

## A Brief History of UMB African American Student Organizations

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As Black History Month 2021 draws to a close, the Historical Collections in the HSHSL could not let the month past without looking back on UMB's African American history. The following highlights a few of the many student organizations throughout UMB's history in an attempt to acknowledge the work of many to make our campus more inclusive and diverse.

In 1954 the Board of Regents of the University of Maryland (which then included College Park) voted to allow African American Students admittance to both Undergraduate and Graduate schools. It was the culmination of years of segregation as well as legal battles between the University and African American students who wished to attend the school. The 1954 decision allowed African Americans to enter the University but the early students still faced the well-ingrained roots of segregation and discrimination policies.

As more and more African American students entered the University of Maryland, Baltimore the students founded organizations to support one another academically, encourage more diversity in the professional schools, and reduce the feeling of isolation felt by early minority students. Additionally, these organizations provided a way to educate the students' white colleagues and faculty on the needs of minority students, patients, and clients. Each of the professional schools at UMB had an African American Student Organizations; the following is a brief history of some of these groups.

### Student National Dental Association, School of Dentistry



**Student National Dental Association**

*Top image: Student National Dental Association group photograph from the 2021 Diversity Recognition Award article announcement; both image: 1975 Student National Dental Association Mirror Yearbook photograph.*

On July 28, 1869, at a meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, the Southern Dental Association (precursor to the National Dental Association) was formed by minority dentists, who felt their needs were not being addressed by other professional dental associations. In 1972, UMB dental students including first African American SOD graduate, [Elton Preston Maddox Jr.](#) '72, established a branch of the Student National Dental Association (SNDA). The goal, according to the [1988 Mirror](#) Yearbook, was "to promote and encourage minority enrollment in all dental schools, improve dental health care delivery to disadvantaged people, promote a viable academic and social environment conducive to the mental health and well-being of minority students." Since its founding, the UMB SNDA has had a tremendous effect on campus, in Baltimore, and nationally.

In the past seven years, the organization has taken home first or second place honors at the National

SNDA chapter of the year competition, which scores the competitors based on the success of each

chapter in fundraising, performing community service, and launching new initiatives. The group is active in the community through their Generation NeXT Program, which mentors local high school students in training to become dental assistants, as well as visits to local elementary schools, where they teach young children about oral health. In 2020 the group received the Colgate Bright Smiles, Bright Futures Award and in 2021 were the recipient of a Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Diversity Recognition Award from UMB. ([Diversity Advisory Council Website News, 2021](#))

### **Black Student Nurses Association, School of Nursing**

The Black Student Nurses Association (BSNA) was founded in 1982. The mission of the organization as stated in the [School of Nursing's 2002 Self Study](#) was to "encourage interaction of minority students & ... to develop a common mainstay for student support and enrichment." Through its history the BSNA supported a variety of initiatives including community service projects, hosting events such as speakers during Black History Month, and worked with the School of Nursing's Office of Admissions to support both black applicants and UMB students. Additionally, the organization performed community service projects, as the clipping from the [1991 Voice](#) shows and worked with community groups to encourage Baltimore youth to consider Nursing as a career.



#### **Story Time at P.S. 122**

LINDA BROWN-SUTPHIN, a junior year nursing student, reads a story to Ms. Chew's kindergarten class at P.S. 122. The monthly story session is combined with a health teaching activity as a community service project of the Black Student Nurses Association.

Armeshui Bilal, a senior nursing student and president of the group, is hoping that nursing students of other races will join them in working with the children at the Samuel Coleridge Elementary School. To join or for more information call Armeshui at (301) 776-8464.

