



High School Senior Advances Education and Earns Work Certificate During COVID-19 Pandemic

by Sydney Stigge-Kaufman
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EAST ST LOUIS – Arielle Bell has simultaneously explored her career interest in hotel management and gained a competitive advantage in the field. She just earned a college-level certification in Hospitality and Tourism Management before even graduating from high school.

Arielle Bell, part of the East St. Louis Senior High School Class of 2020, has been interested in hotel management for over four years. Her mentor, Dr. Teresa Williams, connected her to a free certification program that was being offered through the College of Business at Florida Atlantic University during the COVID-19 pandemic. Arielle jumped at the opportunity – despite being the only high school student to participate in the program designed for college-level students.

First, Arielle made sure she was eligible by reaching out to FAU. They replied that she, even as a high schooler, was welcome to participate, as long she had the personal initiative and motivation to complete the program rigors and requirements. It proved to be a perfect fit.

“Arielle is a scholar and is self-motivated to expand her knowledge and skills,” notes Dr. Teresa Williams, Director of Federal Programs at the East St. Louis School District. “She is always striving to prepare for college and her career.”

Arielle has been an active high school student with extra-curricular activities like band and Beta Club. Once school closure and social distancing began due to COVID-19, she was concerned about how to spend her free time but decided to use it to upskill. The high school senior completed the program and earned a certificate in Hospitality and Tourism Management.

During March and April, Arielle successfully juggled the online certification program in addition to her remote learning high school courses and maintaining a strong GPA.

In the fall, Arielle plans to attend Lincoln University where she will major in Business Management and develop additional skills beyond the certificate she just completed.

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