

# To Whom Much is Given

Spring 2010

The Meyerhoff Alumni Advisory Board Newsletter

Vol. 1 Issue 2

## Officer's Corner

*This article comes to us from Vondell Coleman, Secretary of the Alumni Board.*

Wow, I'm a Meyerhoff adult! I'll be thirty-six in a couple months, I've been a Meyerhoff half of my life. Eighteen years ago I spent the summer bonding with other M4's, debating the meaning of the number 1 in a math class, reliving a slave trade auction, and spending long nights staying up talking and playing cards. The six weeks of summer bridge altered the course of my life forever-fostering lasting relationships, a strong work ethic, and a commitment to push to excel instead of settling for being average.

There have been many bumps in the road over those eighteen years and the many mentors I've had have helped to smooth those bumps and keep me focused. I constantly hear Doc saying, "Black boys with math scores above 600 are special." The many long hours spent in Mr. Toliver's office have left the poem 'If' and its many lessons ingrained in me. Mrs. Baker's pats on the back or hits upside my head, which ever was needed at the time, have been crucial. What if they had never been there? What if there was no Meyerhoff program? How would my life be different? How would yours be different? Fortunately we all don't have to worry about that; the Program was there for us.

It's up to us to make sure it's there for years to come. Join me in giving up that pizza this week and go online and donate \$10 to the program. Then get in contact with your cohort rep or one of the officers and see what else you can do to help us reach back.

### Stay connected...

**Facebook:** Meyerhoff Scholarship Alumni  
**LinkedIn:** Meyerhoff Alumni, UMBC  
**Google Groups:** Meyerhoff Alumni, UMBC  
**Website:** [www.umbc.edu/meyerhoff/alumni](http://www.umbc.edu/meyerhoff/alumni)

Newsletter brought to you by the Communications Committee.

**Editor – Stephanie Bates (M4)**  
**Assistant Editor – Kamili Jackson (M4)**  
**Staff - Tiffani Bright (M11) and Vondell Coleman (m4)**

Questions, comments and corrections can be addressed to the staff at [maabcomm@gmail.com](mailto:maabcomm@gmail.com).

**NEXT ISSUE: August 2010**

## Program Message

*Get to know Keith Harmon, Assistant Director of the Meyerhoff Program, in his own words.*

One evening my wife came home with a job advertisement from the Washington Post, placed it on the dining room table said in passing, "You should considering applying for this job at UMBC". We were newlyweds living in Indiana and considering a move to the Baltimore/Washington area. After following through on her suggestion, applying, being interviewed and accepting the offer, I came to UMBC and joined the Meyerhoff staff in July of 1999, experiencing Summer Bridge with the M11s!

A little over ten years later I find myself Assistant Director of the Meyerhoff Program and wondering where the time has gone. Today I work with juniors and seniors, leading the staff effort to mentor students through the process of applying for graduate and professional programs and work with other grant funded initiatives under the Meyerhoff umbrella. What I find most rewarding is that although there have been changes in staff and a few program components have been modified, many things about Meyerhoff remain the same. The program continues to produce talented students who are recruited to attend top programs across the nation. Just as important, current scholars embrace the program's tradition of commitment to service and leadership, affecting change at UMBC and beyond.

I, along with the entire staff, am excited about the Meyerhoff Alumni Association. Your organization has added an exciting new dimension to the program and I have enjoyed working with and getting to know alumni from earlier cohorts and look forward to partnering with more alumni to better support our students and the program.



Assistant Director of the Meyerhoff Program,  
Keith Harmon

## 2009-2010 Alumni Board Members

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- M9 – Mileka Gilbert
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- M11 – Tiffani Bright
- M12 – Richard Shoge
- M13 – Seth Miller
- M14 – Michael Aaron
- M15 – Candace Mainor
- M16 – Shayla Shorter
- M17 – Latey Jones
- M18 – **Vacant – Representative Needed!**
- Graduate Fellow – Joe Washington

## Committee News

Attention Alumni! Be on the lookout for Meyerhoff undergrads. As summer gets underway, Meyerhoff Scholars will fan out across the country to internships and REU's. Chances are good that some of them are coming your way to a school, research lab, or firm near you! This is a great and easy opportunity to strengthen our family ties. Welcome your brother or sister to town with an email, a call, or a meal. If we know of undergrads coming to your area, you should be hearing from us soon. So please make sure that your contact information on the Alumni website is up-to-date.

