

.....
Imani Anderson is a junior Animal Science major at North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University. Imani is from Raleigh, North Carolina, and has been working with animals for 7 years. Ultimately, Imani intends to become a food and large animal veterinarian. Imani is a part of the alpha lambda delta honors society, and is also the president of the Pre-Veterinary Medical Association at NCAT.
.....

What first got you interested in animal science?

I think it was the fact that growing up, my mom kept an array of animals in the house. There was a point where we owned two iguanas, three dogs, a cat, and two gerbils all at once. My mom told me the first time I mentioned becoming a veterinarian, I was 4 years old and she had no clue where that came from. I feel like this is the path that God had planned for me so I have continued to pursue it and have loved every moment of it.

What school do you attend, and what made you choose to attend your school for this specific major (did your school offer more specific animal related programs or have more animal facilities than others, etc.)?

The reason why I chose North Carolina A&T was because I wanted to go to NC State for vet school, not knowing whether I'd get in or not, I just knew I didn't want to go to the same school for 8 years if I did. A&T was the only other university in the state that offered an animal science program and I wanted to attend an HBCU after growing up in a predominantly white area. A&T was my only option and the only school I applied to.

What are some of the things you're involved with on campus?

On campus I am actively a member of the pre-veterinary medical association, I am a member of the alpha lambda delta honors society, I have been a member of the caribbean student association

as well as the student health advisory council which works closely with the student health center.

What exactly do you aim to do with your degree/ What is your ideal career using your degree? (Include types of animals you intend to work with)

After graduation my hope is to go into vet school to pursue a career in food and large animal medicine. I want to work specifically with ruminants, cattle being my favorite and I have been thinking about the possibility of specializing in radiology.

Is there anything that you wish you would have done differently in highschool to prepare yourself for the rigor of an animal science program?

I wish that I worked a little harder in high school. I didn't put in the effort that I should have and I feel like even though I had a decent GPA, I should have done way more than what I was doing. I never took the time to study and I waited until the last minute to complete assignments.

Talk about an academic setback that you've had concerning your major, and how you overcame it.

Taking a bunch of chemistry classes is what set me back. I had made only A's and B's in college until I reached the second general chemistry course. I thought I could put in the same amount of effort that I did in the chemistry before that and it did not end well. I took summer classes and worked harder the following semester to redeem myself from that.

How are you enjoying your overall college experience? Is there anything you wish you would have done differently this semester?

There is nothing that I would change about my college experience. I have loved every moment of it, the good and the bad. Each event

that took place molded me in some way and I have learned a lot. One thing I know for sure is that I would not be who I am today if I had not attended A&T.

How do you make sure your mental health is up to speed amongst your busy schedule? What are some things you do to let off steam?

I talk to my mom everyday. She's my best friend and we have a great relationship. She always is honest with me and knows me better than anyone and she's usually able to talk me off the ledge, figuratively. I've also tried going to the gym and that was one of my biggest stress relievers.

Was there ever a time when you doubted your aspirations as a result of being a minority in a predominantly white field? If so, how did you overcome that?

Absolutely, even now I am still facing some of that at times. When you go into an environment where no one looks like you and you aren't receiving the support or encouragement that you should be, sometimes it's hard to give that to yourself and you think that maybe this isn't for you. I overcame it by remembering that if I continue to honor God, if it is his will for me to become a vet then it will happen regardless of what anyone says, or does. I have to also keep tabs on the veterinarians that are in the field that look like me and reach out to them for help or questions if need be.

What do you feel is the most important skill that someone going into the field of animal science should possess?

Honestly I'd say patience. A lot of times you're going to need it with yourself when you're frustrated on those days where you just aren't getting it right. You're going to need it on the days when you feel like you want to quit. You'll need it on the days when you're placing too much pressure on yourself. Being patient will calm you down and

bring you back to reality that things don't happen overnight and that whatever it is you're struggling with, you'll get it soon.

Do you think there is enough representation of minorities in our field? If not, what do you think could be done to improve this?

Oh no. That's one of my newer reasons for becoming a veterinarian. Everytime I stepped into a practice back home I was the only black person or there were only one or two others. I want to gain a platform where I can reach out to the youth and begin working with them early to prepare them for a career in vet med. I want to encourage them and let them know that they can do it which is the opposite of my story. I feel like if I had some of the knowledge I have now at an earlier age, I would have done better in preparing myself for this but everything in its time.

If you could give one piece of advice to your high school self, what would you say?

Work harder now so that you won't have to later. You think you'll have enough time but time waits for no one and just when you think you're in the clear, it'll pop up and you'll see why you should've started preparing earlier.

How do you intend to combat racial discrimination and prejudice that you may encounter in the work place?

The first thing I want to do is hire those who are usually discriminated against. I want to give them a fair and fighting chance to learn, to see if this is really what they want and if it is, to encourage them and help them to reach that goal. I want to make it a comfortable space for them to be themselves so they don't have to code switch or cover up bits and pieces of their culture.