When it comes to sports medicine, Ronnie Barnes ’75 is a giant.

As head athletic trainer of pro football’s New York Giants, he’s known as “Dr. Barnes,” the person players and coaches trust with their fitness and rehabilitation. After 28 years with the team, he’s become the Giants’ vice president of medical services.

When he’s not on the football field, you’ll likely find Barnes with a book, catching up on medical reading, or finding inspiration from African American authors, including his favorite, Cornell West.

His dream of bringing more of these authors to ECU led Barnes, an Outstanding Alumnus, to endow a special collection at J. Y. Joyner Library.

The Ronnie Barnes African-American Resources Collection features more than 600 books, and dozens are added each year. Some go into general circulation to increase their availability in the library’s collection.

“In eastern North Carolina, African American culture is very strong,” says Barnes, a Rocky Mount native who fondly remembers Greenville in the early 1970s. “ECU was a home away from home during a time when, in some places, your race really mattered. ECU was a place of learning, of open-mindedness. It was a great experience.”

The collection has become a central stop for teachers, for students, and for visitors from around the world, says Linda Teel, head of services for the Teaching Resources Center, of which the collection is part.

“It is a wonderful collection that’s highly used,” Teel says. “These books bring something truly irreplaceable to our collection. His gift has really made a difference.”

Barnes feels it is important to bridge the years—and miles—between his fast-paced life as a busy NFL executive and his eastern North Carolina youth.

“In some ways, I hoped this collection would be representative of my own past,” he says. “I thought, what would be more fitting than a resource that would benefit all students and allow them to learn more about African American culture.”