

Nizaya Pitts

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My name is Nizaya Pitts, I am a junior attending the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. I am majoring in Public Health Education with a minor in Social Work. I have not yet decided what career I want to go into, but I do know I want it to be focused on Community Health Education. This semester I have been exploring internship opportunities to help expand my options for future careers. I want to attend graduate school to further my education in Public Health. I am a new active member of Eta Sigma Gamma, a National Honorary for Public Health Education.

I am an active campus student who is involved in a lot of great things taking place at UNCG. I work on campus for Spartan Well-Being, a department focused on student wellness. This has truly helped me have hands-on experience within the Public Health realm. My responsibilities are social media management, event planning and programming, and hosting events for students to decompress. Some events and programs I have been involved in are our semiannual HIV/STI testing event, Wellness Wednesdays, Nursing Health Fair, freshman orientation, and setting up Suicide Prevention Pinwheels. These are some major events that have taken place this Fall semester and there are more to come in the Spring semester. I have also attended the UNCG Foundation Board meeting this semester and had the opportunity to network with some important people who gave me advice I will follow for my future career.

At our semiannual HIV/STI testing event we partner with the Guilford County Public Health Department and other community partners to give free HIV/STI testing to students. At this event, we also educate students about sexual health and ways to practice safe sex. Wellness

Wednesdays are hosted every Wednesday at the student center. It is a drop-in space for students to decompress, relax, and learn something new about topics relating to their everyday lives. Each week is a different focus such as preconception and sexual health, healthy and unhealthy relationships, and how to know the signs, and domestic violence within the LGBTQ+ community. During the week of November 8th, our focus was financial wellness and students' relationship with finances. Our last Wellness Wednesday of the semester will be nutritional wellness. This will be an opportunity for students to learn how to make a nutritious snack for study sessions and exams. In September, the month of Suicide Prevention, my co-workers and I set up pinwheels in front of the student center to bring awareness to those we have lost to suicide and those who may be struggling with thoughts of suicide.

On November 8th, I attended the annual North Carolina Community Justice Citation Award Dinner honoring Greensboro native Mae Douglas and Dr. Patrick Harman. These are two people who have made a significant impact on health equity in Greensboro and High Point. It was such an honor to attend this event because as a Public Health Education student, I am passionate about health equity and making sure everyone has equitable opportunities for the best chance at a healthy and thriving life.

I am also doing the Spartan (Student) Leadership Challenge. It consists of three experiences which all require hours for community service and professional development. The first is Bronze, an entry-level experience to help students build leadership skills that they can use on and off campus. The second level is Silver, I am currently doing this experience. It requires students to use their knowledge from the Bronze Experience and apply it to their leadership involvement within the community. A part of the requirement for completion is to volunteer at one organization for 30 hours. I decided to volunteer at the Black Child Development Institute-

Greensboro. This is an afterschool program for Title One schools in Guilford County. I have enjoyed my time here making connections with the children and getting to know their stories. The third level of the challenge is Gold, a yearlong experience that prepares you for transitioning from campus student leader to the workplace. I look forward to completing this level in my senior year.

I am applying for this scholarship because I come from a low-income family, who has lived in poverty all my life. College was the only way I could make a stable and successful life for myself. My mother graduated from NCA&T at the top of her class with a 4.0. Although my mom went to college and had the credentials to be successful, she is struggling and has been since I was a little girl. My mother is a single parent, and I am the oldest of six siblings. Life has not been peaches and cream; at the beginning of my mom's transition from college to the workplace, she was doing good for herself until she encountered unforeseen challenges. I have always moved around, but in high school, it happened every year. My family and I have lived in motels, domestic violence shelters, and with family members because we were homeless. I knew college was meant for me because I wanted my siblings to follow in my footsteps and make a good life for themselves. Since I am the oldest, I have no financial support while I am here pursuing a higher education. I work two jobs and I am on government assistance to provide for myself. My parents can't help me because they must provide for my siblings still living in the house.

Maintaining school, two jobs and other academic priorities has taken a toll on my mental health because I can't afford to not work, and I can't afford to let my grades slip. I have to pay for my phone bill, non-owner insurance to keep my license, and food. Any remaining funds from my tuition come out of pocket so that I can continue school and I have to save up for a car so that I can have reliable transportation once I graduate. I am paying for all of this by myself with little

to no assistance. As I mentioned before, I want to attend graduate school, but the only thing holding me back is finances. I want to start paying my student loans off my senior year so that I am not in debt for the rest of my life. I want to get as much financial help as possible so that I can be successful and help someone in the future with life challenges similar to what I have faced. If I receive this scholarship, it will help me achieve my goals of making a difference in Community Health Education.