

July 2019

## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*July 23, 2019*



It is with a grateful heart that I write this message, as the fourth academic year of the University of Maryland, Baltimore's (UMB) CURE Scholars Program has come to a close and our scholars are all over the

city (and state) engaging in top notch summer enrichment programming. This year marked many milestones, most notably welcoming a fourth cohort, which brought our total number of CURE Scholar participants to more than 100! Additionally, our first cohort of scholars matriculated to high school and into CURE Connections (C2) — the high school portion of the UMB CURE pipeline. I'm still amazed and quite proud to see how much our first cohort has matured over the past four years.

Academically, this past fall semester, 18 scholars presented at Cancer Research Day hosted by the University of Maryland Marlene and Stewart Greenebaum Comprehensive Cancer Center, where Cohort 3 scholar Jaylen Galmore delivered a fascinating keynote address on his research, "Prostate Cancer: New Treatments." This past spring semester, Richmond Levan Sakie, a Cohort 3 scholar, presented an insightful keynote address on his research, "Technological Advancements of Self-Driving Cars," at our CURE End of Year Celebration. Additionally this spring, our UMB CURE MESA (math, engineering, and science achievement) team placed second and third in the National Engineering Design Challenge at the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Lab; Cohort 1 scholars visited three university campuses; ALL scholars competed in our second annual STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) Expo; and ALL the middle school scholars were published in the UMB Journal of STEM. Our scholars continue to impress me and so many others as they exceed expectations time and again.

This also was an exciting year for me personally, as I married Alan Davis in May. I feel so blessed and grateful that more than 40 scholars, their families, and their mentors joined us on our very special day. In fact, as my bridal party and I were outside taking photos before the ceremony, I could see the three vans carrying our scholars pull up to the church. It was such a moving and joyous moment to see my CURE family arrive that I started to cry my first tears of joy on my wedding day! Thank you to everyone for your well wishes and support during this new and wonderful chapter in my life!

This year, our CURE team welcomed TaShara Bailey, PhD, MA, as our STEM curriculum coordinator. In addition to her role with CURE, Dr. Bailey is an adjunct faculty member at the UMB Graduate School and serves on the University's Diversity Advisory Council. Dr. Bailey's dissertation, "Organizational Support, Satisfaction, and STEM Research Career Plans in Pipeline Interventions: A Strengths-Based Approach Among Underrepresented Students," explores how pipeline programs can support underrepresented students to achieve successful academic outcomes in STEM fields. Dr. Bailey joins Ms. Emily Blatter, MEd, LMSW, our CURE assistant director and social worker, whose passion is supporting the social-emotional needs of our CURE Scholars and helping families meet the needs of their children so our scholars can access the rigorous STEM curriculum. It's important to note that Bailey and Blatter volunteered with the UMB CURE Program for three years before officially joining our team, so they are truly committed to our program and know our scholars very well!

We also are blessed to have Shawdae Harrison, our AmeriCorps volunteer coordinator, on our team. She has provided fantastic support to our dedicated mentors, successfully recruiting 100 new mentors this academic year, providing monthly cultural competency trainings for our mentors, and maintaining weekly communication with mentors so they are empowered to connect with their scholars in meaningful ways. Finally, we are happy to announce that Tayloe McKenna was promoted to the position of CURE contracts and grants associate. Before taking this position, for the past year, she was our administrative assistant. She works tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that CURE programming runs smoothly and that we are prepared for all possible grant opportunities that may come our way.

Here at the CURE office, we love summer enrichment programming: Cohort 1 scholars spend five exciting weeks of science and academic enrichment camp, which includes a week of Kaplan PSAT prep, a week of forensic science at Loyola University Maryland, a week of microbiology camp, a weeklong pharmacy boot camp, and a weeklong stay at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. Cohort 2 scholars' five-week summer session is with Mission Thrive Summer, a unique partnership with the UMB Institute for Integrative Health and Civic Works' Real Food Farm. Meanwhile, cohorts 3 and 4 scholars participate in a three-week summer camp that includes a week with Planet Smilez (a camp at the School of Dentistry); a week with Michelle Giglio, PhD, learning about genomic sciences; and a week in the lab of the School of Pharmacy's Lisa Jones, PhD. Cohorts 3 and 4 also experience a Black Panther-themed STEAM (STEM with arts) curriculum, swimming lessons at the URecFit pool, and other engaging educational activities.

In summary, we are so proud of our CURE Scholars' accomplishments of the past year. We are proud that all that stimulation continues through our summer enrichment program, aimed at exciting our scholars about the many possibilities involving science while exploring and hopefully inspiring them to pursue careers in health care, cancer research, and other STEM-related fields. We look forward to seeing all that our AMAZING UMB CURE Scholars achieve in their bright futures! The possibilities are limitless ...

Sincerely,

**Robin Saunders, EdD, MS**

# UMB CURE SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT: TYJAHNAE MORTON

*July 23, 2019*



Tyjahnae Morton is an eighth-grade scholar and honor-roll student who attends Green Street Academy.

**What is your favorite thing about being a CURE Scholar?**

My favorite thing about CURE so far has been the fun experiments and field trips. When I was in the anatomy curriculum track, we dissected pigs. That was really fun, and I learned a lot, too. This year, CURE was invited to speak at the Maryland General

Assembly, and I loved that field trip. We got to go to Annapolis and present our research posters that we worked on all year, and it felt good to tell people about my research.

