

SisterMentors

A Project of EduSeed

Mentoring, Promoting Education, Transforming Communities

A Newsletter for Donors and Friends of SisterMentors

Our College Graduates

Two more of the young women we helped send to college, Azeb Legesse and Maya Simpkins, graduated this May. Both of them graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) in Richmond, Virginia and both want to continue their education and earn a Ph.D.

Azeb received a Bachelor of Science in Clinical Laboratory Science. The fall semester of her senior year she completed clinical rotations at VCU's hospital where she handled real specimens and performed the same work as technologists in the laboratory.



Azeb Legesse, Virginia Commonwealth University, Class of 2014

During her rotation she completed six clinicals. After taking a practical exam at the end of each rotation, she proceeded to her last semester of college to complete the remaining courses in her program.

The Clinical Laboratory Science program was very rigorous. Although hundreds of students applied, only thirty were accepted and only twenty three finished the program. Azeb's last semester was very stressful and challenging, but she remained focused and determined to finish. She is currently preparing to begin working as a medical technologist in the Washington, D.C area. Azeb is also preparing to apply to Pharmacy School and taking the Pharmacy College Admission Test. She plans to earn her Ph.D. in Pharmacology.

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53 Women of Color Doctorates

We are setting new records and we are so excited!!! For the first time in our history we have helped nine women to earn doctorates in one year. This is the highest number of women we have helped in one single year and brings to 53 the number of women of color SisterMentors has helped to earn doctorates, including in Mathematics, Science and Economics, some of the fields where women of color have traditionally been underrepresented.

We congratulate these women on their hard work and perseverance: Tamika Baldwin, Reston Bell, Winifred Betts-Campbell, Juone Darko, Saunji Fyffe, Nicole Hines-Randolph, Maha Hilal, Tia-Jane'l Simmons and Janet Vaughn. We are so proud.

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From the Executive Director

Dear Donors and Friends:

Something good happens at SisterMentors every day and I am always excited to share the good news with you.

I am very grateful for your support and many of you have been supporting us for many years. Thank you so much! It is your long time support which sustains us year after year. Most of our funds come from individual donors just like you.

This year has been historic for SisterMentors as we helped nine women to complete their dissertations and earn their doctorates. And we are not done yet. More women are scheduled to defend their dissertation early next year. This is the first time that we have helped so many women in one single year and we are very excited about this achievement. Some of these women have become life-long friends because of the deep friendships they formed around helping each other earn their doctorates. Not only did they read each other's work and give feedback and support each other emotionally, they also spent countless hours with each other at libraries, coffee shops and each other's homes staying up late into the night burning the midnight oil. During those times when any one of them would begin to feel overwhelmed or unmotivated, another would call or email to get that person back on track. They depended on and trusted each other. This is the power of community and it is the foundation of the work we do here at SisterMentors. There is an African proverb that says: "if you want to go faster, go alone, but if you want to go further, go together." We go together here every day at SisterMentors. It is who we are.

We are also very proud of our two young women who graduated from college this May. Azeb and Maya worked very hard in college and both of them have plans for graduate school and want to earn doctorates just like their mentors in SisterMentors. We are seeing that our college graduates have plans to pursue advanced degrees. Nathalie Navarette, who graduated in May 2013, started graduate school at Brandeis University this fall. Nathalie is pursuing a Master's in Public Policy which may lead to a Ph.D.

We remain focused on inspiring our girls to maintain or renew their love for STEM. Tsega Solomon, a twenty-six year old Ph.D. student in Biochemistry, recently spent



Girls in Elementary and Middle School

three hours with us and made a powerful presentation to the girls on how she came to love science, her work on proteins and why her research is important. She encouraged girls to have a vision for themselves and to not let anything or anyone move them away from that vision. In the spring, we will have a presentation on engineering and how engineering works in our daily lives.

Our young girls are growing up in SisterMentors and it is such a privilege to be part of their lives during these formative years. Many of our girls who started with us in elementary school are now in high school and some will soon be off to college. In August, we were thrilled to see Jessye Jairrels pack her bags and head to Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts (VCUarts), the number one public art school in the United States. When Jessye was in fourth grade, she followed her older sister Roxie into SisterMentors. Jessye spent close to ten years in SisterMentors and had great support from her mentor, Abigail Duchatelier-Jeudy. We are also very happy for Fatima Tolba and Amal Mint Didi, who started community college this fall with the intent of transferring to a four year university. We are so proud of all our high school graduates.

Earlier this year, we created a Youth Advisory Council to empower the girls in our program and have their voices heard regarding the kinds of experiences they would like to have in SisterMentors. Working in teams, they are giving input on our program, including topics they would like to discuss, colleges they would like to visit and activities they would like to do with their mentors. One of the unforeseen results of the Youth Advisory Council is

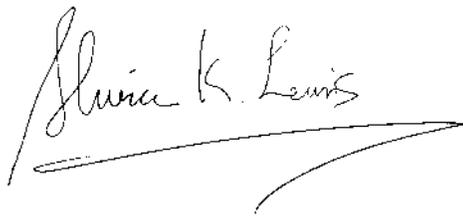
that, as the girls work together, they are building stronger bonds with each other.

