



Bluefield State College

BSC Students Attend 12th Annual HBCU Foreign Policy Conference

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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During our traditional HBCU Foreign Policy Conference attendees gathered during the Networking Lunch at the U.S. Department of State

On Thursday and Friday, February 25-26, 2021, four BSC students—David Buss, Clayton Chenard, Carly Helton, and Lisa Rasnick—and one faculty member, Dr. Colin S. Cavell, attended the 12th Annual U.S. State Department Foreign Policy Conference. Though normally held at the U.S. State Department in the Truman Building in Washington, D.C., due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, this year’s conference was held online. This year’s theme was “Building Leadership for the Diplomats of Tomorrow.”

This year’s speakers included Danielle Hawkins from the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs, Afua Riverson from the Bureau of African Affairs, Tau Shanklin-Roberts from the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, Mignon Houston from the U.S. Consulate General Cape Town, Clifton Jeffery from the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, and many others on the following panels: “HBCUsAtState: Q&A with Alumni”; “Data Science at State”; “Study Abroad and International Academic Exchange as a Path to Service, Policy, and Practice”;

“Oceans, Environment, and Scientific Affairs at State”; and “African American Trailblazers in Foreign Policy”.

Networking lunches on both days featured remarks from various senior Bureau officials and subject matter experts within the State Department outlining the State Department’s top foreign policy priorities from regional and thematic standpoints including speakers from:

- 1) The White House Initiative on HBCUs;
- 2) Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs;
- 3) Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs;
- 4) Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs;
- 5) Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor;
- 6) Bureau of African Affairs;
- 7) Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs;
- 8) Bureau of Intelligence and Research/Analytic Exchange Program;
- 9) Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs;
- 10) Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs;
- 11) Presidential Management Fellowship Advisory Council;
- 12) Bureau of Political-Military Affairs;
- 13) Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons;
- 14) Office of Recruitment and Outreach;
- 15) Blacks in Government (Carl T. Rowan Chapter);
- 16) Thursday Luncheon Group;
- 17) Pickering and Rangel Fellowship;
- 18) Pickering and Rangel Fellowship Association; and
- 19) Bureau of Overseas Building Operations.

In the numerous online sessions, students were able to ask questions of the various speakers, though the online nature of this year’s conference did not allow for the usual social opportunities where students could meet and interact with student participants from other HBCUs and the many State Department and other officials and representatives who attended the conference.

BSC student Carly Helton said of the Conference: “I really loved how they talked about studying abroad in such detail and letting us know how much people in other countries appreciate us even trying to learn their language and are accepting that we do not know their language like they know ours. I like how they told us we would have more fun if we went without expectations and just enjoyed the trip and everything that comes about. The Hall B actually made me consider studying abroad and I never thought I would be interested before. I loved hearing how successful everyone has become after attending the HBCU conferences and how far they have come from where they started. I may not pursue a career in government but if I ever changed my mind at least I now know what actions to take to get there. Everyone was very friendly when speaking and they tried very hard to answer everyone’s questions. I actually enjoyed that conference and I am glad I had the opportunity to listen in this year.”

Commenting on his assessment of the 12th Annual HBCU Foreign Policy Conference, BSC student Clayton Chenard stated: “I did not know that there were so many ways to get into

government. I lived outside of Washington D.C. in the Fairfax county until I was 15 and we had many friends that worked in government departments and was unaware of these opportunities. The opening remarks from Vice President Kamala Harris was well spoken and for me added validity to the importance of the conference. I also found Brandon Jacobson's virtual meeting very informative. I was very surprised on the length of time that the PMF program took to get into, but all was very informative. While listening to the speakers, the value that you place on speaking clearly and robustly, was shown to [be] very important in a state department position.”

Following the conference, on Friday afternoon, there was a Virtual Reception for participants with the Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University.

Students in all majors and fields of study can find numerous opportunities for career advancement by contacting the U.S. State Department's HBCU Outreach Team at HBCUoutreach@state.gov.

The accompanying photo features BSC student Beverly Owensby Briggs, a BSC participant at the 2020 State Department Foreign Policy Conference, which was depicted on the 12th Annual Foreign Policy Conference webpage and is here presented for BSC publicity purposes only.

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