

# THE ALUMNI CONNECTION



VOLUME 8, ISSUE 4

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## The Urban Alliance

### Special Points of Interest:

- Ms. Shanita Conley '06 heads off to law school!
- Alumni Spotlight: Mbachur Mbenga '11
- Tips to design your dorm room this fall
- College Internship Program updates

## GOOD LUCK, MS. SHANITA!

Urban Alliance Alumna and Alumni Services Coordinator, Ms. Shanita Conley, will join the back to school movement this fall when she heads to Howard University's School of Law, located in Washington, DC. A graduate of The University at Albany with a bachelor's degree in Public Policy, Ms. Shanita joined the Urban Alliance staff in March 2011 after working alongside a New York State Senator for a year. Returning to Urban Alliance as a staff member was exciting for Ms. Shanita; she was excited to work for an organization that helped to build her professional foundation.

Ms. Shanita initially wanted to enter law school to join the political field as a legal counsel for a member of the Legislature, a position that would allow her to impact laws and policies; however, her career interests are beginning to shift. With that said, she'll enter law school with an open mind, hoping to be exposed to new areas of the law through externships and legal clinics.

Since many of our Alumni are interested in careers in law, Ms. Shanita suggests beginning LSAT (Law School Admission Test) prep as early as possible, since the LSAT score and GPA are 70% of an applicant's admissions profile. She also thinks that it is pertinent to know your strengths and weaknesses early, and begin taking a prep course or private tutoring to address your identified areas of growth. A high LSAT score will give

you the freedom to be a competitive candidate for a range of schools, while a lower LSAT score will limit those options.

With less than two weeks of work left, Ms. Shanita has spent some time reflecting on the many memorable moments she has had working for the organization. One in particular "took place at the Urban Alliance staff retreat in 2012. We all survived the earthquake! We were right in the middle of planning and discussing strategies for the next program year, when the house began to rumble, and the furniture shifted from one end of the room to the other. After the chaos of everyone processing that we actually had an earthquake in DC, we got right back to business! This experience proved the tenacity of the UA spirit, and our passion for youth development, despite conditions that could easily disrupt our goals."

Although Ms. Shanita will be leaving us soon, she will always be a part of the UA family, and plans to keep in touch with everybody. She will most definitely be missed by Alumni and staff alike, but we wish her nothing but the best!



This fall, **Ms. Shanita Conley**, Urban Alliance Alumna '06 and Alumni Services Coordinator, will pursue her dream of becoming a lawyer at Howard University's School of Law.

### Inside this issue:

Alumni Spotlight	2
Dorm Room Design on a Dime	3
CIP Updates	4
Fannie Mae Service Event Recap	5

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: MBACHUR MBENGA '11



As a member of three on-campus clubs, **Mbachur Mbenga**, practices her leadership and teamwork skills outside of the classroom.

*“Staying positive and asking for help when needed, is always the way to go.”*

The Alumni Services department is fortunate to serve wonderful Alumni with various backgrounds and career paths. We often wonder, where would we be without the dedication and appreciation from our most engaged Alumni? **Mbachur Mbenga '11** is an exceptional Alumna who made her mark not only in the high school program, but also as one of our shining Alumni stars!

Mbachur Mbenga is the true definition of a young professional who takes advantage of resources, responds quickly to emails and is always present at Alumni events. In fact, Mbachur was one of the first Alumni to apply to the 2013 College Internship Program. This is Mbachur's first time participating and we were happy to place her at an organization that aligns with her career interests. Mbachur is interning at Free Minds Book Club, a nonprofit organization that serves 16 and 17 year old youth who have been charged and incarcerated as adults at the DC Jail. Mbachur plans to start a nonprofit one day, and is learning the ins and outs at a pivotal time in her college career.

