Celebrating Women's History Month
Spelman Women - Past, Present, and Future who are Changing the World

IN THIS ISSUE:
President’s Perspective (2)
Faculty Highlights (3)
Campus Highlights (4-5)
Student Spotlights (6)
Alumnae Highlights (7)
Dear Spelman Community, Friends and Supporters,

We are pleased to announce the relaunch of *Inside Spelman*, our monthly campus-wide digital magazine, which was paused in 2015. Through *Inside Spelman* you will be able to learn more about the College's key priorities, students, faculty and staff achievements, alumnae engagement, donor developments and ways you can support our campus community.

The month of March provides us with a perfect backdrop to showcase our amazing students and talented faculty and staff, as we celebrate Women’s History Month and International Women’s Day on March 8.

As I approach the end of my first academic year as the president of Spelman College, my enthusiasm for the school, its people and its mission continues to grow. Spelman is a place that offers a unique opportunity to continue impacting and changing the world. For me, this means advancing social justice and equity through the lens of higher education; and using my skills and experiences to help foster the next generation of change-makers, at a time when the voice of Black women is needed more than ever. And particularly, at an institution that offers students a place to be challenged, yet nurtured. A place that affirms who they are as Black women.

Spelman is also impacting me in the most inspiring way. I stand in awe of our storied institution, brilliant scholars, devoted faculty, innovative staff and legacy alumnae! And I am thankful to be among the accomplished and esteemed Black women presidents who have led Spelman College—Presidents Emerita Johnnetta B. Cole, Ph.D., Audrey Manley, MD, Beverly Daniel Tatum, Ph.D., Mary Schmidt Campbell, Ph.D.—but also recognize the contributions of those who helped pave the way so that our leadership was possible.

As I endeavor to build upon the rich legacy of the College, I am confident that Spelman will maintain its momentum and excellence. I am committed to adding to the successes that have resulted in our institution being ranked as the No. 1 HBCU in the country for 16 consecutive years.

I invite you to continue reading about the College through *Inside Spelman*. We look forward to sharing updates on our partnerships with internal and external stakeholders and our priorities and how we are addressing them. You will also learn more about our efforts to increase engagement with our local, national and global communities, as well as our strategies for building upon excellence in key areas, such as entrepreneurship, the arts and STEM; ensuring a continuation of investments in our infrastructure; addressing housing needs; building on our greatest strengths and bolstering our national rankings; engaging and collaborating with our surrounding West End community; elevating our national and global brand; and working on more ways to increase our financial support and college affordability for our scholars.

Thank you, Spelman Community, for all you do as we continue to Make Our Choice to Change the World!

- President Helene Gayle
The Unsung Storytellers and Game Changers

Paving the Way for Future Generations

While the national 2023 theme for Women’s History Month is “Celebrating Women Who Tell Our Stories,” Spelman College has been the backdrop for this refrain for countless years. Founded in March 1987, Women’s History Month celebrates women’s contributions to history, culture and society. Today, we are proud to amplify the stories of Spelman faculty members – acclaimed storytellers who have engaged, taught, inspired, and empowered hundreds of Spelman students for decades using the power of story.

From novelists and journalists to filmmakers and gamers, our experiences have been captured by a wide variety of female artists and inventors. Inside Spelman, in recognition of this year’s theme, is proud to feature three influential faculty members who have devoted their lives to producing art, pursuing truth, and paving the way for future storytellers to follow in their footsteps.

Jaycee Holmes was recently featured on the Forbes 30 Under 30 Social Impact list for co-founding the nonprofit organization CodeHouse. This Spelman alumna turned faculty member strives to reshape how her students see science and technology through her influence on Spelman’s campus as an art and visual culture professor and the co-director of Spelman’s Innovation Lab. She is dedicated to ensuring students of color have access to opportunities that lead to careers in STEM.