I am humbled by your generosity and grateful for your support these past years. We know that times are tough for many due to the economy, but I kindly request that, as the year draws to a close, you put SisterMentors on your list of priorities for giving. We thank you for the huge role you play, through your donations, in helping the women and girls in SisterMentors pursue their dream of higher education. We simply cannot do this work without your support.

Please continue to support us. You can send a check in the mail, or make a donation online at sistermentors.org by clicking on the **DONATE** link.

As always, I encourage you to contact me for any reason. I am always delighted to hear from you. I can be reached at director@sistermentors.org or 202-778-6424. I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,



Shireen K. Lewis, Ph.D.



Girls in High School

53 Women of Color Doctorates

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Tamika Baldwin

Tamika Baldwin

I earned my Ph.D. in Social Work from Morgan State University. My dissertation is titled, *Depression and Older, Community-Dwelling, African American Women*. My research examines depression among community-dwelling, African American women, ages 50 and over. Recently, I was second author for a book chapter, "City Life: What a Wonderful Way of Life – Aging in the Urban Environment," from the book, *The Collective Spirit of Aging Across Cultures*. I am also the first author of the article, "Where is Spirituality in Social Work?" I am the first woman in my immediate and extended family to earn a doctorate.

Reston Bell

I earned my Ph.D. in Education from George Mason University. While my major concentration was counseling and development, my secondary concentrations were clinical psychology and criminology. My dissertation research evaluated how the recidivism of African American juvenile males varies as a function of the placement, programming, and services they receive within the juvenile justice system.

Mine is a history that stems from "A Place Called Reston." My mother named me after this place and every piece of my existence has been sculpted by it. My elementary school teachers believed wholeheartedly that I, as an African-American girl, could do anything. However, that notion became harder to hold on to as I entered high

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53 Women of Color Doctorates

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Juone Darko, Tia-Jane'I Simmons, Tamika Baldwin and Maha Hilal

school. By the conclusion of high school I felt like a guest rather than a welcomed participant in the classroom. It was not until I was writing my dissertation that I began to get that nagging feeling that I was once again a guest in academia. I was not getting the support I needed. I joined SisterMentors and in a matter of months the darkness began to dissipate. SisterMentors was the bridge between my being a guest and my being a member in academia. I am currently a Clinical Psychology Fellow at the George Mason University Center for Psychological Services.

Juone Darko

I earned a Ph.D. in African Studies from Howard University. My dissertation is titled, *Through the Lenses of the Ghanaian Immigrant Community in the Washington, D.C. Area: An Exploration of Identities and Cultures*. My study explores how the different generations conceptualize their racial cultural and ethnic identities.

I was born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama. All of my education from preschool through my undergraduate program was in Birmingham. I am the first in my immediate family to get a Bachelor and Master's degree. My father was a butcher at a local supermarket and a part-time Pentecostal minister. My mother was a stay-at-home mom who encouraged my educational success by tutoring me and enrolling me in Early Head Start. While pursuing my doctorate, I suffered several setbacks, including a divorce and diagnosis of breast cancer.

I joined SisterMentors and met a group of women who became the source of my strength. We met at coffee shops, libraries, and each other's homes to sit together and write sometimes late into the night. We began to depend on each other not just for our dissertations, but also for our lives.

Saunji Fyffe

I earned a Ph.D. in Public Administration and Public Affairs from Virginia Tech University. My dissertation explores resilient nonprofit organizations in Virginia to gain an in-depth understanding of how small and medium sized human services organizations survived and thrived during the Great Recession of 2007-2009. From soup kitchens to hospitals, nonprofit organizations are critical actors in our communities.

The increasing importance of nonprofit organizations in disadvantaged low-income communities inspired my dissertation topic and motivates my research at the Urban Institute's Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy. As a research associate, my work contributes to building the capacity and effectiveness of nonprofits to help them survive environmental changes as well as sustain themselves well into the future.

Tia-Jane'I Simmons

I earned a Doctor of Public Health (DrPH) in Health Administration from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. My dissertation focused on exploring the acceptance of mobile health technology for type 2 diabetes management among older adults.

It is my passion to develop and implement health interventions that can support behavior change and wellness among people who experience barriers to resources or access. My philosophy of community health engagement is grounded in early childhood experiences in my hometown of Fayetteville, North Carolina where I was heavily involved in local and regional community initiatives through my mother's work, the Cumberland Community Action Program. It was this exposure that instilled a passion for serving community members in ways that increase their capacity to help themselves. I am currently employed at the Maryland University of Integrative Health, where I serve as Academic Director of the Department of Health Philosophy and Promotion.

Maha Hilal

I earned my Ph.D. in Justice, Law, and Society from American University. My dissertation is titled: *"Too Darn Muslim to be Trusted: The War on Terror and the Muslim American Response."* It focuses on the counter-terrorism policies that emerged post 9-11 and their disproportionate impact on Muslim Americans.

