



## **Jessica Watkins, Benedict College- c/o 2000, Computer Information Science**



**Name :** Jessica Watkins

**Your HBCU :** Benedict College

**Graduation Year :** 2000

**Major :** Computer Information Science

### **1. Where are you from? Who introduced you to HBCUs?\***

Benedict's College Young Alumni Page

### **2. Why did you choose an HBCU over a pwi?\***

I came from an HBCU family and desired a family atmosphere. [How did you decide to become a student at Benedict College?] I would like to think that Benedict chose me. I had no intention of going straight to college. My plan was to go into the Army. Benedict came to my school and gave us the opportunity to fill out an application with no fee. I was able to have them leave with my application and transcript. When the Army didn't work out (I only stayed for 3 weeks) I moved back home. There weren't a lot of opportunities where I was from and I was already accepted at Benedict so the following Spring I enrolled.

### **3. What is the story of your "experience" at Your HBCU given its heralded status as a stellar and prestigious institution?\***

There isn't one story, there is a collection of stories and experiences. Everything from the Gospel Choir competitions and the opportunities to work with Grammy winning gospel artist, to the internship opportunity at fortune 500 company which paved the way for my first job out of college.

### **4. "First time" experiences at your HBCU?\***

Lets see...first fine dining experience, first time singing with Grammy winning artist, first time performing on a stage, first time presenting in front of people, first time dancing without fear, first time receiving awards....but most importantly first time knowing my worth.

### **5. Who are the professors that have impacted your life in and out of the classroom? How did they do that?\***

There were so many...I would have to say Ms. Taylor. Although she has passed, I still smile when I think of her. She always demanded better of me and required that I live up to her expectations.

### **6. What sports and/or extra curricular activities did you do in High School? And why?**

Black History Club (1 year), Gospel Choir (1 year)

**7. Best restaurants on/near campus? Best dishes?**

College Corner. It was cheap! My favorite thing there was the cheese cake.

**8. College crush?**

Lee H. He knows now (over 10 years later). We have both moved on but still remain friends.

**9. Ghost stories involving buildings or spots on campus?**

Not that I know of.

**10. What is your major? and Why did you choose it?**

Computer Information Science... Less math.

**11. What to date has been your proudest moment @ Your HBCU?**

Receiving the President's trophy for making straight A's for 2 consecutive semesters, being selected as the best student in my major and securing a full scholarship. After I left the Army many family and friends said that I would not make it.

**12. Where are the spots to go to if you wanted to cuddle with your boy or girlfriend?**

I didn't have time to cuddle with my "boyfriend". Benedict kept me busy with the Gospel Choir, sorority, and other campus events.

**13. What are the chants heard most often at the sporting events?**

BC...BC...You Know...You Know..

**14. How are you positively active on campus? (e.g. clubs, SGA, etc.)**

Gospel Choir, Delta, Tutor, work study.

**15. Where is the "yard" located?**

The whole campus was the yard.

**16. What and where are the historical places on campus?**

The most historical place was the chapel.

**17. What to date has been your saddest moment at your HBCU?**

When Mr. Thompson died. I had never lost someone I knew that well. He meant so much to that school and his death was so sudden.

**18. What situation in your life made you feel like you had arrived into woman/manhood?**

There are days when I still don't feel like I have "arrived". Life is a journey. But when I am in a board room full of white people and men, and they look to me for answers, I know that I am there.

**19. How do you deal with racism when you encounter it?**

By recognizing that it is not about me.

**20. When and how did you discover your passion in life?**

My passion in life is helping others see themselves and I learned that through the volunteer work I did at Benedict.

**21. What's your take on life (in the philosophical sense)?**

Be the best you. You can't control how other people feel and it is not your job to make them happy. By being the best you, you encourage the people around you to do the same.

**22. How did you overcome your nervousness about going to college?**

Acknowledging my fear and determining that it was based on unfounded evidence.

**23. If you could speak to those family members that have risen but that live forever through you, what words would you speak?**

I hope I made you proud.

**24. How did your HBCU prepare you for a diverse workplace?**

It prepared me for a diverse workplace by requiring more than good. I knew that I always had to be the smartest person in the room. Being the smartest person in the room is not always about having the right answer. Sometimes it's about knowing who does.

**25. What advice would you give high school students filling out college applications for the first time?**

Be honest and be you. If the school can't accept you as you are and what you will be, they don't deserve you.

**26. If you could only speak two sentences to the youth coming after you what would you say?**

Focus on being the best you. Being the best you is more interesting than the version of you that is like someone else on any day. The boys, girls, clothes, cars, and other material things will always be there. They even get better with time. So don't rush life and judge your success based on other people and where they are. You are your standard.

**27. Are you a member of a sorority?**

Delta Sigma Theta. I chose Delta because they wanted to stand for something.

**28. How did your HBCU help you to transition into your careers workforce?**

My internship paved the way for the transition. The support staff at Benedict arranged several interviews so there were many opportunities to sharpen my interview skills.