

BCC brothers earn university scholarships

For Bronx Community College business major Bouniyaminou Gbadamassi (the G is silent), who graduates on May 29, this year is exciting for two reasons. First, last week he received his acceptance letter to enroll at Cornell University next fall. Second, he will graduate with his older brother, Taoyidi Gbadamassi, mathematics major at BCC, who helped pave the way for his younger brother to come to the U.S. from French speaking Togo.

Gbadamassi, 30-years-old, is in a special category. The money for his transfer to a four-year college after graduation -- up to \$30,000 annually -- has been promised by the Kaplan Educational Foundation.

The scholarship was given under the Kaplan Leadership Program. The foundation is a subsidiary of Kaplan Inc., a leading global provider of educational services, owned by the Washington Post Group.

(His older brother, Taoyidi, who is 34-years-old, received a \$20,000 scholarship to the Department of Teaching and Learning at the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development of New York University.)

"I am so thrilled. I called my mother and father. They can't believe that the son of a farmer may go to such well-known universities as Cornell, Brown, Georgetown, or American," said Gbadamassi.

"Cornell teaches farming," he said. "I would like to learn more about farming so that I can obtain the knowledge to go back to Togo to help people become more profitable

managing their farming businesses."

"We are interested in helping students become a part of the next generation of leadership," explained Jennifer Benn, director of the Kaplan Educational Foundation. "We work with students in associate programs to help them finish their degree and transfer to four-year colleges. They have great potential, promise and a financial need."

When Gbadamassi was told last May that he had been selected for the scholarship, he was also told that he had to finish the rest of his associate degree in good standing. He has done that. He has a 3.869 grade point average.

His goals are ambitious: "I would like to earn a master's degree in international business and ultimately create a non-profit organization that will help poor children and immigrants attend college in the U.S. and West Africa," said Gbadamassi.

To help choose a four-year college, he's been visiting campuses to ask questions of faculty and administrators since Kaplan first told him that they were interested in him in May 2008. Through the foundation, he has visited multiple four-year colleges including Brown, Georgetown, and American Universities.

Taoyidi helped pave the way for his younger brother. His odyssey to graduation is as fascinating as his younger brother's. Originally a nuclear medicine technology student at BCC, he shifted to become a mathematics major when he decided not to take a yearlong hospital internship because he needed to keep working at his job to

support his wife, pay for college and contribute to his parents.

Like his older brother, Gbadamassi had goals. He wanted to save money to go to college and to help support his parents. He took a job as a tour guide on a double-decker tour bus, City Sights in Manhattan, for 40 hours a week from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. On a second job, he worked as a security guard in New Rochelle from 6 p.m. to midnight.

Finally in 2006, he enrolled in BCC and immediately researched scholarships. "Education is a key to success. It is one very important path on which one attains his goals in life," noted Gbadamassi. "If the United States is the richest country in the world, it is because many Americans are educated. The lack of education is the root of many problems in Africa. Underused and misused resources, corrupt government, high unemployment rates, diseases, and other social problems could be solved if people were better educated."



From left Bouniyaminou Gbadamassi and Taoyidi Gbadamassi.