

The Forum

Environmental Protection Agency Minority Academic Institutions Undergraduate Student Fellowships Newsletter Issue 1, 2003

In this issue

Read all about Na'Taki Osborne, 1994-95 MAI Fellow and current Environmental Justice advocate

Tips for a great summer in a new city

ECO completes survey of EPA MAI Fellows, 1990-2001

Calling all MAI Alumni!



Marlissa Stewart, EPA MAI Fellow

“Wilderness needs no defense, it needs only defenders.”

Edward Abbey

If you would like to receive this newsletter as an e-mailed pdf file instead of by mail, or if you would like to recommend that someone you know be added to our mailing list, please contact us at exchanges@eco.org

A Conversation with

Na'Taki Osborne, 1994-95 EPA Minority Academic Institutions Undergraduate Fellow

“I could not have asked for a better first experience in the environmental field,” says the 1996 graduate of Spelman College. She is not talking about her graduate studies at Emory University, where she earned her master’s in Environmental and Occupational Health. She is not even referring to her unique work with the National Wildlife Federation, where she is currently the group’s only Sustainable Communities Organizer, managing an initiative that addresses water quality and environmental justice issues in the most polluted watersheds of Atlanta. Na'Taki Osborne credits her eye-opening introduction to the environmental field to her experiences with the EPA’s MAI Fellowship program.

Since that time, Na'Taki has gone on to co-found the Center for Environmental Public Awareness, a nonprofit environmental education and

leadership development training organization. She serves on the board for both Georgians for Clean Energy and the Keep Atlanta Beautiful Commission (just a sample of her *pro bono* work). She has received many awards, including a fellowship with the Environmental Leadership Program, and perhaps most notably the 1997 Presidential Environmental Service Award. And to top it all off, Na'Taki was featured in an October 2002 *Redbook* article entitled “Mothers & Shakers,” which highlighted ten American women for their work on behalf of social causes. Na'Taki found herself featured along with supermodel Tyra Banks and First Lady Laura Bush!

She was kind enough to answer a few questions for the *Fellows Forum*:

FF: *Why did you apply for the MAI fellowship program?*

NO: I applied for the fellowship because I stood to gain a deeper understanding



Na'Taki Osborne, 1994-95 EPA MAI Fellow, is currently the only Sustainable Communities Organizer for the National Wildlife Federation.

of the various aspects of environmental work by participating in it. This was ideal for me because it helped me to figure out where I was most interested and where my knowledge and skills were most needed in the environmental field/

(continued on page 2)

ECO Completes Alumni Success Survey of EPA MAI Fellows, 1990-2001

The purpose of the EPA MAI Alumni Success Story Survey was to contact former EPA Minority Academic Institutions (MAI) Fellowship recipients from the years 1990 – 2001 to document their career progress and professional development, and to determine what proportion are pursuing environmental careers. Results of the survey are included in a report which details the beneficial outcomes of the fellowship and of the summer internship experience. The report also provides recommendations about where improvement efforts can be directed. The survey focuses on ten MAI Fellowship alumni and their careers since completion of their MAI internships. Look for highlights from the survey in the upcoming editions of



Three program alumnae from the 2002 EPA MAI Fellowship class

the Fellows Forum newsletter. For more information on this report, please visit ECO's MAI Fellows web page; go to www.eco.org and follow the links to the ECO/EPA website.

(Na'Taki Osborne continued from cover)

movement. The fellowship gave me an opportunity to conduct laboratory research at the Environmental Laboratory at my undergraduate institution, Spelman College and also gave me the opportunity to work in a regulating agency, the US Environmental Protection Agency. I was exposed to the worlds of environmental scientific – biological and toxicological – research, environmental policy, environmental and risk communications, environmental rule-making and regulation, and grassroots community activism. Through the fellowship program and all of its components, I learned many valuable lessons that I will always remember.

