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## **Two Southland College Prep 'Top of the Class' Graduates Admitted to Princeton University, U.S. Air Force Academy Prep Unit**

Written by Press Release



Elijah Calloway learned at Southland's recent Commencement ceremonies in the Harris Theater, Chicago that he is the recipient of the 2014 Ronald Blackstone Memorial Scholarship. (PHOTO SUPPLIED)

Richton Park, IL-(ENEWSPF)- "Performance, persistence and patience."

That's how Southland College Prep Charter High School's college counselor, Ron Anderson, describes the route Imani Thornton and Elijah Calloway, two members of the new public charter high school's first graduating class, took over many months to be admitted to top U.S. educational institutions.

"Imai Thornton and Elijah Calloway focused on goals that some say could have been out of reach, but they each continued to perform academically and personally at very high levels, were offered scholarships to several top schools and finally prevailed in their quest to be admitted to major institutions of their choosing," Anderson explained.

Thornton, 18, of Matteson, who was offered scholarships to several institutions valued at more than \$400,000 has been admitted to Princeton University and Elijah Calloway, 17, also of Matteson, declined \$ 276,000 in scholarships to other top institutions to accept an appointment to the U.S. Air Force Academy's Prep School, a first step towards admission to the Academy.

Both students are members of Southland's "top of the class" group, each posting 4.55 grade point averages (GPAs).

"Imani Thornton and Elijah Calloway and all the members of Southland's first commencement class, are extraordinary young people.

"Their receptivity to a rigorous quality high school education that saw all 71 members of the class admitted to colleges and universities and earning a total of \$7.6 million in scholarships is

remarkable, Their tenacity in the pursuit of excellence and a well balanced approach to living, will stand them well in the future,” said Dr. Blondean Davis, Southland College Prep CEO.

Thornton served as Secretary of Southland’s National Honor Society and also of its Spanish Club. As part of her service in the NHS, Thornton took a leadership role in stimulating greater use of the Matteson Public Library by young people.

She was an active member of the school’s Interact Club, a Rotary International program whose members raised funds for food to be sent to Nigeria and she was an active participant in a March of Dimes fund raising effort that benefited pre-natal care.

Thornton also ran the 400-meter as a member of Southland’s track and field team and played the flute in the school’s Ambassador Band.

“Southland offered me an amazing opportunity, expanded my horizons and opened me up to believe just what my parents have always advocated to me and my sister, Maya, a Southland junior -- that we can become whoever we wish to be if we work hard enough,” Thornton said.

Thornton aspires to a career in journalism and possibly law someday, like her father, Byron, who together with her mother, Dona, are very supportive of her ambitions, she said.

Calloway, an officer of the Southland National Honor Society chapter, played saxophone in the school’s band, and noted that, “attending Southland gave me more than a solid academic experience. Southland molded me into a more holistic person and exposed me to diverse cultural and fine art experiences that I don’t believe any another high school could have offered.

“Many schools strive to provide students with the adequate skills needed to succeed in life, but I think Southland went over and beyond to ensure that we become positive contributors to society,” he said.

“A slogan at Southland is, ‘students today, leaders tomorrow.’ I really do believe that Southland prepared me and my classmates to be our nation’s future leaders, Calloway said.

During summers in high school, Calloway attended a six-week American Field Service student exchange program in Costa Rica, a legal camp at the John Marshall Law School and an advertising and marketing program at the University of Illinois- Chicago.

The USAFA Prep School is a ten-month program that typically leads to an appointment to the United States Air Force Academy.

The process that led to the appointment to the USAFA Prep School was a long one, Calloway explained.

“I originally began in the spring of my Junior Year applying directly to the Academy, however, because of fierce competition, I was unable to receive a Congressional nomination.

“In researching alternatives, I learned about the possibility of an appointment to the USAFA Prep School and applied while continuing to concentrate all my effort toward other college options.

Calloway explained that he first became interested in the USAFA during a college tour to the United States Coast Guard Academy and last summer was one of 25 high school seniors selected to attend a week-long visit to the Air Force Academy.

“I have three older siblings who have had fine careers in the military. My sister, Jenae Calloway, has been in the U.S. Navy for 10 years; my brother, Eugene Calloway III, is completing U.S. Marine Corps basic training and my brother, Jarrod Boston, served in the U.S. Navy for four years.

“As I arrived at Southland’s Commencement exercises, I received an email from the U.S. Air Force Academy of my appointment to the Prep Academy. I look forward to joining my siblings in a U.S. military career,” Calloway said.

“My parents, Sheilah and Eugene Calloway, motivate me to create opportunities for myself and perform at the highest possible level,” he said.