

Kamil Ali-Jackson '81
West Chester, PA

At-Large Alumni Trustee Candidate

Kamil Ali-Jackson is a self-described “accidental entrepreneur.” After almost four decades in the life sciences industry as a legal and business professional, Ali-Jackson is currently a board member of Rigel Pharmaceuticals and PDS Biotechnology, two NASDAQ-listed biotech companies, and Moda Operandi, a private online luxury retail company. She is also an advisor to several other life science companies. She co-founded and successfully transitioned several venture capital-funded specialty and biopharmaceutical companies through multimillion-dollar acquisitions by global life sciences companies while raising more than \$1 billion in private and public equity/debt financings and creating more than 300 jobs.

This was not the career path she envisioned when she graduated from Princeton. With a degree in politics, Ali-Jackson decided Harvard Law School was the next step in her journey to “success.” She joined McCarter & English, where, as a product liability litigator, she was introduced to the pharmaceutical industry. Seeking work/life balance, Ali-Jackson left private practice to join Merck & Co., Inc. Her Merck experience was instrumental in her transition from a product liability litigator to a transactional attorney to a corporate licensing executive. “Meeting people from different cultures at Princeton prepared me with essential life skills that I used to effectively negotiate international multibillion-dollar transactions,” she says, “including the licensing of GARDASIL, Merck’s multibillion-dollar human papilloma virus vaccine.”

Throughout her career, Ali-Jackson confronted “immovable people” when it came to professional advancement. As a result, in 2006, she left “big pharma” to co-found the first of her companies.

Ali-Jackson thrived in “Entrepreneurial America.” Starting in 2010, two of her companies were sold for upfront payments of \$250 million, plus up to \$1 billion in potential milestone and royalty payments. Another of her companies was the top-ranked initial public offering in any industry in 2015. “We beat out Shake Shack,” states Ali-Jackson. Her most recent multimillion-dollar company exit was in 2019.

Ali-Jackson continuously used the power “of being underestimated” to create not only personal success, but professional opportunities and wealth for others. “I thought the law was the most effective tool to help the historically disadvantaged. As a co-founder,” she maintains, “I learned about another powerful tool for impacting others’ economic and social wellbeing through building companies, creating jobs, and generating wealth. From the receptionist to the CEO, we all benefited financially from the companies I created.”

Ali-Jackson is also an active member of her community as the chair of her township’s zoning board, on which she has served for more than 20 years. She has also served as a member of several educational boards, such as at Rosemont College, a private liberal arts college. As an adjunct lecturer at Penn’s law school, Ali-Jackson is passionately engaged with mentoring “the next generation of creators, thinkers, and doers. I want to be an integral part of their evolution into service leaders who care about ensuring that all survive and thrive in our society.”

Ali-Jackson's Princeton roots run deep. She proudly states she had "never missed a reunion until the pandemic," has been an Alumni Schools Committee interviewer and a member of the Princeton Prize in Race Relations Philadelphia Regional Committee and is a member of the Association of Black Princeton Alumni.

Currently, Ali-Jackson is supporting Princeton's mission of empowerment through entrepreneurship as an inaugural member of the Office of the Dean of Research's External Advisory Council on Innovation and Entrepreneurship and START. She is an advisory board member of a Princeton alumni-founded national literacy organization, Our Kids Read. Ali-Jackson has also participated as a speaker or panelist at events such as the Wintersession entrepreneurship course, "Tiger Talks," the University affinity conference THRIVE, and the Princeton Women's Network.

"Without Princeton, I wouldn't have succeeded in my career, period," she says. "Princeton taught me to measure my success by how many others I empower. With Princeton alumni as my fellow collaborators, I continue to work towards empowering others, with passion and grace, so that all may survive and thrive as I did."