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Future Leaders Academy Update

Meet Hawa Abdella and Magarita Jules



How intentional are you when it comes to your behaviors and choices?

In this month's mentorship pairing we are pleased to introduce two women who move through their lives and worlds with great intentionality.

Hawa Abdella is a student participating in the Postsecondary Enrollment Option, also known as dual enrollment. She is a senior at Humboldt High School, on St. Paul's West Side, who is concurrently in her second year at St. Paul College. This semester Hawa is carrying an ambitious course load of 19 credits with an emphasis on computer science and architectural engineering. "I want to graduate with an Associate of Arts, so I'm pursuing that really hard," Hawa says. She is also founder and president of the African Student Union at Humboldt High School which provides East African students and students of the African diaspora with a place to share their culture. **Hawa's values are integrity, religion, honesty, courage, and improvement/growth.**

Hawa's mentor is Magarita Jules, who was recently nominated for *Finance & Commerce's* Top Women in Finance award. Especially impressive as she came to finance as a second act. "So far I've had two careers across multiple states," says Magarita. "I've had a long career in technology and leadership, and now my current career is helping small businesses, especially immigrants and minorities, obtain federal funding." **Magarita's values are diversity, change, meaningful work, wealth, and relationships.**

For the mentorship phase of the Future Leaders Academy program, Hawa and Magarita connect regularly in support of Hawa's goals. However, Magarita's intentions extend beyond goal attainment. "My overall focus is ensuring she's protected emotionally in her inner self as she navigates across all of the cultures she's going to move through," says Magarita. Being from the Caribbean, Magarita has a sense of what Hawa will face: "Are you from your home country; are you from the Minnesota version of your country; are you American?" She explains further, "We have to display different sides of ourselves and it's a tough navigation that hardly anybody talks about — which part should you leverage at which time to allow it to work for you."

Hawa appreciates Magarita's perspective. "Whenever I've had people in positions of mentoring or helping me, they would have gone through the charade of just giving advice," says Hawa. "No one has ever thought of my journey and that I will need a safe way to navigate these goals. I'm really grateful that she's a safe space."

During two months in Ethiopia this summer, Hawa realized her first mentorship goal of creating a space for herself in Ethiopia and learning to let go of things that were holding her back. By acting on her values of integrity and courage, Hawa intentionally put herself in uncomfortable situations.

“I learned a lot about myself, and I came back a lot happier and a lot more relaxed and free,” says Hawa.

Hawa’s additional mentorship goals are to study for the ACT test which she will take in October; learn to speak her father’s traditional Ethiopian language; and inspired by another Future Leader in her cohort, Elijah, she’ll begin a regular journaling practice.

Reflecting on her interactions with Magarita, Hawa shares this insight. “I really enjoy our personal meetings where we share how life is going, and I really like learning about the connections we both have in terms of our cultures, and certain values within our cultures that are big, like family,” Hawa says.

Magarita appreciates Hawa’s connection to her family and the intention she brings to her actions. “Even if she’s going to take a trip back home, the fact that she had tasks for herself while home, she’s very intent in gaining and learning her place and her culture,” says Magarita. “What she thinks she’s learning from me; I’m actually learning from her — that intentionality.”

Hawa values Magarita’s drive and self-awareness. “Looking at Magarita, I learned that it’s best to do something that aligns with your values more than something that just gives you a monetary gain.” With a confident smile, Magarita assures Hawa that it’s possible to have both.

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Do you know a young person in Minnesota with leadership potential? (We believe everyone is a leader!) Encourage them to apply for the 2024-2025 Future Leaders Academy. The application is available [here](#).