HEALTH EQUITY
THE SPELMAN IMPACT

SPelman College celebrates
NATIONAL MINORITY HEALTH MONTH
BETTER HEALTH THROUGH BETTER UNDERSTANDING

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Dear Spelman Community, Friends and Supporters,

Thank you for the overwhelmingly positive feedback on the relaunch of Spelman's monthly digital magazine Inside Spelman last month.

April is National Minority Health Month (NMHM), which focuses on health equity and health conditions that disproportionately impact Black and Brown communities and promotes action through awareness, early detection and prevention. As a Black woman physician and public health professional, advancing health equity has been the driving force for my career.

Much has been written about the disproportionate burden of illness and death for Black women. According to the CDC, the leading causes of death among non-Hispanic Black females are heart disease, cancer, stroke and diabetes. And Black women are also three times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related cause (maternal mortality) than white women. Contributing factors are variations in the quality of healthcare, underlying chronic conditions, racism, and implicit bias. But as is the case for health disparities across genders the social determinants of health, the non-healthcare factors that contribute to our health outcomes, such as education, economic opportunities, transportation, housing and environment play a larger role than healthcare alone.

Ironically, in America, only a small fraction of our healthcare dollars focuses on preventing disease and addressing the social determinants of health. HBCUs have and continue to be at the forefront of addressing these issues through providing culturally appropriate, supportive care that better incorporates patients' cultural and social environments. They also positively impact social mobility for Black students, thus addressing one of the key social determinants of health—economic opportunity. HBCUs also provide a major pipeline for Black professionals including physicians, nurses and healthcare personnel who are more likely to serve the Black patient population and provide much needed, culturally appropriate care. HBCUs have produced 70 percent of African American dentists and physicians.

Over the years, Spelman’s impact on the health profession and health equity has been profound. In 1983, Spelman welcomed more than 2,000 Black women for a conference on Black women's health, organized by health advocate, Byllye Avery; a pivotal moment that led to her founding the National Black Women’s Health Project in 1984, now called the Black Women’s Health Imperative (BWHI). It is the oldest national non-profit organization dedicated to improving the health and wellness of our nation’s 22 million Black women and girls—physically, emotionally, and financially. Their core mission is advancing health equity and social justice for Black women through policy, advocacy, education, research and leadership development. So, Spelman has much to be proud of as a leader in Black women’s health.

Additionally, Spelman is the No. 1 producer of Black women who earn Ph.Ds. in STEM and is a major pipeline for early acceptance/early assurance to the health professions school programs. The College also offers Health Career Program conferences and other resources and events, such as an Alumnae Summit that supports a Summer Science Program. Health science, biology, psychology, and chemistry/biochemistry are among our top majors and medicine, nursing, public health and dentistry are among the top health professions pursued by Spelman students. Through these and other majors, Spelman continues to be a leader in producing health professionals.

I hope you enjoy reading more about our amazing faculty, students and alumnae who are helping to change the world through their commitment to promoting better health and health equity for all.

-President Helene Gayle

Save the date for Inauguration events for Helene D. Gayle, M.D., MPH, the 11th president of Spelman College, from Thursday, April 27 through Sunday, April 30.

View the full schedule of events, by visiting the Inauguration page on our site: Spelman.edu/inauguration

During Women’s History Month, Dr. Gayle hosted the March edition of Courageous Conversations: Black in the C-Suite with ABC News President Kim Godwin, the first Black woman to lead a major television news network.

COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS
Black in the C-Suite

REPLAY CONVERSATIONS - STREAM ONLINE
Spelman.edu/CourageousConversations

Kim Godwin
March 23, 2023

Tracee Ellis Ross
February 20, 2023
The Pink Purpose Scholarship: Supporting Future Doctors in Honor of Spelman Sisterhood

Each year, hundreds of first-year students walk through the gates of Spelman College with the hopes of pursuing successful futures, unaware that their lives could soon be entwined by not only scholarship, but also by lifelong friendship. The College has a long history of giving academic gifts — giving knowledge, skills, experience and confidence. But it has an equally long history of providing something just as valuable as professional excellence: sisterhood.

A true example of that sisterhood is the bond formed by alumnae Alayna Blash, Erika van Putten-Anderson and the late Tara Ayodele Heyliger.

“Spelman has a magical way of connecting people,” said Blash, DPM, C’94, Spelman College’s associate director of Student Success. “I first met my Spelman sisters through the Pre-Freshman Summer Science Program in 1990. We were young, eager and, together, formed a sisterhood full of laughter and support.”

