



Diversity Advisory Council

Outstanding UMB Student Award

Tiffany Otto

President Perman is fond of telling new UMB graduates to “go out and change the world.” Tiffany Otto hasn’t graduated yet, but she already is on course toward changing things for the better.

A fourth-year student at the School of Dentistry, Otto has provided meaningful discussions for minority professionals after traumatic local and national incidents with University events such as an open forum on the shooting deaths of unarmed black men with City Councilman Brandon Scott, a post-Freddie Gray meeting where she allowed her colleagues to speak freely and safely, and helped coordinate an event supporting slain Muslim dental students at the University of North Carolina with other student groups on campus.

She has served in organizations such as Healthy Smiles for Baltimore (vice president), the Baltimore Minority Council of Professional and Graduate Students (vice chairman), and the Student National Dental Association (president), which won Chapter of the Year honors for notable programs such as the Taste Bud Tour, where cultural groups shared their cuisines.

For this and much more, Otto will receive a diversity recognition award as Outstanding UMB Student at the University’s Black History Month celebration on Feb. 1.

“I truly don’t have many hobbies, thus service and upliftment of others serves me just fine,” said Otto, when asked how she finds time for her yeoman organizational efforts. “It is energizing and exhausting, yet empowering at the same time. My commitment to inclusivity, dialogue, support, and service are an integral part of my being.”



raised \$19,445.

This has been demonstrated in her many successful events. The open forum on the shooting of black men provided a safe space for students from all seven UMB schools to discuss their thoughts, feelings, and attitudes without fear or backlash. The goal of this, as well as many of her initiatives and events she has been involved with at the University, was to support students of marginalized ethnic groups and of various religious backgrounds attain healing, discussion, and awareness amongst each other.

“I’m incredibly grateful, honored, and thankful that I attend a University that offers such a Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. diversity recognition award,” Otto said. “This shows UMB’s commitment to Dr. King’s principles and that makes me proud to be here. My hope is that this award will inspire students and staff to initiate conversations and spread love to their colleagues, friends, and community members whom share different backgrounds than them.”

Some of her best work outside the classroom — it’s easy to forget Otto also maintains a rigorous dental school schedule that includes clinic work with patients several days a week — has come with the Student National Dental Association (SNDA), an organization that strives to uplift minority students.

She was community service chair for SNDA during her second year at UMB and created service events for students, on and off campus. The next year she became president and hosted over triple the community service events. In addition she led four professional development programs, seven general body meetings, and more.

The school’s SNDA chapter won Chapter of the Year for the second consecutive year, this time with Otto as president. Notable activities were highlighted such as the Taste Bud Tour, during which all cultural groups on campus were invited to share their cuisines, Generation NeXT, which provided opportunities for School of Dentistry students to mentor high school students at the Vivien Thomas Medical Arts Academy, and an Oral Cancer Walk, which

Otto says all of the SNDA events would not have been possible without the help of her executive board and chapter members whom also shared the same vision of service and cultural competence.

“Her impact toward diversity and inclusivity has been monumental over her four years at the school,” said those who nominated her. “She has been a leader every step of the way.”

Otto, who plans to do a dental residency program in New York (and do community projects, of course) after graduating from UMB, credits her parents for putting her on the public service path.

“My character has been shaped by my childhood experiences in a racially diverse small town called South Orange in New Jersey, coupled by a ‘village’ of family and friends who share similar core values,” Otto said. “My parents taught me very early to treat others well, to do good and to be the change that I wish to see — and it has truly gone a long way. It took a village to get me here, and I owe it to that village to enter spaces at UMB with the same love, energy, and tenacity that they taught me.”

[Back to 2018 MLK Diversity Award Winners](#)

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