## Calling All M4s - The Cohort Giving Challenge

*Delayne Johnson, M4 Representative, has a personal message that she would like to share with her fellow cohorts.*



I read Ray's message in the first newsletter, and I am definitely with him. I can clearly remember the day that Dr. Hrabowski called to let my mother know that I would be a Meyerhoff Scholar. I can still picture her jumping up and down thanking God for the blessing. She did not have to worry about how she would get her baby girl through college! Coming from a background of financial need made me incredibly grateful for the opportunity. I am very proud of being part of the Meyerhoff program, and am wise enough to recognize the tremendous opportunities it has afforded me both professionally and personally.

As an M4, I am just as proud of my cohort - the accomplishments we have made and the people that we have become. We are clearly well-represented among the leadership - Ray, Von, Kamili, and Steph are all doing a wonderful job in their respective roles with the Alumni Board and Newsletter staff. And I believe that this is the way that it should be. As older (sorry!) Meyerhoffs we should be leading by example.

This means giving back to the program in various ways, including lending our financial support. I believe that we should also be leaders in giving. Money is often a touchy topic and it is actually very difficult to ask people to give. In my efforts to craft emails to my fellow M4s, I find myself worried about being too pushy or coming across as too preachy. I do not want to be those things. At the same time, I must be frank and say that when I look at the numbers, I feel a bit disappointed. I cannot be convinced that we cannot do better!

So, this is a call to my fellow M4s (and all Ms). Please take a few minutes and give - \$5, \$10, \$500, \$1000 – give what you can! There is a need to be filled. The Meyerhoff Program needs and deserves all of our support. I know that everyone's experience is not the same as mine, but I'm sure that we share the same gratitude. I hope that you will demonstrate it in many ways, including participating in the Cohort Giving Campaign. We M4's should be our usual top-of-the-list selves! Peace and Blessings.

Thank you,  
Delayne

**THERE IS STILL TIME DONATE! THE COHORT CHALLENGE ENDS JUNE 30<sup>TH</sup>**

## Alumni On The Move

*Taking a moment to catch up on the professional milestones of Meyerhoff alumni.*

Tennille Daniels (M11) and a fellow UMBC alumni & former student assistant in the Meyerhoff Office, Maaden Eshete recently started a community based organization along with two other young women called Divas, MPH (Making our People Healthier). In observance of National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day 2010, Divas, MPH hosted S.O.S. -- Saving Our Sistas from HIV/AIDS, a half-day awareness and skill building summit. A brief story on their work was featured on Essence.com. The story can be found @ <http://bit.ly/9Vmqdr>. A full event recap can be found at [www.soshealthsummit.com](http://www.soshealthsummit.com). For more information please visit [www.divasmp.org](http://www.divasmp.org).

Amber Jackson (M11) attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for a PhD in Mathematics. Along the way, she did a thesis and graduated with a Masters degree in Mathematics in December of 2006. Her first publication was accepted in 2008 and was published in 2009 in the journal "Advances in Water Resources". She is still enrolled in graduate school and plans to complete her PhD in the fall of 2010.

Chinedu Onyedike (M12) will be graduating from Johns Hopkins Medical School this May with an MD and MPH.

Richard Shoge (M12) successfully defended his thesis last December and will be receiving his PhD in Biomedical Engineering from the joint department of Biomedical Engineering Program at North Carolina State University and the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill this May.

Dr. Hrabowski visited Stanford University in April to give a talk about what it means to be a leader with a vision and what it takes to bring that vision to fruition. While at Stanford he had dinner with a number of Meyerhoff alums who are now current Stanford Graduate Students. Pictured below are: Charay Jennings (M7), Brandon Johnson (M16,) Doc, Debra Lin (M16), Yvonne Edmonds (M12), and Kenny Gibbs (M13).



## We Are Family

*This is the place to catch up on the personal lives of fellow Meyerhoffs.*

Kennita Johnson Flagler (M4), an imaging scientist and engineer, has a love of photography and this year she has decided to start her own photography business (her work is pictured below). Check out her blog to see her other amazing work!

[www.kennitajohnsonphotograpy.com](http://www.kennitajohnsonphotograpy.com)



Robert Bonnette, Jr. (M4), Kimberly (Waters) Bonnette (M7), and their daughter Dahlia and dog Ruthie moved to a new home in Columbia, MD in August 2009. All are settling in and adjusting well, and the family is expecting a new addition in June 2010.