Celebrated as the first Black woman animator and one of 10 Black women filmmakers to have shaped the cinematic landscape of the 20th century, Dr. Ayoka Chenzira has been a Spelman faculty member since 2003 and currently serves as Division Chair for the Arts and Diana King Endowed Professor in Film and Filmmaking, Television and Related Media. In 2003, she founded the Digital Moving Image Salon, which taught documentary filmmaking to Spelman students across disciplines and in 2017, led to a documentary filmmaking major now located in the Department of Art and Visual Culture. Dedicated to elevating the experiences of women, Dr. Chenzira’s work as a transmedia storyteller has encouraged new generations to find and raise their voices and push the boundaries of cinema.

Julie Dash is also among the top Black women filmmakers who have shaped the cinematic landscape of the 20th century. She is also a Distinguished Professor and Diana King Endowed Professor in Film and Filmmaking, Television and Related Media. Dash’s debut 1991 groundbreaking work, “Daughters of the Dust,” became the first full-length film directed by a Black woman to obtain a general theatrical release in the United States, and the first movie by a Black woman to be inducted into the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress for its cultural, historical, and aesthetic significance.

Dash’s masterful directorial work is not only seen in film. In 2022, she was recognized by Vogue magazine as one of nine directors transforming period rooms of the Met Museum’s American Wing to display a history of American fashion from the late 18th century to the late 20th century. Determined to redefine how we see African American women on the screen and otherwise, Dash’s efforts in bringing true authenticity to her subjects have inspired emerging female artists to not only become filmmakers, but to say the things that need to be said in new, meaningful ways. She has worked tirelessly to integrate various technologies into her classes, including the growing area of mobile filmmaking, to ensure her students take advantage of virtually every opportunity to capture content and tell evocative narratives.

Ayoka Chenzira, Ph.D.

Emmy-nominated filmmaker and renowned pioneer in Black independent cinema, Dr. Ayoka Chenzira made her mark on history as one of only a handful of Black experimental filmmakers working outside of mainstream financing and production systems since the late 1970s. Her distinctive body of work, including “Alma’s Rainbow,” one of the first 35mm independent films by an African American woman, spans fiction, documentary, animation, performance, experimental narratives, and interactive cinema. Among her recent credits is directing episodes of the critically acclaimed Oprah Winfrey Network drama series, “Queen Sugar,” in which she was nominated for an NAACP Image Award.

Jaycee Holmes

Holmes’ devotion to connecting students with technology led to the creation of the inaugural HBCU Game Jam, a beginner-friendly hackathon for future HBCU game developers. Providing an opportunity to introduce students to the gaming and tech industries through a fun and supportive event, this 48-hour event enabled participants to build their own video games, learn directly from community and industry partners, connect with representatives to learn about career pathways into tech and gaming and compete for $5,000 in awards.

Celebrating women’s achievements, increasing their visibility, and calling out inequality is key in the work of these Spelman faculty who are striving to inspire and help Spelmanites achieve their dreams — but not only in the month of March. Their struggles to pave the way for future artists and STEM professionals happen every day, in the background, often unsung. Let their stories stay with us as we go forward – keeping us inspired, informed, and always aware.
Not Your Average Speaker Series: Spelman Puts Women Forging Paths in STEM on Center Stage

Spelman recently kicked off the Women in STEM Speaker Series, hosted by the Center of Excellence for Minority Women in STEM, to celebrate trailblazing women in science, technology, engineering and math fields. The series also exposes the community, particularly students, to prominent, innovative and outstanding Black women through public lecture and small group conversations.

“Spelman’s Women in STEM Speaker Series is impactful and inspirational because we not only hear about the impressive work of influential Black women, but also about the personal journeys on their paths in STEM,” said Tasha Innis, Ph.D., the College’s associate provost for research and an award-winning mathematician. The 2023 speaker series began during Black History Month 2023, with President Gayle and senior Department of Defense Academic Scholar Demi Browder, C’2023.

