

Aspire2STEAM.org

Jessica Washington Awarded Aspire2STEAM Scholarship

Aspiring chemical engineer and entrepreneur focuses on diversity and inclusion among her peers and members of the underserved community

ANKENY, IA, UNITED STATES, February 24, 2023. [Aspire2STEAM.org](https://aspire2steam.org), which provides educational scholarships and mentoring to young women and girls who are working toward careers that require education in science, tech, engineering, the arts, or math (STEAM), has awarded Jessica Washington an ASPIRER scholarship.

Jessica is currently attending North Carolina State University majoring in Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering with a concentration in Biomanufacturing. Upon graduation, Jessica plans to be an advocate for other young women of color in STEM. “In addition to being an outstanding academic scholar, Jessica is determined to be an uplifting voice and active participant in her community,” said Cheryl O’Donoghue, CEO at Aspire2STEAM. “She is already engaged in volunteer projects that are having positive impacts on marginalized people and she is firmly on her path to help make the world a more inclusive and diverse place to live.”



**Jessica Washington,
Aspire2STEAM scholarship
recipient**

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Jessica Washington

Jessica has always had a passion for helping people and advocating for those who are underserved. At first, she believed becoming a doctor would be the right path for her. However, she found early on in college that she didn’t necessarily need to be a physician to accomplish her advocacy goals. Learning about different formulations and chemical compounds had always piqued her interest, and so she shifted her focus from Biology to Chemical Engineering.

Most recently, Jessica was able to participate in a summer internship with Jacobs Engineering, which is an engineering firm rooted in many different markets around the world such as healthcare, infrastructure, and even space. As a process engineering intern, she learned about and

designed pharmaceutical plants. “It is interesting being able to learn about the processes and specifications to make medicines from the inside out,” Jessica explained. In the future, Jessica hopes to dive into the pharmaceutical industry as an entrepreneur, exploring skincare formulations and chemistries.



When Jessica began her college education, she didn't realize the extent to which there was a lack of diversity among her peers. During the pandemic when everything was virtual, it was hard to connect with her peers and learn more about them. Once classes resumed in person, Jessica was alarmed by what she saw. “I was the only black person in the class and as I looked around, I decided that there needed to be a change,” Jessica said. She quickly put her desire

for change into motion by joining the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee at North Carolina State University. Jessica acknowledges that years may go by before she is able to see a visible impact from her efforts, however, as she explained, “I will continue to persevere and have faith in the process in hope that my story can help inspire other minority students who may have self-doubts.”

Additionally, Jessica was recognized as a student spotlight within the Chemical Engineering department. A student in the engineering college is awarded this achievement for their exceptional hard work and dedication. Some of her work that was showcased featured Jessica's involvement with the university's DEI Committee and participation in community service and hosting events with Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. Jessica also engaged in undergraduate research that focused on a variety of different genes associated with nonalcoholic fatty liver disease and how their expression or silencing influences development of the disease. Her research was continued in Dr. Arion Kennedy's lab over the summer in 2021 after receiving funding from her university's Women and Engineering Minority Program. In this lab, Jessica was able to research how obesity-associated metabolic disorders are influenced by both the innate and adaptive parts of the human immune system.



In the future, Jessica desires to continue to explore the world of engineering and pharmaceuticals and eventually become an entrepreneur. As a leader of her own business, she wants to fund a scholarship that would help other young minority women gain financial assistance to be able to continue their education. Jessica desires to be a mentor to young people of color and individuals of the underserved community. “No matter how successful I

become I will always remember the humble beginnings I came from and uplift underprivileged minority communities,” said Jessica.

About Aspire2STEAM

Established in 2018, Aspire2STEAM.org is a charitable 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, which has earned Guidestar’s Gold Seal for integrity, transparency, and accountability. Aspire2STEAM provides educational scholarships and mentoring to young women and girls who are working hard— aspiring—to achieve careers that require education in science, tech, engineering, the arts, or math. Aspire2STEAM is committed to helping women and girls with a hand up over the incredible barriers of student debt and rising education costs, and the real, ever-present opportunity barriers that keep them out of most male-dominated industries.



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