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Xavier University Honors their own while Encouraging Graduates to follow in the footsteps of Alums who continue to make an Impact

New Orleans LA – On May 11, 2019 at 10 a.m. in Xavier University’s Convocation Center, award winning student and classically trained singer Kayla Lewis will walk across the stage to receive her bachelor’s degree in Music Liberal Arts. This will mark a significant transitional moment in her life as she prepares to embark on a journey similar to that of Xavier alum and world-renowned opera singer Gail Gilmore, who will be receiving an honorary degree at the 2019 commencement ceremony. After Graduation, Kayla will be heading to New York University in the fall to Pursue her master’s degree in Vocal Performance. Gilmore, who developed her foundation at Xavier, also went on to obtain her master’s degree after her undergraduate studies before launching her career in Germany.

Xavier’s history, culture, and faculty members who are the leading authorities on authentic New Orleans Jazz are key as to why students like Kayla Lewis and alumna Gail Gilmore are equipped with the proper tools needed to engage and navigate the music industry having acquired a solid foundation. The Xavier University Jazz Ensemble has been a tool for teaching Jazz Education in the Southeast region for the past decade. Under the direction of Dr. Tim Turner, students involved with the Jazz Ensemble have systematically studied composers of Jazz along with the characteristics, history and nuances of each composer’s music. Along with founding the Xavier University Jazz Festival, which is a three-day event offering clinics/workshops and an evening concert series focusing on the multiple genres of the Jazz art form, the Department of Music exposes Xavier students and the New Orleans community to a wide range of Jazz forms and world-class artists. Thus, the Xavier University Jazz Ensemble has developed into a leading source of Jazz Education in New Orleans and surrounding areas to empower students like Kayla who have a keen interest in studying music as well as vocal performance.

“Kayla is a magnificent student and extremely talented which is why she was selected by faculty members to receive “The Most Versatile Musician Award,” said Dr. Timothy Turner, Music Department Director at Xavier University. “She is also very humble and I think that she will be very successful at whatever she chooses to do with the skills that she’s mastered while here at Xavier.”

In addition to “The Most Versatile Musician Award,” Kayla was also recently recognized for winning the second-place award and an all-expenses covered trip to China at the 2019 Southern USA Final “Chinese Bridge” (language and talent) competition hosted by Xavier on April 28. Kayla also participated in a domestic exchange program during the Spring of 2018 between Xavier and New York University, where she had the privilege of studying under esteemed singer Harolyn Blackwell during her stay. As result of her work at Xavier and brief exchange experience, she has been accepted to study at NYU in the fall of 2019 to work toward her Master's degree in vocal performance.

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About Xavier University of Louisiana

Being America’s only historically Black and Catholic University is just the first of the distinctions that have set Xavier University of Louisiana apart for more than eight decades.

Despite its relatively small size (3,300 students), Xavier is a nationally recognized leader in the STEM and the health sciences, producing more African American students who graduate from medical schools each year than any other university in the United States. Its College of Pharmacy is among the top producers of African American pharmacists. Its liberal arts based programs in such areas as art, business, education, psychology, and political science – as well as such recent additions as bioinformatics, data science, neuroscience, crime and social justice, and jazz studies – offer students an unbeatable combination of traditional classroom study, hands-on research, service-learning opportunities, and life experiences.

The winning Xavier formula? Provide students with a well-balanced curriculum and an environment that nurtures their intellect and feeds their souls.

At Xavier *eXcellence awaits yoU*. For more information about Xavier University of Louisiana visit us online at www.xula.edu or follow us on Facebook, YouTube, or Twitter @XULA1925. To book interviews and/or to speak with our experts in the field of pharmacy, education, premed, public health, science, technology, math, business, English, communications and the arts, contact Diana Hernandez at (504) 520-5120 or dhernan1@xula.edu.