The COE-MWS series has a theme each year. In 2020, the theme was “COVID-19” and the inaugural speaker was Kizzmekia S. Corbett, Ph.D., who was instrumental in developing the Moderna vaccine while at the National Institute of Health. Dr. Corbett uses her viral immunology expertise to propel novel vaccine development for pandemic preparedness, and engaged Spelman students in a provocative conversation about how they can use their research interests to change the world.

In 2021, the theme was “Breaking Barriers,” which highlighted Black women who paved a new path in STEM and included “The Science of Beauty” session presented by Markaisa Black, Ph.D., a senior scientist at Procter & Gamble. The COE also hosted “Spelman on the Front Line,” a 2022 session where Spelman alumnae discussed their respective roles in our nation’s fight against the pandemic.

The next COE-MWS session on Wednesday, March 29, features Spelman’s distinguished Falconer Scholar-in-Residence Candice Price, Ph.D., who has research interests in math education and problems in the intersection of mathematics and social justice.

Spelman.edu/CandicePrice

Defying the Odds and Creating the Future, One Spelman Engineer at a Time

More than just a week-long event, Engineers Week, celebrated this year on Spelman’s campus from Feb. 20-24, was a commitment to making a difference. The College’s Dual Degree Engineering Program (DDEP), home to countless scores of students and alumnae, has been making a difference and changing the face of engineering since 1969.

“With only 5% of all engineers being Black women, there is still much work to do and ground to cover,” said Retina Burton, senior instructor and director of the DDEP and the Office of Science, Engineering and Technical Careers.

‘Creating the Future,’ the theme for this year’s Engineering Week, was about bringing awareness to this issue and for Spelman to leverage strategies for the advancement of African American women in engineering,” added Burton.

By hosting a variety of events such as a “Breaking the Glass Ceiling Women of Color in Engineering Roundtable;” to a special “See How we Engineer” explosion at Market Friday;” to the “Ready to Change the World” closing reception, Spelman joined in solidarity with STEM professionals around the country to celebrate the work and progress of women of color in private industry, academia and corporate America.

“With technological advances at an all-time high, it is imperative that the voices of Black women are heard and that their talents play a leading role in changing the world around us. Engineers Week and the Dual Degree Engineering Program are about setting the stage for the future -- the one we are destined to create,” said Burton.

DDEP began as a partnership with the Georgia Institute of Technology during the 1968-1969 academic year and has expanded to 14 other schools nationwide. Spelman engineering alumnae, who are committed to creating a more diverse and inclusive engineering field, have excelled at many companies and organizations, including Boeing, Accenture, Bank of America, Morgan Stanley, BP, the Coca-Cola Company, Colgate Palmolive, Deloitte, ExxonMobil, Google, IBM, Lockheed Martin, Jackson and Tull, Lord Aeck Sargent, NASA, the National Science Academy, Nokia, Shell, the Southern Company, and Verizon.
Tapped into Her Calling: Dr. Andrea Lewis Influences the Future of Educational Leadership

With her undeniable dedication to academic excellence, Andrea Lewis, Ph.D., C’96, is working to support and fortify future educational leaders through her instruction and research. Recently, Dr. Lewis represented Spelman College as a contributor — in collaboration with academic thought leaders from Morehouse College and Clark Atlanta University — to “The Shoulder Tap,” a policy report on diversifying principal pipeline programs and initiatives. Through “The Shoulder Tap,” Dr. Lewis and her colleagues are inspiring future educational change while influencing how leaders can support and mentor their successors.

“Participating in ‘The Shoulder Tap’ research embodied my love of teacher education and passion for ensuring excellence in the P-12 education community,” said Dr. Lewis. “I appreciated the opportunity to contribute to a growing body of research on education leadership, advocacy and the success of Black children in communities across the nation.”

Dr. Lewis was part of the inaugural class of Clark Atlanta University’s HBCU Executive Leadership Institute – dedicated to preparing administrators to lead historically Black colleges and universities and expand upon the historic role they play in the community.