Dr. Blash strives to provide the same level of support she received to Spelman’s current students, working every day to help them see possibility and opportunity as a chance for growth and not an obstacle to their success. She is forever thankful for Spelman’s gifts, especially for the network of sisters she’s relied on for friendship, sound advice and guidance. Among those sisters is van Putten-Anderson, M.D., FAAP, C’94 — now a Board-certified general pediatrician committed to helping underserved communities.

“God brought us to Spelman, and Spelman brought us together to form what we call ‘The Posse,’” said Dr. Van Putten-Anderson. “For years, we discussed how we could give back to the College that gave us so much, and since all of us came from working families and got through college on a wing and a prayer, we knew what we needed to do.”

But the Posse didn’t want to make a one-time gift — they wanted to offer something as enduring as their sisterhood, something that would help the next generation of doctors move past the financial obstacle of attending college to pursue the futures they deserve. Thus, the Pink Purpose Scholarship was born.

With “Pink” representing the Posse’s fight against breast cancer, and “Purpose” representing their resolve to support the next generation of doctors, the Pink Purpose Scholarship was created as an annual award of $5000 to Health Careers students in financial need. To date, one student per year has been selected to receive the scholarship. It was founded in 2017 with the goal of establishing the Pink Purpose Endowed Scholarship in honor of one of their sisters, Dr. Tara Ayodele Heyliger, C’94, who died from breast cancer in 2018.

“As African American women physicians remain underrepresented in medicine, it is imperative that future Spelman doctors receive this kind of financial support,” explained Dr. Blash. “Tara was passionate about helping others, and we hope to continue shining her light by endowing this scholarship in her name.”

Interested in making your own gift? These generous donations can have an immediate impact on Spelman’s students and campus, helping the College thrive for years to come. Visit spelman.edu/giving to contribute today.
**Williams Receives Prestigious NIH Award for Innovative Neurocentric Research**

Kimberly S. Williams, Ph.D., assistant professor in Spelman College’s Environmental and Health Sciences Program, was recently awarded a K01-National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) Faculty Development Award to promote diversity in neuroscience research by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). This award will support Dr. Williams’ groundbreaking research on the role of estrogen loss in the aging population of HIV-positive females living with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and HIV-associated Neurocognitive Disorders (HAND).

"Being the first faculty member to receive this award mechanism from the NIH since the early 90s is a true honor and privilege," said Dr. Williams. "It not only allows my lab and I to continue the work of understanding how to develop potential novel therapeutic approaches for those with neurological disorders but also highlights that biomedical research and this level of funding can be achievable at liberal arts institutions and HBCUs."

This NIH Mentored Research Scientist Development Award (K01) promotes diversity in neuroscience research through intensive, supervised career development and provides scientific mentoring experiences for those often underrepresented in biomedical research. From resources that will hone grant writing skills to publication opportunities for high-impact research, Dr. Williams will receive support in her efforts to understand how inflammation in the brain leads to damage and potentially characterize a therapeutic process to treat such damage.

Dr. Williams is the second professor in the history of Spelman to receive such an honor. She believes this would not be possible without her previous grant award opportunities and her passion to foster an environment where students gain key transferable skills and constantly push for excellence.

To learn more about Dr. Williams and the work of the Environmental and Health Sciences Program (EHSP), visit the Spelman EHSP page.

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**Navigating the Unknown: How Dr. Yemi Brown Helped Chart Spelman’s Path through the COVID 19 Pandemic**

The state of emergency brought on by COVID-19 in the spring of 2020 changed the everyday lives of individuals globally. It also changed the operations of their employers – the nation’s colleges and universities, among them. As the pandemic progressed, Spelman College took measures to meet the operational and health challenges of the Spelman community.

Three years later, the College continues to thrive. Yemi Brown, Pharm.D., who led Spelman’s COVID operations, played an integral role in the College’s development, administration and monitoring of pandemic protocols.

“When I joined Spelman in 2021, we were at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and the College was operating as a limited access campus – only open to students, staff and faculty within the Atlanta University Center member institutions,” said Dr. Brown. “Though it was a challenging time for the collective community, we made it through by staying fluid in the management and prevention of the spread of COVID-19 using multi-layered mitigating strategies that were always informed by science.”

With a career in health care spanning two decades, Dr. Brown, a wellness advocate and author, came to Spelman with a strong commitment to public health efforts and a solid background in project management. Since 2021, she has led a team responsible for vital COVID-19 and flu vaccination drives, large-scale routine testing initiatives, contact tracing efforts and the promotion of safety protocols and guidance among the campus community. All of these efforts have helped the College maintain low COVID-19 case numbers.