**What do you want to be when you grow up?**

I want to be a pediatrician because I like helping people and I love being around children. I have younger siblings, so I'm used to helping take care of them.

**What curriculum track did you choose and why?**

I'm in the chemistry curriculum track. I chose chemistry because I didn't know much about it, but I wanted to learn more. I also know that you need to know about chemistry in order to become a pediatrician.

**What is the most valuable thing you've learned so far in the CURE Scholars Program?**

CURE has taught me a lot. When I first started at CURE, I was very shy and didn't talk to a lot of different types of people. I am more outgoing and vocal now because CURE puts you in situations to share what you learn. Like on the Annapolis trip, I got to talk to people I wouldn't have talked to before.

Tyjahnae also placed in the top three at CURE's second annual STEM Expo, a poster showcase that challenges scholars to impress judges with their knowledge of their scientific research topics. Tyjahnae's research poster, "New Treatments in Small Cell Lung Cancer," focused on innovative health care techniques created in an effort to reduce the prevalence of small-cell lung cancer.

# UMB CURE MENTOR SPOTLIGHT: ERIKA MILLER

*July 23, 2019*



Erika Miller is a University of Maryland, Baltimore Master of Health Sciences degree candidate.

## **Why did you choose the UMB the CURE Scholars Program?**

During my first year of graduate school, I was enrolled in the President's Student Leadership Institute. One requirement of the program was to partake in community service. Of the many organizations to select from, I chose to serve my community by becoming a mentor to UMB CURE Scholars to encourage students to pursue STEM-related careers, build self-confidence, and ensure that students continue to excel.

**What is your favorite thing about the UMB CURE Scholars Program?**

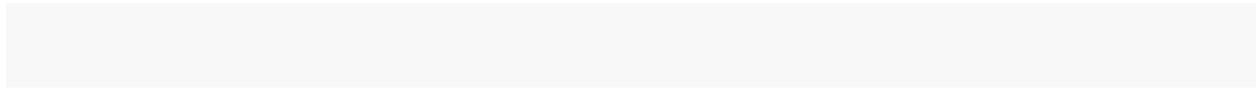
My favorite thing is that the program is composed of a great number of mentors attending various institutions with different educational backgrounds who are very much dedicated to seeing each student succeed. Also, another aspect that sets this program apart from other mentoring programs within the community is the training that mentors receive to identify signs of trauma in school-aged children and ways to establish effective communication between mentors and mentees.

**What project have you most enjoyed working on with our scholars so far?**

It has been a pleasure witnessing the students grow and assisting them as they completed their research projects this year. By enabling students to explore their interests and perform research, they have become more proficient in writing, reading comprehension, and public speaking.

**In what ways will your mentoring experience with the UMB CURE Scholars Program prepare you as a health care professional?**

Mentoring the CURE Scholars has better prepared me to assess the academic needs of students and pinpoint areas of improvement. This experience will be useful to apply to any future global health projects I may participate in so that I may identify health needs of a community or population and establish health programs to resolve any issues.



## UMB CURE DONOR SPOTLIGHT: DARLENE ROBINSON, MD

*July 23, 2019*



As an emergency medicine physician affiliated with multiple hospitals in the West Baltimore area, Darlene Robinson, MD, truly understands the importance of addressing the social and environmental barriers that affect the West Baltimore community she serves. Robinson is a CURE Advisory Board member and believes supporting STEM education can help improve outcomes for students in the UMB CURE Scholars Program.

### **How did you get involved with the UMB CURE Scholars Program?**

I heard about CURE through colleagues at UMB. Once I learned about the program, I immediately felt connected to CURE because of its mission and its relation to my current community outreach efforts.

### **Why do you support the UMB CURE Scholars philanthropically?**

My mom was a teacher, so I always understood the value of education and exposure and, more importantly, the power of those things to influence your passions and dreams. I love that I have the opportunity to expose students in the UMB CURE Scholars Program to opportunities and resources that can inspire a passion within them.

### **Are there people in your life who have modeled philanthropy or particularly encouraged you to give back?**

I grew up in Crisfield, Md., a rural town on the Eastern Shore. My family wasn't rich so we couldn't always give back monetarily, but we were always involved with giving back to our community through the church. For that reason, community outreach is very important to me. My mother is 85 years old and still volunteers at a local hospital, even today! I grew up in an environment where people regularly gave back to their community, and now I'm in a position to do the same. I received a scholarship to medical school and now I feel obligated to help students strive toward educational attainment.

### **What do you think is the most effective way to introduce people to the UMB CURE Scholars Program?**

What works best for promoting a program like CURE is effective messaging and continuous exposure, especially to UMB students, faculty, and staff. I love that the CURE team utilizes the e-boards around the University and often attends various seminars to introduce the CURE Scholars Program to the different student organizations at UMB. I would also suggest reaching out to different departments across the University to explore the possibility of a CURE representative attending staff meetings to get CURE's mission and message to every department at UMB.

In the end, Robinson beautifully sums up the idea that representation truly does matter. As a girl growing up on the rural Eastern Shore, she often noticed that not many people who looked like her attended medical school. As a result, she hadn't considered a career in the medical field. However, with early exposure to STEM subjects and educational support, Robinson went on to become a prominent physician in Maryland. She articulates the importance of equal representation in medical careers and its influence on our next generation of scientists, researchers, and physicians. She challenges UMB CURE Scholars to dream big and be confident in themselves. After all, they are the leaders of tomorrow.