

## Southwestern Athletic Conference (swac.org)

**Bethune-Cookman University, Wildcats** – Daytona Beach, Florida

**Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University, Rattlers** – Tallahassee, Florida

**Alabama State University, Hornets** – Montgomery, Alabama

**Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University, Bulldogs** – Normal, Alabama

**Alcorn State University, Braves** – Lorman, Mississippi

**Jackson State University, Tigers** – Jackson, Mississippi

**Mississippi Valley State, Delta Devils** – Itta Bena, Mississippi

**Grambling State University, Tigers** – Grambling, Louisiana

**Southern University, Jaguars** – Baton Rouge, Louisiana

**University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, Golden Lions** – Pine Bluff, Arkansas

**Texas Southern University, Tigers** – Houston, Texas

**Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical University, Panthers** – Prairie View, Texas

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After the United States Civil War in 1867, Congress required that states with segregated educational institutions (as was maintained throughout the former Confederacy) designate black land grant colleges in order to receive land grant monies for white colleges, as Congress had authorized the program to benefit students of all races. All colleges in the Southwestern Athletic Conference are designated as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). They have between 4000 and 10,000 students.

The conference does play men's football in the Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) while the larger universities play in the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS). However, as far as I am concerned, football is just an excuse to have additional performances by the marching band, drill team, dance squad, color guard, baton twirlers, and band leaders. The conference members do not participate in major football bowls, but do participate in other activities.

For example, Prairie View A&M's marching band is officially known as the "Marching Storm" and has close to 300 active members. Some of the band accomplishments include performing at the Super Bowl, the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, a U.S. presidential inauguration, the Tournament of Roses Parade, the Honda Battle of the Bands, the Houston Rodeo, the grand opening of the NRG Stadium, and at a 2004 Dallas Cowboys game.

The Southern University marching band, better known as the "Human Jukebox", has been featured in numerous television commercials, music videos and invited to participate in the annual Rose Parade in Pasadena, California, Presidential Inauguration ceremonies and six Super Bowl halftime presentations. The band was also featured in the music videos for the Jonas Brothers song, "Pom Poms" and for Lizzo song, "Good as Hell". In 2008, The band was named "Best Dressed Marching Band" by FashionNews.com, and named "#1 Band In The Nation" by USA Today. In 2014, the NCAA ranked the band second best in the nation.

The "Marching 100" is the official name of the marching band at Florida A&M University (FAMU). Since its inception, the band has been credited for 30 innovative techniques which have become standard operating procedures for many high school and collegiate marching band programs. The band has grown to over 440 members. The band has performed at the Super Bowl (on several occasions), the Summer Olympics, the inaugural parades for U.S. presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, and was selected to be the official United States representative to the Bicentennial Celebration of the French Revolution in Paris, France.

The Grambling "World Famed Tiger Marching Band" is a historic marching band with many special accolades and accomplishments. For instance, they are the only HBCU marching band in the nation to perform at two consecutive U.S. presidential inaugurations. "World Famed" was founded in 1926 and serves as one of the premier ambassadors of the university. One of the band's most anticipated traditions is the annual nationally televised "Battle of The Bands" against Southern University's Human Jukebox marching band during Bayou Classic weekend in the Superdome. The yearly event attracts tens of thousands of alumni, fans, and spectators. "World Famed" is led by four drum majors and features a danceline from Grambling's Orchestis Dance Company (ODC).

Founded as the Jackson State University Marching Band, the name was established as the "Sonic Boom of the South". The Motown hit "Get Ready" became as the band's theme, and they introduced the "Tiger Run-on" shuffle, "Tiger Strut" and "Floating JSU" halftime display. The dancing "Baby Tigers" first appeared in a halftime show in 1994. In 2000, the band established the "Jackson 5" drum majors (also known as J5 - previously the Fabulous 4). In 2003, the marching band was enshrined in the NCAA Hall of Champions.

Alabama State's marching band is officially known as "The Mighty Marching Hornets". The band has been invited several times to the Honda Battle of the Bands and has been nationally recognized. The Mighty Marching Hornets were stars of a documentary series, *Bama State Style*, which offered a peek into the lives of the students in the band. In 2016, The Mighty Marching Hornets made an appearance in Ang Lee's film "Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk". In 2017, the band's 2012 halftime performance at the Magic City Classic garnered over three million views on YouTube. In 2019, the band performed in the Rose Parade in Pasadena, California on New Year's Day. The band is traditionally led by four or five drum majors. The band performs at select football games, all SWAC basketball home games, and other special events. The featured auxiliary is "The Sensational Stingettes", a danceline that debuted in 1977. They were invited to appear in the "Give It 2 U" music video and live performance with artists Robin Thicke, Kendrick Lamar, and 2 Chainz. Also, they were shown in Beyonce's Netflix special "HOMECOMING: A film by Beyonce". The most recently added auxiliary is the Honey-Beez, a danceline composed of only plus-size young women that debuted in 2004. In 2017, they were selected to showcase their talents and compete on America's Got Talent.

The Bethune-Cookman University "Marching Wildcats" are a 325-member unit which includes instrumentalists, the Sophisticat Flag Corp, and the 14 Karat Gold Dancers. Known as "The PRIDE", the band strives to bring the finest in half-time performances to viewing audiences. The nationally famous 14 Karat Gold dancers are made up of select young ladies who exemplify exceptional dance skills, poise, and class. The dancers are featured performers in all engagements of the Marching Wildcats and occasionally perform as a solo act. The 14K dancers can be seen frequently in BET video clips promoting Black Colleges. The Sophisticat Flag Corp has been recognized as one of the most exciting auxiliary units in the south. The Corp is known for its blending of traditional flag techniques with innovative choreography to create highly entertaining presentations.