President’s Perspective

Helene Gayle, 11th President of Spelman College

Spelman Community:

Season’s greetings. As we celebrate the season of giving, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you for your unwavering support of our beloved institution. In this year-end edition of Inside Spelman, we are thrilled to share stories on how your generosity helps to champion our cause, empower our community and change the lives of our students.

Thanks to all of you, we are well-positioned to continue advancing our mission and long legacy of producing successful Black women across all sectors of society and fields – from science, technology and health to law, education, business and the arts.

Your time, efforts and gifts are essential to our ability to preserve and build upon the one-of-a-kind, transformative education that Spelman offers Black women and all who enter our gates. You can take pride in knowing that you are contributing to the scholarship of our faculty and to the development of future generations of young women who are committed to driving positive change across the globe. Through them, you are also investing in the betterment of our communities and our world.

We are also grateful for the steadfast support of our alumnae as we celebrate the Season of Sisterhood – a special time of year when alumnae come together to make their Gift to Change the World by supporting Spelman Strong and other areas of the College. Their love for Spelman truly is the fuel that ignites the spirit of legacy, which was on full display during Homecoming 2023. You can relive some of the Homecoming magic in this edition.

As we reflect on the first half of this academic year, we have so much to be thankful for, including our standing as the #1 producer of Black women who earn Ph.D.’s in STEM fields, and the College’s rankings among the nation’s liberal arts colleges by U.S. News And World Report, as the #1 Historically Black College and University, #2 top performer in social mobility, #11 best learning environment, #15 most innovative school, #19 best undergraduate liberal arts teaching program and #39 best liberal arts college.

We are thankful for our community of faculty, staff, students, alumnae, families, friends, corporate donors and partners, and your contributions and commitment to the future of Spelman College.

I wish you all a safe and happy holiday and a prosperous New Year.

With gratitude,

Helene Gayle

COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS
Black in the C Suite

AUTHOR AND PROFESSOR RUTH SIMMONS, OCTOBER 16, 2023

A FIRESIDE CHAT

ESSENCE VENTURES CEO CAROLINE WANGA, NOVEMBER 9, 2023

REPLAY FALL 2023 CONVERSATIONS - STREAM ONLINE
Spelman College has always been more than just an institution. For 142 years, Spelman has been a transformative community — a safe space for young women of African descent to live, thrive and learn together. From the basement of Friendship Baptist Church to its present-day campus, Spelman has climbed mountains to become the premier liberal arts college that it is today – a journey made possible by the magnanimous contributions of its supporters and benefactors. In Spelman, our donors have chosen to invest in more than brick and mortar or short-term fixes. They’ve invested in the incalculable promise of legacy, greatness and fulfillment.

“The investment of our generous supporters continues to uplift communities and transform the lives of our students and faculty,” said Helene Gayle, M.D., MPH, president of Spelman College. “Each contribution assists us in achieving one of our primary goals – ensuring that every Spelman student receives an extraordinary education that empowers them to thrive in their authenticity and drive change and innovation.” Dr. Gayle has made fundraising one of her top priorities as president of the College. She believes that campus life should be stimulating and uphold high intellectual standards, creating an environment that is deeply intentional about nurturing the success of young Black women.

Our excellence is limitless, and the investment put forth by Spelman’s benefactors cannot be measured in dollars alone. Their gifts continuously enrich the experiences of our students by supporting initiatives that address society’s most pressing challenges and by attracting exceptional faculty that positively impact the lives of our students. Many of the faculty and students, programs, and innovations supported by Spelman’s donors help keep us on trajectories that extend beyond Spelman’s gates and well into the future.

“Investing in Spelman means investing in future leaders,” said computer science major and food studies minor Joy M. Rutledge, C’2025. “Young women across campus are making waves in health, policy, research, education and entrepreneurship, to name a few. As for myself, I am determined to pursue a career in sustainable agriculture. By leveraging technology, we can ensure that everyone has access to fresh and nourishing food, which is essential for a healthy and fulfilling life.”

Spelman staff members work closely with corporate and foundation partners to elevate the College’s exceptional programs and cultivate unparalleled experiences for students like Rutledge, inspiring a generation of ambitious young minds. A notable example of such collaboration is the $10 million contribution awarded by Bank of America for the Center for Black Entrepreneurship, the first academic center dedicated to producing, training and supporting Black entrepreneurial talent.

