

An EEL grows in Brooklyn

I bring you greetings on behalf of President Rudy Crew and Provost Augustine Okereke and the faculty of the School of Business at Medgar Evers College. I am humbled for the opportunity to share with you our work of a few short years that we hope will make a difference in the community and world we live in.

My brief talk today is on “ the Work of an EEL” the Entrepreneurship & Experimental Learning (EEL) Lab at Medgar Evers College. We have come a long way from our beginning in 2015. When we started there were only dreams... and now... many of those dreams have come true.

The vision of our President was to launch an initiative whereby students would not be wholly dependent on the job market for career options.... that they may become job creators in their own communities, or in other communities, or in other countries....

You will note in my talk, the focus is on our students. They are at the beginning and end of our hope for a better, stronger, economically abled community.

How did we begin on this journey of training students for entrepreneurship? We used a partner to launch an entrepreneurship skills Bootcamp. Thirteen students accepted the challenge... the very last one was a freshman, Arlette Alexis and she is here today. Arlette, a Nursing turned Psychology major, has kept a full time job as a LPN, is a full time student taking evening classes, and formulated her social enterprise to help others.... there are no excuses when you are passionate and driven to make your dreams come true. This year she is working with high school students to improve their financial literacy and develop financial planning skills so that they will have a better understanding of the importance of saving, investing, and creating wealth. Arlette stand and be recognized.

In 2015 we prepared for many pitch competitions as the students developed and improved their visions for entrepreneurship ventures. I am happy to say in 2016, the first woman to win 1st place ever in the 16-year history of the CUNY SmartPitch competition was on an EEL team, her name is Ashley Warmington and she too is here today. Ashley is not only running her business now full time, she is also employing others. Ashley stand and be recognized.

We have gone on to compete in international competitions, such as StartUp Africa; last year a group of MEC students went to George Mason University, Led by the EEL Director, Dr. Iris Billy where a pitch competition was held with students from around the world – there our student social entrepreneur Omeil Morgan won 1st place with his organic juice and cooperative strategy for community health wellness. Although not here today is one of the most active student entrepreneurs on campus.

Business is global. In one year, our students have studied entrepreneurship in China, Costa Rica, Chile, Thailand, Kenya, Jamaica, Dominican Republic, and Japan. They have not just toured the country and observed the culture – they were immersed in it. In Kenya three students Patricia Johnson, Omeil Morgan and Rowland Fernelon engaged two social entrepreneurs in interviews, site visits, and other experiential learning. The students later wrote two case studies that were presented at an international conference in April with scholars from 32 countries. Patricia was one of the student presenters where the only other students that presented were doctoral candidates. Our

undergraduate EEL students are prepared to stand up and deliver our stories like no one else can. Patricia stand up and be recognized.

We continue to support MEC alumnus visions of entrepreneurship after they graduate. Through a special articulation agreement, MEC students may attend an accelerated executive MBA program at LIU Brooklyn. Our alumnus Jezel Best was a participant in 2016 EEL study abroad to Kenya, Chile, Japan, China, Thailand, and Costa Rico while earning an MBA and graduating with honors two weeks ago at the Barclay Center. Jezel has also been nationally recognized as a young and upcoming entrepreneur. Jezel stand up and be recognized.

The EEL works through alliances with economic and community development organizations to accelerate the successful launch and growth of local businesses especially women and minority businesses. Through collaborations with corporations, organizations, and other academic institutions we improve our student's access to resources needed to become the next generation of leaders in Brooklyn, NY, the US and yes the world. We believe we have world-class leaders at Medgar.

For example, through the NYC Economic Development Corporation we are one of 7 CUNY Colleges that will host international innovators on our campus through the new IN2NYC program. We also will host 5 technology startups at the Brooklyn Navy yard as part of StartUp New York.

. I will close with one last example of the EEL creating change here and now through our students.

Mr. Christian Waterman. Christian is a third generation resident of Ebbetts Fields apartments across the street from our campus; between his mother and grandmother they have been residents for almost 40 years –Christian's dream, as the very first College graduate in his family, is to lift the family out of Ebbets Fields—the world that they have all known for a lifetime.

In 2015 Christian was our Regional winner to the NY State business Plan competition; Christian is a rapper with a social enterprise focused on youth. When asked by the judges why don't you go away blow up and come back. Without batting an eye, that young man said, I want to blow up right here and take my community with me – our EEL youth are grounded in Brooklyn.

In 2015 Christian was the last student to enter the LIU MBA program; he graduated with honors and yesterday I was privileged to see him exchange wedding vows. The couple together operates the company, Black Market wares. He is the CEO and she, Anika Waterman is the COO. In addition Christen is a Leader in the EEL Satellite at the offices of the Central Brooklyn

Economic Development where he assists in developing entrepreneurship skills in middle school students. The EEL comes full circle.

In closing, the vision, work, and soul of EEL lies in Christian, Arlette, Jezel, Omeil,. Rowland, Ashley, Patricia and all of our youth. We know the large corporations will not have enough jobs for those of us who desire to live and work in our community.... we must leverage and invest in those behind us... that is the work of an EEL. Growing in Brooklyn – its electric. Stand with us and join a growing number of men and women in our community that believe we can make a difference... here.... and now...

God bless you and keep you.

Thank you.