“HBCUs afford Black students a safe place to call home while pursuing educational excellence, intellectual and social engagement, and charting their course to change the world,” said Dr. Lewis in a 2021 interview.

Dr. Lewis currently serves as an associate professor and director of student success at Spelman College. In addition, she is a recognized community servant and author. Her fourth book, “She Who Believed: Redefining Life Through God’s Grace,” was published in September 2022.

Spelman.edu/2022FoundersDayHonorees

Spelman Students are Making a Difference Close to Home with SpelREADS

Every day, Spelman students make a choice to change the world, and several are making that choice much closer to home. Since 2017, Spelman College students have volunteered in 10 local elementary schools and helped more than 1,000 students strengthen their reading skills through the SpelREADS program.

The program is led by Jilo Tisdale, director of the Bonner Office of Civic Engagement, and managed by Sheryl Belizaire, program manager. SpelREADS has been credited as a “value-added” resource by teachers in boosting the reading test scores of the program’s students and contributing to a safe, constructive and productive learning space.

“Spelman College students volunteer to spend their time with SpelREADS because they are passionate about education and want to see students succeed,” Tisdale said. “That passion comes through in their dedication to the program and their desire to build an authentic relationship with the students they tutor. It’s a magical combination, and the result is measurable improvements in reading. In the fall semester 2nd grade students who participated in SpelREADS at Kimberly Elementary School increased their reading scores on the MAP assessment at a rate double that of 2nd grade students at the school that did not participate in SpelREADS during the semester.”

SpelREADS started in four Atlanta Public Schools (APS) elementary schools. Today, 234 Spelman students serve as reading guides in six schools and one Metro-Atlanta YMCA location. SpelREADS supports increased literacy proficiency in the elementary schools and provides valuable experience for the Spelman student volunteers to enhance their communication, emotional intelligence, and time management skills – all of which are highly valued by employers.
From Spelman Lane to Pennsylvania Avenue
Elizabeth Gowans Represents the College at HBCU Student Journalist Briefing

Elizabeth Gowans, C’2023, represented Spelman College during the 2023 HBCU Student Journalist Briefing with Vice President Kamala Harris and former Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms. In recent years, the White House has taken great strides toward creating spaces where the voices of young people can be heard. Inviting HBCU student journalists from across the country to engage with national leaders for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic continues that mission.

Gowans, a student trustee to the Spelman College Board of Trustees and director of Spelman’s student-run podcast, The Blue Record (available on Apple Podcasts and Spotify), asked Harris and Bottoms about funding for HBCUs, shining a spotlight on the lack of funding for the institutions that produce some of the country’s top talent. “What plans does the federal government have or what plans do you think there should be to address the historic underfunding of HBCUs and MSIs?”

Bottoms, formally a senior advisor for public engagement at the White House, responded to Gowans’ question by sharing that President Biden and Vice President Harris have ensured there is funding specifically set aside for the needs of the nation’s HBCUs. “This $6 billion goes a very long way. The President has talked about intentionality in certain programs at HBCUs that aren’t traditionally found at HBCUs to help create a pipeline,” said Bottoms.

In addition to Gowans’ concerns around underfunded schools, other students asked about how smaller HBCUs can stay relevant with limited funds, how to gain access to the pipeline of philanthropy for HBCUs, and funding opportunities for students pursuing post-graduate education.

Partaking in this significant experience supports not only Gowans’ desire to help Spelman succeed but also her plans for the future, which include becoming a professor, historian, archivist and college president.

Maya Blasingame Contemplates Her Choice to Change the World through Multiple Post-Graduate Offers

Maya Blasingame, C’2023, has a significant decision to make as she approaches the culmination of her time at Spelman. A senior biology major, Blasingame has a perfect 4.0 GPA and has been accepted to 13 medical schools and counting. Some of her acceptances include Georgetown University School of Medicine, Howard University College of Medicine, the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine, and the University of Michigan Medical School.

