

UMB News

From CURE Scholars to STEM Leaders

June 14, 2024 | By [Brittney Brookins](#)

The University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) CURE Scholars Program graduation ceremony on May 23 was a poignant celebration of transformation. It marked the journey of students from hopeful sixth-graders into confident young scholars, ready to embark on their college careers.

All eight of the scholars in this year's graduating cohort have been accepted into four-year college STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) programs, highlighting the CURE program's success in preparing students for higher education and future roles in the STEM fields.

Yolanda Langhorne, EdD, MS, executive director of the UMB CURE Scholars Program, set the tone in her opening remarks.

"Your dedication to CURE has prepared you for the exciting opportunities and challenges that lie ahead as you move forward," Langhorne said. "Remember that the skills and knowledge that you have gained are just the beginning. The world needs your passion and ingenuity more than ever, and we're confident that you will make a significant impact in whichever STEM path you choose to follow."

The keynote speaker, **Sam Lennon**, president and chief executive officer of L2 Defense, Inc., a logistics and engineering contractor, underscored the importance of perseverance, hard work, and community support in navigating STEM education and careers.

"The skill set and the capabilities that you develop by going through that training, really learning how to think, solve problems, being innovative, being creative, and understanding how to overcome challenges with your mind, those skills are not just used for your professional world, they're transferable to everything you do," Lennon said.

The celebration was not just about academic achievements, it also was a testament to the supportive network that nurtured the scholars' growth. **Ann Felauer, DNP, CPNP-AC/PC**, assistant professor in the University of Maryland School of Nursing's (UMSON) Department of Family and Community Health, shared anecdotes that illustrated the scholars' growth and curiosity.

"One year, they had to analyze water samples to see lead and all of the other chemicals in their water, and they took the initiative to not just get tap water, but to use other water within their homes and compare," Felauer said. "Watching that develop in them, seeing those little hamster wheels in their head turning, was just amazing."

The impact of the CURE Scholars Program was vividly reflected in the aspirations of its graduates such as **Najah Johnson**, who expressed her gratitude and future ambitions.

"With my future veterinary degree, I hope to study animal conservation and discover new information about nature," Johnson said. "The CURE Program was one of the main contributions to me getting into various universities across the country. Due to studying research at such a young age, I became a competitive applicant for the majority of universities I applied to." In the fall, Johnson will be studying dairy sciences at Virginia Tech University.

Jazire Faw, another Cohort 3 graduate, echoed this sentiment.



Demonyae Smith (center rear) stands proudly with his family at the CURE Scholars Cohort 3 graduation reception, celebrating a significant milestone in his academic journey.

“A message I have for current and future scholars is to be courageous and, most of all, never lose our spark. I want us to cherish and nurture it as we go,” Faw said. “I never want to put my fate in somebody else’s hands. I want to work for everything that I will gain, and that I know I deserve.”

Felauer also reflected on the students’ journey with pride and nostalgia. “Gavin [Jones] and Demonyae [Smith] are thick as thieves. They’re always together, so I wasn’t surprised to see they were both going to the University of Maryland Eastern Shore,” she said, highlighting the strong bonds formed

during the program.

As the scholars embark on their journey into higher education and beyond, they carry with them not only the skills and knowledge acquired through the CURE Scholars Program but also the unwavering support of their mentors, families, and friends. Their journey from curious sixth-graders to poised graduates is a testament to the power of education, mentorship, and community.

Felauer captured the essence of the celebration by saying, “The scholars are trying to make a difference, and that’s what I can’t wait to see, is the difference they’re going to make.”

The Cohort 3 CURE Scholar graduates:

Jazire Faw

Martinique Hill

Kaden Johnson

Najah Johnson

Gavin Jones

Lynijah Russel

Demonyae Smith

Samiatu Yussuf

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