As COVID-19 transitions to an endemic status, Dr. Brown continues to work on efforts to keep the Spelman community safe, informed and protected from the virus and other illnesses. As she turns an eye toward more holistic health measures, Dr. Brown encourages everyone to make their health a priority.

“It is essential to be an active partner in your health care by staying engaged with your trusted health care providers,” she said. “It is important that you empower yourself with knowledge and use that knowledge to help you stay well.”
Spelman Students Experience a Taste of Lisbon with Food Studies Program

Food is an important component of our culture, heritage and health, and Spelman College Food Studies Program offers a unique chance to broaden the palate as well as the mind. The program welcomes a hearty cohort of students each academic year and offers an opportunity to explore and engage with food in innovative ways that are both from theoretical and disciplinary perspectives.

During the March 2023 spring break, Food Studies Program Director Dr. Kimberly Jackson took food chemistry students abroad to Lisbon, Portugal. For eight days and seven nights, the group delved into the culture of Lisbon and ventured into the city’s eateries and food markets.

“We were there to examine Black foodways and engage African diasporic communities to understand food practices and food as a marker of cultural identity and socially controversial issues,” said Dr. Jackson.

The week consisted of numerous excursions and food-focused experiences. Students also visited the Atlantic coastline to gauge how it influences life and diet for residents of the country. A major takeaway from the trip was discovering the food and history of the country’s former colonies in Africa, Asia and South America. “It’s amazing how the foods we eat are connected to Africa,” said Dr. Jackson.

To wrap up the week, students cooked a meal for their hosts. It was an experience that Dr. Jackson compared to being on the popular cooking television show, “Top Chef.” “Although our hosts purchased the food in advance, we had no idea what the kitchen would look like or if they bought the correct ingredients,” she said. “However, our Spelman women learned to pivot and created a fantastic meal!”

Upon returning from Portugal, the program hosted “Food as Medicine” – a virtual food justice summit on March 30. This annual food justice event celebrates the work and knowledge of Black women in the field. This year’s event welcomed Black women health specialists, such as Tamara Melton, MS, RDN, of Diversify Dietetics; Tambra Raye Stevenson, MPH of Wanda; and Spelman’s own Rosalind Gregory-Bass, M.D., C’92. WABE host Rose Scott served as moderator.

“Women In Sports Master Class” Inspires Spelmanites to Go for Their Goals


Founder and CEO of “The Playbook,” T.M. Robinson-Mosley, Ph.D., moderated a dynamic panel discussion and fireside chat that explored the vast opportunities in the field of sports and highlighted shared experiences from some of the most successful female sports professionals.

The panelists for this inaugural networking event included Gaelle Romain, director of program development for the National Basketball Association; Kiara McClendon, director of player engagement for the Atlanta Dream basketball team; Shae Robinson-Mosley, vice president of sports medicine and adolescent health for “The Playbook;” and Ashley S. Green, CEO and owner of Ashley S. Green Sports, Entertainment & Lifestyle Marketing Consulting.

Spelman Pathways provides one-of-a-kind learning experience to build student leadership and career readiness. Their Master Classes offer exposure and insight into various career industries and provide the essential tools needed to succeed in today’s workforce. From lessons in identifying transferable skills, a mentor, and internship opportunities to recognizing the importance of joy in one’s career, Spelman students received motivating tips on staying consistent when facing adversity.

“Don’t settle.” Green passionately expressed during the event. “It is never too late to change your pathway. Find the right person, the right mentor or sponsor...and attack your goals.”

“Never stop. keep working hard. If a door closes, look for another one – circumvent,” McClendon fervently explained.

“Show up. In every way, show up. Be ready to grind and stay ready,” said Robinson-Mosley.

Talent acquisition leader Corinne Milien, founder of WRK, as well as Kall Franklin, senior vice president and head of talent and recruiting with Overtime, concluded the event with a dynamic fireside chat that highlighted self-worth and introduced useful tips to navigate the complexities of diverse audiences.

For more information, visit the Spelman Pathways page.
Spelman’s Clothing Initiatives Help Students “Dress” for Spring

Each spring, white apparel floods the campus of Spelman College. The attire is part of the College’s long history and has become synonymous with Founders Day, Class Day and Commencement – three of the annual traditions that celebrate Spelman students and Spelman Sisters. Each event calls for the traditional attire, complete with white dress, skirt or pant suit, flesh-toned hosiery and black closed-toe shoes. In preparation for these events and in support of the spirit of sisterhood, campus initiatives like Bessie’s Closet and My Sister’s Closet are helping students dress for every occasion.

