

FVSU STUDENTS HONORED AT NATIONAL ROLE MODEL CONFERENCE

Fort Valley State University students were recently honored for their academic achievements and research in the field of biomedical studies at the seventh annual National Role Models Conference held Sept. 17-20 in Las Vegas, Nev. Seniors Betsy Ampofo, Allison Lester and Isaac Mickens were recognized at the conference. The conference was sponsored by Minority Access Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to diversifying campuses and work sites. Dr. Sarwan Dhir, associate professor and coordinator of FVSU's biotechnology program, nominated Ampofo and Lester. They were chosen as national role models based on their research achievements and academic records. "These students are stand-outs in their respective fields," Dhir said. "It's important that their work be recognized." Lester praised FVSU for helping her discover her passion for the sciences.



"I was flattered that I was selected as an undergraduate role model for the year," she said. "This experience gave me the confidence that I need to excel on a professional level. FVSU helped shape me into the person I am today. I feel that I am well spoken and I have the confidence in myself that will allow me to achieve all my goals in life." Lester's goals include pursuing a master's degree in biotechnology and embarking on a teaching career at the collegiate level. Honoree Ampofo, a presidential scholar at FVSU, received national recognition and placed first in the poster presentation category for her work with mutation. She received a plaque and \$1,000. She says her experience at FVSU prepared her well for a field in extensive research. "I have received a great education and the academic environment at FVSU has been exceptional," Ampofo said. "The plant science biotechnology program provided me with excellent hands-on experience and advanced training" Originally from West Africa, Ampofo now lives in Macon.

She is interested in genetic engineering and plans to obtain her Ph.D. in molecular genetics or a closely related field. "I have an avid interest in the function of genes and their impact on the human race and the world as a whole," she said. Isaac Mickens placed second in the poster presentation for his work with metal accumulation in red oak trees. The Lithonia native received a \$500 cash award. "I put a great deal of work into my project," Mickens said. "I was happy to be recognized." He plans to obtain a degree in biotechnology in graduate school next year. Dr. Melinda Davis and Seema Dhir were also recognized as outstanding faculty members. Both agree their work is about developing the students academically. "I was very surprised and feel very privileged," Davis said. "I was in such good company, but this is more about mentoring students, and seeing their commitment to their studies unfold." Dhir said, "I was honored to be recognized, but it's more about the students and their future. It's really rewarding to see every student succeed in their academic pursuit. As a mentor, I enjoy being there for the students and seeing their academic dreams come to light."