FEARLESS LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

2019–2020 HIGHLIGHTS
“WE MAY NEVER BE COMPLETELY FEARLESS, BUT WE CAN LEARN TO FEAR LESS.”

— Thaïs Bass-Moore,
DIRECTOR, FEARLESS LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
# FEARLESS LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE 2019–2020 HIGHLIGHTS

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FLI TEAM

FLI was founded by Dr. Tiffany T. Lewis and Ms. Thaïs Bass-Moore. Thaïs serves as current director of FLI and Tiffany is assistant vice president for the Longhorn Center for Academic Equity (LCAE), the unit in which FLI resides. FLI continues to employ graduate assistants and, for the first time in 2020, hired the first full-time employee, Cydni Cox, a FLI alumna, to serve as program coordinator. The remainder of the FLI team consists of student ambassadors, student interns, mentorship program leaders and advisory council members.

Dr. Tiffany T. Lewis (left), Assistant Vice President for the Longhorn Center for Academic Equity (LCAE) and Fearless Leadership Institute Director, Ms. Thaïs Bass-Moore.

PURPOSE OF FLI

THE FEARLESS LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE (FLI) was formed in the spring of 2013 to ensure that Black women at The University of Texas at Austin are equipped to thrive holistically. Black women make up 3% of the student population at The University of Texas at Austin, which can make “fitting in” quite challenging. In 2016, FLI expanded programming to include Hispanic women. FLI offers love, support, and guidance in the form of weekly interest groups, one-on-one mentoring and counseling, larger signature events, an annual leadership retreat, study abroad scholarships and more.

FLI’s goal is to enhance the lives of Black and Brown undergraduate women at UT by boosting a sense of belonging, boosting self-efficacy, and helping these students make better life choices—personally, academically, and professionally. We have been able to increase retention and graduation rates by giving these students a strong support base. Our goal is to touch every Black and Brown woman on campus. If they don’t ever attend an event, at least they know we exist and that we care.
FLI WEEKLY INTEREST GROUP MEETINGS

Every Monday from 5-6 p.m., the students know where to find us. The students are greeted with hugs and reminded that this is a safe space. Our meetings open with food and an interactive ice breaker. Topics rotate between personal development-related material and professional growth. For personal development, the students love talking about friendships, relationships, and “situationships”—those sticky, sort of undefined relationships that tend to occur during college. We also examine biblical perspectives on such topics as anger, jealousy, fear, success, forgiveness and unforgiveness, and more. Professional development meetings cover material including money management, investing, job recruitment, mock interviews, internship opportunities, graduate school requirements, studying abroad and more.

NOTE: During the COVID-19 pandemic, interest groups continued to meet throughout the spring semester via Zoom.

FLI HIGH CONFERENCE

FLI held our first-ever FLI High Conference in November 2019 at The University of Texas at Austin, hosting more than 150 high school students from Dallas, Houston, San Antonio and Austin. Over 30 UT FLI students volunteered to help lead team-building activities and personal and professional development workshops. What a great event!

ATTENDANCE

152 High School Students
7 Chaperones
33 UT Staff Volunteers
4 Staff

“Thank you all for taking the time out to embark on our student’s lives here in Alief. The students enjoyed themselves and also had some excellent breakthrough moments that will impact them for a lifetime. One of the students who brought to light a personal matter [at the conference] has been seeing our school’s mental health coordinator, and she seems to be doing well now that she has sought help. FLI is too good not to be global.”

—Toni Smith
ATTENDANCE RECOVERY COORDINATOR,
HEAD VOLLEYBALL COACH, ALIEF TAYLOR HIGH SCHOOL
FLI WALL ST. EXPOSURE TRIP

FLI ladies had the opportunity to meet with executives and employees of some of the nations’ leading companies and nonprofits in NYC. The ladies overcame their fears of feeling as if they don’t belong in such corporate spaces and became present. They showed up. They learned that you don’t have to have tunnel vision, meaning that your major in college now may not have anything to do with where your career path takes you, and that it’s okay to move into different fields.

