

COLLABORATOR, INNOVATOR, ADVOCATE, CHAMPION

Nikole Collins-Puri

RECEIVES SIENA MEDAL

ANTOINETTE CUMMINS, BETA GAMMA, AND
KATHLEEN SULLIVAN, ALPHA GAMMA

In a year of quarantine, isolation from our loved ones near and far, restaurant carry-out, and video conferencing happy hours, technology has further convinced us how much we need it to stay connected. When Theta Phi Alpha made the wise decision to pivot to holding its National Convention activities virtually, it was an easy choice because of the variety of event technology available (even for free). Do we think about who builds these tools, or how listening to a sister sing “My Sister, My Friend” from 1,000 miles away sounds as precious as it does in-person because of technology?



Nikole pictured with her husband, Ashwin, and son, Xavier.

Our 2020 Siena Medalist, Nikole Collins-Puri, CEO of Techbridge Girls, not only recognizes the importance of technology in our lives, but how encouraging young women to join STEM (science,

technology, engineering, and mathematics)

programs builds a pipeline of smart, confident, and creative women who have set out to solve the world’s biggest challenges through science and technology. Her nomination was also timely “...as we find ourselves in the midst of two pandemics: COVID-19, which has disproportionately impacted Black and Brown communities, and our fight for racial equality and justice in this Nation,” said Collins-Puri.

Nikole Collins-Puri is a social justice visionary, strategist, advocate, and mentor who has committed her life to unleashing the potential to untapped communities. She’s the CEO of Techbridge Girls. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of South Florida and a Master of Public Administration from City University of New York. Before joining Techbridge Girls, she worked for AT&T, the College Board, and the Women’s Foundation of California.

After watching her TED talk, Alicia Zabala Palmisano, BE, National Vice President-Extension, nominated Collins-Puri for the Siena Medal. “As a fellow Greek woman she embodies Theta Phi Alpha’s mission in her life’s work with Techbridge Girls by helping to build young girls into educated and strong young women.”

YOUNG WOMEN HOLD SO MUCH POWER AND SORORITIES HAVE THE POWER TO HELP ITS SISTERS RECOGNIZE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL.

Although 2019 saw a roughly 40% increase in STEM degrees received by women, significant gender gaps still exist. “The nature of what our institutions represent is not only a place for belonging, but it’s a training ground to unleash our individual and collective power, so we are equipped to see the change we want in this world,” said Collins-Puri. Sororities have the potential to help guide women to finding their passions and translating them to action. As a collective force, these organizations can support chapters in making an impact within their campus communities, such as working with administration to build a STEM program or garner funding to build competitive programs.





Techbridge Girls (TBG)

was launched in 2000 at the Chabot Space & Science Center in Oakland, Calif. With a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF), TBG was

one of the earliest organizations to focus upon introducing girls and marginalized communities to STEM fields. After a decade of exemplary outcomes, TBG won another prestigious NSF grant to scale its after-school programs nationally. TBG launched in San Jose, Calif., in 2011, Greater Seattle in 2014, and Washington, D.C., in 2015.

TBG's after-school programs have reached over 70,000 youths, including over 7,000 girls directly engaged in after-school and summer programs, and over 60,000 boys and girls engaged through partnerships with youth-serving groups like Girl Scouts, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCA, and Society of Women Engineers.

To get involved with TBG, volunteer roles available include serving as a Role Model, Advisory Council Member, or Career Exploration

Visit host. The latter provides opportunities to explain STEM to girls in low-income communities. Further information is available at techbridgegirls.org.



Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

is a historically African American sorority founded on January 13, 1913, at Howard University in Washington, D.C. The organization has initiated over 300,000 sisters and has 1,000 chapters worldwide.

Their mission is to promote professional excellence as well as to provide assistance and support through an extensive array of public service initiatives based on Delta's Five Point Programmatic Thrust, in local communities throughout the world. The Five Point Programmatic Thrust sets forth the foundational values pivotal to organizational initiatives that are economic development, educational development, physical and mental health, political awareness and involvement, and international awareness and involvement.

