

Giving That Lasts Beyond a Lifetime

# LEGACY MATTERS

Newsletter

SPRING/SUMMER 2026

BEREA  
COLLEGE



## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PLANNED PHILANTHROPY

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*Amy Burkhardt '99*

Welcome to our newly named and formatted newsletter, *Legacy Matters*. We hope you continue to enjoy Berea stories about our students and donors within the newsletter, as well as information regarding timely planned philanthropy tools. Please also visit our website, [berea.giftlegacy.com](http://berea.giftlegacy.com), which offers more space to detail these experiences and relevant giving opportunities.

I am happy to share that campus is filled with excitement while students are engaging in meaningful coursework and activities as we head toward the end of another transformative year. Graduating seniors are fulfilling requirements for graduation and securing plans for life after college with confidence. It is a truly heartwarming time of year, especially for families who often

witness their students becoming the first to earn a college degree.

Reflecting this positive energy, the stories within this newsletter capture the significance of opportunities available to Berea students. These experiences influence students during college and beyond.

Highlighting the work of Berea's Office of Internships & Career Development, alumna Layla Almassalkhi '15 had such a transformative experience with her own internship as a student, that she wanted to make experiences like hers available to even more students. Collaboratively, she worked with her employer in partnership with the College. Her employer was also the host of her own internship as a student, which illustrates the tremendous growth and opportunity that Berea's internship program offers.

Coming full circle, recent alumni, Victoria Blankenship '23 and Jean-Paul Nuñez '24, share their perspective from their time as student interns working with Layla. While each had a specific internship role, they worked together on a recruitment project. They share their experiences and how their respective opportunities helped inform their paths and forge new opportunities. Be sure to click the QR codes provided to learn even more from Layla, Victoria, and Jean-Paul.

Berea College's robust internship program, and so many other programs on campus, continue to excel thanks to our thoughtful philanthropic partners. We thank you and encourage you to contact us at **800-457-9846** to learn more about opportunities that may help you find joy in the philanthropic areas of interest to you.



Photo credit Thomas Moonjeli '23

*“Supporting Berea in this way allows me to pay forward the generosity that once shaped my life.”*

—  
**Layla Almassalkhi '15**  
North Carolina  
Great Commitments  
Society Member

## LEARNING, GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT THROUGH MENTORSHIP AND PHILANTHROPY

**G**rowing up, Layla Almassalkhi '15 understood early on that education is liberatory and a key that could open doors she had not even imagined yet. Realizing that college carried both possibility and responsibility, her path through and beyond her years as a student illustrates a deep commitment to learning, growth, and development.

“Berea College provided countless ways to prepare for life after college,” said Layla. The Office of Internships & Career Development assisted her in securing an internship at The Resource Group, an experience that stretched Layla both personally and professionally. Knowing the value her internship experience provided, Layla partnered with Berea College’s Office of Internships & Career Development as a young professional to bring internship opportunities to students.

“For me, the goal of mentoring Berea students has always been

deeply personal,” said Layla. “When I began working full time, returning to Berea through recruiting felt less like a career move and more like a responsibility to extend to others the same opportunities that shaped me. **My hope has always been to serve as both a resource and a reminder that they belong in every room they enter, and that their contributions are not just welcomed, but needed.**”

Layla worked alongside and mentored two Berea students, Victoria Blankenship '23 and Jean-Paul Nuñez '24 at The Resource Group during the summer of 2022. Both Victoria and Jean-Paul found their experiences interning under the guidance of Layla to be positive and productive for their future employment endeavors. “Layla was a fantastic project lead,” said Victoria. “Seeing someone who had been in my shoes, just years before, now be in the position she was in helped everything to feel a bit lighter and more hopeful.” Jean-

Paul said his internship experience and Layla’s mentorship helped him to leverage skills needed to secure a finance internship the following year.

In addition to serving students of her alma mater through internship and mentoring efforts, Layla serves on the Alumni Executive Council. She and her husband, Lars, also support the College and its students via monthly gifts to the Berea Fund as well as designating Berea College as a beneficiary of a retirement policy. Layla shared that she had not spent significant energy thinking about what would happen to her finances after her passing, but a fellow alumna introduced her to the **Great Commitments Society**, the College’s giving club for those who have made provisions to include Berea College in their estate plans.

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*Continued on page 4* **LAYLA**



**Victoria Blankenship '23**

Photo credit Anita Chukwu '23

**Jean-Paul Nuñez '24**

Photo credit Ehku Say '26

## OPPORTUNITIES TODAY LEAD TO CONFIDENCE, CAPABILITY AND OPPORTUNITIES TOMORROW

**R**ecent alumni Victoria Blankenship '23, and Jean-Paul Nuñez '24, gained valuable experience through their student internship opportunities while being mentored by Berea alumna Layla Almassalkhi '15.