We connected with L’Oréal, HBO, Facebook/Instagram, The National Urban League, Koviem Suits, and the NBA to learn that our biggest competitor is ourselves; the fear we have that keeps us from stepping out and being present is rooted in not knowing our worth. The students learned that they are worth it, they are enough, and that they do belong in such spaces. What an invaluable experience. We look forward to this being an annual event.

STUDENT TESTIMONIAL

“I ended winter break with one of the most beneficial trips I have ever experienced. Huge thank you to the Fearless Leadership Institute (FLI) at The University of Texas at Austin for putting together the FLI Wall Street Experience in NYC! Thank you to Ms. Thaïs Bass-Moore, Dr. Tiffany T. Lewis and Ms. Raven Pierre for leading and coordinating this amazing opportunity for students like me!”

ATTENDANCE

17 Students
3 Staff
1 Advisory Council Member
FLI ANNUAL LEADERSHIP RETREAT

In March 2020, FLI held its 6th Annual Leadership Retreat and, for the first time, hosted students from Huston-Tillotson, UTSA, and Round Rock High School. It was our largest group yet.

The 2020 retreat theme was QUEEN. Through team-building activities, performing arts, workshops, and small group discussions, we examined a queen not by the crown she wears on her head but by the crown she wears in her soul. We allowed for each student to define their own queendom by discussing the following topics: who and what a queen is; the relationship with your father shaped you; how a queen should operate at school or work; how a queen handles her money; how a queen operates in an intimate relationship; and more. Such great revelations and growth came from these discussions!

STUDENT RESPONSES TO THE RETREAT

“Surrounded by joy and love.”

“There was a delicate balance between digging deep and letting loose.”

“This retreat exceeded my expectations. Not only did I feel heard, understood and loved by everyone, but I felt it from myself, too.”

“The small groups allowed me to step out of my comfort zone.”

“I have the tools to grow and now I am ready to FLI.”

“You are uplifting future generations. You are creating better women. These women will be better wives, mothers, friends, sisters, daughters as a result of your sacrifice. The FLI retreat gave me a voice, it granted me an opportunity to meet such amazing people, it gave me community. I am still floored by your dedication, testimony, and outpouring of love. I want to thank you, and I want to let you know you have done more than enough. I hope you take a moment and congratulate yourself. You have done one hell of a job.”

A BOOK TALK: My Journey From Insecurity to Impact

Insecurity is a stubborn beast to shake. It took author Thaïs Bass-Moore decades to finally be free from that beast that haunted her since childhood. During a book talk, Thaïs talked about the things in her life that caused her to want to drop out of college and end her life, but after a near-drowning experience at Venice Beach, she gave her life to God and discovered that her life had purpose. The book, A Syllabus for Black Women: 110 Life Lessons for Sistahs in College, tells her story through eye-opening, funny, and honest renditions in numerical format. It includes how to overcome challenges in college, from relationships to barriers that keep you from studying abroad. Get it on Amazon!

“Where was this book when I was younger?! This book is an encouragement to me. It has inspired me to believe in myself, motivated me to do things that I normally wouldn’t do such as writing in a journal daily. It has encouraged me to be good to myself.”

BOOK TALK ATTENDANCE

300+
FLI AROUND THE WORLD

Research shows that some of the barriers that keep Black students from participating in a study abroad program are conflicts of interest, which include a conflict between parents and student, and between the university and the student.

More barriers include:
- Cost
- Fear
- Lack of traveling experience
- Need for a summer job
- GPA requirement
- Unable to gauge long-term impact of a study abroad experience

Unaware of study abroad programs, or thinking that the option to participate does not apply to you, as a Black woman, can also serve as barriers.

In 2013, Dr. Leonard Moore, history professor and vice president for diversity and community engagement at UT, initiated the Social Entrepreneurship Maymester program in Beijing, China, targeting Black and Latino students. Moore removed the final barrier by eliminating the GPA required to study abroad. Thirty-eight students attended the inaugural DDCE experience in 2013; 32% of them were Black women.

In 2014, Moore started the Urban Economic Development Study Abroad program in Cape Town, South Africa. That year, the program served 43 students; 30% were Black women. Each year the program has grown, creating a tremendous buzz amongst Black students and an increase in the number of Black women who study abroad at UT.