While the College receives significant support from its corporate partners, it also benefits from the valuable contributions of its alumnae, who — in addition to providing financial support — play an active role in keeping their fellow sisters involved in events and well-equipped for the future. An example of this generosity is evidenced by the $5 million donation from Latanya Richardson Jackson, C’71, and her husband, Samuel L. Jackson, for the restoration of Spelman’s Rockefeller Arts Building, the largest alumnae donation in Spelman’s history. Through the remarkable generosity of Spelman alumnae, the College’s rich heritage and traditions are preserved while adding to the diverse and remarkable alumnae community that activates change worldwide.

“As the reopening of the Rockefeller Arts Building approaches, I can’t help but smile from ear to ear. Since the first gathering in the Baldwin Burroughs Theatre in 1964, Art at Spelman was destined to thrive,” said Kerrington J. Griffin, C’ 2024. “Being a senior in the Spelman College Glee Club and an aspiring Broadway actress, the renovations will not only allow incoming Spelmanites to properly train, but to grow with the proper tools to facilitate magic. Although I’ll have one semester in the building, I can’t wait to walk into Room 107 and continue the legacy of the Spelman College Glee Club.”

Spelman is proud to be home to a dynamic group of scholars who are committed to and passionate about solving the world’s most challenging problems. Thanks to the munificent contributions of our dedicated alumnae, donors and benefactors, our students are poised to make an incredible impact on society. By investing in their extraordinary talents and aspirations, Spelman’s donors help to unleash the full potential of this next generation of leaders and build a brighter future for all.
Spelman College Symposium with Google Celebrates Black Women as Disruptors in Tech

On October 13, 2023, Spelman College hosted the Equity in Innovation Symposium in collaboration with Google, on the future of innovation in higher education and the pivotal role Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Black women play as disruptors in driving technology innovation.

The Spelman College Camille Olivia Hanks, Ed.D., Academic Center Auditorium buzzed with excitement and anticipation as students, alumnae and Atlanta technology professionals gathered to learn about Spelman’s partnership with Google, which includes a $5 million grant to support the creation of an extensive data hub that will track the contributions of Black, Latina, and Indigenous women in STEM.

The half-day event included “AI Lightning Talks,” with faculty, students and representatives from Google who spoke on how artificial intelligence intersects with education, cybersecurity advocacy and the arts. The culminating event was a fireside chat with Spelman President Helene Gayle and Google’s Chief Diversity Officer Melonie Parker, who leaned in on opportunities for Black women to lead in technology and innovation.

Click here to view Equity in Innovation Symposium highlights.

Spelman’s Glee Club Kicks off Road to 100 with a Mix of Performances and Reflections

For nearly 100 years, the Spelman College Glee Club has nurtured the musical talents of students — evolving into an esteemed organization on Spelman’s campus and beyond. Following the recent performance of the 97th Annual Spelman & Morehouse Christmas Carol Concert, and in celebration of the organization’s 100th anniversary next year, the Glee Club is reflecting on its legacy and preparing for a beautifully melodic future.

“The HBCU choral tradition in America began at the turn of the 20th century with the Fisk Jubilee Singers and has strengthened and advanced through the work of the Spelman College Glee Club,” said Kevin Johnson, DMA, Glee Club director.

Dr. Johnson has been at the helm of Spelman’s Glee Club for 25 years, leading the charge of musical excellence and taking the organization to even higher heights with performances throughout the United States and abroad. The musical impact of the organization can be heard around the world — literally — and within the lives of its members and alumnae.

“Before coming to Spelman College in August 2021, I lived in Mexico City, Mexico, with my family,” said Nyomi Munson, a junior computer science major. “In high school, I was the only Black student in my class, but I decided to break out of my shell by auditioning for the Spelman Glee Club, which I successfully joined. This experience has been transformative, providing me with a supportive community and a special place at Spelman.”

President of the Spelman College Glee Club, Gabrielle Campbell, C’2024, said the club has aided in her growth during her time at Spelman.

“The Glee Club provided me with a sisterhood of talented Black women who share a love for music similar to mine. Throughout these three years, the Glee Club has contributed to my growth as a musician overall, as well as my growth as a leader and member in my community. Every rehearsal, I am surrounded by people of all majors, classes and interests, which has made me appreciate the way in which the Spelman College Glee Club brings people together in ways that they wouldn’t without the organization.”

Aptly titled, “Road to 100”, The Spelman community can show their support for the organization’s centennial celebration by following the Road to 100 journey on YouTube (@SpelmanCollegeGleeClub) Instagram and Facebook (@SpelmanGlee).

