



COMING FULL Circle

BIRMINGHAM ATTORNEY TYRELL F. JORDAN CREATES AN ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP TO SUPPORT STUDENTS FROM UNDERREPRESENTED URBAN COMMUNITIES.

When Tyrell F. Jordan was preparing for college, the conversation became old hat.

"I would tell folks I was going to The University of Alabama, and they wouldn't believe me. They wanted to say it was somewhere else. I would finally have to say, 'No. Roll Tide. You see them on TV every Saturday,'" said Jordan, who grew up attending inner-city Birmingham public schools.

"Nobody believed me because people who looked like me and came from my area did not go to the University very much back then, and that was just 19 years ago."

But Jordan did go to the University, with the help of scholarships and other financial aid. He pledged a fraternity, Omega Psi Phi, and formed lifelong friendships. He also found a mentor in his fraternity chapter's faculty advisor, Dr. Samory Pruitt, now vice president of UA's Division of Community Affairs.

Jordan earned a bachelor's degree in accounting from UA in 2001, and his juris doctor from the UA School of Law in 2004. With Pruitt's encouragement, he then pursued an externship at the Kettering Foundation, a cooperative research nonprofit led by former UA president David Mathews. That externship, Jordan said, ended up being one of the more monumental experiences of his life.

Today Jordan is an attorney at his own firm, TFJ Law, in Birmingham. Grateful for the many people and experiences in his seven years at UA that



Above: Tyrell F. Jordan with long-time mentor Dr. Samory Pruitt. Right: Jordan on graduation day, May 19, 2001.

shaped the course of his life, he recently found himself visiting campus more often – and not just for football games or to catch up with old fraternity buddies. This time, it was about giving back.

In 2016, he joined an advisory board, a

group of outstanding UA alumni committed to community engagement and student success, for UA's Division of Community Affairs. He also established a scholarship endowment to support students from underrepresented urban communities.

This new turn in Jordan's life came, once again, at the encouragement of his long-time mentor.

"When we decided to create the Community Affairs Board of Advisors, Tyrell was at the top of my list," said Pruitt, who remembers

Jordan as wise beyond his years as a young undergraduate in Omega Psi Phi.

"He was very smart, carrying nearly a 4.0, and easy to talk to. He always understood what we were trying to do with the chapter," Pruitt said. "I knew he was one of those people that, if you put him in a group, he is going to push the group to get things done."

Jordan accepted the invitation to join the board, but surprised Pruitt by taking his new leadership role one step further.

"I just expected him to be a part of the difference we were trying to make through the board of advisors by mentoring students and supporting projects," Pruitt said. "But he said to me, 'I would like to do something a little more than that.' I asked him what, and he said, 'What does it take to endow a scholarship?'"

Soon after that conversation, the TFJ Law Firm Endowed Scholarship was created.

"My personality is such that I like to get in and get something done," Jordan said. "As I learned more about how endowed scholarships

work, it sounded like an opportunity to jump in and do something good, and hopefully, at the end of the day, help provide an opportunity to some other young man or woman who comes out of an inner-city area, like I did, to be able to pursue an education at the state's flagship university.

"In my mind, this is just the beginning of that endowment. I hope I still have enough time left on this earth to get enough done to see it grow larger."

Along with his outreach efforts on campus through the advisory board, the scholarship brings Jordan's connection to the University full circle.

"Looking back at my life, I know that the assistance of many helped in providing me the opportunities to do what I now get to do, being a lawyer serving the greater Birmingham community," Jordan said. "I know I, in all likelihood, would not have been allowed these chances but for the financial assistance, the support, the encouragement and the love of so many people along the way."

Those same opportunities he is now passing on to others. 