Mbachur is a Biology and Child Education Major at Brooklyn College. As Mbachur prepares to enter her junior year this fall, she reflects on the beginning of her professional journey at Urban Alliance, “I had no internship experience prior to Urban Alliance, so the majority of my professional work ethic stemmed from volunteer work. During the summer of my junior year in high school, I began my UA internship at The World Bank Group. During my senior year, I interned at The Advisory Board Company, a global research consulting

firm.” Mbachur started that journey in 2010, and has been on a steady path ever since. Mbachur's early exposure to the professional world, coupled with her on campus leadership experience, is an example of the credentials that we push for our Alumni to acquire. Mbachur is very active on campus and is a member of the Black History Month Committee, Transfer Student Association Club, West African Student Association, and Women's Advocacy Programs. Mbachur states, “I wanted to contribute, and associate myself with positivity on campus.” On campus involvement is very important for college students and we are proud to see Mbachur's diverse participation in extracurricular activities.

You remember how much we stressed maintaining relationships with your mentors, and continuing to build your professional network, right? Well, we are so delighted to see Mbachur's follow through on our much repeated advice. Mbachur keeps in contact with her mentors from her internship at the Advisory Board, and as a result, she has gained access to an even larger network. Mbachur says, “I still keep in contact with my previous internship mentors; we keep in touch via email and Facebook. Staying in touch is very beneficial because mentors help to mold you into professionals, and they are always available for guidance and support, and most importantly, references!” We couldn't have said it better ourselves; Mbachur gets it!

Being a part of one network can land you access to many other networks if you perform well and leave a lasting impression at your internship. For

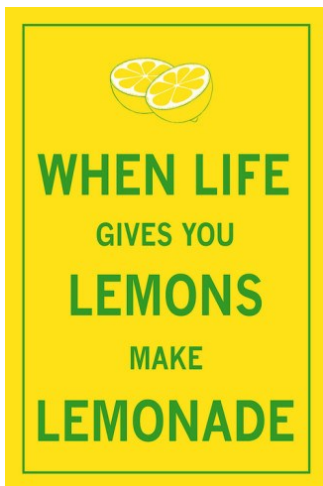
example, Mbachur was such an excellent UA Intern at the Advisory Board that her mentor took notice and advocated on Mbachur's behalf for more internship openings. Mbachur followed the proper channels and gained an awesome experience with the Macy's corporate team in New York last summer.

As you can see from Mbachur's story, hard work, follow through and self-advocacy can open many doors in your professional life. Regardless of your career path, Mbachur's story shows how persistence can guide you closer to your dreams. Mbachur shares advice for students who are not on the four year college path or who believe that college is not for them. “As long as you keep your connections with your mentors and with Urban Alliance, you should have nothing to worry about regarding college not being for you, or covering the cost of attendance. I've had friends in the program that didn't even know what a college or scholarship application looked like; with the help of Program Coordinators and other staff members from Urban Alliance, those students have received scholarships, and grants, and anticipate going back for the next semester! Staying positive and asking for help when needed, is always the way to go.”

Urban Alliance looks forward to hearing more accomplishments and updates from Mbachur, and many more of our outstanding Alumni!



Motivational posters, like the ones above and below, offer daily positivity and can be purchased for less than \$20 from Allposters.com.



## DORM ROOM DESIGN ON A DIME

As college students across the country prepare to start or return to school, furnishing a new dorm room is one of the first priorities to starting the school year off right. We believe that your dorm room should be functional, colorful, and personal. Achieving the ideal dorm room does not have to break the bank. Read on for our tips on creating your dorm room design on a dime.

### **Begin with the End in Mind**

The average college dorm room is a mere 200 square feet, 250 if you're lucky. All dorm rooms will provide a bed and a desk. From there, you will need to decide what else you want to / can have in your room: TV, refrigerator, microwave, etc. In many cases, everything will not fit, so it is imperative that you maximize the limited space available to ensure that your dorm room is functional. HGTV's Frank Fontana encourages "going up" in small spaces. [Stackable storage cubes](#) take advantage of unused space while providing a modern look. Another great way to maximize space is to lift your dorm bed

using [bed risers](#). Once your bed is higher off of the floor you can store folded t-shirts, jeans, sweaters, towels, etc. inside special [underbed storage chests](#) to keep them free of dirt. We also love the idea of a [trunk](#) to store sheets and towels and other items that aren't used on a daily basis. You can set your trunk at the end of your bed and use the top as a table for books and picture frames – talk about two in one storage!

