



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Paulette Thornton
(323) 401-0406

A²MEND STUDENT MENTEES BECOME 2022 COLLEGE GRADUATES

***More Than a Dozen A²MEND Student Mentees Earned Their College Degrees This Past Spring,
With Some Furthering Their Education While Others Already Pursuing Their Careers***

LOS ANGELES – June 30, 2022 – The board of the African American Male Education Network & Development (A²MEND) organization is proud to announce that 13 student mentees graduated from college this past spring. Several students who graduated with an associate’s degree are moving on to a four-year college, while others who graduated with a bachelor’s degree are continuing their education through a master’s program or have already started their careers. Regardless of their future pursuits, the students are grateful to A²MEND for their mentoring support and inspiring them to succeed during their undergraduate experience. A²MEND is led by African American male educators who voluntarily use their scholarly and professional expertise to foster institutional change within California’s community college system to increase success of Black male students.

Jason Haskins is one of the graduates who has expressed immense gratitude for A²MEND’s mentoring support. Haskins, a magna cum laude graduate of Arizona State University, first learned about A²MEND at a time when he needed it most. Weeks after getting laid off from his job, Haskins found himself living out of his car. With a young daughter to support, he decided to go to college to position himself for better career opportunities. After enrolling in Diablo Valley College, he met Dr. Eric Handy, who encouraged him to get involved in A²MEND. His connections through the organization helped him land a student job as an assistant to the college’s president. When Haskins eventually shared about his homelessness, his mentor Dr. Terrence Elliott graciously opened up his home for him to live there as he worked toward his degree.

While carrying a full academic load and working at the college, Haskins took on a second job as an Uber driver. Once he earned his associate’s degree, he transferred to Arizona State University upon receiving an Uber scholarship that paid for his full tuition. Haskins, who is continuing his education at ASU by pursuing a master’s degree in organizational leadership, plans to use his education to one day work in construction management to help builders develop affordable housing for homeless and low-income individuals. “I appreciate A²MEND for filling the void of fellowship for Black students,” said Haskins, who now is also a father to an infant son. “Organizations like A²MEND are what’s needed in our community.”

-more-

Another student mentee who is thankful for A²MEND's presence is Cesar Orozco, who graduated with an associate's degree in social work from Moreno Valley College. Orozco heard about A²MEND through a college counselor during his freshman year. "I was going through a lot of personal struggles and stress at the time," he said. "I had hoped that A²MEND would help me change my life, which it did. They helped me feel like I could break free from my situation." Today, Orozco is headed to UC Santa Barbara to study sociology. His career aspiration is to become a college counselor to help support students with similar struggles that he endured. "I want to help other students by giving them a second chance with the opportunity of an education."

Student mentee Zaire Prewitt, who made the Dean's List as a graduate from Moorpark College, believes that A²MEND influenced him to persevere in his studies and campus activism. Diagnosed with ADHD at an early age, Prewitt said that the stigma of the diagnosis often made him doubt himself. His sensitivity to learning led him to become a tutor for a nonprofit that mentors African American elementary and middle school students. Observing his interest in supporting students of color, one of his professors recommended that he become involved with A²MEND's student chapter. Within months of joining the organization, he participated in A²MEND's Study Abroad Program, where board members annually accompany student mentees on an excursion to Africa. "Going to Africa was a holistic experience," said Prewitt. "It helped me learn how to become more patient with myself and be prepared for opportunities when they arise." Once he returned to college as a sophomore, Prewitt put those self-discoveries into action by becoming vice president and later president of A²MEND's student chapter while also serving as secretary of the college's Black Student Union. "A²MEND helped me build confidence in myself," said Prewitt, who plans to transfer to Whittier College to study marketing. "The board members of A²MEND believed in me."

The African American Male Education Network & Development (A²MEND) organization is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit led by African American male educators who utilize their scholarly and professional expertise to foster institutional change within California's community college system to increase success of African American male students. Since establishing the organization in 2006, A²MEND has served as the premiere nonprofit solely focused on addressing the lack of educational success for African American male students in community colleges.

###