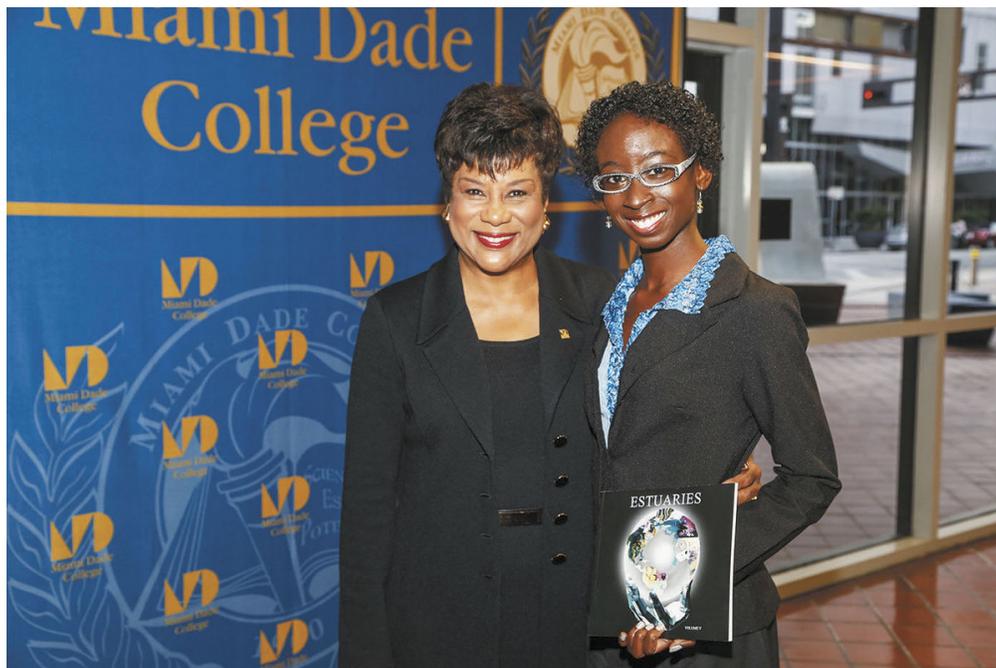


http://www.miamitimesonline.com/education/mdc-grads-looking-to-the-future-to-power-of-human/article_83bad4ac-2ab9-11e7-8af1-67f41f6e4fdd.html

MDC grads looking to the future to power of human spirit

These four students will be among 13,000 to receive their diplomas Saturday

Allison Horton Special to The Miami Times Apr 26, 2017



Credit: Cristian Lazzari
Joy Barnes, pictured right.

Driven by hope and inspiration, even tragedy and challenges, these four Miami Dade College graduates are a testament to the power of the human spirit. They will be among the nearly 13,000 students from MDC's eight campuses who will reach for their college dreams as they walk across the stage with diplomas on Saturday, April 29.

Joy Barnes, who was homeschooled, wanted to attend a college where she could adjust at her own pace. She chose MDC's Homestead Campus because of its welcoming and warm environment that felt more like a community than college. She even turned her experience into an article, "Homeschooling Lays Groundwork for College Success," which was published in the South Dade News Leader.

Barnes was also interviewed for NBC News during College Week. She was awarded the Bronze Presidential Volunteer Service Award in 2016 and graduates with an associate degree in biology. She plans to pursue a bachelor's degree in forensic science, as well as criminal justice.



North Campus political science major Krystal Lanier is a 2017 Newman Civic Fellow, a national distinction as one of the finest student leaders in the nation. Last fall, she served as a Campus Election Engagement Fellow, helping more than 1,000 students register to vote and helping to organize a major rally on Voter Registration Day.

Lanier took on leadership roles in many student organizations, including Student Government Association, Phi Theta Kappa and the Political Science Club. She aspires to become a public policy analyst, focusing on educational or healthcare policies. Lanier comes from a family of six with Honduran, African-American and Puerto Rican roots.

Yvens Duplessis, who attends the North Campus, hopes to one day conduct research for the World Health Organization and volunteer with the Peace Corps. The biology major was the recipient of the Omega Student Award Endowment, Trio Grant Award, Bank of America Scholarship, American Dream Scholarship and Scheffler Scholarship.

Duplessis is the first in his family to graduate from college, while taking on the role of a father by financially supporting and helping to raise his siblings after his parents divorced. "I chose MDC because I wanted to begin my college career without financial burden," Duplessis said.

Darlicia Sakers is a former foster youth who chose to surround herself with a support system to help her defy the odds that most others who age out of foster care face. A student at the North Campus, she serves as a peer mentor to incoming MDC students who are transitioning from the foster care system, and helps to guide them toward solutions to their academic and social needs.

Sakers is motivated to be the best role model for her son and continue to break barriers for students like her. She will graduate this month with her associate's degree in Criminal Justice after studying for under three years. Sakers plans to continue her education and earn her bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice, then begin her career in law enforcement.

MDC's 2017 graduates represent more than 190 countries and speak more than 90 languages. They are game changers, many already making a significant impact on their communities and intent on addressing some of the world's most pressing issues through scientific research, health care, international relations, technology, entrepreneurship, business development, law enforcement and much more.



Krystal Lanier



Darlicia Sakers

