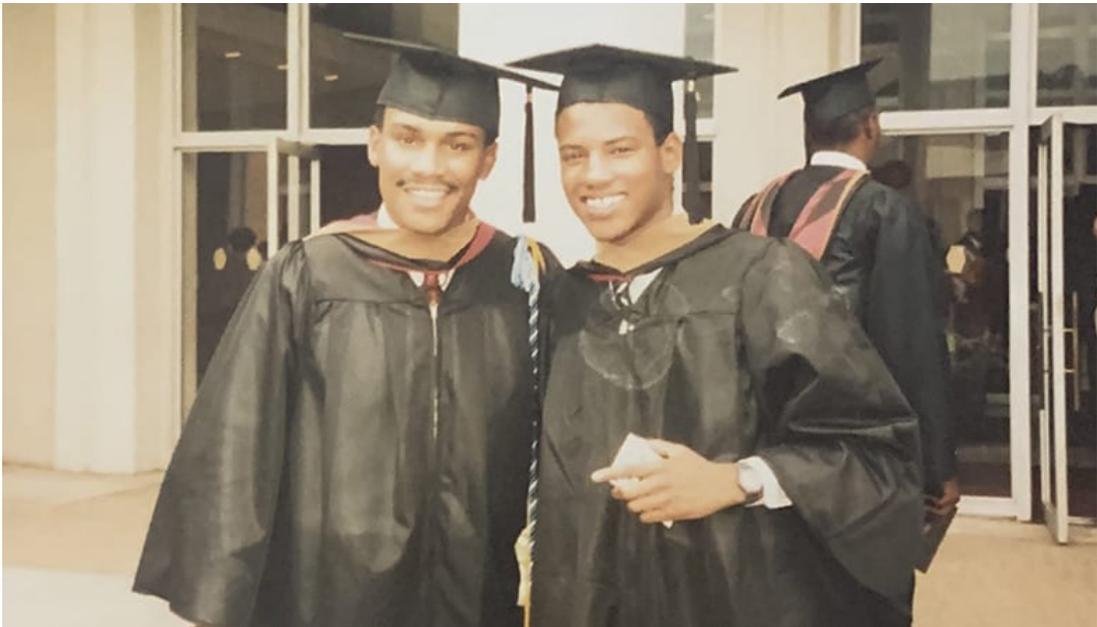


INSPIRE

Greg Cunningham: "Why I Support UNCF"



GREG CUNNINGHAM INTERVIEWING AT THE MINNESOTA STATE CAPITAL, ST. PAUL MINNESOTA



GREG CUNNINGHAM, GRADUATE OF CLARK COLLEGE (NOW CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY) IN 1985 WITH CLASSMATE ALLEN SMITH



GREG CUNNINGHAM, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER, U.S. BANK



PRESENTING AT MINNEAPOLIS MASKED BALL AWARD CEREMONY

U NCF has been blessed over the years with many dedicated staff and volunteers to lead the organization. Recently, Greg Cunningham, a new member of the UNCF Board of Directors, has made history by being a UNCF student, a UNCF scholarship recipient, a UNCF volunteer, a UNCF staff member, and now years later, by joining the board on behalf of Minneapolis-based donor and supporter, U.S. Bank. That’s quite a trail to blaze—one he believes that only UNCF could have made possible.

How did he find his way to the pinnacle of UNCF? After growing up in Pittsburgh, Cunningham was drawn to Atlanta—one of the few cities that had a Black mayor at that time. While visiting a friend there as a young man, he had a chance meeting on the campus of Clark College (now Clark Atlanta University), one of UNCF’s historically Black colleges or universities (HBCUs).

“As we were walking across the campus, there was a woman walking towards us who looked very familiar to me, but I couldn’t place her,” said Cunningham. “As she got closer, I stopped in my tracks—it was Coretta Scott King. As we walked away, she called out a greeting. ‘Hello, how are you?’ My friend told me she was on campus often.”

That chance meeting on the school’s campus and his visit to Atlanta reaffirmed for Cunningham that Atlanta was where he needed to be. After receiving a UNCF scholarship, he enrolled at the university, and Cunningham earned a bachelor’s degree from Clark in business.

“Receiving a scholarship from UNCF and attending an HBCU was just a validation of self-worth and what was possible when you’re in a community that is culturally validating. That experience really changed my life and set me on a course that helped me understand that truly anything was possible,” Cunningham explained.

Following his time attending Clark, Cunningham developed a strong relationship with UNCF. When he first moved to Minnesota and the Twin Cities, he served as the area development director for UNCF from 1995-98. He went on to serve as co-chair of UNCF’s Minnesota campaign, and just recently joined the national UNCF board in 2020.

Since joining U.S. Bank four years ago, Cunningham has been instrumental in securing the company’s commitment to UNCF, including the establishment of the Ujima Scholarship Fund, a \$500,000 multi-year scholarship program. The seven-year program follows students for that length of time and includes a mentor at U.S. Bank, offering guidance, financial education, academic assistance, paid internships and full employment opportunities post-graduation.

“Getting to college is a significant milestone in a young person’s life. At U.S. Bank, we wanted to take it to the next level and help students get that first job and realize success. I’m so glad we acted on this a few years ago. We are starting to see our first students get through the program now and look forward to what they will do in the future,” Cunningham added.

An investment years ago in a young man who happened to walk across the campus of one of UNCF’s HBCUs is now paying off in through the seeds that were planted back then. As we say, “A mind is a terrible thing to waste, but a wonderful thing to invest in.”[®] And Greg Cunningham is a prime example of why that investment is so vital.

