

The PCACAC Impact Award for Diversity, Equity, Access and Belonging is awarded to an individual or organization that has made a tangible influence to further diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives within the PCACAC region. As a regional affiliate, PCACAC has a clear history of producing leaders who impacted the diversity, equity and inclusion of students and professionals in the admissions process, both at the regional level and through leadership in NACAC. This award seeks to honor individuals or organizations who have made opportunities for students who are underrepresented, underserved, and/or marginalized in postsecondary education.

For over 20 years, this year's recipient has been a passionate advocate for diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in college admissions, using his platform to open doors for underrepresented students across the region. As a first-generation college going student from Madison Heights, VA, he went on to become a basketball legend at Roanoke College, recently being inducted into their Athletic Hall of Fame. James, affectionately called "JP" by many, his journey began with a deep commitment to rural Virginia, where he has worked tirelessly to break down barriers for students in underserved communities. His efforts included direct outreach to students in these areas, ensuring they had the information and resources necessary to navigate the college admissions process.

His mission extended far beyond geographic boundaries as he collaborated with his fraternity, The Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc. and church, Loudon Avenue Christian Church to reach students from a variety of backgrounds, spanning from Mad Heights to South Carolina. In addition to his recruitment and outreach efforts, JP has served as a mentor to countless young Black and Brown men, offering guidance and support that goes beyond academics. His mentorship has provided these students with the tools they need to succeed in college and in life, helping them navigate challenges and build the confidence to excel.

Throughout his career, JP has been unwavering in his commitment to creating a more inclusive and equitable higher education system. I'd be remised, if I did not mention that he is a man of faith, a welcoming person to all and his unshakeable love for the purple and gold, his Lakers. His work has had a lasting impact on the lives of countless students, and his legacy of advocacy continues to inspire others, me included, to follow in his footsteps. I know his wife, Lisa, and three boys, Damian, Jamie, and Jordan, wish they could be here in person to celebrate with you, but they are with us via facetime, PCACAC, please join me in applause for this year's Impact Award Winner James "JP" Pennix.