



Diversity Advisory Council

Outstanding UMB Student Award-Eseosa Fernandes

Outstanding UMB Student Award

Eseosa Fernandes, MD, MPH

When Eseosa Fernandes completes her preventive medicine residency and her master's in clinical research at the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB), she plans to funnel her passion for patient advocacy and health equity into working with the city's underserved communities.

"As an immigrant and person of color, I have experienced firsthand the painful consequences of a lack of inclusion and cultural awareness," said Fernandes, who was the first in her family to emigrate from Nigeria in 2009 when she came to the United States to earn her master's in public health as a Harvard University Presidential Scholar. "This has formed a firmly rooted motivation to contribute to diversity efforts, advocate for the empowerment of marginalized groups, and create a better platform for future generations."

When she moved to Baltimore with her husband, Flavio, a few years ago to attend UMB, she learned quickly about the injustices that minorities face in the city when she was repeatedly given advice to avoid living in West Baltimore. She was told it was a socially and economically disadvantaged area with high crime rates and inadequate infrastructure.

"This was my introduction to the long history of injustice as well as the legacy of resilience that characterizes this vibrant and complex city," she said. "As part of my preventive medicine program, I took a graduate course at UMB on health equity and social justice, which further highlighted the dire need for authentic efforts to foster equity. I was particularly horrified to learn about the institutionalized discriminatory policies. This strengthened my enthusiasm to engage in diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts at the University and in the city."

Fernandes' diversity, equity, and inclusion work with numerous programs at UMB has led her to be named a 2021 Diversity Recognition Award winner as Outstanding UMB Student. The Graduate School student will be honored at the University's virtual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Black History Month celebration Feb. 4.

Fernandes worked with B'more for Healthy Babies, an innovative project to reduce infant mortality in Baltimore, from 2019 to 2020. She gave talks to Upton-Druid Heights residents that were geared toward enhancing community knowledge, attitudes, and awareness for healthy pregnancies; educated high-risk African American women of child-bearing age on ways to reduce blood pressure through lifestyle changes and connected them to primary care providers; and participated in meetings with the city health department to develop strategies to prevent fetal and infant deaths.

Fernandes said she has become involved in programs such as this to foster health equity in Baltimore.



“My devotion to health equity is a central theme of my professional interests as a physician,” she said. “Diversity and inclusion are crucial for health care and bridging health disparities. I hope to emphasize the dire need for ongoing training in cultural competence and quality improvement for health practitioners as a powerful way to improve health outcomes, as well as rebuild the trust underserved populations in Baltimore have in health practitioners.”

Fernandes, who is the mother of a 2-month-old son, Casey, also served as a virtual camp counselor last summer with the University of Maryland School of Medicine’s Mini-Medical School for Kids program. More than 200 children of diverse backgrounds participated in the free community engagement initiative *that* introduces them to health care fields and provides positive role models. In her workshop, Fernandes discussed forensics and DNA.

She is currently a President’s Student Leadership Institute candidate with the UMB Intercultural Leadership and Engagement Center. Fernandes will complete 30 hours of community service in the Baltimore area and

spend 12 hours in seminars to learn how to best translate diversity insights into action.

She also serves on the University of Maryland Medical Center (UMMC) Diversity and Inclusion Council as co-chair of the inclusive environment workgroup. In December, her team kicked off “Celebrate Us,” an initiative that highlights multicultural events and observances celebrated by the diverse workforce and patients with the goal of fostering a community of inclusion and understanding.

“It is a great source of pride that I played a key role in coordinating the team that guided leadership to endorse this initiative, which promotes a more welcoming space and respect for diverse groups at UMMC and aims to combat stereotyping, intolerance, and bigotry,” she said.

Fernandes called the Dr. King award “meaningful,” saying the first speech she learned was his “I Have a Dream” from the March on Washington.

“This award strengthens me to continue to advance his mission of equity and inspires me with renewed dedication to humanity,” she said. “It reaffirms that we can all take steps to make a difference in our communities and participate in the struggle for social justice, no matter how small we may feel.

“This award is about each of us. It is a reminder of our collective ethical responsibility — we either actively endorse an oppressive system, passively accept, or actively oppose it. This award is a ‘thank you’ for what we are all doing individually to increase equity at UMB and the wider Baltimore community.”

— Jen Badie

[Back to 2021 MLK Diversity Award Winners](#)

SHARE THIS PAGE



The University of Maryland, Baltimore is the founding campus of the University System of Maryland.
620 W. Lexington St., Baltimore, MD 21201 | 410-706-3100
© 2019-2020 University of Maryland, Baltimore. All rights reserved.