

Bahamian student settles in at HU

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By Sydney N. Shuler

Krishona Minis glided into the Hampton University cafeteria for Saturday brunch as if she'd been doing it for weeks. She had dressed in a mid-morning brunch outfit that is quite familiar on HU's campus: a sweater over a tank top, casual cotton shorts and hot pink Crocs on her feet.

She started to make her way to the dining room but stopped abruptly to look down at her iPhone. Five seconds later, I received a text:

Can you send me a picture? I forgot how you look.

I responded, Short. Bald. Blonde.

She looked up from the glowing screen and smiled while walking toward me.

"Good morning," she said in a soft, but distinguishable Bahamian accent.

She arrived from the University of the Bahamas-North on September 24 following the destruction of Hurricane Dorian. Eighteen-year-old Minnis is a sophomore business management major from Freeport, Grand Bahama, The Bahamas, and a new student at Hampton University. Over a breakfast burrito and a plate of bacon, eggs and potatoes, we discussed her life's most recent drastic changes.

"I'm not nervous about anything, actually," she said. "I'm really excited about this opportunity. I feel like I belong here because everybody treats me like I'm from here."

It helps that Minnis arrived at Hampton with 46 Bahamian peers. She admits that she did not know all of them.

"I'm meeting new people, too," she said. "I'm getting to know them, which is pretty easy because we went to the same school together; I've probably seen them before and just didn't know their name."

As we talked, Minnis showed me photos of her home country before and after the storm.

"From the plane you could see tha the trees were dry because of the salt water. Usually from high up you can just see green [trees], but when I was on the plane it was brown and I could see the houses that were destroyed."



The Bahamas before and after Hurricane Dorian. Photos by Krishona Minnis.

"I never imagined that I'd be in a situation like this because we normally have hurricanes, but we never flood," she said. "Because



of the surges, most of the island got flooded. My area didn't get flooded, but poles and trees still got knocked down, and a few houses had some damage, like

broken windows."

She said that, as the hurricane started to pick up speed and force, her mother sent her to stay with a family member farther inland, where she lost contact with family and friends for days.

"It got crowded because my other family's house got flooded, so they had to come there, too," she said. "I didn't see my daddy until four days after... I couldn't check on him at all because the signal was down."



Krishona Minnis hopes that coming to HU will help her return to life before Dorian, where she played high school sports, cooked Caribbean food, traveled with family and friends and worked toward her goal of being an entrepreneur.

I'm hopeful for her, too.