



Brandi Jackson

Hometown

Granite City, Illinois

College

Southern Illinois University - Edwardsville

Scholarships

Herman J. Neal Accounting Scholarship

Mary T. Washington Wylie Scholar

Greetings Board of Directors and Donors:

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for being selected as a Herman J Neal Scholarship recipient. This is a great financial blessing to me and my family. I would have a hard time paying the costs of tuition if it was not for this scholarship. These monies will allow me to continue to primarily focus on my academic achievement, rather than on how I will finance the costs of my education.

Accumulating the 150 credit hours needed to sit for the CPA exam is a vital part to accomplishing my goals and dreams. After careful research, I realized my undergrad accounting degree alone will not equip me for nor allow me to attain my dream role as a classroom/training instructor in a school of business. I want a start in public accounting and to go as far as I can in field work before teaching. I need the CPA license in order to get that solid foundation.

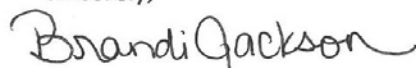
Being in front of the classroom is extremely important to me because I love to teach and coach people. I also want students who look like me to know they have a place in accounting, especially public accounting. By merely being their instructor, I can get that message across. Before I met my mentor in the fall of 2014 and before I had the privilege to be a part of the Mary T Washington Wylie Scholar program, I did not know I had a place in public accounting. There are firms and professionals across the country who are diligently working to change that for minorities. I want to be a part of that.

Although this scholarship will help relieve a great part of the financial burden of my undergrad and graduate degree, this award means more. I see this as you rewarding my past achievements but more importantly, casting a vote of confidence in my future success. This award is evident that there are people who believe in me. "Believe in your dreams and they will believe in you." (Soichiro Honda)

It is a true honor to have the privilege of putting this award on my resume. This increases the value of my brand, the Brandi Nicole Jackson brand. Being a recipient of this scholarship will help me further stand apart from my peers.

I cannot repay you for this generous gift but I will pay it forward. Again, thank you for investing in my education and future!

Sincerely,



Brandi Jackson

Brandi Jackson's 2015 SIUE Senior Standout Winning Essay

I am a non-traditional student majoring in accountancy. I found myself challenged with performing at a high level in academics and maintaining a competitive edge while balancing the various responsibilities I have outside of the classroom.

On January 5, 2015, my life began to change personally and professionally as I gained a deeper insight into the various accounting career paths and established the direction I want to take my career; I credit the Mary T. Washington Wylie Scholar program for this change. This program was a three day event held in Chicago, Illinois and consisted of presentations from seasoned certified public accountants, graduates, recruiters from large public accounting firms, as well as opportunities to network with peers and professionals.

The topics that were covered were important and eye opening, but the presentation about personal branding had the greatest impact on me. This topic was thought provoking and most relevant to where I am in my professional development. I realized my brand is key to gaining and maintaining a competitive edge. It is also an essential part to managing and leveraging my human capital.

I began to apply what I learned during the work session immediately following the presentation. I defined my professional persona and thought about whether I project those qualities in my daily interactions. I focused my thoughts on past conversations with faculty and peer evaluations from group projects to make this determination.

This task became intellectually challenging as I progressed to designing a plan to improve my brand and effectively market my brand. The planning phase was a challenge because it required diligence in critical thinking and strategic decision making. I needed to consider how I was going to communicate what I want to be synonymous for to the right people in a meaningful way. I also had to consider how I was going to be noticed. That included deciding which conferences and networking events I will attend and which professional organizations I should join.

The planning phase could not be completed in one setting which meant I needed to continue to work on it after returning to SIUE. I decided to enlist the help of my mentors to finish developing my strategy. As a result of following through, I am making new connections, obtaining exposure to employers, and continually being presented with opportunities that align with my goals and personal brand.

My attendance and participation at this program is undoubtedly my most outstanding intellectual endeavor while attending SIUE. I left this program with a higher level of confidence in my abilities and myself. I left knowing I am ready to commit to a career in public accounting and that I am possess the technical ability and attributes necessary to be successful at one of the Big four firms. This experience has also given me the necessary resources to help others now and in the future. Since the start of the spring semester, I presented on my experience to a group of my peers at the Accounting Majors Orientation. I have had several personal conversations with classmates about planning for the CPA exam and their career.