



**Men and Women
of Color, Honor
and Ambition**

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"I have a purpose for coming to school now."

"I have never been a part of an organization like this."

"MOCHA has created a brotherhood that truly feels like family."

The Men and Women of Color, Honor, and Ambition program supports the leaders of tomorrow, today.



M O C H A & W O C H A

Men and Women of Color, Honor, and Ambition, or MOCHA/WOCHA, as the program is more commonly referred to, is the brainchild of Kevin McDonald, Vice President for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Community Partnerships at the University of Virginia. While serving as Chief Diversity Officer at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), McDonald and colleagues realized that by most measures of success – including academic performance, persistence, and graduation rates – women were outperforming men across the board at the institution. To close the gap, RIT wanted to create an initiative focused on male students, but McDonald thought that special implications existed for students of color at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) and that those circumstances needed to be addressed head-on. After more research and extensive conversations with students, McDonald developed MOCHA and a year later, he worked with a group of women administrators at RIT to launch WOCHA.

MOCHA and WOCHA provide academic, personal, and professional growth, as well as leadership development opportunities to middle, high, and undergraduate school students. The programs are guided by five pillars: ambition, achievement, integrity, service, and health/wellness. With those guiding principles at the core of the program, students are provided with equal and unfettered access to the tools necessary to achieve their goals.



These activities often include opportunities for mentorship, etiquette training, fitness classes, and participation in a coveted Dale Carnegie training. Ercell Charles, Vice President of Customer Transformation at Dale Carnegie and Associates, has been facilitating the Dale Carnegie trainings with the MOCHA/WOCHA since 2012.

"The common thread to these cohorts of future world changes and leaders is the unity that develops between these young men and women. What separates MOCHA/WOCHA is the honor that is created that drives the ambition of every young man and woman who completes the program," says Charles. "It has been an honor to serve this special organization. "



After its inception at RIT, McDonald expanded MOCHA to the four institutions that comprise the University of Missouri System (University of Missouri – Columbia, University of Missouri St. Louis, University of Missouri Kansas City, and Missouri S&T). Lincoln University, an HBCU in Jefferson City Missouri, and three high school districts in Missouri (Kansas City Public Schools, Columbia Public Schools, and Jefferson City Public Schools) also implemented MOCHA initiatives. During his time as Vice Chancellor of Inclusion, Diversity & Equity at the University of Missouri, McDonald also oversaw the launch of WOCHA at the University of Missouri-Columbia and the very first MOCHA/WOCHA conference for the entire state.

Today, MOCHA and WOCHA are quickly becoming household names in Central Virginia. In 2020, MOCHA/WOCHA launched as a virtual program at Buford Middle School and Charlottesville High School and then to Albemarle High School for the 2021-22 school year.



T Albemarle High School, students are drawn to the contagious energy of Joshua Epps, MOCHA/WOCHA Program Coordinator and fearless leader of the school's cohort. Epps, who also serves as a school counselor at Albemarle, recently took the group to Washington, D.C. where they visited the National Museum of African American History and Culture, the Martin Luther King Jr. and Washington monuments, and networked with students at Howard University.



One of the most memorable moments of the Washington, D.C. trip was when my students asked me, "**Why don't you become the president of the United States, Mr. Epps?**" The faith my young boys have in me brings tears to my eyes. My answer to them was, '**That is not big enough; I will not be satisfied until I win a Nobel Peace Prize.**' My passion and desire to serve others will get me that reward! I love my MOCHA/ WOCHA family."



MOCHA in Washington, D.C.

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UVA WOCHA Activities

This spring also marked the launch of the MOCHA/WOCHA programs for UVA undergraduate students. Members of the WOCHA cohort recently participated in the Challenge Course program hosted by UVA IM-Rec Sports. Members of both cohorts took part in Dale Carnegie leadership course and a fitness boot camp that was followed by a Q&A session detailing resources on Grounds and fitness DOs and DONTs. “We had a lot of fun with this team-building activity. It was nothing short of amazing to build trust and learn more about one another on a deeper level,” said MOCHA/WOCHA Program Coordinator De’Ajree Branch, “MOCHA/WOCHA is changing the students’ outlook on the future by exposing them to various activities that will benefit them in the long run.”

The richness and intentionality of the experiences are key to the programs’ success. Through these activities, so far, MOCHA/WOCHA has made a profound impact on countless young lives, increasing students’ academic and social engagement, and facilitating meaningful connections that have the ability to endure well after graduation.

As for what's next for the program, McDonald is energized by the momentum surrounding the implementation in Virginia. “I think the hope is for MOCHA and WOCHA to be fully embedded and supporting young people in middle and high schools in greater Charlottesville and surrounding areas that desire and welcome it,” he says. “I’m excited about the growth potential that exists with our undergraduate chapters of MOCHA and WOCHA and budding partnerships with a few student organizations to develop tiered mentoring. Most importantly, I am excited to be able to offer another supportive pillar to undergraduate, high school, and middle school students in ways that they desire and are helping to shape.”

**For more information and to apply, please visit:
dei.virginia.edu/mocha-wocha**

**Interested in serving as a virtual mentor for M/WOCHA?
Contact: ddei@virginia.edu**

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