

# Morehouse program helps add diversity to Atlanta airport concessions



By [Rachel Cohen Noebes](#) – Staff Reporter , Atlanta Business Chronicle  
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Morehouse is helping nearly two-dozen minority business owners land space at the Atlanta airport.

Morehouse Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center (MIEC) partnered with Airport Minority Advisory Council and Access to Capital for Entrepreneurs to launch a new concessions group for minority and underserved businesses at Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport.

The group will work to develop a network of potential concessionaires of color and provide them with support services as they prepare to compete for contracts, according to a news release.

The organizations announced the 23 selected entrepreneurs — out of 75 applicants for the group — during a Wednesday breakfast at Morehouse College's Hall of Honor. The businesses range from food and beverage to apparel to feminine hygiene products.

"Based on the diversity in this room in terms of the products and services that they offer ... I believe there's true opportunity for these businesses to make a footprint in the airport," Danita Harris, program manager at MIEC, told Atlanta Business Chronicle.

The average annual revenue brought in by the selected businesses is \$1 million, according to MEIC. Their annual revenue ranges from \$100,000 to \$4 million.

Nearly half of the entrepreneurs are women, 20 are African American and one is multiracial.

"Our research indicates that intentional collaborations like these are necessary to move the needle with diverse businesses in non-traditional spaces exponentially," said Dr. Tiffany Bussey, Executive Director of MIEC, in a prepared statement.

Keitra Bates of Marddy's Shared Kitchen and Marketplace is among those chosen to participate. Marddy's first location is one block from Morehouse.

Bates purchased the former home of Leila's Dinette, a historic neighborhood anchor for over 40 years. It was a hot spot for local Civil Rights leaders as well as Spelman College and Morehouse students. Leila's closed in the 1990s and stayed empty until Bates renovated the space, carrying on a legacy of Black women owners.

Another participant is Kris Hale of Dope Pieces Puzzle Company, who brings representation to an industry that she says has a market value of \$9 billion. Hale was recently featured on "Good Morning America" for her games that reflect "diverse cultures and experiences," according to her website.

Demond Crump, whose family came to Georgia following Hurricane Katrina, founded Reign Pads through his company Jewel Sanitary Napkins. Crump wants to supply vending machines within the airport.

Later this month, the group will take a behind-the-scenes tour of the airport to better understand the inner workings of Hartsfield-Jackson, named for Atlanta's first Black mayor, as they take further steps toward expanding their businesses.