“At Spelman, we are people of change. The shoulders that we stand upon never received applause or fame. So, in their honor, we dedicate our 100 years as an organization as the quintessential example of Black excellence. We are committed to amaze and inspire for another 100 years,” said Dr. Johnson.
Natalie Watson-Singleton, Ph.D., Awarded NIH Grant to Support Study of Hypertension and Pregnancy in Black and Latina Women

Natalie Watson-Singleton, Ph.D., associate professor of psychology, has received a grant from the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The $201,295 grant, entitled “Culturally Adapted Prenatal Mindfulness Training to Reduce Cardiovascular Disparities in Black and Latina Women,” will allow Dr. Watson-Singleton to study hypertension and pregnancy in Black and Latina women.

Hypertensive disorders of pregnancy (HDP) are the most common medical conditions in pregnancy and a leading cause of maternal morbidity and mortality in the United States. Black and Latina women have higher rates of HDP, present with more severe disease. Dr. Watson-Singleton plans to interview Black and Latina pregnant women about the barriers and facilitators to participating in prenatal mindfulness training (MT) interventions and to test if MT reduced stress among Black and Latina pregnant women.

Erdi Kara, Ph.D., and Yanhua Zhai, Ph.D., Awarded Department of Energy Grants to Fund STEM Projects

Erdi Kara, Ph.D., assistant professor of mathematics, and Yanhua Zhai, Ph.D., IBM-HBCU Quantum Center Scholar-in-Residence, have been selected as new Department of Energy grant recipients.

Dr. Kara received a grant in the amount of $400,000 for his work, “Uncertainty Quantification for Multifidelity Operator Learning.” According to Dr. Kara, the focus of the collaborative grant with Pacific Northwest National Lab is to create a mathematical framework for processing and understanding complex data from different sources. “We’re diving deep into three main areas of study. First, we’re figuring out how to mix data or models of varying quality levels and measure how confident we are in the resulting system. Second, we’re exploring how our system can learn on-the-go, ensuring it remains robust and doesn’t forget vital information. Lastly, we’re looking at how to estimate finer details when we have information about larger patterns,” said Dr. Kara.

Dr. Zhai received a grant for “Reaching an Advanced Computing Technologies Workforce through Education Initiatives in Quantum Information Science and Engineering” in the amount of $449,322. The grant aims to advance the field of quantum computing and communications, which has received substantial investment from the Department of Energy (DOE), particularly through the Advanced Scientific Computing Research program. “With the support of this grant, our research centers on quantum information sciences, with a specific emphasis on quantum algorithms and quantum key distribution,” said Dr. Zhai. The grant will benefit Spelman students through training and arming them with the essential knowledge in quantum information science. “This education will not only prepare them for potential research opportunities in this field but also enable them to pursue advanced studies, potentially leading to a Ph.D. in quantum information sciences,” said Dr. Zhai. The grant will also facilitate the establishment of a quantum optics lab at the College, providing students with hands-on experience in vital lab techniques.

The U.S. Department of Energy awarded a total of $16 million in funding for four projects. The projects were selected by competitive peer review under the DOE Funding Opportunity Announcement for Scientific Machine Learning for Complex Systems.
As a resurgence in the interest of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) reaches an all-time high, it has also become critical for HBCUs to use that interest to ensure that their federal, state, and local needs are heard and met. To meet that need, Spelman College has established a new office dedicated to representing the College with government and policy stakeholders. The Office of Government and Community Relations, in collaboration with students, faculty, and staff, will play a key role in advancing the College’s work in partnership with local, state, and federal officials, while also building and strengthening relationships with stakeholders and supporters throughout the city of Atlanta, the state and beyond. At Spelman College, Fatimot Ladipo, who joined the College earlier this year, as associate vice president of the Office of Government and Community Relations is now leading these advocacy efforts on behalf of Spelman.

“On a day-to-day basis, I am reaching out to policymakers at the local, state, or federal level or their staff to ensure that they are informed about things happening around campus or on legislative or policy matters that impact us, with the goal of securing an outcome that will benefit our campus and our students,” said Ladipo.

One of the office’s most important functions is to increase and diversify government funding to support key Spelman priorities, including financial resources for students, research funding for faculty, and funding for programs and facilities maintenance and expansion. The office is also tasked with establishing and nurturing partnerships with key stakeholders that support the economic growth and vitality of the local community.

