



Benita Cooper: Always Persevere

The daughter of a Haitian immigrant, Lincoln College-Normal senior Benita Cooper came to LCN mainly because of its convenience to her home and her children's school. Once enrolled, Benita found the small class size, the number of night and weekend classes offered, and the accessibility of the instructors much to her liking. "Always willing to help, my instructors proved available over the phone, email, or in their offices," she emphasizes.

Not only have her LCN instructors been readily accessible, Benita has found their classes interesting and challenging. Benita notes that in Dr. Chris Winkler's *Organizational Behavior and Theory* course, "you actually get to discuss your thoughts in a mature setting, and your views are respected. You grow that way, your world isn't so narrow, you hear other people's views which spark new thoughts and ideas you may not have had before."

In Angela Ambers-Henderson's *Criminal Procedure* class, Benita enjoyed a similar level of rigor and academic challenge, commenting that the instructor asked the students to "think through different statutes," focusing on understanding why the laws were enacted.

An ex-Marine, Benita welcomes the intellectual challenge of rigorous courses and is willing to put forth the effort needed for success. For instance, Benita's inexperience with statistical analysis seemed a formidable barrier when she first enrolled in *Research Methods*. However, she persevered, and the students in the class came together to aid her in understanding the statistic component. This camaraderie and help from fellow students remain among the best memories Benita keeps from her classes at LCN.

As a Criminal Justice Studies major, Benita also took courses from and worked as an intern under Chief Ronald Swan of the Illinois State University Police. As an intern, Benita recalls assisting with ISU's Freshman Preview, learning the dispatch system, and participating in ride-alongs with ISU officers on campus patrols. Chief Swan was impressed with Benita's abilities, commenting, "Benita was a good student with a firm understanding of interpersonal communication skills."

To industrious student, Benita can add the role of proud mom to two sons, Issiah, 10, and Jeremiah, 6. Interested and involved in their education, Benita served on the Parent Advisory Board of the Unit 5 school district. The family of three also attends Mount Pisgah Baptist church together, Jeremiah singing in the choir and Issiah performing in a church mime troupe while Benita attends a Bible Study class.

Benita and her sons are looking forward to attending Barack Obama's Presidential Inauguration together in January, an honor due to her son Issiah's selection by a special committee as one of a group of Illinois students to attend. Other family in Benita's life include her mother, Jeannette Cooper; her sister, Andrea; and her brother, Andre. Benita's father, Benny Cooper, for whom she was named, is deceased.

Last summer, while her sons attended Y-camp, Benita worked both as a day-care teacher for the Deborah T. Thomas Learning Center and as an activity aide at Asta Care nursing home. After receiving her bachelor's degree this December, she intends to either enroll in law school or pursue a master's degree in Criminal Justice.

Benita offers these words of advice to fellow students: "Take academics seriously, and always persevere past your current circumstances because they are of the moment and not permanent."

November Spotlight

2008 - 2009