In 2009, Spelman’s Student Government Association established My Sister’s Closet, a special initiative and campus resource for students. For more than a decade, “When we originally hosted Bessie’s Closet, we were only thinking of a one-time, two-day event,” said Baisden-Bond. “We had no idea it would have the impact that it did! We had students standing in the rain trying to get into the conference room. As a result, we hosted an even bigger event the following month and invited faculty and staff members, along with Spelman alumnae, to donate items.”

Donations for Bessie’s Closet will begin after Labor Day – prior to the next clothing drive scheduled for September. White dresses and other attire can be found in My Sister’s Closet by appointment via Spelman’s Student Government Association.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS

Spelman Students Scored a $500,000 Win in Goldman Sachs ‘Market Madness’

While Spelman College is gearing up to participate in the Goldman Sachs 2023 competition, we’re still applauding Spelman students who participated last year. Spelman’s team earned second place and $500,000 in prize funding in the final round of the second-annual Goldman Sachs Market Madness: HBCU Possibilities Program case study competition held in April 2022, in New York City.

The Spelman team, aka “The Golden Girls,” included: Jada Cooper, C’2024; Mikayla Ross, C’2024; Carley Cook, C’2025; Latisha Jones, C’2025; Anise Puckett, C’2025 and Lauren Williams, C’2025. Ultimately, the team’s award-winning presentation created business solutions for PepsiCo Inc.

In addition to an academic scholarship upon successful completion of the semester-long program, students were introduced to key financial concepts and real-world applications through weekly virtual sessions with Goldman Sachs professionals. The students also received dedicated coaching and mentoring and participated in additional training sessions, group projects and networking events.

This initiative stems from Goldman Sachs’ $25 million commitment to support and invest in the power of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). From opportunities to experience a culture of teamwork, excellence and innovation to exploring insight into the Goldman Sachs recruiting process, students were inspired and motivated by their experiences from the program.

“We encourage the team to lean on their network and support system, including the previous Spelman teams and Rev. Neichelle Guidry, Ph.D., dean of Sisters Chapel and director of the WISDOM Center, both decided their closets needed emptying. Instead of donating to outside causes, Guidry suggested bringing the clothing items to campus for students. What started as a simple clothing drive in the Bessie Strong conference room turned into a sisterly opportunity for Sisters Chapel and the WISDOM Center to do further outreach to the Spelman community. 
A “Day” for the Culture: Angelise Young-Tucker, C’2024, Shines A Light on Autism in Black Women

Research Day at Spelman College gives students of all areas of study the opportunity to present findings that can potentially drive innovative outcomes in modern medicine. This year, Angelise Young-Tucker, C’2024, is hoping to do just that – or at least shift the way the Spelman community views autism in Black women.

“I’m looking forward to sparking curiosity in others who view my hard work,” said Young-Tucker. “By spreading awareness of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in college-aged Black women, we can hopefully begin an HBCU-wide initiative to create more resources and inclusivity activities for these students.”

Young-Tucker is a health science major and psychology minor – whose research focuses on ASD in undiagnosed and underdiagnosed college-aged Black women and reasons for diagnosis deficiency. She credits a lack of culturally-relevant information and personal experience as the catalyst for her deep dive into how the developmental disorder affects young women like her.

“I began to type in keywords to find many videos of white women discussing their difficulty with ASD, which led me to my curiousness on why there were no Black women distinguishable in these searches,” said Young-Tucker. “As I typed in key phrases such as ‘Black women with autism’ on YouTube, there were at most three late-diagnosed Black women discussing their difficulty getting their diagnoses due to microaggressions and stereotypes, as well as the lack of representation of Black autists in general within media.”

Young-Tucker is supported by faculty advisor Brittny James and is excited to participate in Research Day 2023. The future physical therapist is optimistic that her work will not only help combat stigma related to ASD in her peers, but also impact how resources and support can change how society addresses ASD in Black women of all ages.

“My end goal is to spread awareness and knowledge about this neurological condition, increase the rates of diagnosis, and eradicate or at least decrease stereotypes about ASD and undiagnosed/underdiagnosed Black women.”

Young-Tucker is just one of nearly 350 students who will showcase and present their work at Research Day 2023. Student presentations typically include informational posters, talks, performances and exhibits related to a variety of research subjects and topics students refine and focus on with the help of faculty advisors and mentors. The event, which will coincide with SpelBound – the College’s introductory experience for newly accepted students – celebrates the scholarship, brilliance and creative work of Spelman’s undergraduate students.