“The role of my office is very similar to the role of the Office of Institutional Advancement— we both steward relationships and bring resources to campus, but with different stakeholders,” said Ladipo. This includes working with federal, state, and local policymakers, and corporate and non-profit community stakeholder groups externally—and campus partners like the Office of Financial Aid, Office of Research Innovation and Collaboration (ORIC), and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness internally to help achieve the long-term goal of making Spelman College a needs blind institution. But for now, the office continues to focus on advocating to offset the cost of a Spelman education through additional scholarships, stipends, tuition waivers, and partnership opportunities, to increase the award for Georgia’s HOPE scholarship for Private Colleges and Universities, to increase funding for grants from federal agencies for paid research opportunities for Spelman students and faculty.

Ladipo is also focused on collaborating with faculty and staff to ensure students have multifaceted exposure to government, academic, and advocacy perspectives. “As students get more entrenched in their major courses, there are opportunities for our office to help them explore internship opportunities with any of the levels of government – help them understand a little more about agencies that are directly or indirectly tied to their area of study, oftentimes agencies that are unfamiliar to students,” she said. Since Ladipo joined the Spelman Team, there has been a steady flurry of activity from the Government Relations office.

On August 31, 2023, in collaboration with ORIC and select faculty, hosted a campus visit with Congresswoman Nikema Williams and NASA Deputy Administrator Pamela Melroy for a roundtable on Climate Sustainability and ways to increase diversity in STEM-related fields. During the visit, we highlighted research by Spelman students and faculty and our 2023 NASA Scholar. On September 25, 2023, while in Washington, D.C. for the White House HBCU Initiative, the team attended Federal Agency meetings with President Gayle, regarding funding for campus safety and security. On September 26, 2023, in collaboration with Spelman’s Federal Lobbyist, the team secured a spot for President Gayle to fly from D.C. to Atlanta on Airforce 2 for Vice President Kamala Harris’ Campus Tour Stop to Morehouse College.

On October 4, 2023, Ladipo teamed up with President Gayle, Senior Team members, faculty, and students to welcome local and state officials to campus, including members of the Georgia Legislative Black Caucus. On October 11, 2023, they welcomed Lt. Governor Burt Jones and State Senator Sonya Halpern along with members of their senate staff.

Ladipo, in collaboration with ORIC and the Natural Sciences Department also coordinated a campus visit on October 16, 2023 with the U.S. Department of Energy. More than 20 DOE officials held conversations on the collective goal of strengthening current collaborations and facilitating new partnerships through funding opportunities and current research of both faculty and students from the Division of Natural Sciences & Mathematics.

Although much of the office’s work is behind the scenes, the team has a big role in conveying Spelman’s story in a manner that effectively engages legislators, influences policy, and improves our community.

“You may see us around campus popping our heads in meetings or classes, but just know we are there to learn more about the great work going on all over the college so we can we can amplify it externally,” said Ladipo.
Giving Back by Paying It Forward: How Cynthia Spence, Ph.D., C’78, Inspires the Next Generation of Social Justice Scholars

Spelman has a long and storied history of developing today’s students into tomorrow’s leaders. When students graduate from Spelman, they are equipped with the knowledge, tools and skills to not only thrive but to activate meaningful change that impacts Black women, Black communities and society as a whole. The legacy of Spelman College partly rests on a foundation of advocacy, philanthropy and humanitarianism rooted in selflessness and a commitment to creating a more just and equitable world.

Inspired by this fact for more than three decades, Cynthia Neal Spence, Ph.D., C’78, associate professor of sociology and director of Spelman’s Social Justice Fellows program and the College’s UNCF/Mellon Programs, selflessly gives back to her alma mater and – the next generation of Spelman women – through her tactile leadership and dedication to advocacy work.

“My time at Spelman could be a lot less demanding, but I know that the mentorship and preparation of student activists and social justice advocates will last long after I am gone,” said Dr. Spence. “The opportunity to plant seeds for social justice advocacy is one of the ways I can pay it forward.”

Part of the mentorship and preparation Spence speaks of includes providing budding activists and advocates with unique opportunities to learn and serve on the local and state level even before they leave the gates of Spelman.

Recently, Spence supported the third cohort of the Georgia Women’s Policy Institute (GWPI) Scholars program (which consists of 19 Spelman students), in partnership with the YWCA of Greater Atlanta.

