

Identical twin sisters identify with Dominican ideals

"We've experience all of them," Alissa says. "All the opportunities that were offered to us at freshmen orientation have come to life."

The twin sisters took full advantage of those opportunities. After graduating on May 17, they planned to take a year off to prepare for medical school then apply for entry to USCF and UC Irvine for the fall 2015.

The culmination of their Dominican experience came in March when Alissa was named the first Student Award winner in the inaugural [Melba Beals Award for Excellence in Diversity](#). She was cited for her work promoting diversity and education through club events and activities and expanding the arc of inclusion in the community. "Alissa is a confident person and she resembles the definition of leadership," says Briana, who has made the dean's list at Dominican numerous times. "She's been a great inspiration to me and other students here at Dominican."

At High Tech High School in San Diego, the Gumbs sisters competed in softball and track and taught Bible classes. When they arrived at Dominican, they involved themselves with as many people and projects as they had time.

As freshmen, the twins dove into research opportunities and the [Black Student Union](#) on campus. They both sought to become pediatricians.

By their sophomore years, they took different paths. Alissa, a pre-med student, remained a [biology](#) major, was inducted into the Tri-Beta Society and was selected into the [Dominican/Kaiser Permanente Scholars and Mentors program](#). She has volunteered in the [Service-Learning program](#), presented at the National Conference for Undergraduate Research and has worked closely with Dr. Maggie Louie on breast cancer cell studies. Alissa was president of the Black Student Union, which staged its annual senior graduation ceremony on May 14 in Angelico Hall.

"She hits the major milestones for the experiences that we want Dominican students to have," says Diara Spain, Associate Professor in the [Department of Natural Sciences and Mathematics](#). "She's involved in multicultural-related issues. She does community service. She's delved into research and her studies." Briana changed her major to Occupational Therapy as a sophomore and shadowed an Occupational Therapist at Kentfield Rehabilitation Center. She switched to [Health Science](#) this year as it provided her with more flexibility to examine her career options. She eventually wants to join her twin sister in starting their own pediatric practice someday.

"It's been a roller coaster, but it's been a great experience. It was important for me to have different experiences," Briana says. "I just wanted to show my creative side and see different ways of helping others. I was grateful for that because it opened my eyes and confirmed this is where I need to be."

Briana was vice president of the Black Student Union, joining her sister on the BSU board.

"Their interest and desire to help others is obvious. It shows," says Associate Professor James Cunningham, who first met Briana and Alissa in Dominican's First Year Big History. "They present themselves as professionals. They take their education very seriously."

In the run-up to med school, they engaged themselves in Dominican. The Gumbs sisters tutored students in the Marin County Community School. They volunteered to teach adapted physical education and yoga classes to people with disabilities off campus. They went to [Toastmasters](#) together at the City Hall. They graduated from [Dominican's LeaderShape program](#) and now are members of the [Leadership Fellows Association](#). They also work as student assistants in [Archbishop Alemany Library](#) and they perform at events on and off campus together as a duet as praise dancers, a form of liturgical or spiritual dancing. "I'm always busy on my feet," Briana says. "I'm just happy to show what Dominican is all about."

Inspired by Dominican's four ideals, Briana and Alissa both found their voice on campus and they have been recognized for that. They helped to create an inclusive environment with the BSU and have brought education to their peers about Black History during the month of February through film, lectures, and events. They were

invited to participate in a Black History Month celebration at City Hall in February by a member of the San Rafael Toastmasters, who were honoring Dr. Melba Beals, and BSU club members were asked to participate.