

# University of the District of Columbia

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*"...a new day,  
a new opportunity"*

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Profiles of the University of the District of Columbia's Class of 2006**

The University of the District of Columbia will confer degrees upon approximately 600 students at the University's 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Commencement Convocation 10:00 a.m, Saturday, May 13, 2006 in the Verizon Center. A total of 166 international students are included in the graduating class, representing 54 countries. The Class of 2006 represents a population as diverse as the scholastic offerings of the only public university in the nation's capital.

The University will graduate four bachelor's degree recipients and one associate degree recipient at this year's commencement with a perfect 4.0 grade point average. They include:

- Rachel A. Cicero - BBA /Business Management
- Leola D Dublin. – BA/English
- Dorota Kowalska– BA/English
- John Andrew Donnelly, Sr – BS/Fire Science Administration

- Heidi Leigh Eitel – AA/Architecture Technology

**Adetola Babatunde Shabi**, a graduating senior, has served as the student representative to the University's Board of Trustees since June of 2003. A native of Nigeria, Babatunde has been active in the Undergraduate Student Government, and is the guiding light for "Operation Catch Them Young," a literacy awareness program he founded in October 2004. Targeted towards assisting all public school students in the District of Columbia, "Operation Catch Them Young" is designed to assist and encourage younger students to stay in school.

In August of 2006, graduate Leola D. Dublin will begin a **fully funded PhD in African-American Studies** at Washington State University. As the University's sole nominee for the prestigious Fulbright Award, Leola intends to spend the 2007-2008 academic year in Jamaica, conducting dissertation research. Leola, who graduates with a **perfect 4.0** grade point average, is the **Senior Class President** and will speak at Commencement. In addition to her Fulbright Award, Leola was a Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement Program Scholar, a recipient of the Norma Holloway Johnson and Julius A. Johnson Scholarship Recipient and was on the UDC Dean's List for 2004, 2005, and 2006. After receiving her doctorate and the requisite training, she would like to return to the University of the District of Columbia as its first female President.

Awa Nacoulma and Adama Nacoulma, who are **twin sisters**, are graduating from the Hospitality Management and Tourism Program. They come from the central African nation of Burkina Faso. Born on March 11, 1978, the twins studied Hospitality Management in England, and joined UDC to complete their A.A.S. degree in the same field. They intend to pursue another degree in management before returning to their home country to work in the Hospitality Industry. During their period of study at UDC, they enrolled in the same courses, earned almost the same grade point average, and were constantly seen together around the campus.

There is a **mother and daughter** in the UDC Class of 2006. Tracy Talbert has earned her B.S. in Health Education/Public Health while her mother, Janice Talbert, earned her Master's degree in Counseling. The mother and daughter duo see each other every day at home and

school, but never took classes together. Daughter Tracy recalls going with her mother to Federal City College, a predecessor institution of the University of the District of Columbia, saying that was pivotal in her decision to attend UDC.

The **youngest graduate** in the Class of 2006 is Olumide O. Akinwande, born February 23, 1986, who is graduating with an A.A.S. degree in Respiratory Therapy. The University's "**senior**" **graduate** is Firouz Hejazi, who has earned a Master's degree in English Composition and Rhetoric – date of birth is April 28, 1941.

Kibre Genel Haile has earned her B.A. in Business Management. She is **married to the former Ambassador** of Zimbabwe who served in that capacity during the Clinton Administration.

One of the University's Respiratory Therapy graduates is the program's first **2<sup>nd</sup> generation graduate**. Rohi Puri is graduating this year with an Associate of Applied Sciences Degree in Respiratory Therapy. His father, Sat Puri, graduated in 1993, and subsequently died of a heart attack in the late 1990's.

Five graduating students from the University of the District of Columbia David A. Clarke School of Law were selected to receive the Olender Foundation awards for excellence in the clinical program:

- **Benjamin Kull**, a Dean's Fellow, represented three tenant organizations facing landlord fraud and outrageous living conditions with extraordinary success in the Housing and Consumer Law Clinic. In other matters, he persuaded the Rental Housing Commission to award the School of Law \$5,000 in attorney's fees and proposed legislation to the D. C. Council that would close an eviction loophole.
- **Genetta Smith**, a Dean's Fellow, excelled in every aspect of the HIV/AIDS clinic, serving as a pillar of strength for clients in ill health and desperate need. She helped

several terminally ill clients finalize custodial arrangements for their children and obtained benefits to help support a child with disabilities.

- **Shelia Thorpe** displayed intellect, insight, professionalism and a solid work ethic well beyond the years of many seasoned lawyers during her time in the Government Accountability Project clinic where she worked on several projects including the extraterritorial reach of the Sarbanes/Oxley Act, burdens of proof required before the Merit Systems Protection Board and evidentiary considerations for a jury trial.
  
- **Cynthia Catlett** tackled a number of cases and produced a large quantity of work during her semester in the Juvenile and Special Education Law Clinic, including working with a team to produce a draft federal district court complaint for a case of first impression and litigating at a due process administrative hearing to begin to enforce the special education rights of a student who is currently incarcerated in a federal prison.
  
- **Ryan High**, working in the Community Development Law Clinic, showed substantial initiative, compassionate understanding, legal acumen, and patient resolve in assisting a low- income housing cooperative resolve real estate issues, overcoming bureaucratic obstacles, and obtaining the financing necessary for the redevelopment of affordable and decent housing for its member families.

Mr. Anthony A. (Tony) Lewis, President of Verizon Washington DC, will be the keynote speaker for Commencement, which will be presided over by University President William L. Pollard, PhD. As a part of the graduation activities for the University, honorary doctoral degrees will be conferred on renowned attorney Willie E. Gary (Doctor of Laws) and acclaimed artist Sam Gilliam, Jr. (Doctor of Humane Letters).

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The University of the District of Columbia is the sole public source for accessible, inclusive, affordable, and comprehensive public higher education in the District of Columbia and provides additional life-long learning opportunities. The University delivers quality instruction and uses student-centered approaches to empower and benefit both individuals and its local communities. The University, an urban land grant institution, is a very diverse community, a gateway to the world, and a significant investment engine for the District of Columbia. The University is located at 4200 Connecticut Ave, NW Washington, and is conveniently located at the Van Ness/UDC stop on the Red Line of Metro. For more information on other University activities, contact Mike Andrews, Senior Director for Communications and University Spokesman at (202) 274-5685 or visit the University's web site at [www.udc.edu](http://www.udc.edu).

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**NOTICE TO MEDIA: If media are interested in contacting any of the above-mentioned graduates, please contact Mike Andrews, Senior Director for Communications at (202) 274-5685.**

**Media are welcome to observe and report on highly visual activities taking place in concurrence with the University of the District of Columbia's Commencement Convocation at the Verizon Center Saturday, May 13, 2006. Media interested in covering this event should contact Mike Andrews prior to the event.**