FF: *Where did you intern and what were your responsibilities?*

NO: My ECO internship assignment was at Region 4 of the United States Environmental Protection Agency. Specifically, I worked in the Waste Management Division and the South Superfund Remedial Branch. I assisted remedial project managers with reviewing, researching, and compiling data on environmental justice/injustice issues concerning people who live near Superfund hazardous wastes site in Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina through investigating and evaluating the impacts of implementing various remedial alternatives, drafting records of decision, initiating National Priorities List deletion procedures – for sites that were sufficiently cleaned up at levels protective of human health and the environment – making site visits, and participating in public meetings.

FF: *Did the fellowship and internship experiences affect your decision to continue on in the environmental field?*

NO: My ECO internship was my first environmental internship. It helped me to solidify what I wanted to do in terms of a career.

After the internship, I knew that I definitely wanted to pursue a career in the field of environmental protection with a focus on environmental justice issues. This internship opened many doors for me in terms of contacts with other environmental agencies and groups. It also helped me to get another internship position directly through the EPA, but in another division, the Water Management Division. My ECO internship and the other opportunities it lead to helped me to broaden my knowledge and scope of environmental issues.

My experience working in a federal regulation and enforcement agency helps me greatly in doing environmental justice work.

FF: *So your experiences at the EPA opened your eyes to more than “environmental protection” in general?*

NO: From the fellowship experience I gained some working, first-hand

knowledge of federal environmental regulations and enforcement issues that are critical to my work for environmental justice and my work in the environmental field in general. This internship was the beginning of my environmental activism as well. After this internship, I became very involved in community efforts, environmental activism, and volunteer projects. I knew then that my place was to work with people at the grassroots level, but I would not have been so clear about that without first having an experience in which, through government, I could try to help solve community problems. Without my ECO internship, I would not have gained the contacts and exposure to projects that have essentially shaped my career and community activism since then.

Look for the conclusion of ECO's interview with Na'Taki in the next issue of Fellows' Forum, coming late summer!

I gained... first-hand knowledge of federal environmental regulations and enforcement issues... critical to my work for environmental justice and my work in the environmental field in general.

Calling All MAI Alumni!



EPA MAI Alumni Curtis Durham and Carmen George with Charles McCrea, ECO Board member and former ECO Chief Operating Officer

Are you an alumnus of the EPA's Minority Academic Institutions Undergraduate Student Fellowship program?

In order to receive funding from Congress for the MAI Fellowship on an annual basis, we must maintain the credibility of this program, thus it is essential that we can share success stories about the MAI alumni. Please contact Georgette Boddie at boddie.georgette@epa.gov.

ECO's Alumni Program wants to know all about the MAI Alumni, too! Currently, ECO's alumni comprise a dynamic network of over 8,000 people who have worked as ECO Associates since 1972. The ECO Alumni Program serves and supports these alumni in their ongoing career development and involves them in ECO's mission. Some of the benefits to alumni include: networking with other alumni at regional social and community service events and through the 'Career Classifieds' section of our quarterly electronic alumni newsletter; opportunities to inspire new generations of students and environmental professionals, including speaking with students, representing ECO at career fairs, and "linking" with current Associates to give advice and support in the ECO Alumni C.A.R.E. Program. Contact the Alumni Program at alumni@eco.org for more information.

2002-2003 Minority Academic Institutions Undergraduate Student Fellowship Recipients

Alexis Amaye-Obu
Xavier University, New Orleans
Major: Political Science

Alexis will intern in New York City with EPA Region 2 as a Brownfields Associate where she'll conduct quality assurance research and participate in brownfields redevelopment workshops.

Allyson Cunningham
Hampton University, Virginia
Major: Marine/Env. Science

Allyson, as an Enforcement Intern with EPA Region 4, will investigate violations of environmental law, inspect municipal waste treatment plants, and assist in the composition and presentation of non-compliance reports.

Lyska Dilworth
University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff
Major: Computer Science

Lyska will intern with the Arkansas State Department of Environmental Quality, where she will work to improve data quality and support the Integrated Information System staff.