I am Egyptian American and Muslim. I was born in Egypt. My parents immigrated to the United States to pursue doctorate degrees in Engineering. My father, who passed away when I was ten years old, instilled in me and my sister a love of education. My mother is our greatest pillar of strength and she sacrificed greatly to help us both finish our doctorates.

I am currently the Director of Outreach and Member Engagement for the Peace and Collaborative Development Network. I am also working on a network for Muslim students in academia to provide not only technical, but moral support, in the face of increasing threats to academic freedom around issues that many Muslims are passionate about, not limited to, but including, Palestine.

Janet Vaughn

I earned my Ph.D. in May 2014 from the School of Social Work at Morgan State University. I have a Bachelor of Arts in History from Livingstone College, a historically black college in North Carolina. I was raised in Columbia, South Carolina but born in Sumter. I am the oldest of five children. I am the first on my mother's side to earn a college degree.

My dissertation is titled, *The Lived Experiences of Lesbians Who Served in the Military during 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell'*. 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' was a policy that banned military personnel from asking about sexual orientation. I intend to make my dissertation research the focus for policy changes in the United States Armed Forces to advocate for equal services for all those in the military.

As a military social worker, I have been stationed in several locations including Fort Hood, Texas and Iraq. I am currently the Chief of the Family Advocacy Program at Evans Hospital in Fort Carson, Colorado Spring, Colorado.

Nicole Hines-Randolph

I earned my doctorate in Human Services from Capella University. My dissertation is titled, *Without Walls: An Examination of Women and the Barriers Impeding Successful Reintegration.*" This study is a quantitative examination of recidivism of women in prison and the barriers they experience in trying to re-establish themselves after incarceration. This work was important to me as a woman with 17 years of experience in the field of corrections.

My journey to the Ph.D. has been nothing short of miraculous. I hail from a close knit religious family in southern New Jersey. While my parents had college degrees and encouraged us to further our education, I am the only one of their children who finished college. Since I have completed this Ph.D., many of my siblings are now considering going back to school.

I had several setbacks during my pursuit of the doctorate. My mother died and I fell into a depression. I returned to pursuing my Ph.D. but I was hospitalized several times. I was truly tried and tested. I am hoping to secure a tenure track position at a university.

Winifred Betts-Campbell*

I just earned my Ph.D. this November in Education with a concentration in counseling and development from George Mason University. My dissertation is titled, *The Examination of Medical Mistrust Among Native and Foreign-Born Blacks Living With HIV/AIDS.*

*Winifred successfully defended her dissertation as we were finalizing this newsletter. We will have more on Winifred in our next newsletter.

I appreciate the holistic view that SisterMentors has of the life cycle of an educated woman — from elementary school to the doctorate.

--- Juone Darko, Ph.D., 2014

Social Skills and Leadership Workshop



Our Social Skills and Leadership Workshop is very popular with our girls and their parents. This year, 26 girls attended this four hour workshop at the elegant Jefferson Hotel in downtown Washington, D.C., a few blocks away from the White House. As in the past, the workshop was led by Ms. Fannie Allen of the prestigious Allen Etiquette Institute. The workshop teaches girls several skills including how to communicate well with others, how to dress appropriately for different social occasions and the etiquette of dining at a fine restaurant.

“I was kind of shy but I loved it,” said one of our girls in elementary school. This year, the first part of the workshop consisted of one hour and a half of training in public speaking. The girls requested this training and said that although they are scared of speaking in public, they would nevertheless like to learn. Girls were asked to prepare a written talk beforehand about who they are and the impact of SisterMentors on their lives.

“One of the best things I liked about the workshop was that my peers were able to critique me,” said one of the girls. The workshop started with a review of seven tips for good public speaking including voice control, good stage presence and delivery, and awareness of body language. Each girl was then called up to the podium to deliver her written talk and the others were asked to listen carefully to give feedback based on the seven tips they had reviewed. About two minutes into her talk, each girl was asked to pause and the others were asked to give feedback on what they had seen and heard. The feedback started with congratulating each girl on the good aspects

of her delivery and then mentioning those aspects that needed to be improved. Each girl was then given another chance to deliver her talk incorporating the feedback she had just received. “It was surprisingly informative and supportive,” said one of the girls.

The second part of the workshop focused on the etiquette of dining at a fine restaurant and included more training in social skills. The girls were advised to eat before going to a social gathering so that they would not eat too much or too fast and be able to focus instead on socializing or networking. They were also told not to talk, email or text on their cell phones while dining.

Ms. Allen asked girls their opinion about the appropriate age to start dating and said that she believes that ten year olds are too young to date. One of our girls, who is a senior in college, shared that she only recently started dating at the age of 22. She told girls that may seem late for some people, but she felt that she was not ready before then because she was very busy with school and she was lacking in self-confidence. Dr. Lewis said that the issue should not be just about dating, but about the larger issue of building good healthy relationships with others including parents, siblings, and girlfriends and with boys as friends without romance or sex. Girls were encouraged to build solid friendships.

The girls left the workshop with more confidence and poise for public speaking and better educated about skills they need for social interaction and personal growth.

