



Student Spotlight

Graduate Studies blazes the student trail to focus attention on outstanding students in their academic program or work-related environment. The students selected in this spotlight feature have made a contribution to graduate life at Alcorn State University and deserve to have their story told.

Tony J. Innouvong



Tony Innouvong is currently a second-year Master of Business Administration student at Alcorn State University. He is expected to complete his degree in May of 2014. He was selected as one of two students as the featured scholar for April 2014. Tony is a very dynamic individual and had some interesting words of wisdom to share in his interview.

Career Aspirations: To work in management and business consulting and international development and establish a portfolio of various businesses.

What has graduate student life been like for you since your matriculation at Alcorn?

Graduate student life has been very experiential. While at Alcorn, I have had the great opportunity of working as a

Graduate Assistant in three different offices in which I have utilized and learned an array of skill sets. As a graduate student, undergraduate students look to me for advice and guidance in academic, professional, and personal matters. It is a pleasure and honor to have my experience valued.

What has been a source of motivation or drive for you in your graduate studies?

My biggest source of motivation is legacy. As a first-generation Lao American and college graduate, I have the opportunity of building a foundation for the future generations of the communities I represent. The institution is stacked against my favor and I have disproved the statistics that have plagued people of color and Asian ethnic minorities. As much as this is for me, at the end of the day, it is for my communities and the hope of advancement of those to follow in my footsteps.

Name an accomplishment you are most proud of.

My greatest accomplishment was graduating with my Bachelor's degree from Seattle University. Receiving my diploma was a momentous occasion. The excitement was electrifying and it motivated me to further my education.

Tell us a little about any research or special projects you have conducted in your Program of Study at Alcorn and how you came to choose the research topic.

During my time in the MBA program I have researched the global business environment and completed many case studies on various companies in today's industries. One major project I

worked on was a business plan for a NASA aircraft de-icing and anti-icing technology. The business plan was entered into a business plan competition among HBCUs nationwide in Atlanta, GA.

What do you do to relax? Any hobbies, collections, pastimes, favorite places to go, favorite things to do? Along these same lines, what makes you happy?

In my free time I listen to music, write songs and poetry, read, and surround myself with friends and family. These are also the same things that make me happy. Music, poetry, books, and people make up the support system that hold me accountable to continuous personal development.

What is one thing people would be surprised to know about you?

One thing about me that surprises people is that I can rap, or emcee. Hip Hop is one of my greatest loves. It is engrained in who I am and what I do. When people hear my music and poetry they are stunned.

What do you hope to be doing 5 or 10 years out of graduate school?

In five years, I will have traveled to my family's homeland of Laos, among many other places globally. I want to become well-traveled, as traveling seems to have an astronomical effect on one's perspective and being – or so I've heard. In recent years, I have done a lot of reflecting, researching, and redesigning, and I'll continue to do so for as long as I live. Seeing and experiencing things I've never known will help me continue to invent myself.

Do you have any advice for current graduate students?

Advice for current grad students:

- Join the Graduate Student Association – Participating in GSA will help you expand your network and net worth. Knowing people has exponential value, so value yourself enough to build your value.
- Mentor undergraduate students – We were once in the shoes of a young person struggling with the battle of undergrad life. Be there for someone. Motivate. Guide. Support. The greatest gift we can ever give a young person is the gift of mentorship.
- Do meaningful work – Go into your local communities and give back. Make your campus community a better environment that is conducive to student engagement and development.
- Play the role – You are what you eat, live, and breathe. If you want to become a CEO, dress, act, and talk like one. Don't talk it, become it.
- Surround yourself with who you want to be – You are only as good as your closest five friends. Association breeds similarity, so to be the best you'll have to be with the best.

Amardine Ribot



Amardine Ribot is a long way from home to attend this great university. She made a conscious decision while living in France to attend Alcorn State University to pursue a degree program she felt was the best fit. She is currently in her first year of matriculation at Alcorn as a Computer and Information Science student at the master level. Amardine is expected to complete her degree in 2015.

Career Aspirations: To seek employment as a Software Developer

Organizations Membership: Graduate Student Association

What has graduate student life been like for you since your matriculation at Alcorn?

Life as a graduate student has been so far quite interesting; I really enjoy my program and learning new programming skills. Thus, studying has been more of a pastime than anything else. As an international student, I am also enjoying the “American University” feeling, which I never experienced in my country before.

What has been a source of motivation or drive for you in your graduate studies?

Like I said before, programming is really something that I love doing, like a game or puzzle. There are a lot of different programming languages, and I’m thrilled to learn them all. Also the job market is really full of opportunities in this field with good expectations concerning income and enhancement.

Name an accomplishment you are most proud of.

It has nothing to do with my program here, but before I came to the United States, I had the chance to test my teaching skills. I was a replacement teacher in a high school in my home country. I must say it was not an easy task, but I did my best and therefore have the most respect for teachers (kids are not easy!).

Tell us a little about any research or special projects you have conducted in your Program of Study at Alcorn and how you came to choose the research topic.

I conducted research on the Java programming language for one of my classes in fall 2013, going from the basics of the language to the main structures and uses of it. I chose this topic because Java is one of the most used programming languages in the world, for example Android OS for smartphones, and is based entirely on it. A lot of companies are asking their employees to have skills in Java.

What do you do to relax? Any hobbies, collections, pastimes, favorite places to go, favorite things to do? Along these same lines, what makes you happy?

To relax, I like to listen to music, read or watch TV shows and movies. I really like to travel and discover other cultures and ways of life, even though we are all the same people in the end. My favorite place to go is home, with my family, being away is not always easy and I miss them a lot.

What is one thing people would be surprised to know about you?

My taste in music can be sometimes surprising....

What do you hope to be doing 5 or 10 years out of graduate school?

I hope to have a great job, with new stuff to do every week, new challenges to face and new skills to learn. And who knows, maybe you will all use one of my great programming inventions!

Do you have any advice for current graduate students?

Work at your best, push yourself to do more; it will pay off one day!

Kayla Echols



Accolades are extended to Kayla Echols in receiving a highly competitive Bunton-Waller Graduate Award by the Graduate School at The Pennsylvania State University to pursue doctoral study. The official offer is from the Huck Institutes of the Life Sciences Plant Biology Graduate Program at Penn State. This award was based on Kayla's outstanding academic record and research accomplishments, strong letters of recommendation, and outstanding interview performance. As a recipient of the Bunton-Waller Graduate Award, Kayla will receive full tuition grant-in-aid and a stipend for the fall and spring semesters, plus a scholarship for the following summer session.

Penn State was very impressed by Kayla's outstanding application and interview performance and expressed their delight in presenting a letter of offer. The Life Sciences Plant Biology Graduate Program is part of the top ranked plant science programs in the United States. Kayla will be involved

in a creative and interdisciplinary environment in which students receive broad training in plant biology as well as engage in collaborative research.