



**Outstanding Alum  
Nisha Weems**



**Rising Star  
Syeda Ara**

In 2006, **Nisha Weems** was a single parent of three who had recently moved to Wichita from Texas to find a safer place to live for her family. She was underemployed, living on food stamps, and in Section 8 public housing. Nisha lived next door to Wichita State, and she knew that somehow, some way she'd find an opportunity to enroll at WSU. After many struggles, she enrolled in her first class. Her plan was to better herself by getting an associate's degree, but once she started taking gerontology courses she was hooked. Nisha realized that she was pursuing a profession that she was passionate about.

Nisha got help from Student Support Services. "They provided me with a computer because I didn't have one. They provided me with tutoring, especially with algebra. They were my rock." It was Nisha's SSS adviser, Vanessa Souriya-Mnirajd, who gave her advice that made a big difference in her confidence.

In 2011, Nisha graduated cum laude with a bachelor's degree in general studies. In 2013, she finished a master's in aging studies. Today, Nisha has passed her state and federal exams to become the CEO of a nursing facility. She's also looking at the next step to return to Wichita State to pursue doctoral studies in community psychology. "When I stepped away from my comfort zone, there were people to help," she said. "It was never easy, but it did get easier, and better."

**Syeda Ara** is a senior at Wichita State who is majoring in psychology. She chose to attend WSU because it is a place close to her heart and home. She also had knowledge of the many valuable resources that are available at WSU. In 2015, she enrolled in TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) because she needed additional support to achieve her academic and graduation goals.

Syeda has benefitted most from the program's rental system, both electronics and textbooks. She also enjoys meeting with her advisor even when there is nothing major to report. She is active on the WSU campus and in the surrounding neighborhoods. One of her involvements includes serving on the WSU community service board where her focus is meeting the needs of children across Sedgwick County. She also works with the SSS department as a student assistant. She loves this position as it is a way she feels she can give back to the community.

In her free time, she enjoys watching motivational videos that help her to remain focused and active. Syeda is currently working on learning Hindi, her third language. She is fluent in Bangla and English. After she completes her degree, she wants to travel abroad to work and volunteer while further developing her language skills.