SisterMentors has been great for both of my daughters in reinforcing the importance of education and setting the bar high for their academic performance. My high school daughter, Kayla, has learned strategies for time management and how to stay focused on completing tasks, including homework. SisterMentors has shown my elementary school daughter, Sofia, that she has potential and can be a successful student if she applies herself. Thank you SisterMentors for what you are doing for my daughters!

--- Sandra Torres, Mother of 4th grader and 10th grader

Our Visit to the University of Virginia, Monticello and Yogaville



President Teresa Sullivan with SisterMentors Girls

During their spring break in April, 19 girls spent four days in the Charlottesville, Virginia area visiting the University of Virginia (UVA), Monticello and Yogaville. The girls had asked for free time during this trip to create stronger bonds with each other. Before getting on the bus, they mingled with donors at a breakfast send-off and some of our girls in high school made presentations on the impact of SisterMentors on their lives and on that of their family.

Our college visit is one of the most anticipated aspects of SisterMentors with girls expressing a very high level of interest and participation. This was our third visit to UVA and the first time we were visiting the university since President Teresa Sullivan took office and made history as the first woman president. President Sullivan is a Sociologist who has held many leadership positions in the academy, including as provost at the University of Michigan. UVA is recognized as one of the best public universities in the United States with over 21,000 students. Founded by President Thomas Jefferson in 1819, it is made up of 11 schools in Charlottesville in addition to the College at Wise in the Appalachian mountains of southwest Virginia.

We were hosted by Dean Valerie Gregory, Associate Dean of Admissions and Director of the Outreach Office. Our visit included a meeting with President Sullivan, a session on admissions, a hands-on workshop in engineering, eating in the dining hall, and a meeting with undergraduate students of color who talked about their transition from high school to college. Our high school girls experienced college life a little deeper by spending the night in the dormitories as guests of undergraduate women.

Meeting with President Teresa Sullivan

“The president of UVA is strong, inspirational and brave,” said one of the girls after our visit with President Sullivan. The highlight of our visit to UVA was our meeting with the president. We arrived at the president’s office in pouring rain. She welcomed the girls to the university and asked them to introduce themselves. She then told the girls that she knew they had prepared for their visit with her and asked them if they had any questions. One of our eleventh graders raised her hand and asked what it felt like being the first woman president. President Sullivan responded that she has always been the first in the positions she has had in her career. She explained that when she graduated from high school she could not apply to UVA because the university did not accept women at that time. Comments people made when she started her position included: “no woman can run a university this large” and “Thomas Jefferson must be turning over in his grave because a woman is running his university.” It was not open hostility, she said, but “masked impoliteness.” She said that the key is to assure people that she knows what she is doing and that she will be successful. Lots of people tell her that she is doing a great job.

President Sullivan mentioned Virginia Scott, the UVA alumna, who successfully sued UVA in May 1969 over its male only admission policy in the College of Arts and Sciences. Scott was the first woman to be admitted to the College and she was treated poorly because of her gender. Scott had vowed to never return to the university. However, she did return when President Sullivan came into office.

“I learned that it is important to develop a thick skin for a tough job,” said one of the girls after meeting President Sullivan. Another question from one of the girls was what is the biggest obstacle the president has faced. The president responded that because of her generation, she has always found herself to be the first and only woman in the various positions she has had in her university career. For instance, she was the first and only woman in her doctoral program and the first woman to be chair of her department. She told girls that they may not have to break gender barriers, but may have other barriers to break during their careers. She further explained that her desire to be president of a university started after she did

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a six month internship in the office of Clifton R. Wharton, Jr. the first African American president of the University of Michigan. As an intern, she watched what it was like to be president and that planted a seed. She began to feel that she, too, could be president one day. She added that as her children became older, she began to move into administrative positions at the university. Women with children have to figure out how to combine raising children and having a career, she said.

“It was a once-in-a-life-time experience and it really touched my heart,” one of the girls said. In response to the question about if she is living her dream job, the president responded that many times in her life she has thought that she is living her dream job. She described her job as wonderful and said that her job has terrific pay-offs and she tries to live in the present and do the best job she can. She told girls that she has to do homework every day, just like they have to do their homework, so she can be well prepared for the next day. One of the girls asked if she were not president what would she be doing now. The President explained that right after she became president at UVA there was an opening for a president at the University of Michigan. If she had not accepted UVA’s offer, she added, perhaps she would have been offered the position at Michigan so she would have been president, just at a different university.

One girl asked the president how her degree in sociology helps with her presidency. The president replied that sociology gives her the tools she needs and that her degree has helped her to see relationships within various parts of the university. She has to study faculty at the university because almost all of them will retire in the next seven to ten years and will have to be replaced. The president said that although she is not an engineer or biologist she still must know something about engineering and biology to talk with faculty in those fields. President Sullivan advised the girls that whatever they do in life, they should always remain curious and learn as much as they can about everything around them. She told them that they do not have to be an economics major to read about economics.

