



Tiara Washington, Southern University at New Orleans- c/o 2013, General Studies



Name : Tiara Washington

Your HBCU : Southern University at New Orleans

Graduation Year : 2013

Major : General Studies

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

Louisiana born and bred. As a child, I attended the Bayou Classic for many years. Through this annual football game between Southern University and Grambling University, I learned about HBCUs and the HBCU culture.



Proud HBCU Alum, Tiara Washington - Proud Graduate of Southern University at New Orleans |
Image Credit: Tiara Washington

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

I started at Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO), but transferred to Tulane University because I felt Tulane had more to offer. However, once I arrived on Tulane's campus, I felt like an ink spot in the crowd of pale faces. I could no longer share textbooks w/ friends, make copies of the chapters, and "rib" other students. The cost of Tulane's tuition on my limited budget sent me back to SUNO. Many years ago, I traveled to a few HBCUs (Jackson State, Tuskegee, Alabama State, Clark-Atlanta, Norfolk State, and Hampton) for an HBCU college tour. When I stepped on the scene at Jackson State, I was ready to party. During the campus tour at Hampton, I was told students could not walk across the lawn, halter tops were not allowed in class, and students living on campus had to adhere to a curfew. My rebellious spirit thought there's no way I'm forking over loads of money for y'all to tell me what to do. Now that I'm an adult, I look back at that situation and realize Hampton was trying to provide structure and shape their students into becoming better young men and women. When I finally started college, I was a 22-year-old, GED recipient — translation: I was a non-traditional student. Many universities in the New Orleans area had certain admissions criteria and as a GED recipient I didn't meet the basic criteria. My ACT and GED scores allowed me to start at SUNO and Grambling without needing to take remedial courses. Since my dad is anti-Grambling (he graduated from Southern in 1976) and SUNO is in my hometown, it was the perfect fit for me.

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

Upon returning to SUNO, I had the opportunity to intern with the Vice Chancellor for Community Outreach/Univ Advancement. Shadowing Mrs. Moultrie (SUNO graduate '67) allowed me the

opportunity to understand the important history behind Southern University at New Orleans.

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

First trip to Mexico. First road trip with friends. First Spring Break -> cruise to the Bahamas.

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

Due to Hurricane Katrina, our campus was destroyed and the semester immediately after the hurricane, classes were held at a local middle school. My biology professor, Dr. Mims-Devezin, walked in class and told every student in the room that we had a difficult semester ahead of us, but we would get through it together. Dr. Mims-Devezin didn't treat us as ordinary students, we became her extended children and she expected greatness from each of us. Dr. Helvie-Mason taught me how to communicate, not just in class and around campus, but how to do so in a way that would propel me to new dimensions in life.



Gloria B. Moultrie, Vice Chancellor for Community Outreach/University Advancement | Image Credit: suno.edu

6. What sports and/or extra curricular activities did you do in High School? And why?

I was lazy in high school and didn't participate in much of anything except attending the dances.

7. Best restaurants on/near campus? Best dishes?

SUNO is a small university (for now), with just over 3,000 students. We don't have any restaurants on campus. To get the best bang for my buck, I would hit up Spicy Kitchen. Their soulfood is sooo delicious.

8. College crush?

No one. Actually, I was falling in love with myself. Is this vain of me to say?

9. What is your major? and Why did you choose it?

Initially, my plan was to major in journalism and continue on to law school to become a criminal prosecutor. During my enrollment process I was told SUNO had just lost accreditation for journalism and no new students could be admitted to the program. So I spent several semesters just "winging-it" until I decided to go with General Studies because most of my credits fit into that particular program.

10. What to date has been your proudest moment @ Your HBCU?

Finishing undergrad!!!

11. Where are the spots to go to if you wanted to cuddle with your boy or girlfriend?

I didn't have a relationship while attending SUNO.

12. What are the chants heard most often at the sporting events?

::beat, beat, beat:: SUNO, SUNO ::beat, beat, beat:: You Know, You Know (and the would repeat multiple times)

13. How are you positively active on campus? (e.g. clubs, SGA, etc.)

Between Fall 2011 and Spring 2013, I managed to obtain in internship with the Vice Chancellor for Community Outreach and University Advancement, became the SGA Chief of Staff, then the SGA Vice President and I traveled to Minnesota, Kansas, Ohio, Kentucky, Jersey, New York, Denver and Baltimore. In addition, I was named Who's Who Among American Colleges and Universities and was a Thurgood Marshall Leadership Institute Scholar.

14. Where is the "yard" located?

The "yard" at SUNO consists of the green space in front of the cafeteria.

15. What and where are the historical places on campus?

The Administration Building. This was the first building on our campus in 1959 when the university opened. In 2012, the building was renamed to the Emmitt W. Bashful Administration Building. It's named after our first chancellor.

16. What to date has been your saddest moment at your HBCU?

My line sisters and I getting the boot Fall 2012.

17. What situation in your life made you feel like you had arrived into woman/manhood?

Signing my first rental agreement along with paying my electricity bill, car note, insurance, taxes, and voting. All the crap I didn't have to do while living with my mom.

18. How do you deal with racism when you encounter it?

Racism happens whether we see it or not and so does gravity. Gravity is meant to hold us down. But despite gravity, we hop on planes and build skyscrapers every day. I can't control gravity no more than I can control my gender or the color of my skin. Being a black American is who I am and if someone has an issue with that, it's for them to deal with - not me. Black and white doesn't matter if you understand green.

19. What's your take on love (in the philosophical sense)?

Sometimes, you have to move laterally before you can move vertically.

20. How did you overcome your nervousness about going to college?

I was never nervous about attending college. In fact, my mom drilled it in my head that I would attend college.

21. How did your HBCU prepare you for a diverse workplace?

My preparation came from my mentor, Mrs. Moultrie. Before meeting Mrs. Moultrie, I was ratchet and a hot ghetto mess - maybe not the hot ghetto mess, but certainly ratchet. I was the girl with the heels, the hair weave, crazy eyelashes, heavy eye shadow and an attitude to match. Mrs. Moultrie wasn't afraid to mold me into something better. I became open to seeking/receiving feedback. She taught me how to make a mark at work without becoming a mark. From our conversations, I learned to use judgment about what I wear, what I say and what I do.

22. What advice would you give high school students filling out college applications for the first time?

Follow your passion. If your ultimate goal is to become a scientist, social worker, artist, doctor, or whatever, attend a university with a strong program in your desired field and craft your work with excellence. Colin Powell once said, "Excellence is not the exception, it is a prevailing attitude.

23. If you could only speak two sentences to the youth coming after you what would you say?

1. Be comfortable with who you are. 2. You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself in any direction you choose. - Dr. Seuss

24. Are you a member of a sorority?

Throughout my life it was "understood" that I would pledge a particular organization. For some reason, many students and administrators assumed I was greek. Fall 2012 I decided to pledge a different organization from the one others expected me to pledge. Unfortunately, the line turned out to be unauthorized and we were kicked off for hazing.