

## President's Fellows Urge UMB to Think Globally

April 19, 2018 / By [Laura Lee](#)

“Monique is a community health worker. She’s hosting a healthy food event at a local recreation center. Monique has spent time and resources working on recipes to hand out to the community members that come to the center. She is unaware that most of the food she has prepared cannot be eaten by the majority of the ethnic group in the neighborhood.”

The scenario laid out by [University of Maryland School of Social Work](#) student **Alexandra Huss** was one of several presented on April 13 by the 2017-2018 President’s Fellows who spent a year grappling with the complexities of global literacy as part of the [The President’s Symposium and White Paper Project](#).



*The 2017-2018 President's Fellows pose with President Jay A. Perman, MD. (L-R) Sheridan Todd Yeary, Alexandra Huss, Esther Kimani, Wesley Chan, Nana Akua Tufuoh, Molly Crothers, Saniya Chaudry, and Rhiya Dave.*

The project is an interprofessional initiative that engages faculty, staff, and students from all of the University of Maryland, Baltimore's (UMB) schools and academic programs in a yearlong conversation on a topic that is of interest and importance to the University and its community. This year’s fellows were tasked with providing recommendations to enhance global literacy, defined as “cross-cultural fluency and responsiveness in understanding, engaging, and communicating in an interconnected world.”

In addition to Huss, the President's Fellows include **Wesley Chan** and **Rhiya Dave, MPH**, of the [School of Medicine](#); **Molly Crothers**, of the [School of Nursing](#); **Saniya Chaudhry** and **Esther Kimani** of the [School of Pharmacy](#); and **Nana Akua Tufuoh** and **Sheridan Todd Yeary** of the [Francis King Carey School of Law](#). Throughout the year, the students attended lectures by guest speakers, issued a student survey, and researched best practices on global literacy. They presented their findings to the University community in a white paper on April 13.

In opening remarks, UMB President **Jay A. Perman, MD**, acknowledged the importance of global literacy in a changing world. "It's vital that we understand and experience the world as an interconnected set of nations and peoples and issues affecting us all," he said. "Certainly it's vital to our work as capable and culturally competent professionals."

**Virginia Rowthorn, JD, LLM**, executive director of the [Center for Global Education Initiatives](#) at UMB, agreed. "The goal of global literacy is to provide students with a set of skills that enable them to link the global and the local in ways that are meaningful and useful in their work and their lives, as well as an ability to work with people of diverse cultures and in diverse countries," she said. "This is particularly important to UMB students who are Maryland's — and the world's — future leaders."

A survey of 700 students conducted by the fellows found that 89 percent of students agree or strongly agree that global literacy is important to success in their chosen profession, but only 42 percent believe there are adequate global learning opportunities at their respective schools.

The fellows' presentation highlighted some of UMB's global literacy success stories, including the Center for Global Education Initiatives, which partners with international communities to engage students in tackling global challenges, and the [Office of International Services](#), which is geared toward acclimating international students to the University and life in the United States. They also lauded Perman's announcement that in August the University will take part in the American Council on Education's Internationalization Laboratory — an 18-month lab designed to position UMB as a more globally oriented and internationally connected university.

"UMB is already doing a lot," Kimani said, "but we feel that a lot more could be done to enhance global literacy so that our students are prepared to be globally literate and to spread this way beyond graduation and into their practices."

White paper recommendations for how to improve global literacy include offering an interprofessional basic Spanish course to all students, encouraging a comprehensive evaluation of existing curriculum offerings related to global literacy, and creating a fund to support international education for students. The fellows also suggested bring a global honor society to campus, creating virtual relationships with partner universities overseas, and providing development opportunities for faculty. For a comprehensive list of recommendations click [here](#).

Yeary ended the presentation by emphasizing the relevance of global literacy and education in today's world. "Whether we like it or not, the world is changing," he said. "The question that we have to ask personally, collaboratively, and institutionally is, 'Are we going to be a part of the movement for progressive change that helps to impact the future of the world?' "

This is the seventh year of the symposium, which is a joint initiative of the [President's Office](#) and the [Office of Interprofessional Student Learning & Service Initiatives](#). Previous topics have included cultural competency, community engagement, interprofessional education, civility, and urban renewal.