“What makes you happy?” asked one of the girls. President Sullivan responded that she really likes meeting with alumni and talking with them about what the university was like when they attended. She also likes attending athletic events.

She said she was really very happy to attend three



magical hours of Handel’s Messiah recently performed by a student orchestra. In response to the question of whether she has a hobby, the president responded that she does Volksmarching and helped found a club of about 300 people. She explained that Volksmarching originated in Europe and is noncompetitive walking in picturesque or historic places by groups of people.

In response to a question about how often she meets with students one-on-one, President Sullivan said that she prefers meeting with groups of students. She explained that 126 students in their fourth year at the university were having dinner at her home that night. She also has four student interns in her office and she sees students often, especially those elected to student government. She recently received an email from a first year student who wanted to meet and the president asked the student to bring five or more of her friends to the meeting.

One of our tenth graders asked if she ever has doubts and President Sullivan responded that women often turn anger inside and it can get expressed as doubt and depression. She said that men tend to push anger outward. She told girls that one of the ways to deal with doubt is not to take oneself too seriously. She said that some people at the university would never like her just because she is the president and that they would not like any president no matter who that person is, while others would like her as a person, but not as the president. One has to learn to separate that out. Some people would launch personal attacks, but one has to develop a thick skin. She told the girls that as teenagers people’s opinions may negatively affect them, but that they would grow out of it.

Here is feedback about the president from some of our girls:

“She is a very determined woman.”

“She is strong, kind and smart.”

“She is like a regular woman except that she is powerful.”

“I learned that people expect less from women.”

“I like how she didn’t give up.”

Meeting with Students at UVA

The girls interacted with students many times during their visit to the university. Thanks to Dean Valerie Gregory, tenth through twelve graders spent a night in the dormitories with undergraduate women students. One of the students was a first year student from Washington, D.C. who is double majoring in sociology and foreign affairs and plans to go to graduate school. The girls spent the night getting tours of the dormitories, meeting other undergraduate students and getting a lived experience about residential life at the university.

“I learned to think outside the box, to be creative and to not give up,” said one of the girls after the engineering workshop. The girls also interacted with students when they had a workshop building wind turbines, which was hosted by the UVA Chapter of the Society of Women Engineers and the Center for Diversity in Engineering. Under the direction of women engineering students, the girls worked in groups learning to build wind turbines. Girls were given kits with material to use to create all parts of the turbines including the blades and pinwheels. One girl said that she is interested in a career in STEM because “everything around you is science and I am curious to find out more about science.”

The girls also had an opportunity to meet with a panel of undergraduate students of color ranging from first to fourth years. Students talked about where they went to high school, the college application process and their transition from high school to college. One girl asked students what was the hardest year so far and a student responded that her first year was the hardest as she had to adjust to the coursework and to college life. Another girl asked students to describe their most memorable moment at the university. One student said that he would never forget the first time he attended a football game and saw male students dressed in khakis and women students dressed in sundresses and pearls. The students advised girls to stay in touch with their high school



friends because those friends may become the CEO of a company or may invent the next bit of technology and they would have wished they had kept in touch.

Our Visit to Monticello

“Thomas Jefferson owned slaves, had a relationship with a slave and slaves built Monticello,” said one of the girls when asked what she learned from our visit to Monticello. It was a chilly day when the girls visited Monticello, the home of Thomas Jefferson who was the third president of the United States, the author of the Declaration of Independence and the founder of the University of Virginia. Our visit to the university would not have been complete without a visual and oral history of the slave plantation where Jefferson lived and died and which is a historic landmark.

Although the girls had learned about Thomas Jefferson in school, none of them had heard about Monticello. This provided SisterMentors with an opportunity to educate the girls about life at Monticello, including Sally Hemmings, the slave with whom Jefferson fathered several children. Before their visit, the girls read about Monticello and discussed it at one of their SisterMentors mentoring sessions. “Monticello is part of our history and learning and a great way to learn about our third president, Thomas Jefferson. Thank you for this experience. I am glad and thankful,” said one girl.

Our Visit to Yogaville

“Yogaville changed my life,” said one of our tenth graders after our visit. Girls spent two days and two nights at Yogaville during their visit to the Charlottesville area. Located on the banks of the James River near the Blue Ridge mountains in Buckingham, Virginia, Yogaville is a

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News from Our Young Women in College



Cindy Ayala

Fourth Year

Cindy Ayala, George Mason University

I am in my last year at George Mason University majoring in New Media Arts and minoring in Game Design. This past semester has been the hardest one so far because of the tough, but also exciting classes I signed up for. I was worried that I wouldn't do well because of how hectic my classes were. I learned how to use Indesign and Illustrator from my Typography class and how to design a recipe book and a magazine spread. After checking my grades, I found out my GPA was 3.53. I made the Dean's list again because of my hard work! In May 2015, after I graduate, I plan on finding work in my field focusing on animation. This past summer I took two classes, Game History and Writing for Artists. Both classes involved a lot of writing, but I did very well. I want to thank SisterMentors, my friends, my family, and my boyfriend Sam for their ongoing support.