Traditionally, Black women, at large, do not gain collegiate global experience. However, FLI is changing the game through our FLI Around the World movement by motivating and encouraging all FLI students to study abroad! FLI Around the World scholarships are distributed annually to stimulate this life-changing opportunity.

### DDCE STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>DESTINATION</th>
<th>NUMBER OF STUDENTS</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE WHO WERE BLACK WOMEN</th>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019*</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*NOTE: In 2019, both DDCE study abroad programs took place.

Study Abroad Testimonials

“I am a first-generation college student doing a lot of things that my family hasn’t had the chance to do and I know the things I am doing make my family proud, but being in China made me realize that I was also their wildest dream.”

—Jalesha Bass (China, June 2019)

“Having this experience motivates me to push myself and work so much harder so everyone around me can one day experience this. My heart couldn’t be more full, and I appreciate and love FLI for this experience. There is nowhere but up from here.”

#FLIaroundtheworld

—Mackenzie Robinson (South Africa, June 2019)
FLI ONE-ON-ONE MEETUPS

FLI staff meet daily with students one-on-one throughout the semester. In these 30- to 60-minute meetings, we get to know students on a deeper level. We dig into personal and/or academic issues to offer advice and support. If necessary, we refer students to the UT Counseling and Mental Health Center for further assistance.

One-on-one meetings continued during the COVID-19 pandemic via zoom, texts, and phone calls to check on the mental and physical health of students.

AVERAGE WEEKLY MEETUPS | 20

FLI MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

The mentorship program is a service offered by the Fearless Leadership Institute that matches UT upperclassmen and alumni with undergraduate women in search of guidance academically, professionally, or personally. Our mission is to serve as a bridge between collegiates and professionals, empowering them through community, resources, and relationships with industry experts.

NUMBER OF MENTORS | 14
NUMBER OF MENTEES | 24

FLI GOALS

SHORT-TERM

• Develop a more efficient method to incorporate people who want to volunteer with FLI throughout the year.
• Establish a FLI podcast.
• Develop a better method for collecting FLI data and usage of it.

LONG-TERM

• Implement a two-day professional development conference for students and staff across the country.
• Establish a FLI Network of organizations like FLI at every predominantly white institution in the country.

THANKS

FLI STAKEHOLDERS

We greatly appreciate the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement for continued support throughout each fiscal year. We thank the UT Career Services Office for helping to take this year’s programming to the next level.

Additional thanks go to our other sponsors which include Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Sigma Theta, Texas Exes Black Alumni Chapter, BEST, The Links, Inc. (Town Lake Chapter & Austin Chapter), Central Market, Tiff’s Treats and numerous Austin community and UT alumni donors.
FLI ALUMNAE

We stay in contact with FLI alumnae as best we can. Some return to serve as FLI graduate assistants while in grad school at UT, some serve as mentors, and many more as volunteers at our annual leadership retreat. Some are married with children now, some are top executives of their companies, and still more are across the country in law school, medical school or attaining their Ph.D.

The following list include some of the FLI alumnae and where they are now!

**Kiara Truitt-Chambers**, Class of 2014, MS in Accounting
Founder of FLI Mentorship Program
Senior Investment Accountant, Houston, TX
Currently acquiring Certified Public Accountant Certification

**LaShaneika Ephraim**, Class of 2014
Claims Adjuster, Amica Mutual Insurance, Winter Park, FL

**Tenecia Gardner**, Class of 2015
Masters Student in Counseling
Founder and Owner of Sun Juice’D, Houston, TX

**Chelsea Jones**, Class of 2015
MA in Public Policy
Doctoral Student and TA at UCLA, Los Angeles, CA

**Gabrielle Owusu-Ansah**, Class of 2015
MA in Medical Biology
Currently pursuing an MD, New Orleans, LA

**Vanilla McIntosh**, Class of 2015
Project Manager at Target, Minneapolis, MN

**LaDee Maxie**, Class of 2015
University Union Event Host, Austin TX

**Raven Pierre**, Class of 2015
MA in Nursing
Registered Nurse, Houston, TX

**Christle Nwora**, Class of 2016
Incoming Resident Physician, MD expected May 2020, Houston, TX, National Chair of the OSR-AAMC, Aspen Ideas Health Scholar, Incoming Med Peds Resident at Johns Hopkins