Through their GWPI experience, the Spelmanites are being trained to advocate for legislative initiatives through the Georgia General Assembly. Dr. Spence said the importance of the students’ work as GWPI fellows is “that they are truly learning how to make a choice to change the world through legislative policy advocacy.” Through her work with the next generation of Spelman women, who will one day join her as accomplished alumnae in their own rights, Dr. Spence is doing her part to elevate the Spelman difference by way of unique instruction and her contemporary approach to showing students who and what they can become.

“I believe my work provides a platform for students to find ways to animate the tag line ‘a choice to change the world,’” said Dr. Spence. “Students are exposed to role models and mentors whose scholar activism and social advocacy work exemplifies how individuals can in fact make a difference in small and big ways.”

Last month, Dr. Spence coordinated a special visit and conversation at Spelman with leaders from the nation’s Federal Reserve Banks. Drawing the presidents of Morehouse College and Clark Atlanta University, the day’s events and conversations centered around how the Federal Reserve Banks can further engage in meaningful partnerships with Atlanta University Center (AUC) institutions and conduct research on wealth and equity.

However, Dr. Spence doesn’t see efforts and events like these as work – she sees them as opportunities to make indelible contributions to the Spelman community and the world at large through the students she impacts.

“I am so very proud when I see Spelman alumnae and current students whose lives I have been able to touch,” said Dr. Spence. “We truly have so many ‘before’ and ‘after’ images of students who have accepted Spelman as a place for intellectual and personal growth. I tell students all the time ‘You can either just ‘go through Spelman’ or allow ‘Spelman to go through you!’ The latter have a much better experience.’

Pairing her love of engaging Black women of the future and the process of teaching and learning with her love for the mission of her alma mater, Dr. Spence is giving back to Spelman daily – from the heart.

“My work is a labor of love,” she said.
Thank You
On behalf of our entire editorial team, we would like to extend our thanks to the students, faculty, staff, alumnae, families and all members of the Spelman community, local and abroad, for your continued support of this publication.

Happy Holidays
FROM ALL OF US AT
Spelman College
Spelman students Nichele Washington, C’2025; Jada Mason, C’2024; Devyn Washington, C’2026 (not pictured); and Joy Rutledge, C’2025, all have one thing in common – the Spelman Innovation Lab.

The College’s hub for science, research, technology and gaming on campus, the lab is also a space for students to ideate and lay the foundation to bring groundbreaking, industry-shifting ideas to life. Aptly called a “makerspace,” the Innovation Lab houses an array of tools and equipment for student-use, including 3D printers, laser cutters, 4-axis CNC router and a 3D scanner. The lab also welcomes special guests to campus for events and holds programming for students to establish and/or grow their skillsets in technology, entrepreneurship and gaming. Spelman is merging the fields of technology and entrepreneurship to create a holistic environment dedicated to the success of students.

“In the Innovation Lab with the guidance and mentorship of Dr. Jerry Volcy, Professor Jaycee Holmes and Mr. Eric Thompson, I learned how to create prototypes, how to use 3D modeling programs and 3D printers and how to ideate effectively,” said Nichele Washington. “Through Spelpreneur with Ms. Sonya Rush, I learned how to take my creation in the Innovation Lab and turn it into a viable business idea complete with a value proposition, website, pitch, pitch deck, problem statement, MVP, revenue model, go-to-market strategy and more.”

Under Rush’s leadership, the Spelpreneur Program introduces students to the fundamentals of entrepreneurship, and they even have the opportunity participate in “Entrepreneur Chats,” “Speed Mentoring” and a 10-Day Startup Competition. This high-level programming helps Spelman students become more prepared as they navigate business and entrepreneurship. Recently, Spelman students had the opportunity to present their work to the Metro Atlanta Chamber during the organization’s annual meeting.

Washington, an Innovation Lab Fellow, presented Oshun, a zero-waste company, with the Chamber’s 1,000+ audience. “It felt wonderful to know that I was not only representing myself and the hard work I have been doing for almost four years, but also the school and (my) mentors that supported me by giving me resources to accomplish my goals and several opportunities to prove myself to others,” said Washington.

Oshun is taking lipstick packaging and making it more sustainable. Washington’s business venture “meets consumer demands for environmentally sustainable packaging without breaking the bank.” After presenting at the Metro Atlanta Chamber, Washington was granted the opportunity to meet with a startup founder who attended. “I am clear that this would not have happened had my mentors not put me before the Chamber of Commerce,” said Washington.

Joy Rutledge is giving back to the Atlanta University Center community through Yardsell, an online marketplace exchange connecting students and student entrepreneurs. Rutledge’s journey to Spelman began after making the choice to study computer science.

