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Firebirds

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JULIUS SMITH, JR. APPOINTED NEW UDC MEN'S BASKETBALL HEAD COACH

Washington, DC—University of the District of Columbia President William L. Pollard, today, announced the appointment of Julius L. Smith, Jr. as the University's new men's basketball head coach. This appointment marks the reinstatement of the UDC Firebirds men's basketball program, which was suspended for the 2004-05 season because of concerns about reported ineligibility issues.

Coach Smith, a native Washingtonian, graduated from Archbishop John Carroll High School in 1973. He then went on to attend Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, from which he graduated in 1979 with a bachelor's degree in psychology. After graduating from college, Smith served in various athletic related capacities, including working as assistant coach at several colleges. His last coaching position was at Indiana University where he was an assistant to Head Coach Mike Davis, during the 2000-01 season. He most recently served as a consultant to various school athletic departments.

Smith also served as an assistant basketball coach at Southeastern Louisiana University during the 1999-2000 season and as an assistant at Tulane University from 1991 to 1999. Prior to his tenure in Louisiana, he served as an assistant to Charles "Lefty" Driesell at James Madison University from 1989 to 1991.

Other capacities in which he served include assistant basketball coach at Mississippi State (1986-1989), administrator to athletic director and assistant basketball coach at West Georgia College (1982-1986), assistant basketball coach at Georgia State University (1981-1982), and assistant basketball coach at Georgia Technical Institute (1980-81).

Smith is confident that he will be able to rehabilitate the UDC program by drawing on experience from his work at Tulane University, where the basketball program there had been suspended for one year prior to his arrival, because of NCAA violations. He assisted the new head coach to rebuild that program and plans to use the same philosophy here at UDC to restore respectability to its basketball program. He said, "I remember when UDC was winning championships and had great athletes. I don't know if I will be able to duplicate the successes of the past, but I want to take the program in that direction."

Smith also said, "I want consistency from the team, and I want them to do it the right way. I expect and will demand that my student-athletes be solid citizens who want to go to class". He used Tulane's basketball athlete graduation rates as an example, saying that "its athletes had a higher rate of graduation than its non-athletes." He has no specific expectations for this year's teams beyond meeting academic requirements, because he isn't sure of the number or caliber of players he is inheriting.

Although he has never played competitive basketball, he feels his exposure to excellent basketball programs such as Archbishop John Carroll's has helped nurture and prepare him for the task at hand. He cites the fact that he and Washington Wizard Head Coach Eddie Jordan were classmates and that he watched the Carroll team intently and learned much about basketball from that experience. He and Coach Jordan have maintained their very good friendship through the years.

Dr. Pollard says "he is confident that Coach Smith will help stabilize and restore the UDC Men's basketball program to respectability under the leadership of Interim Athletics Director Kelly A. Higgins." Higgins was brought in November of 2004, to oversee the athletics program and put it on a sound footing. Higgins says, "Coach Smith is a great fit to help reconstruct and move this basketball program forward the right way."

UDC also wishes to thank all of the institutions that have helped us in this process. The men and women's 2005 basketball schedules are attached.

