

Innovation and Insight: Alandas Dobbins Inspires at Newcomb Institute

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Alandas Dobbins (NC '89) visited Newcomb Institute as the featured Alberto-Culver Lecture speaker this May. This program was established by Carol Lavin Bernick (NC'74) to bring many distinguished, nationally recognized professional women to campus to meet with students and discuss crucial topics about women in business. Fittingly, the lecture series collaborates with the Women in Business student organization to research and invite guest speakers.

Dobbins is the CEO and founder of Oteka Technologies, a prominent Memphis-based infrastructure, smart city, and technology solutions company. With a background in communications and a passion for innovation, she has been a driving force behind Oteka's rise as a leader in the tech industry. Dobbins has extensive entrepreneurial experience; she co-built a successful company with her late father, George Dobbins Jr., and built a government agency called MORE, Memphis Office of Resource and Enterprise, from the ground up. She has 30 years of experience in this industry and a strong love for business growth in start-ups and young companies.

Dobbins' lecture had a big impact on staff and students. Her experience in the tech industry resonated with Newcomb Institute's technology interns and staff.

"Living in the digital age, technology is in practically every sector of business," Aaliyah Randall (SE '23), Technology and Facilities Coordinator at Newcomb Institute, said. "Since the start of the pandemic, most companies have switched over to a hybrid or work-from-home structure. This kind of transition relies heavily on technology. Computers, WiFi networks, and cloud storage are some of the technologies that allow businesses to perform basic operations. Technology itself is a business. Tech and business are now so intertwined, that being up to date on technological advances is key to the scale at which a business can be successful."

Dobbins had a somewhat unique approach to the lecture; rather than simply offering career advice, she explained how intrapersonal skills and growth are equally important. "Alondra emphasized that the true key to being successful in your career is first being in touch with the person that you truly are to be able to determine who it is that you want to be. Her wisdom came from a human perspective instead of a business-minded perspective," said Randall.

Dobbins also discussed business practices, especially in relation to equity and diversity. Her leadership style, characterized by a commitment to diversity and empowerment, has fostered a company culture that values collaboration and creativity. As a Black woman, Dobbins also spoke about achieving success in spaces that have historically marginalized people like her. She advised attendees with marginalized identities to "be who you are," even in male and/or White-dominated spaces.

Favour Olushola (SE '26) attended the discussion and commented that she found connecting with Dobbins helpful in many ways. **"As a tech intern, she helped me**

understand the importance of not being scared to tackle new challenges, being resourceful, and taking advantage of the networks available to me."

Dobbins' visit demonstrates the power of connection between Newcomb staff, students, and alums. Randall has kept in contact with Dobbins since the visit and said, "From this talk, I gained not one, but two successful Black mentors in tech... Meeting with Alandas and the friend she introduced me, Meka gwuekwe, to has given me much perspective on what I can expect and explore working in tech."