She attributes her time at Spelman as the motivation to engage in topics she’s passionate about, such as sustainability, accessible food pathways and supporting local businesses.

“My journey with [Yardsell] began during my freshman year when I decided to pursue the idea,” said Rutledge. “In that same year, I participated in Spelpreneur’s 10-day pitch competition, guided by mentors from Google and Home Depot, where we placed third, marking my first successful attempt at raising capital for the project.”

Rutledge also presented her work to the Atlanta Metro Chamber, marking her inaugural appearance on a large stage. “Being told to expect an audience of a thousand individuals was daunting at first. The once daunting sensation swiftly transformed into exhilaration as I set foot on stage,” said Rutledge. “I learned firsthand what it meant to be undaunted as that was the motto my freshman year at Spelman.”

Graduating senior, Jada Mason said attending Spelman has made a powerful contribution to her life. “Spelman has showed me that regardless of the ways Black women are put down, we have the power to change the world,” said Mason. The computer science major created “Copies,” a digital story-based role-playing game.

“Before coming to Spelman, I never would have thought I was going to create my own video game, let alone multiple games. But the Spelman Innovation Lab, taught me a lot about what it takes to create a video game – like how each aspect of the story, art and coding within it are all important parts that make up the video game creation process,” Mason said.

Washington is also carving out her own lane in gaming. She’s currently building the Georgia HBCU Exhibition, an interactive museum that uses virtual reality to provide an opportunity to visit the 10 HBCUs that call Georgia home. Washington began the project with absolutely no programming experience but credits the Innovation Lab with helping her develop skills.

“I would never have made it as far in this project as I have without Dr. Volcy,” said Washington. “I came into it with no programming experience at all, and he has been teaching me coding over the course of the project’s development.”

Washington’s project has the potential to provide future student applicants with the opportunity to visit a college, without physically stepping foot on campus.

Each of these projects by Spelman students are proof of the College’s ability to develop talent that makes an impact on the worlds of business, sustainability, entertainment and education – proving that giving to Spelman is making an investment in the creativity and achievements of Spelman students and in the benefit of the world at large.
Revisiting Spelman’s Ralph Lauren Corporate Foundation Scholars

Since 2021, the Ralph Lauren Corporate Foundation and Spelman College have partnered to empower students who exemplify passion, curiosity and a dedication to equity in local communities. The Ralph Lauren Corporate Foundation Scholarship offers financial aid to deserving students to offset educational expenses while enrolled at Spelman. The foundation has provided a total of $100,000 ($12,500 per semester) in scholarship support to five Spelmanites over their four-year matriculation. Beyond financial assistance, students maintain good academic standing and actively participate in community service within Southwest Atlanta, including working at local schools. This month, we highlight the scholars and allow them to share a bit of their experiences to date.

“As a Ralph Lauren Corporate Foundation Scholar at Spelman College, I can exercise my skills of compassion, leadership and collaboration. Working with K-5 schools in the greater Atlanta area allows me to connect with the community I am a part of. Through this connection, I can access relevant situations and come up with solutions to eradicate them. Through my work in this prestigious program, I can apply these skills to my academics and motivate myself to accomplish my goals. The skills in which I’ve gained can be used beyond Spelman in my community and future career as a healthcare professional. Using skills of compassion, leadership and collaboration will provide optimal healthcare to various communities and generate a lasting impact.”

Chelsea Tamara Benton, C’2026
Health Science major pre-medical track Management and Organization minor

“My role as a Ralph Lauren Corporate Foundation Scholar has influenced my academic journey at Spelman College by pushing me to pursue community-based research that will empower local governments, as well as non-profit organizations, to make impactful policy decisions. I envision using the skills I have developed through my experiences in this program to enact social change in academia and the public policy sphere, always striving to serve marginalized communities and make a positive impact on the world around me.”

Dahlia Nadine Tarver, C’2026
Economics major on the Ph.D. track

“As a Ralph Lauren Scholar, I have had the opportunity to gain transferable skills that will aid me in not only my college experience but my professional career. I have been able to participate in professional development that has strengthened my understanding of service and of how I can better serve my community. I have been able to learn so much from the elementary school where I have served the past two years, and I plan on using the lessons and skills that I have learned there to create my own school that can uplift the community where it will reside.”

