

## Romanian Student Is HBCU Valedictorian

Contributed by Shampale Williams -- Black College Wire  
Wednesday, 06 May 2009

First non-black top grad at Voorhees College to deliver address

Voorhees College, a historically black college in Denmark, S.C., is graduating its first minority valedictorian in the institution's 112-year history.

Victorita Paun, a 22-year-old native of Bucharest, Romania, will be honored at graduation on May 9. She is the only student from Romania attending Voorhees. Paun, who was also accepted at predominantly white institutions, such as La Roche College and the University of Dayton, said her experiences at Voorhees were life-changing. "I cannot begin to explain how much growth Voorhees facilitated in my life," Paun said. "The skills and leadership abilities that I have gained at Voorhees are priceless for both my professional and personal life."

Paun learned of Voorhees through history professor Dr. Leland Barrows, whom she met while he was living in Romania eight years ago. Paun continually kept in touch with Barrows, and once she graduated from high school, he recruited her for Voorhees.

"Paun has not only done well for herself, she has done well for Voorhees College and Romania," Barrows said.

Civil-rights veteran and Voorhees College President Dr. Cleveland L. Sellers, Jr. said Paun's accomplishment speaks volumes to the students Voorhees produces. "Ms. Paun is one of the many intelligent and bright students at Voorhees. We are proud of the work that all of our students commit to day in and day out."

Sellers also said that Paun will do well in her future endeavors. "I know that Ms. Paun will continually make the Voorhees family proud as she matriculates in a graduate program because she is a hardworking and success-driven student."

Paun said she was excited about coming to America for the first time to attend Voorhees. "My only experience with America was with watching television," she said. "I was always intrigued by the American culture."

It is not an easy task to maintain a perfect 4.0 grade point average, but Paun makes it look like a walk in the park. Not only did she excel academically, she was active in numerous campus organizations.

"From academic organizations, to athletics, to social and community service organizations, I purposely involved myself in every activity that my schedule allowed so I would not miss anything that Voorhees had to offer," Paun said.

"The VC community welcomed my participation in every form and fashion, and I am very appreciative for that."

Since her freshman year on campus, Paun has been active in various organizations, such as the first-ever Voorhees College Debate Team, where she was the team captain, concert choir, Honors College, Alpha Kappa Mu Honor Society, the International Student Association, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. and the softball team, where she was named the Most Valuable Player for the 2008-2009 academic year.

Days before Paun's graduation, Dr. David Caslan, professor of accounting at Voorhees, smiled as he said, "We want more students like her." He also said that he is not surprised of Paun's accomplishment as valedictorian.

Next on the honor graduate's plate is attending graduate school. Currently, she is considering Harvard University and the University of Rochester.

When asked what her motto for life was, the honor graduate paused for minute, looked toward the sky and said, "Be the change that you want to see in the world."

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