

NEWS RELEASE

**Foundation for Independent Higher Education
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September 19, 2006

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Two Florida students selected for FIHE Collegiate Women of Color Leadership Development Institute

Washington, D.C.. --- Two students attending independent colleges in Florida were selected to participate in the FIHE Collegiate Women of Color Leadership Development Institute. In all, fifty-one college students from nineteen states participated in the Institute sponsored by the Foundation for Independent Higher Education. All of the young women selected are college seniors.

Starr Brookins, from Tampa, FL, is majoring in Criminology at The University of Tampa . Dione Occenad of Lauderhill, FL is majoring in Nursing & Biochemistry at the University of Miami. These young women were selected through a competitive process based on academic record, leadership achievements, letters of reference and an essay. “We believe that they will be able to make this world a better place through effective leadership,” said Algeania W. Freeman, Ph.D., founder of the institute.

This initiative is a project that grew out of FIHE’s national initiative, First Opportunity Partners (FOP). The FOP initiative strengthens the ability of independent higher education to reach out to

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traditionally underserved populations. Its three-fold purpose is to broaden accessibility to higher education, strengthen retention and academic experiences, and prepare students for the future world of work.

Participants were immersed in a rigorous leadership development program at the Mt. Washington Conference Center in Baltimore for four days in mid-August. A variety of speakers spoke on topics related to servant leadership. Many shared intimate experiences or historic insights that helped empower the young women to see themselves as future leaders. The group also visited the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) headquarters, where they heard from four top women leaders in national defense.

Participants were each assigned a mentor, a woman executive in a corporation, non-profit organization or government. The mentors met their students for the first time during the Baltimore program, and will stay in contact with the student during their senior year to help enhance their leadership abilities. Where possible, the student will participate in a job shadowing with their mentor. Dr. Katie C. Davis, chairperson of the Advisory and Steering Committees said, “Mentees left this institute excited, encouraged and more importantly, empowered.”

After classes start, participants will undertake a leadership project on their home campus or in the neighboring community during their senior year. A stipend of \$ 2,500 has been provided to assist each student in funding their project. This program engages women of color campus leaders enrolled at independent colleges across the nation and provides a learning experience to help prepare them for future leadership roles. The success of the program will contribute to an increase in highly-prepared women leaders from diverse backgrounds in the marketplace and society.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation of Battle Creek, Michigan is the major donor for the program. Major support was also provided by BP Foundation of the global energy group and the Chubb

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Group of Insurance Companies. Additional donors include American Family, State Farm Insurance, W.K. Kellogg Corporation, HSBC-North America, TIAA-CREF, and the Central Intelligence Agency.

The Foundation for Independent Higher Education is the national partner in a network of state and regional associations that develop resources for private colleges and universities throughout the nation. Over 626 institutions are members and enroll over 1.5 million students.

The FICF is a not-for-profit foundation that assists in program and resource development for the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida. Based in DeLand, the FICF is dedicated to providing financial assistance to students attending Florida's 28 independent colleges and universities. The FICF scholarship programs are funded by grants from corporate partners who are equally committed to providing the best educational alternatives for today's college students and tomorrow's leaders.

For information about the Florida Independent College Fund,
Please visit our website at www.ficf.org.

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