



# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT:Ogochukwu Obiagwu



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At age twelve, many of us spent our days feeding Tamagotchi's, listening to angst-ridden punk rock, heating up Kid Cuisines, and trying on brightly-colored skinny jeans at the mall. Meanwhile, at the same age, current Business Scholar Ogochukwu Obiagwu was fostering an early interest in creativity and entrepreneurship by starting her own fashion business, ByOgochukwu, for which the motto is "expressing cultural pride through fashion."

Despite the many responsibilities of being a young businesswoman, Obiagwu did and still does find time for hobbies, including watching popular TV series such as *Scandal*, *Power*, and *Blacklist*. She loves volunteering with babies and youth, especially from underrepresented communities. Outside of her coursework as a second-year Accounting major, she is involved with campus organizations including the National Association for Black Accountants (for which she is the current Philanthropy Chair), the Office of Diversity and Inclusion Undergraduate Recruitment Society, the Deloitte Career Launch Program, Becker Professional Education Student Ambassadors, Ey Scholars, Project Thrive, and Morrill Scholars. Many of these organizations are focused on professional development for minority students; some are specifically geared toward business and accounting.

Off campus, Obiagwu works for Google through The Campus Agency, helping market the new Google Smart Messaging App. She is also a Senior Ambassador for a start-up called MYLE (Make Your Life Entertaining), which helps smartphone users find local events tailored to their interests. She has had two internship experiences so far: one with U.S. Social Security Administration as a senior in high school and one with PricewaterhouseCoopers LLC this past summer. In recognition for her accomplishments both on and off campus, Obiagwu has received the Freshman Black Excellence Award and has been an Education honoree for the African Distinction Awards.

Though Obiagwu was born and raised here in Columbus along with four siblings, she is Nigerian and speaks Igbo and Pidgin in addition to English. Growing up bicultural played a large role in her decision to start a clothing line that expresses cultural pride. "I was shy about my culture after being made fun of by my peers for my 'weird name' and 'weird hair' for so long," she recalls. "After visiting Nigeria in 2008, I fell in love with my culture and who I was and where I came from." She realized how remarkable it is to come from a continent with 54 countries and a country with over 200 spoken languages.

As she watched classmates start their first jobs, she became eager to take on a new challenge as of her own. Thinking of other young people who may struggle to accept and appreciate where they are from, she decided to create an affordable clothing line offering modern versions of traditional cultural clothing. She notes, "This diverts away from the misconception that all African clothing is 'the big hat on the woman's head' or 'the dresses guys wear.'" Her website features sweatshirts and tees that combine traditional elements of fashion with more modern, Westernized elements.

As her business has grown, Obiagwu has attended events as a vendor and has put together outfits for fashion shows; this has required a lot of planning and logistics. She says her biggest responsibility is overseeing her team of brand ambassadors and interns, who she describes as wonderful. She hopes to continue fighting against the underrepresentation of minorities in the fashion industry. Balancing these missions has given her a real-world lesson in communication, time management, and teamwork. These skills are undoubtedly transferrable to her future career as a Big 4 or private accountant and to her additional goal of spreading financial literacy and professional development opportunities to youth.

Obiagwu plans to graduate from OSU in 2020 after completing the dual-degree Master of Accounting program. So far, many of her favorite memories as a Buckeye have been related to her participation in Business Scholars. In fact, she met one of her closest friends in Scholars last year, and now the two of them are roommates. She has also connected with several minority students in the program to share opportunities; for example, this is how she found out about the study abroad program she attended in Germany as a freshman. She is also grateful for the H&S Enrichment Grant that made the trip possible. One of Obiagwu's favorite memories from Germany was going canoeing with several friends from the program; one of the boats tipped over, causing her friends to tumble into the water in a moment they will likely be reminiscing and laughing about for years.

In addition to her adventures abroad, she also has fond (or at least notable) memories of studying for calculus exams until 4am in Morrill Tower with her friend Sierra. Though she feels she has had a variety of exciting experiences at OSU already, she looks forward to the next several years, noting that one of the best things about the university and H&S is that "there is always more to do, more to see." For Obiagwu, this will ideally include participating in a study abroad program with a community service purpose and attending her first Buckeye game.

by Christina Szuch, H&S Student Staff Writer



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