

Lewis '89 is *Ebony* "Unsung Hero"

Dr. Shireen Lewis '89 received an "Unsung Hero" award from *Ebony* magazine, for making a difference for children, schools, and communities. Lewis is the executive director of EduSeed and founder of its SisterMentors program, based in Washington, D.C.

Lewis' career includes almost 30 years of mentoring and coaching women and girls. Through SisterMentors, Lewis has helped 32 women of color earn doctorates and two groups of girls of color get into college, including to Duke University, Goucher College, and Bates College. Many of the women graduates now serve roles in communities in the U.S. and abroad, including as leaders of nonprofits and professors at universities.

"The impetus for my work," said Lewis, "is my experience attending the first school in my village in Trinidad and Tobago. It was there that I was mentored by a young woman teacher when I was

quite young. That mentoring relationship profoundly changed my life and boosted my self esteem to such an extent that I went on to excel in college, earn a law degree, and a Ph.D."

SisterMentors' women and girls are African Americans, Latinas, Asian Americans and immigrants. The program helps doctoral candidates to complete their dissertations and get their doctorates. The women in turn, while in the program, give back by mentoring girls of color from disadvantaged backgrounds, inspiring girls to stay in school, do well and go to college. They serve as role models for women of color who have achieved academic success despite the odds.

This spring, Lewis brought a group of elementary, middle, and high schools students from the Washington, D.C.-area to spend two days at the University.

SISTERMENTORS VISIT CHARLOTTESVILLE

By Shireen Lewis '89

"An awesome man," said one of the girls in describing University President John Casteen, who took time out of his busy schedule to meet with 23 girls taking part in the SisterMentors program. The girls sat in President Casteen's office as he talked about Thomas Jefferson and his vision for the university. He explained that students from all over the world attend the University, and shared that he had recently returned from a trip to China where he met with parents of students.

The girls were comfortable enough to ask questions — one wanted to know if there are equestrian events at the University, while another asked if the University has a particular specialty — to which the president said most students undertake arts and sciences courses. The president shared a story about his daughter, who graduated from UVA in five years with a bachelor's degree and a degree in teaching.

One of the last questions asked was why one should choose UVA. The president said that first-year students would find an interesting mix of people and would have fun doing so. At the end of the meeting, President Casteen presented the girls with Girl Scout cookies as they presented him with a thank you gift.

Attending Classes

On the second day of their visit, the group attended classes in international relations, drama and theatre, and sociology. They



even attended a science class designed specifically for them — learning to make ice cream using liquid nitrogen. In addition to the arts and sciences courses, the girls attended a law class with Professor **Darryl Brown '90**.

The Law School Through Young Eyes

The visit to the Law School was special for the girls, as many of the younger students want to be lawyers. Professor Brown designed and taught a criminal law class for them. Like law students, the girls sat in a classroom to read a case and examine a statute. They were thrilled as they responded to questions on a criminal case used with first-years, *Martin v. State*. Brown asked the students to identify the plaintiff and defendant, the type of case, and where the case was in the court system. The group then analyzed the statute under which the defendant was convicted. ■