

PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

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Former Wallace TRIO Student Tru'Kessa Scott recently earned a masters of science in management from Florida Institute of Technology. She is employed by Lockheed Martin in Huntsville, Ala.

Wallace TRIO Student Achieves Education, Career

When she was in the sixth grade, Tru'Kessa Scott would meet regularly in her elementary school library with a few fellow classmates. She felt really special.

Tru'Kessa and her friends were chosen to participate in Talent Search, one of eight federal TRIO programs funded by the U.S. Department of Education. The program, administered by Wallace Community College – Sparks Campus, focuses on students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and/or show academic promise to achieve a college education as a first generation, post-secondary student.

Tru'Kessa achieved that and more.

The goal of Talent Search is to decrease the high school dropout rate, and to increase the number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds who complete high school and enroll in college. The program serves students from grades 6-12 and adults to age 27. Many students are as young as 11 years old.

“Everyone wasn’t selected or eligible to be in Talent Search,” Tru’Kessa recalled. “Mr. (Earl) Bynum came to school, and we met in the library. It kind of felt like a special society.” The students, from what was then Clayton Elementary School, participated in field trips to museums and other cultural-enrichment activities, and explored career options. “Talent Search gave me exposure to possibilities and opportunities,” said Scott.

When Tru’Kessa transitioned to Barbour County High School, she began participating in Upward Bound (UB), another TRIO program. UB teaches the skills and motivation to complete high school and to be successful in college.

The UB program targets ninth, tenth, and eleventh graders in four area high schools (Barbour County, Eufaula, Bullock County and Abbeville). The participation requirements are similar to the Talent Search program.

Upward Bound demanded Scott’s time and effort during the summer and on Saturdays during the academic year. Students participated in numerous trips, including college campus tours and a visit to Philadelphia, Pa. While on campuses, they stayed in dorms with students from other UB programs. One such campus was Alabama A&M University in Huntsville, Ala., the college that Scott ultimately attended on a full scholarship after graduating as salutatorian from Barbour County High School.

UB students also take classes in high school to prepare them for the next level. Terri Ricks, who is now the coordinator of student support services at Wallace, taught Scott math during the program. “I enjoyed the math classes the most because we learned the level of math that we would be taking next. For example, if I had just completed Algebra, I would take pre-calculus prior to the upcoming school year. It put me ahead of my counterparts,” Scott remarked. “I believe that this is how math became my favorite subject, and the subject I was best in, so I majored in mathematics at AAMU.”

The UB program also exposed Scott to experiences that challenged her in new ways. Taking a speech class under the tutelage of Mrs. Dixie Guice, an instructor in UB, was perhaps the most beneficial. “I had a fear of public speaking that I was not even aware of. I will never forget breaking into tears during one of our speech sessions, but now I am able to speak to any crowd,” she said.

As a result of participating in UB, Scott felt more prepared for college than other students. The expectation in the program is that students will attend college and obtain a degree. Typically, 60% of UB participants attain either an associate’s or bachelor’s degree within six years following graduation from high school.

Like the other TRIO programs, UB is federally funded and relies on government grants to offer services to area students. Wallace's Upward Bound program has been selected to receive funding from September 1, 2012 through August 31, 2013. The grant is for \$297,299,00 for this period. It is anticipated that the grant will be for a total of five years.

The summer after high school graduation, Scott participated in her third TRIO program, called the Student Support Services Bridge. While in Bridge, Scott took college courses during the summer for transfer to the college of her choice. Two of the courses transferred to AAMU to give her a headstart as a freshman. In addition, she learned study techniques from instructor Shannon Thomas during a college Orientation course.

The course that best prepared her for college-level work was African American History, which she says is her worst subject. Instructed by Eddie Thomas, Scott said taking his history class "was the first time I ever had to really study. I worked hard for that A and I learned so much!"

After Bridge, Scott was ready to apply the training she had received since sixth grade. She moved to Huntsville and, with the help of her scholarship, graduated from AAMU with a bachelor of science in mathematics and a minor in computer science. Three days after graduation Scott began work at Lockheed Martin Corporation in Huntsville as a Software Engineer. In May 2012 Scott received a master of science in management from Florida Institute of Technology.

Today, Scott still works for Lockheed Martin in Huntsville, Ala., developing and testing software for an air defense system. Scott encourages other students to explore her career choice. "STEM – Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics – is one of the best career fields to go into. It's not as hard as you would think," Scott explains.

Scott gave back to the UB and TRIO Student Support Services by tutoring students while in college. She continues to pay it forward by helping interns at Lockheed Martin prepare an end of summer presentation to display their summer experience, which helps them acclimate to the work environment.

Scott recommends that students who qualify should be encouraged to participate in the TRIO programs at Wallace. By participating in the programs, Scott felt that she was exposed to different cultures, traveling, and the importance of education. "I had no choice but to excel in life," she said. "Participating in these programs is the chance of a lifetime. It's a chance to step out of your comfort zone and try new things."

For Tru'Kessa Scott, the opportunity to excel directed her to where she needs to be in life.

For more about Talent Search call (334) 687-3543, ext. 4426 or 4280; Upward Bound call (334) 687-3543, ext. 4255; or Student Support Services, (334) 619-3003 – Sparks Campus or (334) 556-2368 – Wallace Campus.

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