Jackqueline Green
North Carolina A&T, Greensboro
Major: Electronics Technology

While working in Denver for EPA Region 8 on the Northeast Denver Environmental Initiative, Jackqueline will coordinate a facilitative process to develop comprehensive approaches to deal with environmental concerns in a disadvantaged neighborhood.

Toiya Jimerson
Howard University, Washington, DC
Major: Chemistry

In DC, Toiya will work with the Office of Water as the Decentralized Wastewater Management Associate, where she will communicate with stakeholders to develop and revise the Wastewater Management Handbook.

Priscilla McCutcheon
Spelman College, Atlanta
Major: Political Science

Priscilla will assist the Office of Regional Counsel as they research and detail the environmental benefits to enforcement. She will be responsible for relaying technical information in layperson terms for external reports as well as researching and writing case results.

Olivia Penrose
Norfolk State University, Virginia
Major: Chemistry

Olivia will work collaboratively in the environmental chemistry field with NSU Professor Kenneth Hicks. The goal of these experiments is to prepare complexes useful in the detoxification of low levels of cyanide in waste water, thus protecting valuable water supplies.

Natasha Plumb
Spelman College, Atlanta
Major: Chemistry

Natasha will intern with the Office of Pollution Prevention in DC for the Green Chemistry Program, where she will prepare technical program summaries, perform computer, library and green chemistry laboratory research.

Candita Woodis-Rucker
Phoenix College, Arizona
Major: Environmental Science

As the second of two Enforcement Interns in Atlanta, Candita will have responsibilities similar to Allyson, and will also evaluate the ecological and technical aspects of violations, meet with permittees, and prepare documents for the Enforcement supervisor.



To learn more about the EPA MAI program, visit www.epa.gov/ncer or contact Georgette Boddie at boddie.georgette@epa.gov or call (202) 564-6926. To learn more about ECO or the EPA Fellows Summer Intern Program, visit www.eco.org or contact Daniel Buckley at dbuckley@eco.org or call (617) 426-4783 x158.



FIRST CLASS
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
RANDOLPH, MA
PERMIT NO. 35

The Environmental Careers Organization
179 South Street
Boston, MA 02111

5 Tips for a Great Summer in any City

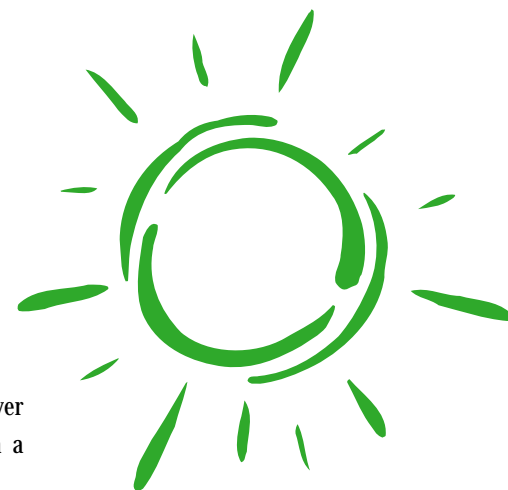
Volunteer! There are community groups and non-profit organizations all over the country looking for energetic and intelligent people to give their mission a hand. Check out www.idealists.org to find groups near you.

Reach out to new friends, as 2002 Fellow Dodie Arnold explains, "I made it a point to get to know the other EPA MAI fellows and the other summer students and interns. I had a great time and have remained good friends with the EPA MAI fellows I met in Atlanta."

Get involved in college events. Colleges will often have diverse programs of events over the summer— you may find anything from pottery lessons to career workshops; check your local university's website.

Go to local museum events. Cynthia Behel, 2001 Fellow, advises to "check out the local museums and get a schedule of events for the city, and often there are free concerts in the parks." Look in the Arts section of your local paper!

Seek out the advice of your project advisors and mentors – locals know best!



EPA MAI Fellows getting to know each other at ECO's EPA Career Day Event.