*Newspaper clipping from the Voice, Vol. 9, No. 6., 1991*

### **Black American Law Student Association, School of Law**



*Verna Moses (left) and Brian Iton (third from left) accept the 1989 J.C. Penney Golden Rule Volunteer Award, on behalf of the Black Law Student Association of the School of Law. from J.C. Penney Store Manager William Ceolin and General Image from the Voice, Vol. 6, No. 19., 1989*

The National Black Law Student Association (BALSA) was established in 1968 and soon after a chapter of the organization was established at UMB. BALSA was responsible for a variety of activities in the School of Law including working to recruit black students to the school, helping black graduates find good job placements, and hosting an annual award banquet every Spring. The banquet honored black lawyers whose "hard work and personal sacrifices...created the opportunities enjoyed by black law students today." ([Happenings, Vol. 10, No. 31, 1981](#)) In 1989, the organization was awarded the Golden Rule Award from J.C. Penney; the

award acknowledged outstanding volunteer service in Central Maryland and was awarded to Balsa because of their work with the Booker T. Washington Middle School. ([Voice, Vol. 6, No. 19, 1989](#))

Today, Balsa is known simply as the Black Law Students Association. The organization continues to provide support for UMB African American law students and gives back to the community. For the past ten years, the organization has taken first place at the Mid-Atlantic Regions Mock Trial Competition. ([February 20, 2020, SOL News Website](#))

### **Organization of African-American Students in Social Work, School of Social Work**

The Organization of African-American Students in Social Work (OASIS) was founded in 2000. Other organizations, such as the School of Social Work and Community Planning's Black Student Union, existed prior to today's OASIS. Unfortunately, there was not a lot about these organizations in the Archives. Like other organizations at UMB, these SSW's Black Student Union appears to have planned and hosted events about minority issues.

OASIS' mission today according to their charter is, to "promote unity among African-Americans and to empower students by providing academic, professional, social, and spiritual support." ([OASIS Organization Website](#), Charter) The organization hosts events including lectures, movie screenings, and workshops, for the School of Social Work during Black History Month as well as throughout the year.

### **Student National Medical Association, School of Medicine**

The Student National Medical Association (SNMA) was founded in 1964 by students from Howard University and Meharry Medical Schools. The organization has been on



The University's Office of Academic Affairs and the Organization of African American Students in Social Work (OASIS) held an event Feb. 13 at the Southern Management Corporation Campus Center to mark Black History Month. The speaker was Helena Hicks, PhD, MSW, a Baltimore civil rights pioneer for her role in a 1955 sit-in at Read's Drug Store, who is seated, left. Chair of OASIS, Crystal Brown, is seated right. In the back row, OASIS officers Simone Garrison, left, and Latoya Jones stand with School of Social Work Professor Llewellyn Cornelius, PhD, LCSW.

*Image from the Voice, Vol. 32, No. 6, 2012*



Janet Williams, President of the Student National Medical Association, discusses the ins and outs of medical school with some of the 28 honors program students who recently came from the university's Eastern Shore campus in Princess Anne to visit UMAB. They met with deans and students of the various schools and toured the facilities. These minority undergraduates are participating in an unusual program which, on successful completion of all requirements, allows them to matriculate at UMAB in the professional discipline for which they have prepared.



(L-R) Second-year medical students and SNMA members Latey Jones, community service chair, Novlette Akinseye, SNMA president, and Kevin Affum, community service co-chair, at CommUNITY Fest 2010.

*Image to left: From the Happenings Newspaper, Vol. 10, No. 40, 1981; Right image from the Buzz Vol. 12, No. 5, 2011.*

UMB's campus for over 50 years. Its mission, according to the organization's [website](#), is "educating, serving and empowering underserved communities through health education, screening, and youth enrichment programs."

Today the organization provides programs that mentor local high school and undergraduate students through the Minority Association of Premedical Students (MAPS), volunteers at Lexington Market's CommunityFest to provide free medical tests and services, and hosts on campus talks and events. Additionally, each year a senior medical student is acknowledged with the SNMA's service award for demonstrating leadership to the organization and making outstanding contributions for the minority community. In 2011, SNMA won the national chapter of the year award.

### **Student National Pharmaceutical Association, School of Pharmacy**

The national organization of the Student National Pharmaceutical Association (SNPhA) was founded in 1972 at Florida A&M University by Sharon Roquemore and John J. Scrivens. UMB's chapter was established by Alex Taylor '76, who served as its first president, and Clarence Jeffers III '75. Taylor and Jeffers sought to eliminate the isolation felt on campus by minority students, help these students with academics, and educate the minority groups in the community about the pharmacy profession.

