I had the opportunity to kick off Black History Month by attending a panel discussion celebrating black software engineers. I choose to attend this event because, as a Black woman majoring in MIS, I find myself surrounded by white people who are majority male. So, I wanted to network with others who may have encountered similar struggles. The panel was hosted by Codesmith, a CIRR-certified school that offers various coding boot camps, and took place on February 7, 2024, via Zoom. Codesmith is ranked as the top coding bootcamp by Course Report and SwitchUp. The panel consisted of five black software engineers who had recently completed the Codesmith Software Engineering Immersive course. This course offers a full-stack JavaScript curriculum and may be completed in person on the Codesmith campus in New York or remotely. If you choose to complete the course remotely, you have two options: the full-time remote course is conducted Monday-Saturday for 13 weeks, while the part-time remote course is held Monday-Thursday with the addition of Saturday and lasts 38 weeks. If you are interested in taking this course, it is a serious time commitment, a sentiment shared by all 5 panelists.

During the event, panelists discussed various topics, from how they began their journeys in tech to tips and tricks for finding work after school and how to approach technical interviews. I will share the wisdom bestowed upon me by these talented individuals.

Networking:

In my time completing the MIS program at East Carolina University, networking is a topic you will often see. Each course stressed the importance of networking when looking for a job. Networking is also an excellent opportunity to learn something new or get help with problems. Building relationships through networking can also open doors you never even thought to knock on. This event allowed me to network with tech professionals all over the country. They also referred us to other networking opportunities, such as the AfroTech Conference, one of the largest multicultural tech conferences in the United States, that gathers to discuss how culture, innovation, and tech dominate modern society. Black Brilliant Minds is another organization offering free programs for aspiring and experienced software engineers to unlock opportunities. You can find out more about each organization by clicking the links below.

Black Brilliant Minds- [Sign Up for the Program | Brilliant Black Minds (karat.com)](https://brilliantblackminds.karat.com/sign-up-brilliant-black-minds)

AfroTech- [ATC Early Bird Tickets - The AFROTECH Experience](https://experience.afrotech.com/)

While networking was the main topic of discussion, my other key takeaway from the presentation included the essential skills needed to land your dream job. Take a guess, what skills does one need to be a software engineer? If your guess was a full tech stack, think again. While a basic knowledge of the coding languages used at the job you're applying for is essential, you will never be able to memorize everything. Instead, focus your efforts on sound research and communication skills. If you know where to look, you can always find the solution to the problem. I am interested to see where combining these essential skills and building my network will lead me a black woman in tech post-graduation.