**Allison Stinnett**, Class of 2016
Outreach Specialist at the nonprofit It’s Time Texas (Public Health Sector), Austin, TX
Currently applying to graduate school

**LaShawn Washington**, Class of 2016
MA from UT Austin
Doctoral Student at University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI

**Morgan Burgess**, Class of 2016
Product Manager Goldman Sachs
Former FLI Mentorship Director

**Camry Ivy**, Class of 2017
Sales at Dell, Austin, TX

**Autumn Griffin**, Class of 2017
Entertainment Publicity, Los Angeles, CA

**Rakiya Cunningham**, Class of 2018
Financial Analyst at Shell, Houston, TX
Certified Public Accountant

**Jennifer Eze**, Class of 2018
Middle School English & Reading Teacher, Dallas TX
Master’s student at John Hopkins University
Mickelyn Washington, Class of 2018  
College Adviser at Manor Senior HS with the Advise TX program, UT Chapter, Austin, TX  
Master’s student at St. Edwards University for Marriage & Family Therapy

Ashley Oliphant, Class of 2018  
Master’s student at UT School of Social Work, Austin TX

Javonna Hamilton, Class of 2018  
Master’s student at UT Austin  
Educational Psychology  
Graduate Assistant and Counseling Practicum Intern

Angelica Walker, Class of 2018  
Fourth-Grade Math Teacher at Govalle Elementary, Austin, TX  
Certificates: ESL, PPR, Texas EC-6 Test(s)

Wendoline Gamez, Class of 2018  
High School Adviser with the Advise TX program, UT Chapter, Austin, TX  
Serving on the Hospitality Team at Summit Worship Center

Taylor Jenkins, Class of 2018  
Student Success Coach at H. Grady Spruce High School, Dallas, TX

Shaniece Denson, Class of 2018  
Law student in the UT School of Law, Austin, TX

Tyeria Evans, Class of 2019  
Fifth-grade Math Teacher  
Teach for America Corp Member, New Orleans, LA  
Currently applying to graduate school

Jordan Guillory, Class of 2019  
Account Manager at Facebook, Chicago, IL  
Hosted Facebook’s first Black History Month Gala  
Completed the IRTS Fellowship in NY

Ethany Thomas, Class of 2019  
Risk Consulting at KPMG, Dallas, TX

Amahree Archie, Class of 2019  
Staffer for U.S. Senator Cory Booker, Washington D.C.

Marissa Elder, Class of 2019  
Law student in the UT School of Law, Austin, TX

Cydni Cox, Class of 2019  
Program Coordinator & Student Support Specialist with the Fearless Leadership Institute, Austin, TX

Dayjah Harris, Class of 2019  
Consulting and Account Management, Dallas, TX

Marshala Wilkins, Class of fall 2019  
Digital Services Advocate at the National Domestic Violence Hotline, Austin, TX

Christina Hampton, Class of 2019  
Elementary School Teacher, Houston, TX

CONGRATULATIONS  
TO ALL OUR GRADUATES AND FLI ALUMNAE!  
“We’re proud of you!”
When I think back over my college years at UCLA, I know I’ve come a long way. Those 5 years in college were challenging for me. Yes, I had fun. I partied. I made good friends. But also made so many mistakes that led to depression, suicidal thoughts, and almost to dropping out of school. After a traumatic situation where I almost lost my life during my 3rd year, I spent the next two years trying to figure out who I was and why on earth did God make me. If it wasn’t for the hugs, the meals, and the prayers from my parents and extended family who lived throughout Los Angeles I could have completely lost my way. Yes, I had some support from UCLA to stick it out, but I needed something deeper, something in my face, something tangible. I needed the Fearless Leadership Institute. But because it didn’t exist at UCLA, I knew exactly what was needed at UT Austin when I started working here. Some of the Black undergraduate women I was mentoring at UT dealt with some of my same issues I dealt with as a first-generation Black woman: feeling like I don’t belong, ignorant of college resources, staying in abusive relationships, pursuing others’ dreams for my life and not my own, and more. I needed something like FLI to help me find myself, to discover my gifts, to uncover childhood pain and be healed from it, to access everything college has to offer me, to discover my purpose and my career, to make life-long friendships, to inspire and serve others, to learn that it’s bigger than me, and to learn to dream bigger.

