

## Beta Sigma Boulé and Basketball Hall of Fame Celebrate Students and Greatness

September 14, 2016



As part of the 2016 Enshrinement Weekend, Beta Sigma Boulé (Springfield, Massachusetts) and the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame formed a partnership and hosted over 85 local high school and college students at the Inaugural Leadership and Education Luncheon on Friday, September 9, 2016, at Springfield College. Under the leadership of Beta Sigma's Sire Archon H. Brooks Fitch, this newly formed strategic alliance is a result of a shared vision to be champions of youth, particularly young black men, and provide an opportunity to celebrate their greatness with Hall of Famers. The luncheon theme, "Experience & Inspire Greatness," was a clarion call for everyone in the select group of 250 students, educators, public servants, and business and community leaders to witness, celebrate, and inspire greatness.

The event was attended by the Boule's national president and secretary, Grand Sire Archon Wesley A. Coleman and Grand Grammateus-Executive Secretary Archon Samuel Bacote III, respectively. In his remarks to the audience, Grand Sire Archon Coleman highlighted the Boule's biennial theme, "Inspiring Our Youth to Succeed," and noted Sigma Pi Phi's dedication to mentorship, scholarship, and various social action programs that support young black males. Archons from nearby Alpha Psi Boulé (Hartford, CT) and Beta Beta Boulé (Boston, MA) were also present. Hall of Famers attending the luncheon were "Earl the Pearl" Monroe (inducted in 1989) and Lenny Wilkens (inducted in 1989 as a player and again in 1998 as a coach).

The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Shaquille O'Neal – four-time NBA champion, three-time NBA Finals MVP, and 2016 Hall of Fame inductee. He delighted and engaged the audience with great

storytelling about his childhood challenges, college experiences, NBA fame, and educational achievements. With a strong dose of humor, Dr. O'Neal delivered an inspiring, three-point message that encouraged the students to listen to their parents, use technology to educate themselves, and learn to take criticism and let it motivate them. Throughout his stories, he introduced five of his six children who were in attendance and spoke of each one's school activities. Dr. O'Neal entertained several questions from students and insisted each student to state his or her name and what he or she *will* be when they grow up. The students' questions ranged from inquiries about his shoe size and footwear to his motivation for pursuing the MBA and Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degrees. His answer to the latter was, "To continue to see my mother smile."

At the close of the program, Archon Brooks Fitch stated that he believed 85 mothers smiled as a result of such a powerful and inspirational experience for each of the students who attended the luncheon.