

Catalyst Profile

Michael (Mike) A. Blackmon, Jr. Esq.

Mike Blackmon, the WCU alumnus of 2005, is a vice-president of one of the top ten largest banks in the United States. After graduating summa cum laude from WCU with a bachelor's degree in political science, Blackmon went on to attend law school at Howard University in 2012 after working in the banking sector. Blackmon is currently a vice-president and corporate counsel for U.S. Bank in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Blackmon credits his time at WCU for building the foundation for his career today. "I learned how to think analytically and on my feet while receiving a broad academic experience," said Blackmon.

During these years, Blackmon transferred to N.C. State. "I found that at N.C. State there weren't a lot of resources for political science, but at WCU there was a broad course selection," Blackmon states.

Of the faculty at WCU, Blackmon mentions Chris Cooper, a recipient of the 2013 "Professor of the Year" award by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in North Carolina, as being a significant influence on his career by "always reiterating to his students that they need to do their best." Others encouraged and guided Blackmon to participate in enriching programs. Niall Michelsen, Blackmon's academic advisor, was the one who introduced Blackmon to a program called UNC in Washington which allowed students from the UNC university system colleges to act as summer interns in Washington D.C. Blackmon was one of three students from WCU who were accepted into the program in 2005.

This opportunity, Blackmon explains, is what ultimately peaked his interest in banking. After participating in Wachovia Bank's management trainee program and being a loan officer in one of its Asheville branch locations, Blackmon went on to receive his law degree from Howard University.

Despite having only been practicing law for almost four years, Blackmon believes his greatest career achievements are in the area of policy and federal consumer regulatory law at U.S. Bank.

"My manager and I have been able to focus on the many consumer regulatory changes that are occurring and are responsible for monitoring and interpreting those regulations, and providing the bank legal counsel as it implements those regulatory changes," said Blackmon.

His advice for current students who wish to find success in achieving their dreams is to "be imaginative and pursue what interests you." Blackmon emphasizes the importance of not being

afraid of failure because “life is not a linear path.” He encourages students to find a mentor for guidance and advice.