Blasingame is both a Department of Defense Academic Scholar and a Research Scholar. Through the DoD programs, she received a four-year scholarship, conducted research every year with an advisor, and published research in the prestigious science journal “Nature.” As an aspiring physician, Blasingame hopes to become a “change-maker” in the medical field by giving voices to the voiceless, and is thus seeking a medical school that prioritizes medicine with diversity and serves underrepresented communities.

“I want to be a voice for those who are not always heard,” said Blasingame, “and create spaces where I give all patients the voice and autonomy to understand their decisions and choices within medicine. I also hope to become a mentor and give back to those who come after me, just like many of my mentors did by advocating for me, helping me, and encouraging me throughout my own journey.”

When Blasingame is not contemplating her choices to change the world, she is actively involved in Spelman College’s service organizations, such as the Lady Buds and Sisters Keeping It Real Through Service (S.K.I.R.T.S.), as well as academic endeavors like the LINCS Scholars Program. Additionally, she serves as a dedicated member of the Minority Association of Pre-Medical Students and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated.

Fueled by the Spelman Spirit, Winter Jones is Preparing for Takeoff

Winter Jones, C’2025, is preparing for takeoff – literally. The sophomore mathematics major, with a focus on aerospace engineering, is currently working on research to develop sustainable rocket fuel. It is a subject she has been passionate about since her elementary school science fair days.

“I have always been interested in fire and space,” said Jones. “My project, A Choice to Build a Rocket: Examining Paraffin Fuel Grains, is of particular interest to me since paraffin wax is used in 95 percent of our candles worldwide. Due to its chemical makeup, it can be used as rocket fuel.”

Jones – who is also the undergraduate representative of the NASA University Leadership Initiative – actively participates in Spelman’s Innovation Lab programming and is a frequent visitor. She credits Spelman’s motto, ‘A Choice to Change the World,’ as the fuel that further inspired her work with rockets.

A self-proclaimed ‘ATLien,’ Jones’ desire to study math was established in fifth grade during her first visit to the Atlanta University Center. She recalls watching her mother present her original mathematics work at a Morehouse College symposium.

“During the symposium, I was in the back of the classroom working on a math winter break project. Now majoring in mathematics, especially at Spelman College, is a full-circle moment. My mom, Tiffany Jones of GrayTech Corporation, has always been among the few Black women mathematicians I knew. I am proud to follow in her footsteps and encourage Black students to pursue STEM degrees.”

Within her first month at Spelman, Jones received funding from the Innovation Lab to continue her high school rocket fuel research. She presented her work at the 2022 Spelman College Research Day and was one of the winners in the interdisciplinary category.

This academic year, Jones was funded by the COE-Department of Defense Research Scholars Program and used the funding she received to build a model hybrid rocket engine and begin casting fuel grains. She presented research at Atlanta’s World Space Day and at two mathematics conferences: the National Association of Mathematics’ MATHFest Undergraduate conference, where she was a contender for best oral presentation, and the Joint Mathematics Meeting, the largest mathematics gathering in the world.

When asked about the impact she hopes to make in STEM, Jones shared her wish to celebrate the success of Black inventors: “We should celebrate all Black success, especially in STEM, loud and proud. I want to teach Black children about Black inventors, mathematicians and scientists. I want to showcase how mathematics and science influence every aspect of our lives.”
**A True Blue Welcome: the NAASC of South Florida Welcomes President Helene Gayle**

**10 a.m.  William H. Turner Technical Arts High School**

President Gayle began the day on Wednesday, February 22, 2023, at William H. Turner Technical Arts High School in Miami, Florida. Principal Uwezo B. Frazier gave her a tour of the high school, during which she observed a senior-level science class and spoke with nursing students about working in the medical field. Following the tour, Dr. Gayle hosted a Q&A session with prospective students about Spelman College and attending HBCUs. She concluded her visit with an insightful dialogue with school district administrators, where she answered questions about Spelman’s STEM programs, summer programming for high school students, and funding opportunities for incoming first-year students.