If any of this resonates with you, consider supporting what FLI does—making sure young Black and Brown women live fearlessly, making sure they reach their goals and make their mark in today’s society. Thank you.

Thaïs
As an alumna of the University of Texas at Austin, I am grateful for the resources, opportunities and network that was afforded to me while I was a student. However, even with all those perks, there were still times that I felt alone and unsure of myself while in college. Sure, I was involved in student organizations and I pledged a sorority, but even those spaces were not spaces I could fully express some of the challenges I faced while I was a student at the university. My circumstances were unique, not only was I a first-generation college student, but I became a single mother while in college. Navigating the college environment while also getting adjusted to motherhood was a challenge. Very early on I was concerned about my next steps and what I would do after college, because I knew that I had to provide for not only myself, but also for my son. I was a psychology major and my academic advisor had already told me that she didn’t think that I would be competitive for admission into a psychology graduate program so I turned my attention to looking for full-time employment. I did not have a clue of what I wanted to do with a psychology degree, I had not had any mentorship and I did not think I had built any practical skills that would make me successful in a professional job. There were certainly some bumps and bruises along my journey, but thankfully, I ended up finding my way. Sometimes, I can’t help but think how far I could have gone or how my journey might have been smoother if the Fearless Leadership Institute was around for me back then.

If you are looking for opportunities to give back or are looking to be a part of a movement, consider supporting FLI.

– Tiffany
HOW TO FLI WITH US

FLI WELCOMES YOUR HELP! Whether it’s through your time or treasure, we look forward to the opportunity to connect, engage and collaborate to continue to serve women of color at The University of Texas at Austin.

GIVING POINTS:

1. **Give any amount you like!**
   All proceeds go towards programming and making sure each young lady realizes their worth, dreams big dreams, and pursues greatness!

2. **Give $50**
   Help a student attend the annual leadership retreat by covering the $50 registration fee. (The 2021 FLI Leadership Retreat which occurs every March, may take place via Zoom considering the Covid-19 pandemic.)

3. **Give $100**
   Every year we gift each student with t-shirts, make-up bags, personal products, and more so they can feel loved, supported and a part of FLI.

4. **Give $500**
   During the pandemic we gave thousands of dollars away to FLI students who were experiencing financial hardships to help them pay for groceries, rent, books, tuition, etc. Help us to continue this support.

5. **Give $1000**
   Last year we started the FLI Wall St. Exposure Trip to NYC to expose young women to industries they may not otherwise be aware of. Help pay for NYC housing. The trip will resume when the pandemic subsides.

6. **Give $10,000**
   FLI aims for all Black and Brown women to gain global experience which boosts their confidence and academic performance, as well as, opens up more career opportunities for them. Help FLI give away even more FLI Around the World Scholarships.

THREE WAYS TO GIVE:

1. Via Venmo @FearlessLeadershipInstitute
2. Online at: [http://ddce.utexas.edu/fli/](http://ddce.utexas.edu/fli/) Click on GIVE NOW button.
3. By check made payable to: Fearless Leadership Institute
   Mail check to: Fearless Leadership Institute
   100 W. Dean Keeton, A5700, Austin, TX 78712
   Attn: Thaïs Bass-Moore

THANK YOU! All donations are tax deductible.

BAWSE UP! INVESTMENT CLUB
Towards the end of the semester FLI student, Kim Nwaneri, a junior at UT, conducted a workshop on stocks and investing, along with long-time investor and guest speaker, Alisha White-Madison. FLI students were inspired to learn more about increasing their income and thus started the BAWSE Up! Investment Club.

FLI ‘RONA RELIEF
Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, many students lost jobs or were negatively impacted by their parents’ situation. FLI opened an application allowing students to apply for financial support. Two rounds of funding (one in April and one in July) were conducted to help students. FLI gave over $2,600. We would love to be able to give more!
Your support makes a difference!

Visit us online at: http://ddce.utexas.edu/fli/

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA:
The Fearless Leadership Institute is a program within the Longhorn Center for Academic Equity, a unit of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement at The University of Texas at Austin.