Binta Bayoh, University of Virginia College at Wise

This fall, I am a senior and I am excited about graduating next May. I will apply to graduate school in Psychology since I want to be a Psychologist. I recently spoke with Dr. Genevieve Gaisie, one of the women SisterMentors helped to earn her doctorate in Psychology. She gave me some really good advice which caused me to change some of the classes I am taking this fall. I am finally clear-headed about my future and SisterMentors has been a big part of my success. This fall, I am creating a new organization called the African Cultural Association and I am the President, while my good friend Sherifa Idris is the Vice President. This association will focus on helping to bring clean water to countries in Africa and we will work with the



Sherifa Idris

Clean Water Foundation. We will train younger students so they can help run the association and become its leaders when we graduate.

Sherifa Idris, University of Virginia College at Wise

Senior year has started off great. I am co-founder of a new organization, the African Cultural Association, which has helped me get involved with the campus by bringing awareness about Africa. I am a Biology major and I have decided to either get my Master's in public health administration or become a Physician Assistant. My entomology professor, Dr. Rodriguez, has inspired me to pursue a career in the medical field.

Gifty C. Dior Boakye, St. John's University

I changed my major so instead of graduating this May, I will graduate in Spring 2015 since I have to take more credits toward my new major. I will major in Clinical Psychology because I want to be a Psychologist. I plan to go to graduate school for my doctorate. For the past three years of college I struggled with time management. What surprised me about college was what it took to be on my own, like budgeting and doing my laundry. I am looking forward to studying abroad next year in Paris since my school has a program there. I am also doing professional modelling while in college. At first I signed on to an agency, but now I do freelance modelling with designers like Tracy Reese. I was recently in the New York Fashion Week and Miami Fashion Week.

Alinah Mphofe, Longwood University

I am currently attending Longwood University and my major is Elementary Education with a concentration in PK-6 Licensure. It's almost hard to believe I am a senior



Margie Obeng

and finishing up in a year, but of course my path doesn't end there. I plan to get my Master's and work abroad. I am hoping to do my student teaching where I would like to teach. I think it would be a great experience. Nothing has really changed since I left Northern Virginia Community College and transferred to Longwood. I don't really like to socialize much with others. I'm usually in my room reading or writing poems. This past year really did fly by. I don't have words of wisdom or guidelines on how to succeed, but as long as you follow your heart I'm pretty sure you'll be fine.

Margie Obeng, Pennsylvania State University

As I begin my senior year at Pennsylvania State University (Penn State), I am both very humbled by my experiences and excited for what is to come. I am amazed by my transition from freshman year to now. I entered college as a Political Science major with a concentration in International Politics. Although I was initially very excited about that major, I found myself feeling less and less excited as I took classes. I then decided to switch gears. I found my current major which is Education and Public Policy.

As I took more classes, I discovered that I love teaching. This summer, I explored teaching through a summer internship at Penn State. I worked as an academic coordinator for high school sophomore girls who took on the role of being college students. It was a very uplifting experience and my interactions with the students reminded me of the work SisterMentors does. The girls I worked with are from immigrant backgrounds, low Income neighborhoods, and will be first generation college students.



Ledia Yirgu

Third Year

Ledia Yirgu, University of Virginia College at Wise

So I finished this year by making the Dean's list and I improved myself in so many ways. I am now past the halfway point in college. A part of me is excited about my third year. I look at all I did last year and I feel proud at how much I've grown and learned since freshmen year. I think all of us have academic hiccups, and if you end strong, that's all that matters. Colleges are very aware that freshman year is a time of exploration and learning. With learning comes failure, bad decisions, as well as growth. I played around freshmen year, but my sophomore year I came back strong and dedicated. I have only a couple more classes until I walk away with my Bachelor of Business Administration in Marketing! I am focused on the 18 credit hours I'm taking this semester.

Second Year

Gloria Aboagye, Old Dominion University

My first year at Old Dominion University (ODU) was fun. There were no surprises during my first year because I was prepared for everything that came my way. I learned a lot of new ways to study as well as where to go for help in classes that I'm struggling in. I've learned not to wait until the last minute to ask for help. Being at ODU has taught me to be independent as well as how to save my money. I had to make sure I had money for books and other necessities that had to do with my education before spending on irrelevant items. I had to learn how to study ahead or write a paper a week before it was due in order to proofread and perfect it.

Our Visit to the University of Virginia, Monticello and Yogaville

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yoga community that has existed for over forty years. Just outside of Charlottesville, it is an intentional community on over 600 acres of land. Yogaville's mission is to practice, live and share the Integral Yoga teachings of Sri Swami Satchidananda and to experience joy and peace and share that with others. The girls received a warm welcome from Shankari Bowmaster of Group Services who gave them a brief history of Yogaville.

"I really like the quiet here," some of the girls said. For some, this was their second visit to Yogaville since they had spent a day there in 2011. The girls slept in bunk beds in the dormitories, played soccer and hula-hoop on the quad, had a class on the meaning of yoga, and hung out at the Mandala Café as a way of bonding with each other. Girls had yoga classes with Satya Greenstone, one of the senior yoga teachers at Yogaville.

