

THE ECONOMIC CLUB
OF WASHINGTON, D.C.

SCHOLARS TO LEADERS

Ayana Bell

2012 Scholarship Recipient

"I took pride in my academics and it was a personal goal for me to never be satisfied with being average or just skating by in anything."



2012 scholar, Ayana Bell

From an early age, learning something new became a habit for Ayana Bell. While she was in the second grade, her dad established a special "weekend rule" for her: before she could go outside and play, Ayana had to stimulate her mind, by reading or writing for at least two hours. This annoyed Ayana as a child, but as the years passed by, this obligation turned into pure enjoyment, and she looked forward to learning and studying new things. Eventually those two hours turned into four hours.

"It had developed into a habit that has stuck with me throughout my life, and I now can see the benefit of getting those two hours in."

Ayana's family stressed education because they knew personally how education could improve circumstances for anyone's life. Both her parents and grandparents are college graduates, and her grandmother continued her studies to complete her PhD.

"My dad's father went to Morgan State, as well as my parents. My mom also worked there when I was a child, [so] I pretty much knew I would end up going to Morgan State for my undergrad [studies]."

Curiosity and a hunger to learn more led Ayana to the field of technology. From her very first computer class in seventh grade, she immediately knew that a career in technology was for her. At first, she did not know much about the field, but she would shape the rest of her school years figuring out what a profession in technology could look like. Throughout her high school years at District of Columbia's Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter School, Ayana worked at her cousin's technology firm where she was able to gain a great deal of fundamental hands-on skills. These were pivotal points for her because she realized her passion was truly in technology. To supplement her work experience in the field, she joined her college's club "Code Now" and attended local weekend seminars that helped grow her knowledge base and her network. Her strong drive to succeed in the field was instilled in her early years, and by the time high school graduation rolled by, Ayana knew she wanted a career in cybersecurity.

Ayana first heard about the Economic Club scholarship through a staff member at her high school. At first, she felt discouraged about applying because she had been unable to secure a scholarship up to that point. That did not stop her. Ayana researched the Economic Club and immediately felt compelled to apply because in addition to the financial benefits of a scholarship, she saw the Economic Club as a lifetime source of professional connections.

“I truly thank the Economic Club for this opportunity because those funds helped my parents avoid having to pay out of pocket for my college education. With me being the oldest of three, I would have had to sacrifice my higher education to work in order to save up and pay my way through school, [since] my parents couldn’t afford it.”

Ayana attended Morgan State University, where she graduated with a Bachelor’s degree in Information Science and Systems in 2017. During her time at Morgan State University, Ayana won the “Most Outstanding Female Junior” award in 2015, a Student Government Association award based on campus posture, on/off campus involvement, and grades.

After graduation, Ayana stayed engaged with the Economic Club and recently took a leadership role within the Economic Club’s Alumni Leadership Council (ALC). In addition to co-chairing the ALC, Ayana mentors and offers sage advice to younger scholars as they navigate through college. Ayana hopes to impart value with the current scholars because she feels that she has benefited from the advice of Economic Club members that have been in her corner since she graduated high school. With an entire network of Economic Club members at her disposal, Ayana has met and connected with some of the technology and security industries’ most respected and successful members. Their insight and advice kept Ayana motivated to find her current job: a Cybersecurity Compliance Analyst for Accenture Federal Services. In her role, she provides support for federal system security assessments of cloud-based systems; Ayana is the liaison between Security and Technical/Functional teams to define, document, and deliver security documentation and artifacts that demonstrate compliance with required security controls. Aside from her position at Accenture, Ayana is now looking to launch a start-up company called The Innovation Station, a one-stop technology shop for current and aspiring technology professionals in the DC Metropolitan area. When asked what her mission statement would be, she responded:



Ayana at an annual tech conference

“To inspire African-American girls in tech to become the best version of themselves while encouraging them to innovate the way they think.”

Ayana is an exemplary alumna for our scholars; an innovative and curious professional who broke through her comfort zone by challenging herself and never being satisfied with mediocre results. Driven and motivated, the sky is the limit for Ayana’s future.