Senior Brittney Burton is a leader and a scholar. She has been a Girl Scout troop leader for two years and has conducted field research through her internship with the Women’s Justice Department of the Cook County Jail in Illinois. She is also involved with the campus rocket team.

As a troop leader, Brittney works with approximately 25 girls, ranging from the first to the eleventh grade. She says that while the job is highly rewarding, it is also challenging.

“I have to make sure I am a sister/mentor without seeming so strict like a teacher” says Brittney. “Most of the girls come from broken homes and live in poverty stricken areas. Being a role model is the greatest gift I can give them.”

Last summer, Brittney interned with the “End Demand Illinois” program at the Cook County Jail. Brittney’s experience as a case worker allowed her to assist recovering prostitutes in securing housing and connecting them with support agencies. During her internship, Brittney was able to utilize data analysis skills gained from her courses at Fisk. Brittney continued this research interest with her senior project in Sociology. She analyzed media portrayals of prostitution. She presented her research at the Southeastern Undergraduate Sociology Symposium.

After graduation, Brittney plans to go back to her hometown of Chicago. She is interested in securing a position in the criminal justice system such as a probation officer. In the future, Brittney hopes to pursue a Master’s degree in Criminology. Brittney attributes the foundation of her interests to her work as a joint Sociology and Psychology major. She says, “Being able to study both has opened my eyes to this great world we live in.”

Brittney encourages students to be diligent and open-minded, “Study hard, do your own research, and embrace all that’s offered. You never know what class will have an effect on your life goals!”

She has recently been inducted into Alpha Kappa Delta, the Sociology honor society. She is also a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority.
Dr. Dani Allred Smith has served diligently in the Sociology Department at Fisk University for 15 years. She says that her greatest experiences at Fisk are when students declare Sociology as a major and present their research. Smith’s philosophy of teaching is that of a winding staircase, with her as the supportive railing which students can access when they need help. Her goal is to assist students to the top of the staircase, whether that step represents success in a course or admittance to graduate school or entry into a chosen profession. Dr. Smith says that coming to class every day is a joy. Dr. Smith devotes her time to student research—taking students to compete regionally and creating an intercollegiate symposium in Nashville. Smith basks in the success of her students as they compete. Dr. Smith has been granted a sabbatical to conduct research on “gender images in young reader fiction.” She has received a faculty residency fellowship at Emory University this summer. This break in teaching will benefit Dr. Smith’s research career, and she will return to the classroom in the fall of 2012.

Sociology Major Shayla Shane Elected as SGA Presi-

Shayla Shane’s slogan “One Step at a Time” proved to be just what the student population needed to hear. Shayla states, “It’s an affirmation of what I’ve worked toward. People believe in me to get the job done.” As for her goals for the coming year, Shayla says that she wants to focus on communication between the SGA, the student body, and faculty to make sure that students’ voices are heard.

After serving as Grievance Director this past year, Shayla says that she knows what the student body needs. One of her goals is to have students more involved with SGA, an initiative current SGA president Jenise Burks began. She plans to have meetings with representatives of all campus organizations and to hold senators and members more accountable for their responsibilities. “We’ve got a lot of serious challenges that face us,” Shayla states, “and I think the student government should be willing to meet those challenges head on and not blink.”

Shayla says she enjoys interacting with other students of different backgrounds. “I want students to see SGA as the vehicle by which they can change Fisk. We all have things we love about this place, but there are also things to be improved,” Shayla states. “We are the change, and we must take action.”

Parenthood and Studies

Vickie Bufford is a senior Sociology major at Fisk University and the mother of a three-year-old daughter. Other students are curious about her life as a mother and a college student. “How do you balance it all?” “How do you find time for yourself and still be a mother to your child?” they ask. Her reply is, “I just do what needs to be done.” Her response to this question is the reason she chose to investigate gender flexibility in household and childcare tasks for her senior research project.

Her faith and the active involvement of her daughter’s father offer the support that she needs to persevere and meet her goals. Her philosophy is family first, school second, and work last. She reminds us that, “Every decision we make in life has consequences, and we must be mature enough to deal with them.”

