



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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