[\(Happenings, Vol. 5, No. 38, 1976\)](#)

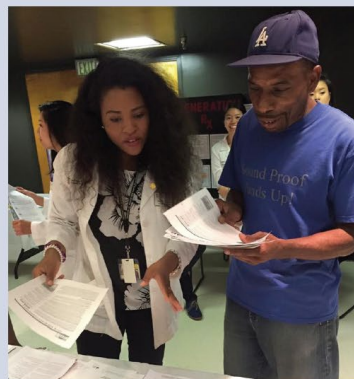
## SNPhA: Health Fair to Food Fare

The School's chapter of the Student National Pharmaceutical Association (SNPhA) was busy during the fall semester with participation in a community health fair at Lexington Market and with hosting its popular International Fiesta in Pharmacy Hall.

In September, SNPhA hosted an International Fiesta, where students came together to celebrate the School's diverse community by sharing their cultural food and/or wearing their cultural attire. 🌍



From left, Rebekah Placide, Laetitia N'dri, and Alvileen Diggs of the Class of 2019; Chioma Uwandu and Kelechi Chikeka of the Class of 2018; Odera Ekwunife, Class of 2019; Sidonie Takougang, Class of 2017; Pamela Younes, Olivia Akubuilu, Catherine Wang, Esther Kimani, and Stephanie Anyanwu, all of the Class of 2018; Rahwa Daniel, Class of 2019; Hannah Oseghale, Class of 2018; Nadia Khan and Nishu Kharel of the Class of 2017; and Suza Tsegai, Class of 2019.



Sidonie Takougang of the Class of 2017 talks with a shopper at Lexington Market during the interprofessional Community Health Fest in September.

*Image clipped from the School of Pharmacy Spring 2016 Capsule Magazine.*

Today the mission of UMB's SNPhA states, "The purpose of SNPhA is to plan, organize, coordinate and execute programs geared toward the improvement for the health, educational, and social environment of the community." ([SNPhA Website](#)) The organization continues to be active on campus and hosts academic, professional, and social events for its members and the campus community at large, including

their annual International Feast/Fiesta and Diversity Day (shown in the [Capsule](#) clipping). In 2019, UMB's chapter was awarded chapter of the year from the national organization.

### **Joint UMB African American Organizations and Conclusion**

In 1983, the Black Professional Student Alliance was created in an effort to “promote equitable educational opportunities and experiences for Black people at UMAB; to promote intellectual and socio-cultural activities from the Black perspective for the university community; to assist in the general improvement and enhancement of the quality of life in the Greater Baltimore minority community.” ([Student Voice, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1983](#)) This group sought to join the four (BALSA, SNMA, SNPhA, BSN) existing African American Organizations across campus into one campus wide association. The hope was to have a larger voice with then UMB Chancellor (like today's President); however, the chancellor refused to acknowledge any student organizations except for the University Student Government Association (USGA). As a result of this, the BPSA disbanded sometime in 1984. ([Student Voice, Vol. 1, No. 4, 1983](#))

In 1988, another organization, the Coalition of Minority Professional Students (COMPS), was formed by Carolyn Morris, School of Dentistry Class of 1988, and Dr. Louis J. Murdock, then associate vice chancellor for student affairs. COMPS hosted campus events on minority issues and was a sponsor of Black History Month events. ([Voice, Vol. 5, No. 13, 1988](#))

While these organizations were formed as a way to eliminate the isolation felt by African American Students in the 1960s and 70s, the tradition of African American student associations remains strong on UMB's campus. A majority of the organizations featured here still remain on campus, supporting the needs of African Americans, while also providing leadership opportunity for students and educating the campus and community about diversity needs and concerns.

### **References and Further Reding:**

For more information on UMB's African American History see the [February 3, 2020](#) Post on *HS/HSL Updates*.

Information on these organizations as well as other campus events and history can be found in the [Campus Newsletters](#) known as *Happenings* and *The Voice*.

Photographs of the following organizations can be found in the [Yearbooks](#) (1970s-1990s):

- Student National Pharmaceutical Association
- Black Student Nursing Association
- Student National Dental Association