Once she had her daughter, Vickie wondered how and if she would finish college. Finances and time were two realities that Vickie faced as she contemplated continuing her education. She decided to continue because she desires to be a positive role model for her daughter, who constantly emulates her. She acknowledges that she must make sacrifices to ensure that she is providing quality parenting for her daughter. Her time outside of classes is designated for her family.

Although Vickie is a busy individual, she has a calm presence and manages her time well. “In order to be successful in college while being a mother, I had to have time management down to a science,” she says.
After graduation, Senior Ashley Brown, a joint Sociology and Psychology major, will join the U.S. Peace Corps.

Candace Warren achieved the highest score on the Sociology Major Field Test. She will be attending John Brown University.

Angela Addae won the 2nd place award at SEUSS and Best Sociology Paper at Student Research Day. She will attend the Univ. of Arizona in the Fall.

Joint major Pierre Moton has been accepted into the Masters of Social Work programs at Case Western, Washington Univ., Univ. of Alabama, and Univ. of Southern California.

Eight Sociology seniors presented research at the Southeastern Undergraduate Sociology Symposium (left to right): Tamika Vaughn, Angela Addae, Jessica McDowell, Pierre Moton, Candace Warren, Vickie Bufford, Ashley Brown, and Brittney Burton.
**ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT**

Elissa Johnson (’07) is beginning a position as a Law Fellow with the Southern Poverty Law Center in Jackson, Mississippi. Elissa completed her dual degrees in law and social work at Loyola University in Chicago in December. She has earned a J.D. and an M.S.W. She plans to take the bar exam in July. Elissa interned with the Southern Poverty Law Center in Summer 2009. Her new job will involve issues of juvenile justice, mental health, and education. Elissa was a joint Sociology and English major. She was also a member of the W.E.B. DuBois Honors program and Alpha Kappa Delta, the Sociology honor society.

Samantha Keeling (’07) recently completed a master’s degree in Marriage and Family Counseling at Trevecca Nazarene University. She says that majoring in Sociology gave her a unique perspective on society and culture that she has been able to apply in her budding career as a therapist. Currently, she pursuing an Ed.D. in Clinical Counseling at Trevecca and state licensure to practice therapy independently. She works at the Nashville Rescue Mission’s Family Life Center. She counsels homeless mothers and children.

Stephanie Lewis (’08) completed her B.S. in Nursing in December. She recalls when she considered transferring to Fisk University in the summer of 2006. She had taken an “Introduction to Sociology” class – a pre-requisite for nursing at her local community college in Dallas, Texas. As the world viewed through the lenses of Sociology opened, she wanted to know more.

After completing her nursing degree in December, she has remembered to make no assumptions, and to see her career as a nurse as an opportunity to do research in order to help develop the best patient outcomes. She is currently working full time at Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children as a registered nurse. There she finds opportunities to complete graduate level classes offered through the hospital to help nurses reinforce evidence-based practices. She admits that the tools that she has gained via the Sociology major at Fisk are ones she can use to help improve a hospital patient’s quality of life.

Sociology graduates Tashaye Byrdsong (’09) and Danisha Williams (’07) have returned to Fisk in staff positions. Tashaye works in the Office of Career Leadership and Development as the Career Development Specialist. She has the opportunity to place students in internships, summer programs, and full-time employment. Danisha is coordinator of the Living and Learning Center located in Jubilee Hall. In this position, she tracks and monitors student grades and attendance and uses that information at the end of each semester to determine if a correlation exists between tutorial attendance and increases in students’ grades.

Danisha has earned a Masters of Public Administration at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois. Tashaye is pursuing the Masters of Public Administration at Tennessee State University.

Contributors: Angela Addae, Candace Warren, Charity Fonkeng, Tashaye Byrdsong, Dani Smith, Samantha Keeling, Danisha Williams, Britney Burton, Pierre Moton, Victor Bradley, Lannie Smith, Jenise Fredricks, and Melissa Garcia