

STUDENT NEWS

A Self-Driven Life

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As a college student, getting to an 8:00 am class on a Friday morning can be difficult. For Mareme Dieng '20, however, balancing self-care and commitments to make it to class is all the more a victory on days when she's arriving to Bennington from Tunisia. Or San Francisco. Or Turkey. Or Barcelona.



Though she still has another term left at Bennington, Mareme is already preparing for a future career that promises to be audacious and global.

Mareme spent her junior year abroad in France, an experience made all the more valuable by the consulting position she picked up along the way. She partnered with **Schoolab**, an innovation studio that works with students, startups, and large corporations to make industries more flexible, innovative, and appealing to young employees.

“Working with Schoolab was an intense experience because I was balancing it with my own studies,” said Mareme. “It wasn’t easy, but I’m happy I did it because I learned about myself, the things I want to do, and the type of environment in which I want to work.”

An Innovative Career

While Bennington's **Field Work Term** is generally intended to give students four unique work experiences over the course of their college experience, Mareme has instead taken this opportunity to grow within a single organization.

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Mareme Dieng '20

Since 2016, Mareme has worked alongside Tim Draper, founder of the immersive Silicon Valley entrepreneurship program Draper University. Her continuing relationship with Draper University recently led to her appointment as Head of International Partnerships and Relations, a position that Mareme will transition into full-time following her graduation from Bennington.

“Draper University is an innovative ecosystem, and within it, we have a program for start-ups,” said Mareme. “My team currently works on all international activities, including both existing international start-ups and ones we invest in. I travel a lot to meet with institutional partners and to manage the relationships we have with them.”

On behalf of Draper University, Mareme also attends and speaks at global conferences. In September, Mareme spoke at the **afric'Up** summit in Tunisia, which convened technology and innovation leaders from throughout Africa. She then traveled to Amsterdam for the **World Summit AI**, where she spoke on the development of AI and financial structures. In

November, she'll be in Turkey for the Turkish National Startup competition, and then Barcelona for the **Blockchain Leadership Summit**.

Drawing on her multiplicity of business leadership experiences, Mareme's postgraduate dream is to work on the development of a new Draper campus for emerging markets, ideally based in Africa or southeast Asia.

“I'd like to establish a campus that could hold corporate offices, investor offices, and start-up offices, creating synergies between those populations

and directing more effort to researching given problems,” said Mareme. “The structure would allow start-up investors, states, and corporations to collaborate on projects while also including training for start-ups and five-week sessions to promote alternative ways of engaging with entrepreneurship.”

A Resourceful Education

But for the meantime, as she completes her Bennington education, Mareme is determined to keep her current academic priorities at the forefront.

“Bennington is one of the most flexible and resourceful places I have ever been,” said Mareme. “When students do the work of figuring out what they want, they can learn how to leverage being here and take advantage of the College’s resources.”

Mareme has used her time at Bennington to explore both broadly and deeply. She initially intended to study Biology and Dance, but over time, her focus shifted to include Social Psychology.

“During my first term at Bennington, I took Political Psychology because the title was interesting,” said Mareme. “Throughout the course, I started learning about Social Psychology, as well, which was a field that was previously unknown to me. I started seeing similarities between the way we approach hard sciences, like Biology, and Social Psychology. I started creating synergies between both fields.”

One of Mareme’s three advanced works—she is also writing a Society, Culture, and Thought thesis on Pierre Bourdieu and building an entrepreneurship program within CAPA—focuses on such a discourse. Mareme is researching the effects menstruation has on female preferences of male facial traits.

“The common talk around menstruation is that women ‘go crazy,’ but that’s not true: there are biological reactions going on during that time that do make the body respond differently,” said Mareme. “There’s not enough study on the way menstruation affects the female body, so I wanted to give more attention to feminine behavior and feminine traits.”

Her advanced work stems from an experiment Mareme conducted during her second year, in which she found a strong correlation between ovulation in

heterosexual and bisexual women who did not take birth control and their preference of testosterone traits in male faces. Mareme plans to expand and diversify her sample populations as she revisits this work, monitoring more women of varying sexualities over the course of several months.

While her course load is expansive, Mareme is eager to take on each of her academic challenges.

“Sometimes, the toughest roads are the ones that are most satisfying because they allow you to understand what your limits are and what your potential can be,” said Mareme. “I have so many projects going on, I could choose to drop one because I’m busy. But because I—not anyone else—am the one choosing my path, I am determined to take advantage of every single situation. That’s how I also learn more about my own capacity.”

Mareme credits the support she’s received from Bennington’s administration, particularly her advisor **Susan Sgorbati**, with providing the flexibility she needs to build her academic trajectory.

“Susan’s help with connecting me to resources available that have also build my career beyond Bennington have made a huge difference,” said Mareme. “I’ve been able to work with Draper while still having opportunities to go abroad, serve as an SCP representative, work as an admissions intern, and be involved in day-to-day campus life. I’m very lucky.”

By Natalie Redmond, Associate Writer