



## **Lavonzell Wilks, Mississippi Valley State University- c/o 1989, Computer Information Science**



**Name :** Lavonzell Wilks

**Your HBCU :** Mississippi Valley State University

**Graduation Year :** 1989

**Major :** Computer Information Science

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

I'm from Coldwater, MS. When I was in the 9th grade I was introduced to the Upward Bound Program at Mississippi Industrial College and Rust College by my Chemistry teacher Mr. Jessie Edward. At that point I knew an HBCU school was the right fit for me.



Lavonzell Wilks, proud HBCU Alum and Graduate of Mississippi Valley State University '89 |  
Image Credit: Lavonzell Wilks

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

Mississippi Valley State University was the closest University to my hometown that offered me a full academic scholarship. [How did you decide to become a student at Mississippi Valley State University?] Scholarship

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

I majored in Computer Science while at MS Valley State and got the opportunity to CO-OP with the U.S. Department of Transportation in their Air Traffic Control Program. I successfully completed that program and have been employed with them now for 25 years. Although the hiring process has changed since they were actively recruiting at some HBCUs but it is still a great career with great pay and benefits.

[http://www.faa.gov/jobs/job\\_opportunities/airtraffic\\_controllers/](http://www.faa.gov/jobs/job_opportunities/airtraffic_controllers/)

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

N/A

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

Dr. Carolyn Ford was the Department Head for the Computer Science and Math Department and she left the biggest impression on me. She treated us like we were her kids. To see such an influential Black lady that grew up in the rural Delta in Mississippi achieve greatness and help so

many other students attain success in their field of study made me realize that I too could achieve whatever I set my mind to do.



Lavonzell at the JSU vs ASU game! | Image Credit: Lavonzell Wilks

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

Never give up on your dreams. If you believe then you too can achieve.

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