



UMB News

CURE Holds Virtual End of Year Celebration

June 8, 2021 | By [Jena Frick](#)

After a long and difficult school year composed of virtual learning, the [University of Maryland, Baltimore](#) (UMB) CURE Scholars came together May 13 to celebrate a year of success.

"I am truly proud of what we have been able to accomplish this year," said **Gia Grier McGinnis, DrPH, MS**, executive director of the [CURE Scholars Program](#). "I applaud all of our scholars for continuing to be dedicated to CURE and to their studies, despite this devastating pandemic."



The CURE Scholars gather over Zoom for their annual End of Year Celebration, bringing together scholars from every cohort along with CURE teachers, mentors, faculty, and staff.

The CURE Scholars' annual End of Year Celebration brings together scholars from every cohort along with CURE teachers, mentors, faculty, and staff. The event is usually held on the UMB campus, but due to COVID-19 restrictions, the scholars got together over Zoom video conferencing. The virtual nature of the event did not quell the sense of excitement and support that comes with the celebration.

"To our CURE parents and caregivers, I know this has been a stressful time for your families," Grier McGinnis said. "Just know that we will always be here to support you, and we thank you for encouraging your scholars despite numerous hardships and challenges."

Many scholars were recognized for their continued dedication to the CURE Program and curriculum even though it was all held virtually. Markia Eubanks, Shereen Farquharson, Kaden Johnson, Princaya Sanders, and Ayishat Yussuf received special recognition for achieving over 95

percent attendance for the CURE High School Program. And for the Middle School Program, Ashira Evans, Narelle Evans, Earold Farquharson, Savannah Glanville, Shayla Monroe, and Emmanuel Silver received special recognition for achieving perfect attendance.

Members and mentors from the CURE staff were also given a big shout-out for putting together an impressive lineup of guest presenters, panels, virtual tours, and online activities throughout the school year, which made the online curriculum an enjoyable and unforgettable experience.

"I want to acknowledge members of the team who made our after-school and Saturday programming possible," Grier McGinnis said in her opening remarks. "First, I want to thank **TaShara Bailey, PhD, MA** [director of STEM curriculum], and our wonderful CURE teachers for their leadership and creativity. I also want to thank **Sequoia Wright, MA** [CURE Connections program specialist], **Ivan Lamas-Sanchez, MA** [program manager for scholar success], and **Martina Efeyini, MS** [college and career readiness coordinator], for providing unwavering support to our scholars in and out of the classroom."

In between the presentation of awards, the scholars heard from a special keynote speaker, Kelli Christopher, PhD, the creator of STEM Greenhouse Virtual Lab, which is a series of videos that teach children about STEM through fun, hands-on activities. During the End of Year program, Christopher walked the scholars through several experiments that showed capillary action and chromatography by soaking celery stalks in food-colored water. The scholars could see how the water traveled through the capillary branches of the celery stalk. Christopher explained to the scholars how she too had to adapt her STEM teaching methods to the restrictions of the pandemic.

"I actually started creating these STEM activity videos because of COVID," she explained. "Young people need to see persons of color working in STEM as a role model, and I am so glad I have been able to use the internet to reach everyone during this time."

Christopher delved even deeper into what inspired her to pursue a career in physics and engineering. She told the scholars that she loved math and science but was never interested in pursuing it as a career because she had never seen a person who looked like her in that field.

"It was not until I saw a good friend of mine go into the engineering field that I felt it was even possible for me to follow that path," she said. "And that woman is on this Zoom right now. You all know her as Dr. Bailey."

At that moment, the chat lit up with comments from scholars, mentors, and staff who were touched by that story. Many of the scholars expressed that they felt the same feelings of inspiration from having Bailey as a mentor.

After hearing from the keynote speaker and receiving several awards and recognitions, the scholars were split into breakout rooms to play a forensic science mystery game. They had to work together to solve a hypothetical mystery of money stolen from a high school football ticket booth.

Even though the event was held virtually, the scholars still shared the same feelings of accomplishment and pride for all of the work they put in during the school year. They now have a short break before summer programming starts at the end of June and the beginning of July.

This summer marks a major milestone for the CURE Scholars in Cohort 1 as they will be heading into their senior year of high school in the fall. Their summer will be spent submitting scholarship applications, selecting colleges to apply to, writing their personal statements, and participating in professional internships with STEM mentors. This is all part of the Career Navigator Program, which is the final leg of the UMB CURE pipeline.

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