



## Sophia Rahming

College: Education

Program: Higher Education

Degree: PhD

### Why FSU?

The Seminoles have a historical sociocultural link to my country (The Bahamas) that few here in Tallahassee are aware of. Consequently, becoming an FSU 'SEMINOLE' was an incentive when submitting my application. I was impressed by the faculty and their academic productivity. I particularly needed to see at least one faculty member who looked like me. There were two women of color listed among the faculty. Let no one dissuade you, representation matters. During Visiting Days, I met several graduate students and left knowing I would choose FSU.

### Why pursuing a graduate degree is important to you?

I want my research to change the culture of [STEM](#) to include race, gender, sexuality, religion, class, ethnicity, and creed. I know that with mentorship and support from my major professor, [Dr. Tamara Bertrand Jones](#), and the [Higher Education program faculty](#), I can achieve this goal.

### What is the importance of your research, interests, and ambitions?

The [LeaderShape](#) vision statement, "A just, caring, and thriving world where all lead with integrity™ and a healthy disregard for the impossible," motivated me and continues to motivate me to create a just and caring environment for anyone interested in STEM, especially women of color. STEM's dominant narrative and education's curricula often erase the contribution of brown and Black scholars in STEM. Every day we learn about another "Hidden Figure." Brown and Black bodies belong in STEM, not just as commodities, but as producers of knowledge. There are research questions that only women of color will ask and only women of color will seek to answer; questions only the LGBTQ community will ask and seek to answer because the research addresses issues particular to them. These important questions emerge from the critical observations of distinct lived experiences, and their answers have the potential to inform policy, practice, and theory more broadly. We are all the poorer to the extent that STEM continues intractably to be a cisgender, white male, heteronormative, 'chilly' environment that discourages long-term participation by 'diverse others.' I am prepared to shift the culture of STEM.

### What are your future career aspirations?

To pursue a tenure-track faculty position or a postdoctoral fellowship. While much has been written about women's experiences and outcomes in STEM at US Research I institutions, little has been written about how international women construct science identities and whether they maintain or abandon their cultural identities to be successful in science careers. International women of color, especially refugees, have unique experiences and differential outcomes in STEM education in the US when compared to their American female counterparts. These experiences need to be investigated.

### Advice for prospective graduate students?

Do it! Jelaluddin Rumi, a 13th-century mystic poet said, "Sell your cleverness and buy bewilderment." What graduate school does well is ignite an increased sense of curiosity (bewilderment). The questions never stop. If problem-solving and a search for innovative solutions excite you, graduate school is for you. If you have a restless discontent with the status quo and critiquing, dismantling, and transgressing systems appeal to you, graduate school is for you. Do it!

### Advice for current graduate students?

Listen to your body. Sleep when you have to. Eat healthily. You will never have this dedicated learning time again. Build community. Get to know your faculty outside of the classroom. Often we're asking, asking, needing, needing—attention, direction from our advisors. Don't always be a recipient, give back as well—a note of appreciation goes a long way. Faculty are people, too.

### Accomplishments:

In 2018-2019 I became a [NYU Steinhardt Faculty First-Look Scholar](#) and was awarded the [FSU Graduate School Fellows Society Dissertation Fellowship](#) and the [W. Hugh Stickler Award](#) for the Enhancement of Dissertation Research. In 2018, I was inducted into [Omicron Delta Kappa](#), became a [FSU College of Education Hardee Fellow](#), and was one of sixty PhD students from around the world chosen to participate in the [Humboldt University Berlin Summer School in Social Sciences](#).

