

Letter to JSU leadership from U.S. Ambassador Michael A. Battle

I am pleased to share with you that one of your outstanding students, Ms. Naomia Suggs-Brigety, is serving as a summer intern with the U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa Ethiopia. As U.S. Ambassador to the African Union, co-located with U.S. Embassy Addis, I have had the honor of engaging Naomia in conversation and learning from her direct supervisor of the excellent work she is doing. Her excellent work speaks well of the preparation provided her by Jackson State University.

Naomia spent 10 weeks as an engineering intern with USAID in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, during the summer of 2013. Much of her internship was spent in the field monitoring the progress of construction programs alongside USAID contractors, Ethiopian nationals and government officials. In a few of these visits she was the sole U.S. embassy representative, giving her a unique opportunity to test both her technical skills and diplomatic abilities. She led an engineering team that handed over 11 construction sites to USAID subcontractors, a process that included discussions with key political figures to ensure community buy-in and long-term project viability. The discussions included the good news about what the U.S. government was willing to provide. But, it also required securing commitments from local communities for their role in the projects. Naomia had to provide critical evaluation of subcontractors and community performance on these projects without offending or alienating them in the process. From this she learned that the way embassy representatives present critiques, is just as critical to making progress in development work as is the technical mentorship provided.

I congratulate the Jackson State University family for exceptional role it plays in the continued development of Naomia who, I am confident will make exceptional contributions to the fields of engineering and diplomacy.

Michael A. Battle

U.S. Ambassador to the African Union

U.S. Permanent Representative to the UN Economic Commission for Africa

Embassy Addis Ababa, Ethiopia