Research Day 2023 is April 21, 2023. For more information, visit Spelman.edu/ResearchDay.
NAASC Los Angeles Welcomes President Helene Gayle To Sisters’ Awards Brunch

The National Alumnae Association of Spelman College (NAASC) Los Angeles Chapter hosted the 27th Annual Sisters’ Awards Brunch at the Skirball Cultural Center on March 12. The Sisters’ Awards Brunch helps raise scholarship funding for Spelman Students.

Pictured: President Gayle with Sister’s Awards Brunch Honorees (left to right) Los Angeles Dodgers Foundation CEO Nichol Whiteman, C’98, The CW Executive Producer N'kichi Okoro Carroll and Nike Senior Diversity Director Barbara Furlow smiles.

Spelman Alumnae and Friends Join Trustee Pauletta Washington For Reception Honoring Spelman’s Legacy of Empowering Black Women

Panel discussion featuring President Helene Gayle M.D., MPH, and Ayoka Chenzira, Ph.D., about the future of the arts at Spelman.

Paulettz Pearson Washington warmly welcomes guests to the reception.


TRUSTEE HIGHLIGHTS

Spelman Trustee Frank Baker hosted a welcome reception for Dr. Gayle on February 23 in South Florida.

Spelman Trustee Cara J. Hughes, C’2003, welcomed Dr. Gayle back to Chicago for a meet and greet reception on March 29.
IN THE NEWS

ABC News Spotlights Diversity in Gaming
Featuring Spelman Innovation Lab co-director Jaycee Holmes and brother Ernest Holmes - Siblings who are changing the face of gaming for HBCU students
SOURCE: ABC NEWS LIVE PRIME STREAMING CHANNEL

ESPN FIRST TAKE Highlights Spelman College
Spelman students share why attending an HBCU is important to them, and ask host Stephen A. Smith questions related to today’s hot topics in sports.
SOURCE: ESPN

Dr. Gayle Shares the Power of HBCUs with Forbes
“HBCUs Are Powerful Game Changers. Spelman College President Dr. Helene Gayle Explains Why.”
SOURCE: Forbes

Spelman Museum: Black American Portraits
Spelman Museum’s newest exhibition entitled “Black American Portraits” featured in various news outlets.
SOURCES: AJC | Artnet News | Cultured
Ebony Online | WABE | The Georgia Voice
The Atlanta Voice | Saporta Report
Celebrating the Largest Capital Campaign In Spelman College History

On March 28, Spelman College hosted a virtual celebration and on-campus viewing party with Spelman College President Helene Gayle, M.D., MPH, Board Chair Rosalind Gates Brewer, C’84, and President Emerita Mary Schmidt Campbell, Ph.D., to celebrate the conclusion and success of the Spelman College Ascends Campaign.

Spelman Ascends is the largest campaign in the College’s history and will support various projects including the completion of the Mary Schmidt Campbell, Ph.D. Center for Innovation & The Arts and the Center for Black Entrepreneurship. The Spelman Ascends Campaign Impact Report will be released for public viewing in April 2023.

Re-watch the virtual celebration online: Spelman Ascends Virtual Celebration on March 28
Founders Week Preview
April kicks off a season of spring celebrations at Spelman College, including our 142nd Founders Day.
From Saturday, April 1 through Tuesday, April 11, the Spelman College community will commemorate Founders Day with a Day of Community Service, Founders Day Worship Service, an alumnae celebration and Founders Day Convocation.
For more information, or to RSVP, visit Spelman.edu/alumnae/founders-day.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Founder’s Day Convocation
Tuesday, April 11

Courageous Conversations: Black in the C-Suite
Featuring Cathy Hughes
Wednesday, April 19

Research Day
Friday, April 21

Spelbound 2023
Friday, April 21 - Saturday, April 22

The Inauguration of Helene D. Gayle, M.D., MPH
The 11th President of Spelman College
Thursday, April 27 - Sunday, April 30

Reunion
Wednesday, May 17 – Sunday, May 21

2023 Baccalaureate
Saturday, May 20

Class of 2023 Commencement Ceremony
Sunday, May 21

View the Full Events Calendar at Spelman.edu/calendars
View the Academic Calendar at Spelman.edu/AcademicCalendar
MISSION STATEMENT
Spelman College, a historically Black college and a global leader in the education of women of African descent, is dedicated to academic excellence in the liberal arts and sciences and the intellectual, creative, ethical and leadership development of its students. Through diverse learning modalities, Spelman empowers the whole person to engage the many cultures of the world and inspires a commitment to positive social change.

Accreditation: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award baccalaureate degrees
Member: Atlanta University Center Consortium

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