Layla had a transformational internship when she was a Berea student, which inspired her to connect with Berea College to establish internship opportunities for the College's students. "I carry with me the memory of stepping into my own first professional role, full of nervous energy and a quiet fear of making mistakes," said Layla. "Because I have had so many extraordinary people pour into me, opening doors I could not have opened alone, I now see it as my responsibility to do the same."

Victoria, who earned her degree in Business Administration at Berea College, served as an Associate Experience Intern, and Jean-Paul, who earned his degree in Business Ad-

ministration with a concentration in Finance, served as a Business Analyst Intern with The Resource Group, which provides integrated solutions for healthcare organizations.

Victoria and Jean-Paul worked together on the Berea College recruitment project that Layla coordinated as one of their internship responsibilities. Together, with a team of interns, they focused on creating a strategy to recruit more Berea students to The Resource Group.

"We met often to discuss the strategy, and the plan was followed through after my internship ended," said Jean-Paul. **"It was my first internship, and it helped me gain confidence and learn how to work in a professional setting."**

This experience, "helped develop my professional communication skills tremendously," said Victoria. "Layla was a fantastic project lead; the support, advice, and experience I gained from working with Layla,

Jean-Paul and the team helped to diminish my anxieties," said Victoria.

Victoria said she benefitted significantly from the support she received during her time at Berea College. **"From resume workshops to networking lunches to the mentorship I received from my supervisor—it was obvious that Berea wants each student to succeed. Berea College was a tough and rewarding journey, one that was necessary for my growth. I gained independence, confidence, and lifelong friendships."**

"Berea is where I discovered myself, and where I learned who I want to be, and that never would have happened had it not been for the support and care of the friends I met, and the people of the College."

Visit the QR code to read Victoria and Jean-Paul's full story.



Learning about the Great Commitments Society, “gave me a new lens, one rooted in continuity,” said Layla. **“The idea that a part of what I’ve worked for can live on in the form of opportunity for someone else really resonated,”** she said. **“I know what it meant to be a Berea student. I know how transformative the experience can be. Supporting Berea in this way allows me to pay forward the generosity that once shaped my life,”** said Layla. “It’s a quiet promise that the cycle of giving, of lifting, continues.”

Lars said that he gravitates toward the College’s eight Great Commitments and its devotion to service, community, and equality. “By

donating to Berea, we are able to continue the promise of giving and the commitment of educational opportunity for other students who were once in Layla’s shoes.” He also said, **“Through philanthropy, I want to help create an environment where financial barriers never prevent a dedicated student from pursuing their educational goals, where diverse perspectives are celebrated, and where students feel empowered to lead with knowledge, heart and compassion.”**

Layla hopes their philanthropy helps future Berea students feel both supported and inspired. “Through giving, I want to ease

some of the burdens students carry so they can focus fully on learning, growing, and contributing to their communities,” she said. “I hope my support serves as a quiet but steady reminder that they are not alone. There are others who believe in their potential and are invested in their success. **If my philanthropy can help students discover their purpose, embrace the dignity of work, and go on to lead lives marked by service and integrity, then I will have honored Berea’s values in the most meaningful way.”**

Visit the QR code to read Layla’s full story.



*The Great Commitments Society honors the many alumni and friends who have made testamentary provisions for the College in their estate plans or made planned gifts, such as charitable remainder gift annuities or trusts, with the remainder assigned to Berea. These gifts forever sustain Berea College’s distinctive mission and perpetuate its heritage.*

## WAYS TO INCLUDE BEREA COLLEGE IN ESTATE PLANS

A bequest is a revocable gift that is transferrable upon death. The Berea College Board of Trustees made a decision in 1920 that determined all bequests shall be considered as additions to the permanent endowment funds of the College unless otherwise designated. This visionary decision has helped secure the mission of the College to this day by building resilience through its endowment.

### OPTIONS TO MAKE A BEQUEST GIFT

- **Gifts in Will** – A simple, flexible way to leave a legacy that costs nothing today and can be changed at any time.
- **Beneficiary Designations** – An easy, private way to support a cause through a retirement account, life insurance policy or bank account.
- **Gifts of Stock** – A practical option for people who want to give appreciated assets rather than cash.
- **IRA Charitable Gifts** – For people age 70½ and older, a straightforward way to support a cause while meeting required distributions.

### BENEFITS OF MAKING A BEQUEST GIFT

- Leave a legacy to be remembered.
- Potentially lessen the burden of taxes on family.
- Potential estate tax savings.

**Contact** a member of Berea College’s Planned Philanthropy team to learn more at:  
phone: **800-457-9846**  
email: **plannedgiving@berea.edu**  
website: **berea.giftlegacy.com**

**BEREA COLLEGE**