**Dorothy Bendross Mindingall Social–Economic Institute  1 p.m.**

Following the school visit, Dr. Gayle attended a luncheon hosted by Spelman mom and Miami-Dade County School Board Member Dorothy Bendross Mindingall, Ph.D., and the National Alumnae Association of Spelman College South Florida Chapter. During the luncheon, Dr. Gayle was presented with a proclamation designating February 24 “Dr. Helene Gayle Day” in Miami Beach.

**6 p.m.  African Heritage Cultural Arts Center**

To conclude the evening, the NAASC South Florida Chapter hosted a reception and meet and greet for Dr. Gayle and Spelman alumnae in the area. The event was moderated by Chapter President Wanda Bland Randall. Following her remarks, Dr. Gayle responded to questions about scholarships, housing and the legacy she plans to leave at Spelman.
Join us in supporting Spelman students in their quest to change the world and join our trailblazing alumnae, including award-winning authors, scientists, educators, doctors, artists, business leaders and change agents. Gifts to Spelman Strong support students, faculty, facility upgrades and maintenance, and other needs of the College.

**By supporting Spelman Strong, you reinforce our Four Pillars of Spelman's Excellence:**

- **Fund Her Future:** Spelman Strong gifts support ALL students by allowing the College to operate at peak potential without drawing down our endowment more than would be prudent or raising tuition substantially.

- **Supporting and Advancing Academic Excellence:** Spelman Strong gifts provide funding for important faculty initiatives, allow for the expansion of the faculty, and support numerous academic programs across the College.

- **Foundation for Transformative Change:** Spelman Strong gifts allow the College to respond to the most pressing financial concerns and provide the flexibility to seize unique and vital opportunities.

- **Fund Unrestricted Possibilities:** Spelman Strong gifts are a promise to provide unrestricted possibilities for our students to change the world.

Let’s continue to support our College’s legacy by keeping Spelman Strong! Give your gift to change the world today.

www.Spelman.edu/SpelmanStrong

---

**Spelman Ascends**

**THE CAMPAIGN for SPELMAN COLLEGE**

This month, we celebrate the conclusion of an integral era of giving in Spelman’s history. Spelman College Ascends was a five-year campaign launched with the goal of raising $250 million to cover student fees, improve technological infrastructure, build the Mary Schmidt Campbell, Ph.D., Center for Innovation and the Arts, and expand various initiatives across campus.

![Goal 
$250 million

Raised 
$339 million

Number of Gifts 87,493
Under $1,000 81,054
Over $1 million 67

17,235 Unique Donors
516 Unique Areas Impacted*]

* Includes unique named scholarship funds, and academic and program areas.

We are grateful to all who helped the College exceed our fundraising goal - raising $339 million! Later this month, the College will host a virtual celebration to commemorate this historic campaign. Stay tuned for more details.
**SAVE THE DATE!**

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**MARCH**

**Spring Break**  
Monday, March 13 - Friday, March 17

**Spelman Pathways: “Women in Sports” Masterclass**  
Tuesday, March 21

**Junior Preview Day**  
Friday, March 24

**Courageous Conversations: Black in the C-Suite**  
Thursday, March 23

**APRIL**

**Founder’s Day Convocation**  
Tuesday, April 11

**Courageous Conversations: Black in the C-Suite**  
Wednesday, April 19

**Research Day**  
Friday, April 21

**Spelbound 2023**  
Friday, April 21 - Saturday, April 22

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

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

Inside Spelman is published monthly by the Division of Strategic Communications and Marketing. All editorial correspondence should be directed to the editor at: publicrelations@spelman.edu.

CONTACT US
Spelman College
350 Spelman Lane S.W. | Atlanta, GA 30314-4399
[p] 404-681-3643 | publicrelations@spelman.edu
For More Info, visit Spelman.edu/InsideSpelman