



## **Taevin S. Lewis, Harris-Stowe State University- c/o 2018, Biology & Pre-Medicine**



**Name :** Taevin S. Lewis

**Your HBCU :** Harris-Stowe State University

**Graduation Year :** 2018

**Major :** Biology & Pre-Medicine

### **1. Where are you from? Who introduced you to HBCUs?\***

I was born down in the delta of Greenwood, MS which is the neighboring city to Mississippi Valley State University in Itta Bena, MS. Small towns, rural areas, it was here where my uncles, aunts, cousins, and even parents attended school beginning somewhat of a Lewis & Siggers tradition. Ironically, members of both sides of my family attended Mississippi Valley while my Great-Grandmother also served as a cook there for 30+ years. I remember every Saturday morning, my grandmother would get my brother and I ready for the usual Saturday morning activities, to go see my uncle play football or run track for his beloved HBCU. I was always so amazed by the band, the dancers, the people, the overall HBCU culture, the togetherness of my people. Although I later moved to Memphis, TN with my father, I never forgot how I vowed to attend a Historically Black College or University during MVSU's Homecoming in 2001.



On April 27, 2017, I was inducted into the Missouri Chapter of Alpha Chi, the National College Honor Society, as my SGA Presidency was coming to an end. (I'm pictured with both my SGA plaque & Alpha Chi certificate)

### **2. Why did you choose an HBCU over a pwi?\***

I chose to attend an HBCU over a PWI because I graduated from a predominately white high school where the African American population was less than 10%, faculty included. Although I thoroughly enjoyed my time in High School (for it provided many cherish-able memories), something was always missing. There was sometimes a disconnect with my peers or clash of perspectives when social issues would arise which stamped my reasoning for attending an HBCU, I wanted more. I wanted to connect with my past, present, and future in ways only an HBCU could provide.

### **3. What is the story of your "experience" at Your HBCU given its heralded status as a stellar and prestigious institution?\***

During my tenure at my beloved institution, I have learned that a true winner doesn't only seek a title. A true winner seeks growth and change within oneself as well. As the very first Harris-Stowe State University student accepted into the 3+2 Occupational Therapy Program at Washington University in St. Louis School of Medicine. I have had the pleasure of serving my beloved HBCU as

the 2014-2015 Miss Freshman, 2014 Recording Secretary of Student Government Association's Executive Board, completed an internship with Missouri's State Representative Joshua Peters of District 076, Secretary of HSSU's Honeycomb majorettes, the 2015 Vice-President of SGA as well as the first female SGA President of HSSU in 2016 since 2009. Outside of collegiate activities, I have served as the 2016 Miss Black and Miss Gold for the Alpha Eta Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. as well as the 2016-2017 Miss Black Missouri US Ambassador who placed 4th Runner Up this past Summer in my very first National competition. All the while, I maintained a cumulative GPA of 3.65 as a Biology/Pre-Medicine major, full time student, scholar and servant intern of the Children's Defense Fund, Kingdom House. Throughout all of my many successes, I have had several failures which makes my story so intriguing for from the outside looking in, no one would know of the many losses taken to get to where I am today. As high as my achievements may seem, I have had some even lower points in my life. The loss wasn't what was important to me. Sure enough it hurt. Sure enough I was disappointed when it happened, but my power lay within how I responded to those situations that weren't so favorable. It was about how can I make this loss a win so that the next millennial won't stumble like I did. This is why I love my HBCU, Harris-Stowe State University, for it is a place of teachable moments. My Dean of Students, Dr. Lalande always told me, "Use these times as practice for the real world". I hope my actions showed him I actually listened.

#### **4. "First time" experiences at your HBCU?\***

Harris-Stowe State University gave me the first opportunity to truly be whom I wanted to be. The student leadership life at HSSU is so student-centered meaning there is room for everyone to do any and everything you'd like to. Because my mind races a thousand miles a minute, I had ideas for literally everything. From a 16 count for the Honeycomb majorettes to thoughts about a theory in Biology class to a policy, campaign or event to host for SGA, I was able to fully express myself and try new things. It also gave the lessons and tools of academic, social, and professional development which assists me in my quest to being a holistic person as well as a healthcare professional.

#### **5. Who are the professors that have impacted your life in and out of the classroom? How did they do that?\***

The professor who impacted me the most is Dr. Dwaun J. Warmack, 19th President of Harris-Stowe State University, teacher of Sociology; Race, Gender, and Class. As one of the youngest HBCU Presidents in the nation, I was one of his first recruits to his new home back in 2014. As a close friend of my father's and mentor of mine, he has guided me along my collegiate as well as young adult life. By no means am I a perfect person which makes him so meaningful to me for even when I made mistakes, Dr. Warmack used those moments as teachable ones instead of chastising as probably needed be. Great people make great leaders which makes him as a true gem of my beloved HBCU.



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