The highlight was their visit to the Light of Truth Universal Shrine (LOTUS) where they had the opportunity to practice silence or meditation. LOTUS is an interfaith shrine built in 1986 and dedicated to all faiths known and unknown. The girls rated this shrine the highest on the evaluation of their visit.

The girls listened to a presentation by Sister Mukti about the meaning of yoga. They learned that yoga is not just a class but can be way of life. A living embodiment of how yoga is lived day to day, Yogaville was the perfect place for girls to get this lesson. They learned about the different branches of yoga. Sister Mukti said that the idea is to calm the mind through these different yoga practices and explained that the definition of practice is effort toward steadiness of mind, which helps us to remain balanced and not get caught up in anger or anxiety.

Here's feedback from one of our high school girls: "Yogaville gave me time to self-reflect. It influenced and changed me. At Yogaville, I experienced so much peace and calmness. After returning home from Yogaville I am enrolling in yoga classes and doing meditation every night. Also, I was really inspired by Yogaville being all vegetarian so I decided that I would no longer eat any meat but I would eat only seafood. Yogaville has affected me in all positive ways and it has given me a whole new outlook on life."

Our College Graduates

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Maya Simpkins, Virginia Commonwealth University

Maya double majored in Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies and African American Studies. She ended her

final semester on the Dean's list and completed her senior year cum laude with a 3.44 grade point average. Maya's final year at VCU was tough. She started her senior year as vice president, treasurer, and secretary to a two-person chapter of a social organization. She worked over twenty hours a week and participated in a professional Salsa dance team as a performer and instructor. However, she was excited about all of her classes and even took more classes than were required to graduate. This past summer, Maya worked as a grant writer for a dance theatre company and as an office assistant at the residential life and housing office on campus. In January 2015, she wants to get a certificate in nonprofit management from VCU while taking the Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) for admission to graduate school which she plans to begin next fall. Maya's goal is to earn her Ph.D. in either Africana Studies or Gender Studies.

Thank You Very Much!

Very special thanks to the law firm of Schiff Hardin LLP, including Managing Partner of Schiff's D.C. office, Sherry Quirk.

Thanks to those who made Leadership Gifts for our October 22 fundraiser: Anonymous, Adrienne Clair; Carroll Green and the Estate of Mary Hunter; Diane Curran; Elizabeth and John V. Geise; Kris Miller and Chris Shirley; Thomas Jesulaitis; Yonette Thomas, Ph.D.; Marianne Tshihamba; Rita Posner in memory of her late husband Herbert Posner; and the Board of Directors of EduSeed. Thanks to all who donated at the fundraiser.

Special thanks to PNC Bank, the Kolar Foundation of BuckleySandler LLP, the American Institutes for Research and Wiley Rein LLP for sponsoring our October 22 fundraiser.

Very special thanks to George Bartz for volunteering countless hours to redesigning our website. We cannot thank you enough, George, for your great generosity of time and wonderful energy. And thanks to Cindy Ayala for being the connector. Thanks also to Lina Woods and Mark Seifert of the Brunswick Group for their public relations pro bono services.

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Thanks to Yogaville for superior service to the girls during their visit with special thanks to Shankari Bowmaster, Michael Smith, Karuna Marcotte and Madhavan Aubert. Thanks to President Teresa Sullivan of the University of Virginia and to Dean Valerie Gregory for hosting us. Special thanks to Glynn D. Key for making our meeting with President Sullivan happen and to Pat and Jane Belisle for their gift to help with the visit to Monticello. Thanks to Yogaville and Kris Miller for providing writing retreat accommodations for the women and thanks to Dhivya Berthoud for her generosity to the women.

Thanks to our wonderful volunteers including Jory Barone, Tacy Telego, Dawn Nelson, Alice Wilkes, Estegnet Firdaweke, Mary Helen Coleman, Alesha Armstrong, Ernestine Jones, LaShoun Christian, Wanda Morris, Wayne Richardson, John Teschner, Jesse Halpern, Kae Ross and Sherri Elliott. And thanks to all the volunteers who helped to make our October 22 fundraiser a success. Thanks to Wanda Jenifer and Steven Johnson for their help throughout the year.

Thanks to Kenda Kittrell and LaNitra Berger for planning and hosting the first reunion of women SisterMentors helped to earn doctorates.

Special thanks to Joy Dingle for her service.

Very special thanks to Dean Bonnie Thornton Dill, Glynn Key, Linda Orr, Alec Orudjev and Schermeen Washington for their very strong support of SisterMentors; Ruth Enid Zambara for her generosity to our girls and to Maisie Dunbar of Maisie Dunbar Spa and Lounge for her college send-off gift to one of our girls. Thanks to Nancy Bryant and Karen Barker for Kennedy Center tickets for the girls.

Our deepest gratitude to Glynn D. Key who passed away suddenly in November 2014. Glynn was a dear friend and strong supporter of SisterMentors.

And, as always, thanks to the women and girls of SisterMentors for their fortitude and grace.



