Bianca Shinn ‘03
UN Counselor, Inspiring Graduate Encourages New Undergrads

Many people use their upbringing as motivation to become successful adults. Some do so to make their loved ones proud, while others do so to forge their own path in life. Childhood experiences can also lead a person to choose a career path where they can give back to those who helped them succeed.

All of these scenarios describe the experiences of Bianca Shinn ‘03, a graduate of CCSU’s Educational Opportunity Program (EOP). The daughter of Haitian immigrants, Shinn was exposed at a young age to human rights causes, as her parents actively worked for immigration rights in areas such as New York City and Miami, cities with large immigrant populations. Seeing her parents strive to help others would help shape the person she has become.

These early experiences led Shinn to her interest in pursuing a degree in Political Science at CCSU. However, getting into college was problematic, as her academic work in high school did not meet the University’s admissions requirements.

Thankfully for Shinn, she interviewed for and was accepted to attend the EOP. The five-week summer program is designed for students who have the potential and desire to do college-level work but do not meet CCSU’s admissions standards. Graduates of the summer program are then admitted to CCSU as full-time matriculated students for the fall semester.

During the summer program, students take courses in English, reading, mathematics, and fitness and wellness. EOP provides academic preparation to do college-level work, and includes seminars on personal and professional growth, while offering individual attention and academic support. According to Shinn, the experience provided a “stepping stone that added to my self-esteem when it came to writing, and I was able to build lasting relationships with my peers and professors in the program.”

At Central, Shinn immersed herself in her studies, and in the overall college experience. She was a member of the Black Student Union, the Caribbean Club, and served as a student senator. Shinn participated in CCSU’s first study abroad trip to Cuba in 2000, as well as trips to Chile and Mexico. Shinn’s time at Central was enriching, both culturally and personally. “I had great experiences at Central; many were outside of my comfort zone, but those years allowed me to blossom.”

After graduating in 2003, Shinn continued her education, earning graduate certificates in Legal Assisting and Adult Forensic Mental Health, and master’s degrees in Urban Studies, Health Education, and Public Health. Shinn currently serves as Counselor for the Permanent Mission of Haiti to the United Nations (UN), where she serves as a committee member for social, humanitarian, and cultural affairs.

Shinn’s role at the UN allows her to give back to her parents’ homeland in a meaningful way. “I can go back to my roots and help others, especially those from underprivileged backgrounds,” says Shinn.

Shinn’s educational experience at CCSU helps her in her job to this day. Specifically, she cites a course taken with Associate Professor of Political Science Paul Petterson, “Political Leadership in the European Union.” Shinn says. “Dr. Petterson’s strong influence still serves me in my job at the UN dealing with EU delegation.”

This past summer, Shinn returned to Central to speak to EOP students, sharing her story and offering advice. Shinn speaks fondly about meeting students with whom she shares the EOP experience: “It was very inspiring to motivate them as individuals.” She advised the students to “be creative, action-oriented, resourceful, to ask for help, and to take healthy risks to blossom into leaders in their chosen fields.”

Shinn sums up her experiences with CCSU and the EOP: “EOP is a part of me. It’s part of my history. I graduated high school with a below-average GPA, but CCSU and EOP took a risk and gave me a chance. Programs like EOP allow people of lower income an opportunity to succeed. EOP took me to my first Broadway play, and I go every year to this day.”

-Nicholas Irving