PNC Announces Results of 2023 PNC North Carolina HBCU Initiative Pitch Competition

- Student-entrepreneurs from North Carolina Central University, Elizabeth City State University and Winston-Salem State University awarded top honors in statewide pitch competition

- Competition was open to students enrolled at the five N.C. institutions receiving multi-year entrepreneurship grant funding from PNC Foundation through the PNC North Carolina HBCU Initiative

GREENSBORO, N.C., Feb. 3, 2023 – PNC announced today the honorees of the first PNC North Carolina HBCU Pitch Competition, with student-entrepreneur Jahmir Hamilton from North Carolina Central University placing first. Hamilton will receive a $2,500 cash prize for his pitch, *IX Studio: Empowering others, through gaming*.

The competition, which was judged by a multi-disciplinary panel, builds upon the February 2022 launch of the PNC North Carolina HBCU Initiative, an effort designed to enrich the future of entrepreneurship and workforce opportunities for students at the five N.C. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) represented today: Elizabeth City State University, Fayetteville State University, Johnson C. Smith University, North Carolina Central University and Winston-Salem State University. As announced in 2022, a total of more than $2 million in grant funding from PNC Foundation is being awarded to these institutions over a three-year period to support the development and delivery of entrepreneurship resources and programming.

Students representing Elizabeth City State University and Winston-Salem State University finished in second and third place, respectively. The second-place finishing team, which will receive a $1,500 cash prize in recognition of their pitch, *HBCU Ment*, was composed of Quante Bishop, Joshua Hunter and Brandon Shaw. Receiving third place and a $1,000 cash prize is student-entrepreneur Abbas Oumar for his pitch, *Elofit*.

Prizewinners were chosen from an entrant pool of nine student-entrepreneur teams representing the five N.C. HBCUs receiving multi-year grant funding from PNC Foundation through the PNC North Carolina HBCU Initiative. Participants in today's competition were selected by their respective schools through a series of preliminary pitch competitions and were evaluated today on innovation, clarity, comprehensiveness, feasibility, professionalism, the 'wow factor' of the presentations and their answers to questions from the judging panel.

"Today's competition provided a forum for North Carolina's future business leaders to share their unique approaches to entrepreneurship and the creation of innovative products, services and solutions – while demonstrating skills and learnings from entrepreneurship programming and resources made possible through the PNC North Carolina HBCU Initiative," said Weston Andress, PNC regional president for Western Carolinas. "We recognize the participants' significant efforts to prepare for this competition and congratulate the prizewinners and the faculty members who mentor and support them."

The 2023 PNC North Carolina HBCU Initiative Pitch Competition was held at the International Civil Rights Center & Museum in Greensboro, N.C., a historically significant landmark housing the F.W. Woolworth's lunch counter where the Sit-In Movement originated in February 1960. Judges for today's competition included Farad Ali, president and chief executive officer, Asociar; Jay Bigelow, entrepreneur-in-residence, Council for Entrepreneurial Development; Carolyn Donaldson, minority business development relationship manager, PNC Bank; Jessie Maxwell, vice president and director of business strategy, Partner Community Capital; and Madison Potter, business solutions officer for the Carolina Small Business Development Fund.

"Based on the student presentations we saw today and the meaningful learnings and advancements taking place in these institutions' classrooms and communities every day, it's clear that the future is bright for innovation and entrepreneurship in North Carolina," said Jim Hansen, PNC regional president for Eastern Carolinas. "All of us at PNC look forward to seeing these talented students' contributions and impact to the state's business landscape and talent pipeline."

The PNC North Carolina HBCU Initiative aligns with PNC's support for HBCUs throughout the country and complements the ongoing offerings of the Howard University and PNC National Center for Entrepreneurship. Additionally, the grant funding is part of PNC's nationwide $88 billion Community Benefits Plan, which is inclusive of a previously announced commitment of more than $1 billion to support the economic empowerment of Black and low- and moderate-income communities.

About Elizabeth City State University
Elizabeth City State University provides students with a high-quality, affordable education as one of North Carolina's leading four-year public institutions that is part of the University of North Carolina System. ECSU develops leaders who are courageous, resilient, and empowered through excellent student-centered, experiential learning. We offer baccalaureate, professional, and master's degrees across a wide variety of interests. Excellence is the standard at Elizabeth City State University – success is our legacy. Come to Discover. Leave to Conquer. Visit www.ecsu.edu.

About Fayetteville State University
Fayetteville State University is a constituent institution of The University of North Carolina System and the second-oldest public institution of higher education in the state, having been founded in 1867. FSU is a historically black university offering degrees at the baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral levels. With more than 6,700 students, Fayetteville State University is among the most diverse institutions in the nation. To learn more about Fayetteville State University, visit www.uncfsu.edu.

About Johnson C. Smith University
Founded in 1867, Johnson C. Smith University is an independent, close-knit urban university located in Charlotte, N.C. It has a growing national reputation for integrating the liberal arts with business, the sciences and technology in ways that empower tomorrow's diverse entrepreneurial citizens and leaders. Offering 23 fields of study, including a master's degree in social work, to more than 1,200 students from a variety of ethnic, socioeconomic and geographic backgrounds, the university's excellent academic programs focus on servant leadership, civic engagement and global responsibility. For more information about JCSU, visit www.jcsu.edu or follow the university on social media sites Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

About North Carolina Central University

North Carolina Central University (NCCU) prepares students to succeed in the global marketplace. Consistently ranked as a top Historically Black College or University, NCCU offers flagship programs in the sciences, education, law, business, nursing and the arts. Founded in 1910 and located in the Research Triangle Region, NCCU remains committed to diversity in and access to higher education. The university, which offers bachelor's degrees in more than 100 disciplines, master's degrees in more than 40 areas, and a Ph.D. in Integrated Biosciences, has an expanding academic portfolio that meets current and future workforce demands in industries from clinical research to information technology. NCCU's signature graduate and undergraduate degrees are housed in seven colleges and schools. NCCU is a leader in the scientific study of health disparities and provides students the opportunity to gain laboratory skills and experience working with faculty researchers and pharmaceutical and biotechnology industry professionals through two, state-of-the-art research institutes that are housed on campus.

About Winston-Salem State University

Winston-Salem State University fosters the creative thinking, analytical problem-solving, and depth of character needed to transform the world. Rooted in liberal education, WSSU's curriculum prepares students to be thought leaders who have the skills and knowledge needed to develop innovative solutions to complex problems. Founded in 1892, WSSU is a historically Black constituent institution of the University of North Carolina with a rich tradition of contributing to the social, cultural, intellectual, and economic growth of North Carolina, the region and beyond. Guided by the motto, "Enter to Learn, Depart to Serve," WSSU develops leaders who advance social justice by serving the world with compassion and commitment.

About PNC Foundation

The PNC Foundation, which receives its principal funding from The PNC Financial Services Group (www.pnc.com), actively supports organizations that provide services for the benefit of communities in which it has a significant presence. The foundation focuses its philanthropic mission on early childhood education and community and economic development, which includes the arts and culture. Through Grow Up Great, its signature cause that began in 2004, PNC has created a bilingual $500 million, multi-year initiative to help prepare children from birth to age 5 for success in school and life.

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