**Shomari Maynard**

**S**homari Maynard is an education abroad professional who is dedicated to increasing diversity, equity, access and inclusive excellence in the field of study abroad. Her passion for inclusive excellence in education abroad began with her transformative experience studying abroad in high school on a Pasadena Sister Cities exchange to Finland. Her education abroad journey has led her to travel to more than 35 countries. These experiences have inspired her commitment to increasing access to education abroad opportunities and improving the quality of programs for diverse students. Shomari’s journey with citizen diplomacy began almost 15 years ago as an exchange student in high school language and culture study abroad programs to Spain and Finland. Her high school exchange experiences led her to pursue studies abroad in college including in the countries of Ghana, Ecuador, and Hong Kong, SAR. After college Shomari served as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in Brazil and now helps high school students study abroad as a regional manager for the largest high school scholarship fund for U.S. students in New York City.

 Her most recent personal and professional accomplishment which represents her commitment to practicing inclusive excellence and equity in education abroad is being awarded the U.S. Department of State Exchange Alumni Citizen Diplomacy Action Fund grant the past two years for a project based on bolstering outreach to underserved communities. Shomari received two grants to create the Global AfroxChange Conference, which serves as the first professional conference and network of Black-led education abroad organizations.

My experience as a Pasadena Sister Cities exchange program student in high school was the beginning of my journey with citizen diplomacy and student exchange. As an education abroad professional who recruits and supports high school students to apply to programs and scholarships to study abroad, I often reflect on my Sister Cities exchange to Finland as it was one of my first international language and culture immersion experiences. I have recently become re-engaged with the local Sister Cities I first traveled with in high school, and I am excited to contribute new ideas on how to involve youth with the organization, particularly through cultural exchange that promotes citizen diplomacy and experiential learning I look forward to also bringing my ideas and experience as an education abroad professional and an alumna of a Sister Cities exchange program to provide a unique perspective to the board. I understand firsthand the value of introducing youth to cultural exchange and encouraging them to be active global citizens and cultural diplomats. I hope to collaborate with my fellow SCI board members to recruit youth, Sister Cities exchange alumni, and young professionals to actively engage with Sister Cities in their communities around the world.

My skills include extensive travel and studies abroad, along with diverse professional experiences, and a continued commitment to citizen diplomacy and education abroad. I have gained professional experience working in the nonprofit fields of international education, philanthropy, and impact investing. I have gained skills in sales, student recruitment, public speaking, school relationship management, student advising, customer service, grants management, grant writing, curriculum development, project management, event planning, travel logistics coordination, alumni relations, and experiential learning.

[Letter of Support](https://sistercities.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Letter-of-Support-Shomari-Maynard.pdf)