



FAIR LAWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A STATEMENT FROM MR. NICHOLAS J. NORCIA, SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

FAIR LAWN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT ACCEPTED TO FIVE IVY LEAGUE SCHOOLS

FAIR LAWN, N.J. (April 14, 2021) - Fair Lawn High School senior Oluwatamilore “Tami” Kabiawu, 17, received acceptance letters from five Ivy League schools. Although he hasn’t committed yet, he is leaning toward Harvard University, Class of 2025.

“I was surprised beyond belief and still am. I’m more so just excited that so many schools saw promise in me and am looking forward to using these resources to make a difference. My goal is to work on innovations in AI and augmented reality and I hope to work on research and projects in these fields in college,” said Mr. Kabiawu, noting that when he opened his final acceptance decision letter from Harvard on Ivy Day, April 6, he, his mother and aunt started jumping for joy. His family celebrated that night with his father via a WhatsApp call; the senior Mr. Kabiawu works in Nigeria.

Before Ivy Day, Mr. Kabiawu received likely acceptance letters from Yale and Cornell, so he opened those letters first on Ivy Day, then moved on to University of Pennsylvania (waitlisted). After that, the other acceptances trickled in: Columbia, Princeton, which he says shocked him, then Harvard.

“The whole situation felt surreal and I couldn’t believe it,” said Mr. Kabiawu. “It’s taken many days for the shock to dissipate and for everything to sink in.”

His acceptance letters were not limited to the Ivy League. In all, Mr. Kabiawu was accepted at 14 colleges and universities (including MIT). An exceptional student, he had a weighted 4.58 grade-point average when he applied (it’s now 4.61) and has been involved in football (freshman and sophomore year) and varsity track since his freshman year. He is president of both the Future Business Leaders of America and the National Honor Society, a member of TEAMS, an engineering club (for three years) and the Chemistry League (two years). In total, he has taken nine Advanced Placement (AP) courses and if AP wasn’t offered, he took the honors version. Outside of school, he has volunteered as a summer camp counselor, the library offering tech help, and as an SAT tutor, where he co-started a volunteer program with some of his classmates.

Tami was born in London, moved to Atlanta for a short while, then moved to Troy, New York where he attended elementary school while his mother pursued a Ph.D. at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI). The family relocated to Fair Lawn when Mr. Kabiawu started sixth grade at Memorial Middle School. His twin brother, Tommy, will be playing football at RPI next year.

“This could not have happened to a better young man. His humility, hard work, persistence and emotional intelligence is far beyond his years. The college of his choosing should be excited about the student they are getting in the fall, but even more excited about the person,” said Joseph Lake, Tami’s guidance counselor at FLHS.

With college campus visits limited due to the coronavirus pandemic and standardized tests cancelled last summer, applying to schools has been particularly tough for the Class of 2021. Mr. Kabiawu credits his laser focus on his application, which was built around the idea of pursuing Computer Science to strengthen human relationships between people.

“I made sure to provide evidence and support for this motivation in every single part of my application, from my activities section, to the common app, to college-specific supplemental essays,” said Mr. Kabiawu, while adding that he weaved in stories of his life and where the future is headed.

He also says to stand out from the “tens of thousands of people” who are applying to schools he took a chance writing about an experience he witnessed while visiting Nigeria in 2012. His college app essay focused on the aftermath of a cow butchering for a wedding and used the cow’s head as a metaphor for himself and growing up in Fair Lawn.

“It’s a complex, extended metaphor and I took a gamble with sending it in, but my teachers and friends who read the essay really enjoyed it, so I took the risk.”

Mr. Kabiawu will graduate with his class on June 22 on Fair Lawn High School’s Sasso Field.

“FLHS could not be more proud of Oluwatamilore. His quiet presence and standard of excellence is something for his peers to emulate. Especially after all he and his fellow members of the Class of 2021 have been through over the past year, Tami’s accomplishment is a shining light. No matter where he goes, I know that Tami will capitalize on his choice to make a true difference,” said FLHS Principal Paul Gorski.

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Photo Credit: The Kabiawu Family

Photo Caption: Tami Kabiawu, Fair Lawn High School senior, showcases his 14 college acceptance letters, including 5 from Ivy League schools.