Abimbola A. Adedeji (M11) is getting married to Michael C. Chike on May 30, 2010.

Chiana (Paschall) Sanderson (M4) married Sean Sanderson in 2002. She is an at-home mom to four children - Arianna, Joshua, Jaylen and Alexia. She is currently homeschooling her children and enjoying the fulfillment that investing in her family has brought and wouldn't trade it for the world.

Tara Brinck Reid (M13) and her husband are enjoying life in the city of Seattle. They recently bought a house and have no plans to leave the wonderful city any time soon.

Jerome Adams (M4) and wife Lacey welcomed their first baby girl, Amelia (pictured below), in December. Amelia joins older brothers Caden and Eli at home.



## FEATURED Alumna: Dr. Chiatogu Onyewu - One Meyerhoff Who Is Holding Fast to her Dream

Below is an article based on an interview of Dr. Onyewu by Kamili Jackson (M4).



**Dr. Chiatogu Onyewu,**  
M7

**Education:**

BS Biological Sciences,  
1999  
PhD Defense, 2006  
MD/PhD Duke, 2007

**Current Position:**

UNCF/Merck Postdoctoral  
Fellow and Director, AIMM  
Young Study Children's  
National Medical Center  
Research Center for  
Genetic Medicine

**Current Research:**

Genetic risk factors  
associated with metabolic  
syndrome in minority  
young adults.

**Next Steps:**

Offered the AAAS Science  
and Technology Policy  
Fellowship

**Community:**

Board member and  
Outreach Chair of the  
Association of  
UNCF/Merck Fellows

You might have seen Dr. Onyewu on PBS recently when she was a guest on "To The Contrary" where she commented on the promise of genetic testing in Part III of the DNA Sequencing series. Perhaps you saw her on the MacNeil/Lehrer Productions educational website, "the.News" where she explained to young people some strategies to fight obesity. She is making strides in her career and has a bright future ahead of her as evidenced by her first taste of success. However, what comes to mind during a recent conversation with her is the quote: "Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile" (Albert Einstein).

Clearly Dr. Onyewu's is committed to exposing young people to the possibilities of the sciences. She is and has been a mentor to many students over the years both by referrals and through students she has worked with in her lab. She is also the community outreach chair for the Association of UNCF/Merck Fellows (AUMF). In this role she is working with the SEED School in Washington, DC. During her leadership AUMF has interacted with the students as science fair judges and as chaperones for 10<sup>th</sup> grade students visiting UMBC and meeting with LaMont Toliver. They helped arranged a mobile laboratory visit to the school and also sponsored travel for one high school junior student to attend the annual UNCF/Merck Fellows Day. She believes that once you are trained and recognize your own worth, you can have control over your own destiny and she is intent on passing this idea of career independence on to her students.

When Dr. Onyewu was asked what experience has shown her that each trial and tribulation in getting to where she is today was worth it, her answer is not surprising based on her focus on others. She starts the answer by passing on the good news of an M9 who recently defended her thesis. Then she dives into a familiar story for some of us. The M9, who she considers her little sister, called in a panic two or three weeks before the defense. The candidate was overwhelmed with the dissertation writing and disappointed by a lack of expected support. While the details may not be the same, many of us know the point where achievement is close but the last obstacle can be daunting. Dr. Onyewu then summarized her own nightmare of the Endnote application crashing during her dissertation writing and having to complete references by hand with the first chapter taking 12 hours. She reached a point of really not being sure anymore that success was in sight and turning to faith as her only option. Obviously it turned out well but when asked this question about an experience that made it "worth it" she didn't mention an achievement, accolade or award. Instead, she tells of being thankful of her own pre-defense experience so that she could relate to the frustration of her M9 little sister who was going through a similar thing. She was both able to identify with the M9 and lend support during the dissertation writing process. Dr. Onyewu was thankful that her own trial served as a tool to help someone else.

At the writing of this article Dr. Onyewu had been offered an AAAS Science and Technology Fellowship at the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI). Should the past predict the future, we will be seeing much more from this young lady.

Do you know an alum who should be featured in the newsletter? Is it you or perhaps one of your cohorts? Maybe your mentor or mentee? Let us know at [maabcomm@gmail.com](mailto:maabcomm@gmail.com)