

Dr. Kiki Baker Barnes is an award-winning sports executive and trailblazer in athletics. As Commissioner of the HBCU Athletic Conference (formerly the Gulf Coast Athletic Conference), she became the first African-American woman to hold this role in the conference and in the NAIA. In her first two years as commissioner, she expanded conference membership by 53% and increased annual revenue by over 1,000%. She also secured a groundbreaking \$1.2 million, five-year media rights deal—the largest in NAIA history.

Dr. Barnes is the author of **Blazing Your Own Trail: Faith, Focus and Forward Momentum in Leadership** and founder of So You Want A Career in Athletics™, a leadership program exposing girls and young women to career opportunities in sports. Named one of the 100 Influential Black Women in Sports by Sports Illustrated and EmpowerOnyx, her work has been featured on NPR, TBS, Andscape, Essence, and Black Enterprise. She has been recognized as one of the Biz New Orleans 500 Most Influential Executives (2023, 2024) and received honors such as the Nike Nell Jackson Executive of the Year Award (2021), NACDA Under Armour Athletic Director of the Year Award (2019), and Women Leaders in College Sports Administrator of the Year Award (2015).

Prior to her commissioner role, Dr. Barnes served as Dillard University's athletic director, revitalizing the athletics program after Hurricane Katrina. She launched new sports teams, established the university's first endowed athletic scholarship, and created the Dillard University Sports Hall of Fame. Under her leadership, the Bleu Devils earned 15 conference championships, a national title, and the prestigious Thomas Howell Cup. She also brokered partnerships with sponsors like the Allstate Sugar Bowl and launched the Dillard Bleu Devil Network.

In 2019, Dr. Barnes became Interim Commissioner of the Gulf Coast Athletic Conference (GCAC) while continuing as Dillard's athletic director. Previously, she served as GCAC President (2009–2018), leading its recovery and growth after member schools departed. Earlier in her career, she coached basketball at Southern University, the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, and Dillard University, among others.

Active in the community, Dr. Barnes serves on several boards, including the Greater New Orleans Sports Foundation, the Tulane University Albert LePage Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, and A.B. Freeman School of Business, and the New Orleans City Park Conservancy. She is also a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., and The Links, Incorporated.

Dr. Barnes holds a Ph.D. in higher educational administration, a bachelor's of general studies from the University of New Orleans, and a master's in communications from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. A proud native of Minden, Louisiana, she resides in New Orleans with her husband, Dr. Marc A. Barnes. They have two adult children, Caitlin and Marc Jr.