### **Play with Color**

A well designed dorm strategically makes use of color and patterns to bring a sense of energy to the room. [HGTV](#) suggests getting an idea of your roommate's color scheme so that your décor doesn't clash. (Speaking with your roommate before moving in is also a great way to plan who will bring what – thereby saving you the trouble of returning an extra ironing board or microwave.) When it comes to picking your décor, experts suggest that you choose a main color and an accent color. Get inspired by checking out the [Dorm Room Decor Inspiration](#) board on

Pinterest. Once you've chosen a color scheme, make sure that you strike a balance between solids and patterns; too much of one can be boring or distracting.

### **Make it Personal**

Living away from home can take its toll, and homesickness is a reality for many college students. Incorporating a few pieces of home into your dorm room can make a small, seemingly foreign space feel warm and comforting. Photos from graduation, your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, or a recent family trip / reunion will serve as constant reminder of the love and support you have from the people who are rooting for your success. Posters are also a great way to bring your personality into your room. Many college campuses arrange for retailers to sell a wide variety of posters on campus during the first few weeks of schools. You can also order posters online from [All Posters](#) – the site typically offers free shipping around back to school time.

*(Continued on page 5)*



We love how these dorm rooms mix color and personality with organization and functionality.





## THE ALUMNI CONNECTION

## 2013 COLLEGE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM (CIP) UPDATES



Alumni review the 2013 College Internship Agreement

### Orientation Recap

CIP Orientation took place on Friday, June 21, 2013 at the new Urban Alliance office, located near Dupont Circle. The Alumni Services Team also provided tours for those who were visiting for the first time.

All Alumni showed up professionally dressed and prepared for an exciting summer. We were happy to review CIP Policies and changes with our students, some of which included a community service requirement and an end-of-program \$500 bonus.

We are very proud of this year's CIP cohort and look forward to hearing about the great work they are doing!



Director of Alumni Services, **Jazmyn Singleton**, and Alumni Services Coordinator, **Shanita Conley**, prep Alumni for their summer internships.

### FDOW—First Day of Work Recap

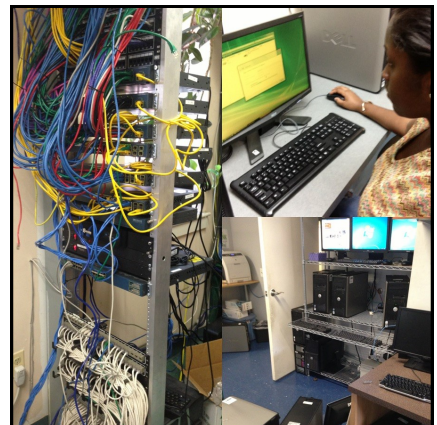
Monday, July 1, 2013, was the first day of work for CIP participants. This year, we have 63 participants representing over 25 different colleges.

Some of our wonderful jobsites include USAID, AARP, Joy of Motion Dance Center, College Summit, and Artemis Real Estate Partners to name a few. The feedback we've received from Mentors thus far has been nothing short of amazing!

**Kadesia Barrow '12**, who works in the Information Technology department at Latin American Youth Center (LAYC) reflected, "Thus far, my main responsibilities have been to upload Microsoft 7 on to computers and to make sure each one is up-to-date; something I had never done

before. I have also been connecting various computers onto one network and server. I feel very comfortable performing these tasks because my mentor visually explained the process to me and then I got the hang of it. It takes at least two days to complete the process for the computers, so I'm never just sitting around. This has been my most interesting summer job I have ever had. Everything is hands on and I am never bored. My mentor is really cool and very detailed when teaching me new material!"

We encourage all Alumni to keep up the good work and finish the program strong!



