



Siera Barksdale »

# AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

SIERA BARKSDALE TRANSFERRED TO THE college to study sociology. She'd heard about the research professors were doing and she was looking to find a niche for herself. After coming to campus, she discovered the African American Studies Program, and she's been immersed in it ever since."

Meet Siera – serious student, engaged activist and committed community member. She's involved in the Black Students' Union and The Journey (a student-run campus ministry). At the same time, she spends her afternoons running a youth program at the local YMCA. And, during

one semester, she volunteered 10 hours a week for a state senator's campaign. She does all this while balancing the demands of a full-time college student with two majors.

"All of my courses have been interesting, and the professors have been tremendous," says Siera. But one course in particular – Black Images in the Media – really motivated her, and prompted Siera to conduct an innovative sociological experiment on campus.

"I had seen a video online about people in New York City who hung signs around their necks reading 'You can touch my hair. I have natural African American hair, so one day I let it go big and I hung a similar sign around my neck and stood in Cougar Mall for a few hours. I did this because I wanted to see the outcome. We all know too little about each others' cultural backgrounds, so this was my way of addressing that gap. Did it work? Well...I made some connections, so it was definitely a start."

Siera is serious about studying cross-cultural tensions. "My dream job would be to serve as a diversity consultant in corporate America," she says. In a research project, she looked at U.S. Census data and statistics from the U.S. Department of Labor and complemented that with surveys, focus groups and interviews to develop a comprehensive understanding regarding diversity and human resource policies. "I want to understand how, as a black female, I'll be treated by corporate America once I graduate. This was an amazing chance to research something in detail that genuinely interests me." 📌



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## AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM

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Our program prepares students for academic excellence and social responsibility while challenging them to understand the diversity of African American experiences through a variety of disciplines. Faculty who teach in this program represent departments as diverse as English, teacher education, history, anthropology, political science, music, religious studies and theatre.

» The Avery Research Center for African American Heritage and Culture offers a unique laboratory for students with archives and programming.

» This degree is broadly applicable; our majors pursue careers in areas such as law, politics, medicine, art, education, entertainment and journalism.

» A degree in African American Studies is also excellent preparation for graduate school.