

TRANSCRIPT

Djibril and Nia's reflections

Djibril:

I'm Djibril. I am an operating student. I'm going through my third year this year, October, and I'm studying computing with electronic engineering.

Nia Paris:

Hi, I'm NIA Paris, I'm Asian intern for the Black STEM Hub and I also studied natural sciences at the Open University. I graduated in 2023 I believe so a bit of a while ago now, but I came across this project over a year ago and I was really interested in getting involved in the OU in particularly in helping students that are like me.

Djibril:

So basically STEM hub is a project born to create the space of belonging between open universities to black student. So it's created to make the student more confident if they have any issue. Any question or whatever come up in my mind to be free to expose it and talk about it.

Nia Paris:

A lot of things went well on this project. It was a fledgling project, so Gibril and myself had a lot of say in how we wanted the Black STEM Hub to look. Even the Black STEM Hub as a concept itself is something that we created. We went into this project and into this internship with the idea that Black students need a sense of belonging at the OU and that is kind of how the Black STEM Hub was born.

I think on a personal note, I also learned a lot of things public speaking, which it was something that I was always very shy to do before and that was something that was at the forefront of this project.

And also just having like the mentorship and guidance of OU faculty that I think I found immensely helpful. I also think what went well was the collaboration between faculty and student in shedding light on the black experience at the OU. Jabril and myself were able to come up with a lot of different concepts for the events, you know, issues that were personal to ourselves. So, they could be like finance issues, they could be issues with imposter syndrome. And, but these events were very much shaped by our own experiences. And I think that that really helped in, you know, drawing other black students in and creating that sense of relatability as well. A good example of this was our employability event.

There are many employability sessions that are run throughout the OU throughout the academic year and we really wanted to put on an event that was specifically targeted towards Black students and that was a challenge in itself. We had to kind of ask the questions of what makes specific finance or employability topics particularly relevant to Black students as opposed to anyone else.

Djibril:

How I say from the beginning, when I started, what was wish about this internship was to know if any black person being able to reach a heigh level to normal because actually I don't know any of them.

But because of this project, I've been able to get involved with several people. So knowing effectively many people was involved in they become teacher, they become most any role you will experience was like giving me like a hop with a wow. So what stopped me from becoming like them? What stopped me from limiting myself. So, it was a lot of inspiration. So, I believe to get more people can tell more based side of the story.

Nia Paris:

So throughout the project, we had a few different ways that students could communicate and connect. One of them was the WhatsApp group. This was an informal space for students to express how they're feeling on the modules and just how they're feeling being a black student at the OUI think this worked really well in that students could be more vocal about their experience in a way that they may not be able to be in, you know, faculty LED spaces.

Djibril:

So since day one of my internship, I have had this idea to gain a face-to-face event. All the people joined us were happy about it. We have a chance to meet some few stuff. Unfortunately not everyone being able to join us, but was a wonderful opportunity to see a side of the vulnerable side of ourself.

Not in the screen where like you were feeling like you were following a copy, but was like ourself just go there. I never done before any event face to face and I was there just by myself and talk with the public like we were in a little, our little group of friends and I believe was a success.

Nia Paris:

I would say that in the future, the Black Stem Hubs needs to be in more dynamic space that exists through the communication connection of Black students at the OU rather than at specific events that we put on throughout the calendar year. And I would say that this needs to be done by having a more individualized approach. I would like to see students who connect within this Black Stem Hub group to really know each other on a more personal level. I'd like to see more informal sessions where we can call students by their name and, you know, have that deeper sense of connection.

Djibril:

The big challenge in and where I really feel sorry was we didn't reach a large number of people even though we were advertising in server social media in our upper university website was look like people doesn't know it that the people couldn't have the opportunity to register themselves and join us like writing in personal emails about some of it like this. You might be more keen to join us, but was challenging because we were following the policies of the Open University.

Nia Paris:

The thing I would say that I found very challenging was just coming on board as a student and not feeling that I had, you know, any sort of prior knowledge or skill set to kind of to execute this project essentially. And there was a huge sense of impostor syndrome. And I think like going forward for future interns, maybe having like more support, you know, in bringing like a concept to fruition would be really helpful.

Djibril:

Sometimes can be over overwhelming, but don't give up. Sometimes it's look like you wanna literally say I wanna give up because it's too much. Try to put all to get in one, but please don't give up because at some point you're going to see the benefit of it. If you feeling like it's getting too much, you need just carry on, do what you can and remember you're not alone. You it's always someone in the team will support you and try to get out your the best thing of about yourself.

Nia Paris:

As for a message for future students or staff at the OU, and I won't say something as cliché as your voice matters, but I do think it's really surprising how many people want to listen to your voice and, you know, value what you say. I really did feel that my opinions were very valued in this project and really put at the forefront of this project. And that really alleviated my sense of impostor syndrome that I had going into this. And I think it made me feel like, you know, I, I could be someone who's valued and contributes something important to the world.