



STEP ALUMNI NEWSLETTER 2024

Dr. Simran Kaur & Dr. Joan Petersen
QCC-STEP Faculty Liaisons

Dawn Henderson
STEP Alumni
2006-2010

With pride, we present to you our second STEP alumni newsletter. We are very happy to report that we have involved our alumni in many ways, continuing to connect past STEP students and staff with the current STEP students and families. This year, STEP alumni have been part of the STEP advisory committee (Mr. Rhoundy Jones, Ms. Andrea Ziegler), have presented at our annual Career Day (Ms. Andrea Ziegler), and have addressed current STEP students and families as keynote speakers (Ms. Karen Mason, Mr. Rhoundy Jones) at our annual STEP Recognition Day. We remain committed to maintaining and expanding a strong STEP alumni network.

The current academic year, STEP 2023-2024, has been extremely exciting as it marks the first year that STEP has been fully in-person after being online for four long years. The program kicked off with a summer mathematics camp and a school supplies event. It offered 20 sessions, including Science & Math workshops, enrichment courses in coding and robotics, SEL through journaling, and meditation, as well as SHSAT Prep, and SAT Prep workshops. Student research opportunities were available in Financial Machine Learning with Python and Biology Research Workshops. Students who participated in research activities were given the opportunity to present their research work at the Regional STEP Conference at Staten Island, the NYS Virtual STEP Conference, and at the QCC STEP recognition day. All students also participated in the annual Career Day, college prep workshops, the Regional STEP Conference at Staten Island, a day of volunteer and service learning, and the Family Showcase Day. The year ceremoniously ended with the annual QCC-STEP Recognition Day, where each student was recognized for their participation and effort, and the STEP Field Day, where students visited the Riverhead Aquarium as a reward for their commitment to the program.

This year's newsletter features **Ms. Dawn Henderson** who is a doctoral candidate with The English department at Howard University. We have maintained contact with Dawn since she graduated from our program and we are indeed very proud of her successes and achievements.

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." — Nelson Mandela

ALUMNI PROFILE IN THE WORDS OF MS. DAWN HENDERSON

I joined STEP in 2006 during my freshman year of high school and remained a member of the program until I graduated in 2010.

My strengths have always been solidly aligned with literacy-based classes like English and History. During my school's first-quarter parent-teacher conferences, my biology teacher recommended joining the STEP program at Queensborough CC because they would provide academic support in math and science.

I joined the STEP program expecting a traditional academic tutoring environment. I had long standing struggles with math and was no stranger to extracurricular tutoring programs. To say that I was pleasantly surprised by the execution of STEP at QCC would be an understatement. I was welcomed, empowered, and nurtured by seasoned educators with a wealth of professional experiences. I received guidance and reinforcement that had a direct positive impact on my performance in school, but I also received much more. I developed relationships with invested adults who truly cared about our success, and I fostered lifelong friendships.

Committing to weekly Saturday classes was indeed a challenge at times for a high school student on the track team and with an active social life. However, STEP represented a complementary familial environment where learning was cultivated through insightful and creative means. A studious mindset was honed alongside character traits like partnership, camaraderie, and trust. In other words, STEP quickly became a niche social circle all its own, and I flourished because of it.

When I entered college, I sought a program that would support me in a similar manner to STEP. As an English major, I was not eligible for C-STEP. However, my search led me to the Ronald E. McNair program for undergraduate study and ultimately to the Ronald E. McNair Fellowship when I pursued my doctorate. Since then, I have conducted research, published articles, spoken on panels, and attended and hosted conferences, all with the confidence instilled during my time in the STEP program.

1. college(s) attended: Mercy College, Howard University
2. degree(s) earned: BA- English, MS. Ed- Education, PhD- African American Literature (ABD)

The STEP program has made a marked difference in my life. There are experiences that help us become better students, and there are experiences that help us become better people. The STEP program represents the latter for me, and I believe these sentiments are echoed by members of my cohort.

Current QCC-STEP students, I encourage you to embrace this moment in time when you have supporters around you championing your success. Linger after dismissal to ask follow-up questions, and don't underestimate the importance of developing a rapport with your peers— this is practice for the networking of tomorrow. Remain in contact with your cohort and instructors and remember to check in even if those check-ins are infrequent. You truly never know how we can grow to support one another and those who come behind us.

There are too many great memories at STEP to choose a single favorite. Those experiences leave me with all of the positive sentiments outlined above. I can say my favorite aspect of STEP was the community built on rigor, challenge, laughter, insight, accountability, care, and encouragement. I hope QCC-STEP continues to build a sense of community for years to come.

"Education is not the learning of facts, but the training of the mind to think." Albert Einstein.

With pride, we share the poem Dawn wrote about her experience with the STEP program and presented it on Recognition Day 2010

Science Technology Entry Program

S-T-E-P spells step...

To you

But to me it spells family, guidance, friendship, acceptance, and a high school experience shaped by all four.

And so much more.

It spells one of a kind faculty student mentorship's

That make us sick with anticipation for our weekend long Albany trip.

It spells tutoring services that are the only reason I passed math.

It spells determination, perseverance, and equal opportunity

Between and between the letters S-T-E-P I found unity

A togetherness that bonds all of us here

A unique connection with all of my peers

And now, being without you all next year

Is one of my biggest fears

But I can do it because STEP has made me strong

And honestly, I think that was their intention all along

I'm excited to graduate though leaving STEP is bittersweet

They've given me all my foundation

One that's solid and concrete

And even though the thought of saying goodbye

Creates instant waterfalls that fall from my eyes

I'm gonna smile

Because today is a celebratory day

This journey's over but another's on the way

Now if I may...

Thank Dr. Petersen and Dr. Semi*

For the unyielding support they have always given me

In and outside of QCC

They truly encouraged a STEP Family

Special thanks to Professor Burke, Mr. Julian and Rhoundy

And lastly to my friends

Remember

This chapter's done but the story never ends

By Dawn Henderson
Class of 2010

*Dr. Kaur