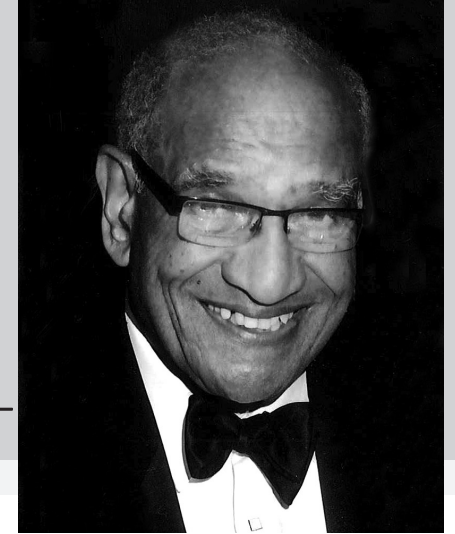




DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS

H. Jesse Arnelle '55, '62g



To H. Jesse Arnelle for his distinguished law career, his commitment to diversity and his service and leadership to Penn State—from student-athlete to student-body president to chair of the Board of Trustees and beyond.

Recruited for his football prowess by coaches Rip Engle and Joe Paterno, first to Brown University then to Penn State, Jesse Arnelle fondly remembers that initial visit to campus in 1951.

“I’ve only had three ‘wow’ moments in my life and this was one of them,” Arnelle said. “I knew right away that this was the place for me. The decision by the coaches to offer me an academic football scholarship was up there with the kind of good fortune that having solid, loving and encouraging parents can have in a young person’s life—priceless.”

Arnelle has been making the most of his Penn State experience ever since. As a student-athlete, he contributed in both football and basketball. Although he earned All-America honorable-mention for football in 1955, it was in basketball where his athletic aspirations reached a higher level. In 1954, his third season, Arnelle led

the team all the way to the NCAA Final Four, an accomplishment that has yet to be duplicated by the Nittany Lions. To date, Arnelle is Penn State’s first and only All-American in basketball.

“I had the most enjoyable time as a student-athlete,” Arnelle said. “I love Penn State and could never do enough to repay the University for the academic and sports’ education. Penn State provided me with an opportunity to find the courage and intellect within myself and start the maturing process.”

Knowing that law was the career he wanted to pursue, Arnelle studied political science and history and sought out leadership roles as an undergraduate. Arnelle was co-captain of the basketball team and was elected as, All-University student body president in 1954. He was the first African American to hold that office. After graduating in 1955, Arnelle went on to play in the NBA, served in the Air Force and then, in 1962, he earned his law degree from Dickinson School of Law in Carlisle.

Before moving forward with his law career, Arnelle spent four years with the Peace Corps in Turkey, India, and Washington, D.C. After passing the California bar exam, Arnelle settled in San Francisco to practice

law with corporate law firm Morrison and Foerster, and then on his own. Nearly 30 years later, in 1997, Arnelle retired as senior partner of Arnelle, Hastie, McGee, Willis and Greene of San Francisco. The firm specializes in civil litigation and public finance law. He and original partner William Hastie, founded it in 1985 as one of the first minority-owned corporate law firms in the country. They built it into a successful law practice with corporate clients such as Ford Motor Co., Chrysler and The Coca-Cola Co. In 1993, the firm was identified by *Black Enterprise* magazine as one of the top 12 African American law firms in America.

Arnelle later served as counsel to Womble, Carlye, Sandridge and Rice. He was admitted to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court as well as the Pennsylvania and California Supreme Courts.

“If being a lawyer has taught me one thing, it has taught me how to view people,” Arnelle said. “It’s taught me the essential need for the rule of law and the importance of advocating for the powerless in society. I have met others who hold the same views, some of whom were here at Penn State.”

For 45 years, (1969–2014), Arnelle served as an alumni-elected Penn State trustee. In 1969, he was the first African American elected to the board and then, in 1996, was elected chair of the board by his fellow trustees. As chairman, Arnelle was involved in bringing about the Penn State and Dickinson School of Law merger. He also co-founded, with other trustees, the Penn State Renaissance Fund, which provides scholarship support to academically talented students with the greatest financial need. In 2014, Arnelle was granted emeritus trustee status.

He has served on the board of several American corporations including: Wells Fargo & Co., Textron Corporation and Armstrong World Industries.

Arnelle and his wife, Carolyn, are life members of the Penn State Alumni Association and have established scholarships in the College of the Liberal Arts, Dickinson School of Law and the College of Health and Human Development. The Arnelles have three children, Nicole, Paolo '96 (deceased) and Michael.