Abigail Duchatelier-Jeudy
Doctoral Candidate and Mentor to Jessye Jairrels

Jessye Jairrels, SisterMentors Mentee since Fourth Grade

I have been a part of the SisterMentors community for close to 10 years. I joined the program when I was only 9 years old and in the 4th grade after tagging along with my older sister, Roxie, who had joined a few years earlier. Today, I am 18 years old and I can definitely say that SisterMentors has had a tremendous impact on my life.

SisterMentors has encouraged me to do my best and excel in all aspects, not just academics but personal growth. During the monthly meetings, mentors help us evaluate our academic performance and develop strategies for improvement, set goals and plan for college. The college visits provide a real view of what to expect and plan for. Many of us had never been on a college campus, only read about the experience online or from what we were told by teachers and counselors. But the college visits provide the real experience. We learn about the application process and financial aid, talk with students, attend classes, eat in the cafeteria, and experience college life. Those visits help instill a stronger desire to make college our goal.

SisterMentors has also given me and other girls the opportunity to meet women of all colors, ages, and stages of life who are living examples of the benefits of an advanced education and the work needed to get there. Our mentors, women currently in graduate school attaining their doctorates, inspire us at every meeting, sharing their own personal hardships and goals that give us mentees the encouragement and understanding to know that we too can achieve our



dreams, knowing the wonderful women before us have once stood in our shoes. My own mentor, Abigail Duchatelier-Jeudy, has been a source of strength for me through difficult and stressful times, acting not only as a mentor but a cheerleader and friend with whom I could confide my struggles and celebrate my achievements.

This fall, thanks to the support of Dr. Lewis and the women of SisterMentors, I graduated from high school and started my dream school, VCUarts. VCUarts is ranked as the number one public art school in the country. I am pursuing my life-long dream of becoming a professional illustrator, animator, and storyteller. I cannot thank SisterMentors enough for pushing me to get there --- to achieve my goals and dreams, one step at a time. THANK YOU!

Update on SisterMentors Alumnae

- Koritha Mitchell's book, *Living with Lynching: African American Lynching Plays, Performance, and Citizenship, 1890–1930*, won awards from the American Theatre & Drama Society and from the Society for the Study of American Women Writers. Koritha earned her doctorate in 2007 and is a tenured professor at Ohio State University.
- Nathalie Navarette, who received her Bachelor of Arts from Bates College in 2013, started a Master's degree this fall at the Heller School of Public Policy at Brandeis University.
- Megan Tuck, who received a Bachelor of Arts from Duke University in 2011, was recently promoted to Senior Account Executive at Bliss Integrated Communication in New York City. She plans to earn a MBA in behavioral economics.
- Susan Ozawa, who earned a Ph.D. in Economics in 2012 and a Master's in Global Political Economy and Finance, recently joined Protected Investors of America as a Financial Advisor specializing in Socially Responsible Investment. Her office is based in the financial district in San Francisco, California.

PLEASE SUPPORT SISTERMENTORS

I would like to support SisterMentors. My donation will help sustain this program so that it can continue mentoring women and girls of color in their pursuit of higher education.

Please send your donation by December 31, 2014.

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MONTHLY PLEDGE

I would like to make a monthly pledge to SisterMentors. I would like to contribute \$ _____ for _____ months for a total of \$ _____.

If you would like to make your donation in someone's honor or in memory of a loved one, please let us know.

For donations by check, please use the enclosed envelope, make your check payable to EduSeed and mail to:

EduSeed/SisterMentors
901 K Street N.W., Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20001

Please remember that your donation is tax deductible.

Who We Are

SisterMentors is a project of EduSeed, a nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C. EduSeed's mission is to promote education among traditionally disadvantaged and underserved communities such as women and people of color. SisterMentors mentors girls of color from low income families starting in elementary and middle school and following them through high school and college graduation. The girls are mentored by women of color doctoral students who SisterMentors helps to complete their dissertations and earn their doctorates. The women and girls are African Americans, Latinas, Asian Americans and immigrants.

EduSeed's goal is to help stop the high dropout rate of girls of color and increase the number of women of color doctorates. We believe that doctoral students and Ph.Ds of color are a powerful, yet untapped, source of inspiration, motivation and knowledge for children of color who are at risk of dropping out of school. We exist because girls of color are dropping out of school at an early age. Our message to girls is to stay in school, do well, and go to college. We also exist because statistics show that more than 50 percent of doctoral students drop out of their programs and the numbers are higher for women of color.

We have helped 26 young women to go to college, including to Duke, Goucher, Bates, Virginia Commonwealth University and Northern Virginia Community College, and 53 women to earn doctorates, including in Mathematics, Science and Economics.

EduSeed's Board of Directors

We welcome new board member Yonette Thomas. We also welcome Kenda Kittrell who will begin her service in January 2015. EduSeed's current board members are the following:

Montina M. Cole

Thomas Jesulaitis

Shireen K. Lewis

Kris Miller

Yonette Thomas

Marianne Tshihamba

For more information on EduSeed's Board of Directors, please visit www.sistermentors.org.

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