

Cordella Dixon admits to her mother having had a strong influence in her life. In fact, she has followed in her mother's footsteps by attending California State University, Fresno. That, however, is where their similarity ends.

"We come from a long line of teachers," she explains. "My mother graduated from CSUF and has been a teacher for 15 years. I decided to attend CSU, Fresno so I could be close to her. I wanted to keep that bond strong.

"I'm the different one. I want to be a doctor. My mother nor my aunts, who are also teachers, cannot help me with my studies. As far as school is concerned, I'm on my own."

A dedicated young woman, Cordella explains that some initial adversity in her college career helped her realize what it took to attain the lofty goals she has set for herself. She recalls the challenges of being a college freshman.

"When I first came to CSUF, I thought it would be like high school. High school was a breeze. In college, you are on your own. I learned a lot about responsibility.

"I've learned you get what you put forward. I've also learned that you earn what you get if you slack off. Grades don't just come to you, you have to earn them."

As a result of "slacking off" as a freshman, Cordella's formidable goal of becoming a doctor became even more challenging. Her mind-set changed, however, upon the birth of her daughter, Jamina.

"I have a three-year-old daughter. Jamina played a significant role in changing

my life around. I became more serious about my studies. I've changed a lot of things in my life to get where I am today, to make sure I provide the best future I can for her.

"I want to pay a lot of attention to her so she develops properly, therefore I really have to manage my time. It's tough. Jamina is only three, but sometimes when I come home, she'll say, 'No studying tonight, mom.'"

In her position as a peer counselor for the Educational Opportunity Program, Cordella draws from her experiences — scholastic difficulties as a freshman, student-mother, minority student, would-be medical school candidate — in helping freshmen with their concerns and anxieties.

"Because I struggled during my first two years of college, I know what to counsel the students to look out for, so they will not make the same mistakes. When students come into the office and say, 'I can't do it!,' I can look them in the eye and say, 'I did, and you can too!'"

The challenges posed by Cordella Dixon's career choice and personal life will only become more challenging as she moves on to professional school and beyond. While they are certain to be difficult, they are equally inspired.

"Once I get to medical school, it's another eight years before I will be out of school. Hopefully, by the time I'm 30 I'll be a doctor. We don't have a Black pediatrician in Fresno. I want to open some doors to other minority students who will follow me. I want



Cordella Dixon
Junior

to be a role model for others."

Asked what advice she shares with students who seek her out as an advisor, Cordella's answer is colored with knowledge learned the hard way.

"In college, no one is there to guide you. You have to get the work done. If you get a 'D', you've earned it. In high school, the teachers did everything they could to prevent you from getting poor grades. Here, it's up to you.

"That is why I really respect the Educational Opportunity Program. This program provides access to the university to students who realized too late in high school that education is important in their lives. Without this program, they would not be able to attend college. They are students who have the potential to succeed. The students they bring in really see the opportunity they have and work hard."

Words from the biography of Cordella Dixon.