**Kadesia Barrow '12** shows off her workspace in the Information Technology department at LAYC.

### Community Service Opportunities

We have three events remaining for CIP Alumni who have not yet fulfilled the community service requirement:

- Alumni Services Panel and Networking Lunch—Friday, July 26 from 10am—1pm
- Public Speaking Challenge—Wednesday, July 31 from 8am—4pm
- Alumni Induction Ceremony—Friday, August 2 from 10am—1pm

CIP Alumni, if you have any questions or would like to attend, please contact Ms. Shanita Conley at (202) 459-4316.



Employing Youth. Inspiring Excellence.

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## THE URBAN ALLIANCE FOUNDATION

Urban Alliance Foundation, Inc. is a 501 (c) (3) organization and our mission is to empower under-resourced youth to aspire, work, and succeed through paid internships, formal training, and mentoring. Founded in 1996 by a small group of business leaders to create employment and educational opportunities for economically disadvantaged youth, we serve youth throughout the District of Columbia, Baltimore City, and Chicago. Through three distinct programs, the High School Internship Program, Alumni Services, and Curriculum Outreach, we provide resources to our youth to successfully transition from high school to college or career training, and ultimately to the working world. To learn more about Urban Alliance, visit [www.theurbanalliance.org](http://www.theurbanalliance.org).

## DORM ROOM DESIGN CONT.

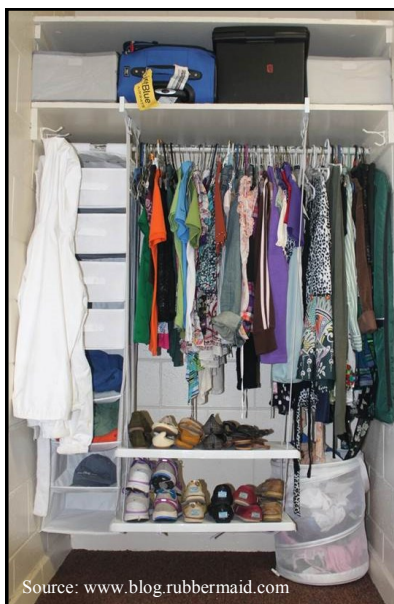
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### Use your Resources

So we've provided you with a ton of great dorm room design tips. Now we want you to know all the secrets to achieving your design on a college student's budget:

- Get to know Craig and his list. Seriously, [Craigslist](#) is one of the best ways to buy amazing furniture and electronics for a fraction of their original cost. Search daily for best results and attempt to negotiate with the seller; you'd be surprised how low people are willing to go when they want to get rid of something.
- Stock up on 20% off
- Bed Bath & Beyond coupons. If you don't already receive the coupons, sign-up now on their [website](#). You can use one coupon per item and coupons are usually accepted well after their expiration date.
- Talk to your people. Don't underestimate your network when it comes to furnishing your dorm room. Your grandma's antique, but mint condition trunk, could save you enough money to buy a book for your English class! Be vocal about your needs and grateful for the items you do receive.

Now that you have all the information you need to decorate on a budget, we wish you luck. Score some good deals and share your finished product with us at [alumni@theurbanalliance.org](mailto:alumni@theurbanalliance.org). We'd be happy to feature your dorm room in our September "Back 2 School" edition of *The Alumni Connection*!



Your dorm room closet may be small, but keeping it organized will allow you to focus on more important things, like your calculus quiz!



## FANNIE MAE SERVICE WEEK RECAP

Last month, 11 Alumni served as Team Leaders for Fannie Mae's 7 Days to SERVE program, which consists of a concentrated week of community service activities for Fannie Mae employees. At each non-profit site, Alumni greeted volunteers, collected release waivers, and introduced the group to the non-profit lead on-site. Once volunteers got working, UA Alumni jumped in to assist with the projects. This was a great opportunity for Alumni to represent Urban Alliance to Fannie Mae employees and local non-profits in the DC metro area. We are very proud of the 11 Alumni who participated!



**Tyrone Littman '12** (second from right above) served as a Team Leader for Fannie Mae volunteers at Martha's Table, located in DC and **Kadesia Barrow '12** (left) served as a Team Leader for PG Crises Center, located in MD