

INSPIRATION



On the rise

Can an intern advance to executive? This West Palm woman says you can

Mike Diamond Palm Beach Post | USA TODAY NETWORK

Tacaria Anderson Jones graduated in May 1998 on a Friday from Palm Beach Lakes High School. The following Monday, she began work as a summer student intern at the Port of Palm Beach. • Twenty-six years later, she is still at the port. She has come a long way since her days as an eight-week intern. Today, she is one of its top executives – its director of contract compliance and tenant relations. • “It has been a bit of whirlwind,” said Anderson Jones. “I remember the first day. There was a retirement party. I had to get the food. I would answer the phones, run errands. Back then, I was the only intern.”



Tacaria Anderson Jones, seen here in October in Riviera Beach, is director of contract compliance and tenant relations at the Port of Palm Beach. GREG LOVETT/PALM BEACH POST

In her current position, she interprets and negotiates complex contracts. For Anderson Jones, the trail to become a top executive from her humble beginning was not easy.

She became a full-time employee in January 1999. Her first job was as a fiscal technician, reconciling deposits. While working full time, she went to college to study finance. She eventually obtained a degree from Florida Atlantic University in 2007 in business administration management.

“I’d work until 4 p.m. and then take night classes that started two hours later,” she said, noting it could often take more than an hour to get from the port in Riviera Beach to FAU in Boca Raton.

Is another career in the cards for the one-time student intern?

She advanced to an accounts payable specialist, accounts receivable specialist and manager of accounts receivable. Last year, she was promoted to her current executive-level position.

“Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think I would have a port career,” she said. “It has been very fulfilling.”

She said it has been satisfying to see the growth that has occurred. The port has the highest container volume per acre of any port in the country. More than 1,400 cargo vessels a year dock there, 412,000 cruise ship passengers frequent the port and much of the Caribbean receives its commodities from the port. “It is quite an operation,” she said.

So what does the future hold for Anderson Jones? At 44 years old, she is exploring the possibility of obtaining a certification through the Port Professional Management Program that would allow her to become a deputy director or even an executive director of a port.

“Retirement is only four years away. I have always wondered what it would be like to work at a much bigger port. So who knows?”

In October, the Port of Palm Beach received a Lighthouse Award from the American Association of Port Authorities for its summer internship program. Applications for 2025 will be accepted in March, and the program could have as many as 10 interns this coming summer.

Anderson Jones urges high school



Tacaria Jones as a student intern in 1998 at the Port of Palm Beach. Today, 26 years later, she is one of the agency’s top executives. PROVIDED BY PORT OF PALM BEACH

and college students to apply, noting: “The sky is the limit. I am an example of that.”

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