Graduating Against All Odds

Every college student looks forward to graduation; no one more so than Ketal Patel. Ms Patel’s indomitable self determination has brought her to the May 2010 commencement ceremony where she will receive her PharmD and graduate “cum laude.”

Ms. Patel, 26 year old native Houstonian, suffers from sickle cell anemia. “I have never let this illness keep me from reaching my goals.” says Ms. Patel

She will be the first person in her immediate family to receive a graduate degree. “Pharmacy school was the best four years of my life so far. I have gone through so much and now I have my degree and will be practicing for the rest of my life.”

Sickle cell anemia is a serious disease in which the body makes sickle-shaped red blood cells. “Sickle-shaped” means that the red blood cells are shaped like a "C." The clumps of sickle cells block blood flow in the blood vessels that lead to the limbs and organs. Blocked blood vessels can cause pain, serious infections, and organ damage.

Dr. Milton recalled a time when, “She (Ketal Patel) suffered several crisis that required emergency treatment and absences during her tenure at the university. During the first year, her absenteeism due to hospitalization was so extensive that a total withdrawal was suggested. I can recall her mother’s comments as she inquired about accommodations –‘She’s a smart girl and I think she can make up the work and perform well following her recovery.’ We then decided to work with Ketal to ensure that she received the accommodations needed to complete her education.”

“I have such a deep love and respect for TSU. I firmly believe that had I chosen any other university I don’t believe that I would have received the type of support from the professors and faculty.” Ms. Patel goes on to say, “Even during my darkest time TSU was there pushing me and supporting me.”

Upon graduation Ms. Patel will start her one year drug information residency in July here at Texas Southern. “I am finding my way around and trying to see what opportunities. I am looking forward to all of the possibilities the world has to offer.

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Texas Southern University was founded in 1926 and became a state institution in 1947. Texas Southern possesses an impressive array of undergraduate and graduate programs, a diverse faculty, more than 80 student organizations, and an alumni network comprised of educators, entrepreneurs, public servants, lawyers, pilots, artists, and more, many of whom are change agents on the local, national and international stage. Nestled upon a sprawling 150-acre campus, Texas Southern has served as a cornerstone for developing the greatest potential in leaders from various socioeconomic, cultural, and racial backgrounds. Texas Southern is located in the heart of the city, giving its students and faculty easy access to the Museum District, neighboring educational institutions, the Texas Medical Center, downtown Houston, two major airports and all of the city's major freeways. More than 9,487 students, along with nearly 1,500 faculty and staff comprise the University's community making it one of the nation's largest Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's). For more information, visit www.tsu.edu.