

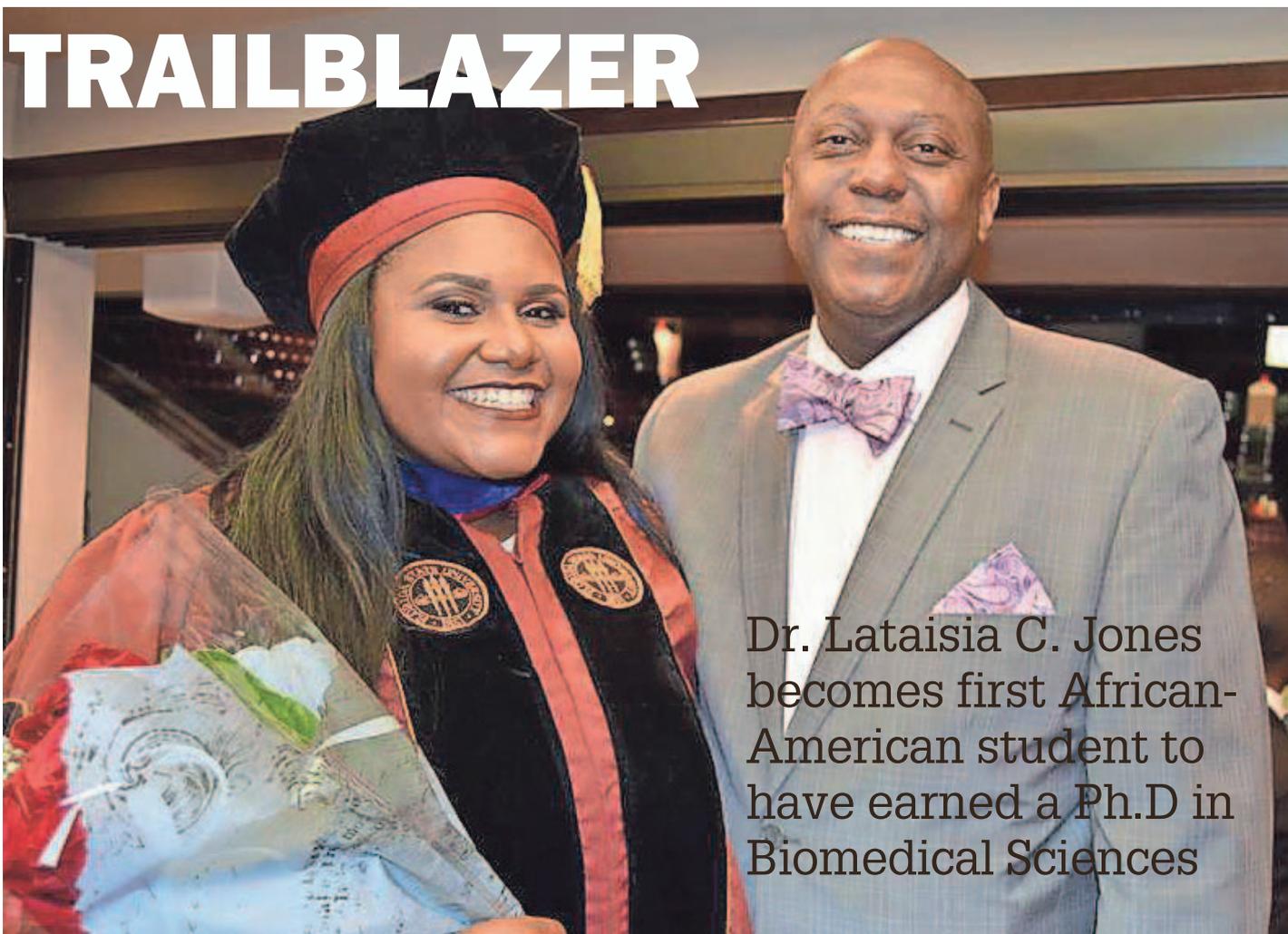


The independent student newspaper at The Florida State University™. Established 1915

# FSView & Florida Flambeau

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# Jones becomes first African-American student to earn Ph.D in Biomedical Sciences

ARSENE FREDERIC  
STAFF WRITER

Dr. Lataisia C. Jones has become the first African-American student to graduate from Florida State University with a Ph.D. in Biomedical Sciences. She bravely follows in the footsteps of those women who have come before her, while creating her own path in the field of STEM (science, technology, engineering and math).

There's a long history of love between Jones and the STEM field. Her mother discovered her affinity for science when she pulled her off the basketball team for being too talkative in her science classes. After completing an internship during her freshman year of college, she was confident in her pursuit of a career in the STEM field.

Prior to beginning her time at Florida State University, Jones attended Virginia State University on the pre-med track. Virginia State University is an HBCU—historically black college or university—located in Petersburg, Virginia with currently approximately 4,600 students. Her Ph.D. research is about evaluating neurological movement disorders using bimolecular techniques. It covers anything and everything that applies towards advancing the medical field. It's this broadness that Jones loves the most about the STEM field.

According to the FSU College of Medicine as of 2014, amongst the 4,923 graduate students in U.S. neurobiology/neuroscience programs, only 163 were black or African-American.

“My goal is to always connect with Virginia State University and leave a lasting impression,” Jones said. “To have minorities feel brave enough to succeed in a world that is dominated by others. It brings me so much happiness when others look at me and say, ‘Tay did it, so I can do it too.’ It’s something about the foundation that I was provided at VSU that gave me the gas in the vehicle to attain one of my goals.”

Jones’ mother’s side of the family is from Ghana. She recently traveled there to show other students like her that it is possible to achieve anything “as long as you put your mind to it and have a solid support system around you.”

“The people who inspire me first and foremost are my family,” Jones said, who is the only person in her family to earn a Ph.D. “My mom retired from the military, and during her time she was a Senior Chief. At the time, it was dope to see a black person excel like that.”

“Black Girl Magic” which has been popularized as a social media hashtag, is a phrase that captures the essence of black women, their unlimited capabilities and accomplishments. When it was time to show the world that a black woman is capable of being classy, graceful, educated, but still has room to grow, Michelle Obama rose to the forefront. When it was time to show the world that black women can break barriers in music and videos, Whitney Houston, Janet Jackson, Rihanna and Beyoncé stepped up to the plate. These women and so many others represent strength, compassion, agility and that “she laughs without fear of the future” spirit. A true representation of #BlackGirlMagic and



COURTESY OF THE JONES FAMILY AND THE FSU COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

Dr. Lataisia C. Jones and her father celebrate her graduation.

**“My greatest obstacle is myself. There are a limited number of black professors in the program, however the professors and my committee were very supportive. They showed me that support as a minority student and every time I felt discouraged they let me know that I could do it.”**

DR. LATAISIA C. JONES  
GRADUATE

more.

Jones explains that the work she put into getting her advanced degree was challenging but she is grateful for her support system at FSU.

“My greatest obstacle is myself,” Jones said. “There

are a limited number of black professors in the program, however the professors and my committee were very supportive. They showed me that support as a minority student and every time I felt discouraged they let me know that I could do it.”