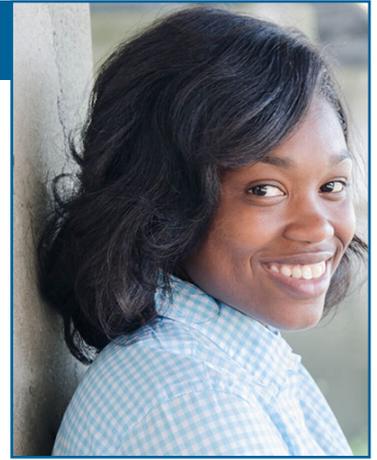


TURNING DREAMS INTO REALITY

**By: Taylor Holliday, ELC Scholar
2017 Praxair Engineers of Tomorrow Scholarship Recipient**

My name is Taylor J. Holliday, and I am a sophomore, mechanical engineering major currently attending Louisiana Tech University. I had the special opportunity to be selected as a Praxair Engineers of Tomorrow Scholar.

The Executive Leadership Council is a global member organization of prominent black executives with the mission “to increase the number of successful black executives – both domestically and internationally – by adding value to their development, leadership, and philanthropic endeavors throughout the life-cycle of their careers thereby strengthening their companies, organizations, and communities.” Through their scholarships program, The ELC additionally provides the opportunity for young black leaders to not only see different career paths, but also to expand the knowledge of how the corporate world functions.



“Turning Dreams Into Reality,” the four special words I use to express my personal feelings about The ELC’s Honors Symposium that I was able to attend during the week of October 22nd-27th in New York, NY and Washington, DC. Upon my arrival in New York, it was my first time riding in a taxi and I was in such amazement. Once I arrived at the W Hotel, I met some of the other scholars, including Michael Brown (Kansas State University), Apris Howey (Virginia Tech), and Alan Biggs (Texas A&M University). I observed the architecture of the buildings, I watched as the pedestrians walking through the traffic, I smelled the hot dog stands on each corner, and I just simply enjoyed being in a place that was not home. Later as the other scholars trickled into the hotel, we were all able to interact with each

other during the Welcome Reception and Scholar Social. We then took a luxurious shuttle ride to Dylan’s Candy Shop and let me tell you, Dylan’s is not just any candy store. It gave me the feeling of actually being in The Willy Wonka Factory where you see the full effect of candy innovation all around. This concluded the first day, which made me look forward to what was in store for the following days.

During the next three days of the Honors Symposium, we visited corporations that enlightened our perception of what corporate America is like. The first being American Express, which is the world’s largest card issuer. There we met Ken Chenault, chairman & CEO of the American Express Company, who spoke in-depth about being a courageous leader and how confidence, honesty, and integrity give hope and define what reality is. “Why not me, I deserve to be at the table because I am unapologetically me,” said Chenault.

Next we visited HSBC, a worldwide banking organization, and later visiting Jopwell where we focused on the content, structure, and informational parts of a resume.

Being a former basketball player, it was very exciting to later visit the National Basketball Association, which is more than just a sports league but an organization that supports education, community outreach, and health. I had the opportunity to join Deputy Commissioner Mark Tatum’s group where we discussed the triumphs and lessons through failure, stating “what does not kill you makes you stronger.”

The Honors Symposium also included visits to the Environmental Defense Fund, L’Oreal USA, and a delightful dinner with the Williams Capital Group where we had the pleasure of meeting with Founder & CEO Chris Williams, and speaking with Kelly Holloway, Principal of the Williams Capital Group, who gave lots of tips and points for navigating the corporate world. His quote that stuck with me most was, “it is not who you know, it is who knows you.”



Times Square was such an amazing place but it soon came to an end as we traveled to Washington, DC for The ELC's Annual Recognition Gala. Being a Praxair Engineers of Tomorrow Scholar, my fellow scholars and I had the pleasure of having lunch with Vanessa Abrahams-John, Global Diversity Director at Praxair. In speaking with Mrs. Abrahams-John, she did a tremendous job with giving us a better understanding as to what makes Praxair stand out beyond measure stating that it's not just a company, it is a family. As our three-day experience of meeting with these fascinating corporations came to a close, we met with Sekou Kaalund, a former ELC Scholar who is now Managing Director at JPMorgan Chase & Co. He stated, "hard work keeps you with a job but with no exposure, you are not seen."



On Thursday, we attended The ELC Recognition Gala with the theme "Own the Future: Now, More Than Ever," which was a Cinderella experience that allowed us to be surrounded by many other successful black executives. The Gala capped off the entire week of events that gave me memories that will live on forever. I had the opportunity to meet such amazing people who were once in my shoes and I was able to interact with people who motivated me to believe that anything is possible even when society says it is not.

The ELC is the perfect example of my four special words, "Turning Dreams Into Reality." From taking my first flight ever, visiting New York and DC for the first time, and most importantly giving a young lady such as I the chance to have a future that some thought was only a dream.

A special thank you to The ELC for such an unforgettable experience, to The ELC staff Roxanne Caesar and Mayra Espinoza for their leadership and guidance, to my colleagues who took this journey with me, to Praxair Inc. for the scholarship award and to all those who were present throughout this experience - you keep me believing that my dreams can in fact become a reality.