

# Tomorrow's Leaders

THE HOLMES SCHOLARS PROGRAM  
ENHANCES DIVERSITY IN AND OUT  
OF THE CLASSROOM



**At William & Mary, Holmes Scholars are training to be the next generation of leaders in counseling, teaching, and educational leadership.**

The program is designed to support high-achieving students from underrepresented backgrounds as they pursue doctoral degrees in education. Founded by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) in 1991, the program promotes diversity in the PK-20 education workforce through mentoring, professional development and peer support.

"The most significant benefits of the Holmes Scholars Program for participants, as well as the school and university, is that it supports the values of diversity, inclusion and equality," says Jamel Donnor, the program's faculty advisor. "It signals to others outside of the William & Mary community that there is a commitment to diversity, inclusion, equality and excellence, which are not mutually exclusive, but in fact mutually reinforcing."

Holmes Scholar Nancy Chae knows that the Holmes Scholars Program will prepare her for the challenges and rewards that she will experience in her future career as a counselor educator and supervisor.

"We will be uniquely positioned to bring attention to inequities and to advocate for and empower our students as well as those students and clients that they will serve," she says.

Scholars benefit from professional development opportunities, including presenting their research at the annual AACTE conference, attending a summer policy institute in Washington, D.C. and accessing career fairs, networking events and other career placement services.

The connections that many Holmes Scholars describe are critical as peers become colleagues and mentors become supervisors. The program provides an opportunity for students to bond beyond the scope of their regular learning experiences, Scholar Denise Lewis says. These relationships allow for students' experiences to become more meaningful as they figure out their purpose and how to develop their professional voices, she adds.

Not only does the program provide students with a support network as they develop their careers, but it also empowers scholars to contribute to the field with outreach to younger generations to spark interest in education careers.

A local middle school in Newport News provided such an opportunity when scholars spoke with students who were interested in pursuing careers in education. It was meaningful to connect with children who were enthusiastic about learning to become future education leaders, Chae says.

While the program increases racial diversity in the profession, it also encourages diversity in thinking about the approaches, practices, policies and structures of education systems, Holmes Scholar Jamon Flowers says.

"As an experienced educational leader, the Holmes Scholar program encourages me to think beyond PK-12. There are several educational systems and phenomena related to education that are underdeveloped and undervalued. More importantly, it is a reminder that 'my voice' is needed and is critical to the development of teachers, administrators and students," Flowers says.

However, earning a doctorate is just the beginning for him.

"I am charged to use my experience and education to enhance and change the narrative of education for students, teachers and educational leaders."

– NATASHA TOWNSEND M.ED. '21