

## Alison Banks-Moore, Ramapo College of New Jersey, Class of 1977

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Alison Banks-Moore gets goosebumps of inspiration – as opposed to tears of nostalgia – when thinking of her commencement from Ramapo College in 1977. The commencement speaker was Shirley Chisholm, politician, educator, and author, who became the first black woman elected to the U.S. Congress, where she served for seven terms representing parts of New York City from 1969 to 1983.

Congresswoman Chisholm’s words and example reinforced for Ms. Banks-Moore the essence of her Ramapo experience – connecting with others for the purpose of helping others. Instead of being apprehensive about leaving the nurturing nest of Ramapo, Ms. Banks-Moore, who earned a B.A. in

Contemporary Arts, felt excited about flying from the nest and facing whatever personal and professional challenges were in her future.

Ms. Banks-Moore over the course of several decades has harnessed that commencement-day excitement into professional success that helps others to succeed in life. She is Chief Diversity Officer at Horizon Blue Cross/Blue Shield of New Jersey, and, in that role, she finds gratification from having a positive effect on the lives of “so many of our employees in a variety of ways .... Be it through community service activities, our Affinity Group events, our Diversity Council Annual Showcase, or our Reverse Mentoring Program (just to name a few) ... these initiatives allow our employees the opportunity to contribute, develop, and be an integral part of the larger Horizon-BCBSNJ community, while having the ability to bring their whole selves to work,” she said.

With over 30 years of experience as a human resources professional, Ms. Banks-Moore has held various positions at major corporations including: AT&T; KPMG; Cablevision; and 32 BJ Benefit Funds. As Chief Diversity Officer at Horizon-BCBSNJ, she is responsible for strengthening personal and professional relationships that support an inclusive and diverse workplace. The company has received numerous awards from national publications such as: *Diversity MBA Magazine*; *Diversity Inc.*; *AARP*; *Latina Style*; *GI Jobs*; *Diversity Best Practices*; and *Working Mother* magazine. She is a member of the Society for Human Resource Management, the Blues Association Diversity Alliance, the Northeast Region Corporate Industry Liaison Group, Christ the King Board of Trustees, Tri-State Diversity Council Board of Directors, and the N.J. Network to Network Women’s Group. She formerly served on the advisory board of N.J. LEEP (Law Enforcement Education Program).

“Overall, I guess you could say I’ve always held roles throughout my professional career that have enabled me to help others,” she said.

In her “spare time,” Ms. Banks-Moore is helping others by working with numerous community organizations, including as a trustee on the Ramapo College Foundation Board of Governors for the past three years. Ms. Banks-Moore received the President’s Award of Merit in 2013 from Ramapo President Peter Mercer and was honored as a Ramapo College Distinguished Citizen in 2015.

Although she had no idea when she was in college that she would have a career in human resources, the signs pointing to such a career path were evident when she was choosing colleges.

A full-fledged Jersey gal (native of Newark, graduate of Metuchen High School, current resident of Parlin, and employee at the Newark headquarters of Horizon-BCBSNJ), Ms. Banks-Moore, when she graduated from high school, decided she needed to explore life beyond New Jersey. She left the state for one year, then returned to the Jersey fold – and did her homework to learn about New Jersey’s public colleges and universities.

She found Ramapo intriguing, because it seemed “ahead of the times,” in many ways, particularly its progressive policies regarding accommodations for students with disabilities – before anything was required by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Even though these accommodations had no effect on her personally, she thought it indicated “a philosophy and ethic that probably would be reflected at the school in all the areas of the academic and social environment,” concluded Ms. Banks-Moore, who already was thinking with the sensibility of a human resources professional.

“I was right .... The atmosphere at Ramapo was nurturing, I developed lasting friendships with some of my professors,” she said. She particularly honed her public speaking and communications skills when at Ramapo – skills which have proven to be invaluable for her career – which initially began in a job unrelated, theoretically, to human resources.

“Although I could have assumed a job right out of college as an investment banker at Goldman Sachs, the first ‘professional’ position I held ironically was somewhat similar. I was a management trainee at AT&T where I provided transfer requirements to shareholders. The service impacted the company’s shareholders as a result of my responding to their inquiries which ranged from a simple address change, to giving instructions regarding how to replace lost or stolen stock certificates, to providing transfer requirements as a result of the death or divorce of a spouse.

“In many instances, you had to exude a level of empathy for the shareholder when assisting them. Many were looking for your direction and guidance so they could make sound decisions .... It wasn’t as though I thought to myself, ‘I’ve always wanted to work in HR.’ When the first HR opportunity (at AT&T) presented itself, I was intrigued about the role, and decided to apply for the position,” said Ms. Banks-Moore.

Thousands of individuals over the years have been very happy that Ms. Banks-Moore decided to apply for that HR position 30 years ago. Just getting an email from her could brighten one’s day. Her signature tagline in an email is from Muhammad Ali: “Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth.”