OUR SISTERS IN THE NATIONAL PAN-HELLENIC COUNCIL HAVE A THRIVING COMMUNITY BASED ON SIMILAR IDEALS OF INCLUSIVITY AND CELEBRATE WHAT MAKES THEM DIFFERENT.

As Collins-Puri celebrates her 22nd anniversary as a sister of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, she recognizes that women, even in very different organizations, are still groups of women looking to make change. Both organizations were founded on the basis of being unable to become a member of Greek organizations in the early 1900s, whether it was for the color of our skin or for how we choose to worship God, and both have evolved to be more inclusive and accepting of those who even once turned us away. Darcy-Tell Morales, ΓH , said, "As a sister from a racially- and ethnically-diverse chapter and community, I hope that Theta Phi Alpha's selection of Nikole is an indication of more recognition of Black and Brown women in our society, who also align with our shared values as an organization. Since my Initiation in 2003, I have never attended a National Convention, so I appreciated the opportunity to attend virtually.

Dr. Mari Ann Callais, AB , Board of Trustees, articulated about Collins-Puri, "Nikole's life's work has been around leadership and making a difference. She is a remarkable woman who lives the values of our Fraternity and that of St. Catherine of Siena."

Thanks to:

- Alicia Zabala Palmisano, BE , Nominator
- *In-person presentation:* Cristin Miller Brown, $A\Psi$, and Lauren Svec Gallo, BB
- *Virtual presentation:* Tracey Liphardt, AN , National President
Dr. Mari Ann Callais, AB , Board of Trustees
Leslie Ervin Trahant, AB , Theta Phi Alpha Foundation
Darcy-Tell Morales, ΓH , Invocation
- Siena Medal Committee
- Theta Phi Alpha Foundation for the Siena Medalist's honorarium



Graphics provided by Techbridge Girls and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Siena Medalists

1937 – Agnes Regan
1938 – Mary Merrick
1939 – Agnes Repplier
1940 – Jane M. Hoey
1941 – Ann O'Hare McCormick
1942 – Anne Sarachon Hooley
1943 – Rev. Mother M. Katherine Drexel
1944 – Helen C. White
1945 – Thomas F. Sullivan
1946 – Frances Parkinson Keys

1947 – Mary Theresa Norton
1948 – Sister M. Madeleva, C.S.C.
1950 – Loretta Young
1951 – Anne Laughlin
1952 – Elizabeth Salmon
1954 – Sister M. Ignatia, C.S.A.
1956 – Phyllis McGinley
1958 – Mary Harden Loomam
1960 – Mary Ellen Kelly
1962 – Maria Augusta Trapp
1964 – Irene M. Auberlin

1966 – Dorothy Julia Willman
1968 – Rosemary Kilch
1976 – Hattie Larlham
1986 – Candy Lightner
1988 – Anne M. Burke
1990 – Helen Thomas
1992 – Eileen Stevens
1994 – Linda Caldwell Fuller
1996 – Nancy Goodman Brinker
1998 – Barbara McKillip
2000 – Kaye Redfield Jamison, Ph.D.

2002 – Dr. Pamela Martin
2004 – Susan Davenney Wyner
2006 – Andrea Cooper
2008 – Diane Straub, M.D., M.P.H.
2010 – Emily Elizabeth Douglas
2012 – Elizabeth Smart-Gilmour
2014 – Rachel Simmons
2016 – Terry Grahl
2018 – Ginny Carroll
2020 – Nikole Collins-Puri

The Siena Medal has been bestowed to 42 women since 1937 to outstanding women who have been leaders in business, education, the arts, and humanitarianism. Nikole Collins-Puri joins a prestigious group of recipients including Loretta Young, Phyllis McGinley, Maria Augusta Trapp, Nancy Brinker, and Ginny Carroll. Nominations for the 2022 Siena Medal are available at www.thetaphialpha.org/sienamedalist-nominations. Nominations are due by June 1, 2021.