Brooke Blacknall, C’2026
Elementary Education

“As a Ralph Lauren Corporate Foundation Scholar at Spelman, I have developed a deeper understanding of the importance of advocacy, representation and equity within underserved communities. I believe that everyone should have access to the resources that they need, regardless of their socioeconomic status. Throughout my community service at Dunbar Elementary School and STEM Sports, I have championed for education equity as it relates to science, reading, and math. I aspire to become a pediatric dentist in the future, because I am passionate about using my scientific knowledge and skills to decrease the disparities in oral health access and outcomes. I plan to use the experiences I’ve gained through service to help inspire and mobilize others, while consistently advocating for equity, education and healthcare to address systemic issues that impact marginalized groups.”

Kailen Nichole Bain’ C’2026
Chemistry on the pre-dental track.

“Being a Ralph Lauren Corporate Foundation Scholar has profoundly impacted my academic journey, providing both financial support and an opportunity for self-discovery at Spelman. I started a nonprofit called Women4Change before I came to Spelman, and being a Ralph Lauren Scholar has allowed me to gain valuable insights that have led me to refine my business and personal goals. Through Women4Change, I support women immigrating to the United States to escape relationship violence. I am motivated to not only make a difference in the community I am a part of but also to inspire individuals globally to contribute to their communities.”

Tamara Morgan, C’2026
Political Science major on the pre-law track with a double minor in Sociology & Anthropology & American Sign Language
Spelman Students Showcase Cutting Edge Research at 2023 SASA Conference

Spelman seniors Morgan Ellis and Kaitlyn Whitner and junior Ayanna “AT” Rhoades had an opportunity to showcase their innovative work at the 2023 Southeastern American Studies Association (SASA) Conference. The conference highlights work related to interdisciplinary fields encompassing the humanities and social sciences around the study of the U.S. and North America (including history, literature, anthropology, culture, sociology, languages and political science).

“It felt wonderful to represent Spelman at the SASA Conference,” said Ellis. “It was very inspiring to hear my peers present their research and to be able to look at how each of our research was connected to one another!”

Held September 28-30, 2023 at The Georgian Terrace in Atlanta, this year’s SASA conference was centered around “undiscovered country” — a utopian concept resonant with creators of speculative fiction and alternate histories whose work evokes places beyond our reckoning. Related topics ranging from maternal mortality to the controversial proposed local police training center locally known as “Cop City.”

“I loved having the opportunity to bring my research from a class during my junior year to life at the SASA conference,” said Whitner. “Being able to work [alongside] my fellow sisters and hear their different perspectives about different extremist groups, and how all our research intertwined in different ways, was an eye-opening experience! It definitely solidified my love for sharing knowledge with people around me.”

In addition to the trio, SASA featured a large Spelman contingent of current faculty and alumnae who presented on topics ranging from maternal mortality to the controversial proposed local police training center locally known as “Cop City.”

ALUMNAE HIGHLIGHTS

Another homecoming is in the books at Spelman College. The annual week of celebratory festivities was held October 22-29, 2023 and drew thousands of attendees from across the country. This year’s homecoming inspired Spelman’s alumnae and campus community to reconnect and reflect on sisterhood, academic success and the College’s bright future.

The week kicked off with an Opening Worship Service in the prestigious Sisters Chapel with a special message from the Reverend Jasmine Rose Smothers, C’2005, Lead Pastor of the historic Atlanta First United Methodist Church. On Thursday, a “Jewel Chat & Chew” was held for Diamond Daughters and Golden Girls from the class of 1974. The Opening Convocation featured Safietou Seck, C’97 – SARAYAA owner and creator; Tori Soudan, C’96 – Tori Soudan Brand owner and creator; and Desirée Rogers – Black Opal LLC CEO, for an in-depth conversation centered on entrepreneurship in the fashion and beauty industries.

The week also included a series of daytime events: Alumnae Check-In, Market Friday on the Oval, the Welcome Home Day Party in the Museum of Fine Art, and “Coming Out and Coming Home” a Lavender Homecoming Reception in Manley Student Center.

Homecoming 2023 culminated the way it began – with worship. Alumnae gathered Sunday morning for the Jewel Brunch, before the closing worship service, led by Reverend Chelsea D. Waite, C’2016, Assistant Pastor for Children, College, and Women’s Ministries at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta.

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Homecoming 2023 Recap (cont’d)

Homecoming was a vibrant celebration of sisterhood and unity. The campus was filled with school pride as the Spelman community rallied around the theme “Ignite the Spirit of Legacy.” Alumnae, students and cherished friends of the College came together for a week of events encompassing a Homecoming Convocation, Market Friday, Welcome Home Party and Saturday tailgate. This homecoming was a tribute to the college’s rich history and unwavering dedication to empowering women of African descent through education and leadership.

