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Dr. Russell is a native of Columbus, Ohio where she attended Groveport Madison High School. She graduated in 1991 and began her academic journey at OSU with a full academic scholarship. In 1995 she received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and went on to Attend Georgia State University where she received her Bachelors of Science in Criminology in 1998.

Dr. Russell then returned to Columbus to attend Ohio State again for her Master's in Social Work and completed that degree in 2002. To culminate her academic endeavors she received her Doctorate in 2006 in Human Development and Family Science with a concentration in Sociology. After finishing her Doctorate she served as an instructor at OSU where she taught several undergraduate courses in Human Development and Family Science. She won numerous teaching awards and received many accolades for her ability to motivate her students. Currently, she is a Post Doctoral Research Fellow at Auburn University where she heads a research team of many undergraduate and graduate students.

In 1999, Dr. Russell was lead by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost to create a forum where the academic achievements of CLGI youth and young adults can be celebrated. Dr. Russell believed strongly in the need for positive reinforcement from the church family for the academic endeavors of their youth. Thus, the IYYAD graduation ceremony was born! From its' inception the Graduate ceremony has been a vehicle to motivate and celebrate the achievements of its youth and young adults. Soon the graduate ceremony blossomed to not only include high school graduates but also college graduates which incorporated adults who took the challenge and despite all odds went back to college to pursue their educational goals. The Lord has blessed the IYYAD Graduate ceremony to become a great service in the Celebration of Academic Excellence in Christ.