



Bluefield State Students Attend US State Department's Sixth Annual HBCU Foreign Policy Conference

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 8, 2015

On Friday, March 6, 2015, four Bluefield State College students—Staccotta Dickerson, Tenika Jackson, Jelena Jevtic, and Samuel Dennah--and two faculty members—Eugene ‘Lacy’ Watson and Dr. Colin Cavell--took part in the sixth annual Foreign Policy Conference for HBCUs sponsored by the US State Department in Washington, DC. The US State Department acknowledges that “Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have, for over 155 years, produced many of the nation’s leaders in business, diplomacy, government, academia, and the military and have provided generations of American men and women with hope and educational opportunity.” From the nation’s first black ambassador to Haiti and the Dominican Republic, Frederick Douglass, to notable statesman, diplomat, political scientist, and Nobel Prize winner Ralph Bunch, to Bluefield State’s own long-serving career State Department diplomat and scholar Dr. William B. Robertson, many HBCU students have chosen to pursue careers with the State Department in order to serve their country, see the world, and meet and interact with folks from other cultures.

HBCUs are institutions of higher education in the United States that were established before 1964 with the intention of serving the black community, as most of the nation’s white institutions of higher education systematically excluded blacks from matriculating. Today, “there are approximately 106 HBCUs in the United States, including public and private institutions, community and four-year institutions, medical and law schools.” Most of these institutions were established in the wake of the secessionist defeat in the Civil War and the passage of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the US Constitution. While most HBCUs exists in former slave states, there are some notable exceptions, like Bluefield State, established in 1895 in the free state of West Virginia.

The State Department’s annual HBCU Foreign Policy Conference seeks to honor the history and contributions of African Americans by bringing the next generation of leaders together with US government foreign policy officials. At Friday’s Conference, students were able to gain insight into current US policy priorities and, as well, make acquaintance with the plethora of diverse career trajectories for those wishing to work in the area of foreign policy.

Current State Department and US Agency for International Development (USAID) officials who spoke at Friday’s Conference included Doug Frantz; Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs; former ambassador to Liberia, Linda Thomas Greenfield, who is now Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs; Marie Harf, a State Department spokesperson; and Karen Richardson and Alisha Johnson, Senior Advisors in the Bureau of Public Affairs. The Conference ended with a dynamic panel discussion on careers at the State Department and the USAID, including scholarship opportunities like the Pickering Scholarship, the Rangel Scholarship, and the Payne Scholarship.

The Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship Programs “provide academic and professional preparation for outstanding candidates to enter the U.S. Department of State Foreign Service, representing America’s interests abroad. The Pickering Fellowship Programs are open to both undergraduate and graduate students in academic

programs relevant to international affairs, political and economic analysis, administration, management, and science policy. Women, members of minority groups historically underrepresented in the Foreign Service, and students with financial need are encouraged to apply.”

The Charles B. Rangel International Affairs Program is “a collaborative effort between Howard University and the U.S. State Department that seeks to attract and prepare outstanding young people for careers as diplomats in the Foreign Service of the U.S. Department of State. The program seeks individuals interested in helping to shape a freer, more secure and prosperous world through formulating, representing, and implementing U.S. foreign policy. The Program encourages the application of members of minority groups historically underrepresented in the Foreign Service and those with financial need.”

The USAID’s Donald M. Payne International Development Graduate Fellowship Program “seeks to attract outstanding young people who are interested in pursuing careers in the Foreign Service of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). If you want to work on the front lines of some of the most pressing global challenges of our times—poverty, hunger, injustice, disease, environmental degradation, climate change, conflict and violent extremism—the Foreign Service of the U.S. Agency for International Development provides an opportunity to advance U.S. foreign policy interests and reflect the American people’s compassion and support of human dignity. The Payne Fellowship, which provides up to \$90,000 in benefits over two years for graduate school, internships, and professional development activities, provides a unique pathway to the USAID Foreign Service.”

A complete list of State Department “Scholarships, Financial Aid and Student Internships” is available on the US State Department website at <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21963.htm>.

For additional information, contact Colin S. Cavell, Ph.D. at ccavell@bluefieldstate.edu, 304-327-4034.