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Dr. Kiki Baker Barnes is an award-winning sports executive with a track record of pioneering accomplishments in the field. Currently serving as the Commissioner of the HBCU Athletic Conference (formerly known as the Gulf Coast Athletic Conference), she holds the distinction of being the first African American woman to occupy this role within the conference and the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). In her first two years at the helm full-time, she increased conference membership by 53% and annual revenue by over 1,000%. She also negotiated and signed a 5-year, 1.2 million dollar media rights deal for the conference, the largest conference deal in NAIA history. Dr. Barnes is also 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, Dr. Barnes has been featured and covered on National Public Radio (NPR), TBS, Andscape, The Grio, The Louisiana Radio Network, and in *Black Enterprise*, *Essence*, *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*, *The Times-Picayune*, and *The Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*. She has received numerous honors and recognitions. In 2025, she was honored with the Spotlight Award at the Sports Power Brunch during the 2025 Super Bowl. In 2024 and 2023, she was honored as one of the *Biz New Orleans* 500 Most Influential, Involved, and Inspiring Executives. She was also named the GCAC Athletic Director of the Year in 2021, 2015, 2014, and 2011. In 2021, Dr. Barnes was honored as the Nell Jackson Nike Executive of the Year and with the Higher Education Leadership Foundation Trailblazer Award. She was recognized as the 2019 NACDA Under Armour Athletic Director of the Year, as one of the 2018 *New Orleans City Business* Women of the Year, and as a 2018 New Orleans Pelicans Black History Month Honoree. Among Dr. Barnes' other honors are 2015 Women Leaders in College Sports Administrator of the Year, a 2014 Girl Scouts Woman of Distinction, one of the 2014 *New Orleans Magazine* People to Watch, and a 2013 Gambit Top 40 under 40 honoree.

Prior to her role as full-time Commissioner, Dr. Barnes assumed the leadership role as Dillard University's athletic director in 2006. She simultaneously held the position of head coach of the women's basketball team until March 2013. Her initial responsibility was to facilitate the return of the athletics program after it was shuttered following Hurricane Katrina. She not only resurrected the program, but she grew the program into a national model of student-athlete success and community service. Dillard's athletic program saw the establishment of new sports teams, the university's first endowed athletic scholarship, and the Dillard University Sports Hall of Fame. Under her leadership, the Bleu Devils won a national championship and 15 conference championships. Dillard also garnered multiple Top 25 rankings and earned, for the first time in the university's history, the coveted Thomas Howell Cup for the GCAC member with the most athletic success. Dr. Barnes negotiated and secured key sponsors and partners, including All-State Sugar Bowl who served as the title sponsor for the annual Bleu Devil Classic.

She also led the launch of the Dillard Bleu Devil Network in conjunction with streaming partner, Stretch Internet, on Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV, Android TV, and Roku.

In March 2019, she was named Interim Commissioner for the GCAC while concurrently serving as Athletic Director at Dillard. This was not her first stint with the GCAC, as she was elected and served as president of the GCAC from 2009 to 2018, directing its growth after several universities departed for other conferences. Her trailblazing appointment made her both the first female and African-American president of the GCAC. Earlier in her career, Dr. Barnes served as assistant women's basketball coach at Dillard University, first assistant women's basketball coach at Frank Phillips College, head women's basketball coach at Southern University at Shreveport, first assistant women's basketball coach at Southern University, and assistant women's basketball coach at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

Active in the community, Dr. Barnes is involved with several organizations. She is on the boards of 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 also serves on the Fidelity Bank P.O.W.E.R. advisory board and the HBCU Legacy Bowl committee. She served as President of the NAIA Athletic Directors Association and as a member of the local NCAA Men's Basketball Final Four committee, the local NCAA Women's Basketball Final Four committee, Lark in the Park, and the NAIA Conduct and Ethics committees. Dr. Barnes is a member of the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc., the New Orleans (LA) Chapter of The Links Incorporated, and a former board member of the Minorities Opportunities Athletic Association.

Dr. Barnes attended the University of New Orleans, earning her Ph.D. in education administration and her bachelor's degree in communications. Dr. Barnes earned her master's degree in communications from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. She is also a certified John Maxwell speaker and trainer, having distinguished herself as a keynote speaker, enterprising national expert, consultant, and mentor in the sports industry. A proud native of Minden, Louisiana, Dr. Barnes is married to Dr. Marc A. Barnes. They have two adult children, Caitlin and Marc Jr.

Achievements

- 2025 Spotlight Award The Sports Power Brunch “Celebrating the Most Powerful Women in Sport”
- 2023, 2024, & 2025 New Orleans 500 Most Influential, Involved, and Inspiring Executives
- 2022 Named one of the 100 Influential Black Women in Sports by Sports Illustrated and EmpowerOnyx
- 2021 Nell Jackson Nike Executive of the Year presented by Women Leaders in Sports
- 2021 Higher Education Leadership Foundation Trailblazer Award
- 2019 NACDA Under Armour Athletic Director of the Year
- 2018 Women of the Year New Orleans City Business
- 2018 New Orleans Pelicans Black History Month Honoree
- 2015 Women Leaders in College Sports Administrator of the Year presented by Women Leaders in Sports
- 2014 Girl Scout Woman of Distinction
- 2014 People to Watch New Orleans Magazine
- 2013 Gambit’s Top 40 Under 40
- 2011, 2014, 2015 & 2021 Gulf Coast Athletic Conference Athletic Director of the Year

Professional Affiliations, Community Affiliations, Boards, and Committees

- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated
- New Orleans (LA) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated

- New Orleans City Park Conservancy, Board of Directors
- Tulane University Albert LePage Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation and A.B. Freeman School of Business Advisory Board Member
- Greater New Orleans Sports Foundation, Board of Directors
- 2022 NCAA Men's Basketball Final Four Local Organizing Committee
- 2013, 2020 NCAA Women's Basketball Final Four Local Organizing Committee
- 2022, 2023, 2024 HBCU Legacy Bowl Committee (presented by Black College Football Hall of Fame)
- 2022 Lark in the Park Committee
- National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NACDA)
- Minorities Opportunities Athletic Association (MOAA), Former Board Member
- National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) Athletic Directors Association, Board of Directors, Past President
- National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) Conduct and Ethics Committee, Former Chair