IN THE NEWS

Google and Spelman College partner to support minority women in STEM
Coverage of the Equity in Innovation Symposium. Spelman College Provost Pamela Scott-Johnson, C’82, is quoted in the article.
10/13, SOURCE: Atlanta News First (WANF)

Spelman scholars on the past, present, and future
Alumnae across generations discuss what their alma mater means to them and how it transformed their lives.
10/18, SOURCE: Atlanta Magazine

WATCH: Three Choirs Come Together for Special “Music and the Spoken Word” Broadcast
The Tabernacle Choir and Orchestra at Temple Square welcomed the Morehouse College Glee Club and the Spelman College Glee Club from Atlanta, Georgia for the Choir’s weekly Sunday broadcast of “Music and the Spoken Word” on October 22, 2023. A link to the performance is included for viewing.
10/22, SOURCE: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Spelman students participate in pilot program aimed at eliminating racial wealth gaps
On a recent edition of “Closer Look,” Korene Smith and Dr. Venetta Coleman, the director of Institutional Effectiveness and director of the Quality Enhancement Plan at Spelman College, talked with show host Rose Scott about the goals of Spelman’s new pilot program, including how it aims to eliminate the racial wealth gap.
10/30, SOURCE: WABE-FM

A Brighter Future for Black Women in STEM: Kimberly Bryant and HBCU Student Cadence Patrick Are Making It Happen
AT&T Dream in Black celebrates and empowers future leaders who are making a positive impact. The third-annual AT&T Rising Future Makers Showcase is back to reward a new class of HBCU students with exclusive opportunities to take their dreams to new heights. In this episode of The Futurist, Cadence Patrick, C’2025, shares her mission to help young Black women navigate the world of STEM. Cadence sat down with technologist Kimberly Bryant, founder of the Black Innovation Lab, to discuss their shared passion for computer science and building a better future.
11/3, SOURCE: Global Grind
Atlanta wants to study reparations for Black residents, but not direct payments

Housing, business and education could be areas where the task force considers repayment for years of inequities. Spelman’s Dr. Cynthia Spence, a professor and reparations expert, is quoted in the article.

11/8, SOURCE: Atlanta News First

ESSENCE CEO Caroline Wanga Discusses Authenticity, Purpose And Legacy At Spelman College

During a fireside chat with Spelman’s President Helene D. Gayle, Wanga spoke about her rules to life: “Don’t chase accomplishments, pursue purpose,” she said.

11/10, SOURCE: ESSENCE

Spelman receives $750K grant to boost local Black entrepreneurs

Spelman College has received a nearly $750,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce for a new incubator program for local entrepreneurs, which will be housed at the school’s Center for Black Entrepreneurship. Over the next three years, the Launch Incubator For Traction (LIFT) will give 48 early-stage Black tech founders in the metro area (16 per year) access to mentorship, investors, education and other local resources. Grant Warner, executive director of the CBE, is quoted in the article.

11/17, SOURCE: Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Sacred Ground: The fight to identify the final resting place of more than 300 African Americans

For members of the Black community, maintaining the upkeep and maintenance of the final resting place of their ancestors has remained a hurdle, mystery, and a fight for generations. Spelman’s Dr. Michelle Hite was interviewed for this investigative series.

11/21, SOURCE: InvestigateTV

Meet the Leader Helping Train Future Black Business Owners

The return of federal student loan payments this month threatens to derail prospects for graduates of HBCUs, a cohort already facing steep economic disadvantages. The nation’s more than 100 HBCUs, including Spelman College in Atlanta and Howard University in Washington, DC, serve more low-income and first-generation students than traditional schools and aim to help close the wealth gap between Black households and their White counterparts. Dr. Grant Warner was interviewed for this story.

11/28, SOURCE: Word in Black

Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell Addresses State of the Economy and Engages President Gayle, Leaders During Visit to Spelman College

Spelman College welcomed Federal Reserve Board Chairman Jerome Powell and Federal Reserve Board Governor Lisa D. Cook, Ph.D., C’86, on December 1, 2023, for a full day of insightful conversations on the economy, career opportunities in the finance sector and economic mobility opportunities and challenges often faced Black entrepreneurs and technology firms.

12/1, SOURCE: Atlanta Journal Constitution

12/1, SOURCE: Spelman.edu/ourstories
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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