Top Five Graduating Seniors

LaGuardia Billingslea
Shantay Owens
Casey Li
Challis Cooks
Jeff Oyo

LaGuardia Billingslea is a Dean’s List and EOP Honors student with a 3.71 cumulative average. LaGuardia is a non-traditional student who worked long and hard to earn her degree. A Childhood Education major with a concentration in American Studies, LaGuardia ever remains a dedicated learner as well as an inspiration to all around her. Now, as she leaves Buffalo State prepared to nurture and educate future generations, LaGuardia is eager to accept and conquer new challenges while teaching new generations. Her future students will undoubtedly be in good hands.

Shantay Owens is a Criminal Justice major who currently holds a 3.68 cumulative grade point average. Shantay came to Buffalo State from New York City to experience education in a new environment and meet new people. She also came to Buffalo State to gain independence and make career and academic decisions on her own. To say she has been successful at Buffalo State is an understatement. In addition to earning Dean’s List and EOP Honors, Shantay is a member of Chi Alpha Epsilon and an EOP First Year Mentor. Additionally, Shantay is a coordinator in UPSA and a member of the Residence Hall Judicial Board, which shows her dedication to Buffalo State’s students, community and mission. Shantay’s long term goals, inspired by her support system at Buffalo State, are to gain a master's degree in Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration., ultimately, to become a Director of Student life, so she can help develop students as professional and social beings.

Casey Li is a Fashion and Textile Technology major. Casey has excelled academically throughout her time here at Buffalo State. Having received Dean’s List and EOP honors multiple years, Casey, who has a 3.56 cumulative average, looks to tackle the world with her creativity and ingenuity. There is no doubt she will make a difference wherever she goes. She is a senior designer for the Buffalo State Runway 7.0 fashion show.

Challis Cooks is a senior Writing major who holds a 3.55 cumulative grade point average. Challis has never fallen below a 3.4 grade point average, and she finished the Fall 2013 semester with a 3.91 semester average. In addition to being amongst the top ten percent of our students, she exemplifies leadership and a commitment to community service. She is a member of Chi Alpha Epsilon, and motivated by her desire to “give back” to the EOP program, which helped her to realize her own potential. Challis also served as a Student Assistant for our 2013 EOP Summer Program, where she served as an excellent role model for our incoming college freshmen. She also volunteers at St. Leo the Great Elementary School, where her nephew has attended for the past four years, by supervising on field trips, working bingo on weekends, monitoring the cafeteria during lunch, organizing the library, and preparing take home folders for the kids. She also often volunteers at her church where her father is the Director of the Sports Ministry. While there, she helps with clerical work, organizing team fundraisers, watching kids during practice, and attending to any other matters that need to be done to keep things running smoothly. In Fall 2012, she and a group of writing majors visited Buffalo’s Academy of Visual and Performing Arts with Dr. Ralph Wahlstrom. There, they held a writing workshop with a class of aspiring writers. She got to share her writing with the kids.
and even got them to perform their work. In addition, her group was also able to give them a detailed description of the growing writing major at Buffalo State.

**Jeff Oyo** is graduating in May with a Bachelor of Science in economics and currently holds a 3.54 grade point average. Jeff is a McNair and Kenzie Scholar, a Student Ambassador, and an EOP Academic Mentor for the Center of Excellence. He also serves as Treasurer for the Buffalo State chapter of The National Society of Black Engineers and Executive Chairmen for The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. His success at Buffalo State has been recognized as he received The Chancellor’s Award for Student Excellence in 2014. In hopes of giving back to his community by providing underprivileged students with the same opportunities he had, he actively participates with EOP programs and workshops, and he participated with the EOP/EOC lobby day to meet with law makers and legislators in Albany to secure support for EOP/EOC programs. Furthermore, he has taken time to participate in volunteer and community service with the Women for Dignity and Human Rights organization on many occasions. Jeff desires to implement groundbreaking economic research that adds to the complex puzzle of labor market theories, and he continues to work towards this goal. Accordingly, starting this August, he will be a student of the economics doctoral program at Ohio State University. Jeff’s academic, research and personal experiences have instilled in him the creativity and maturity that the economics doctoral program at Ohio State requires. He aims to conduct research in labor economics, investigating unchartered areas of the twenty-first century American labor force.