Program Message

This edition of the program message comes from LaMont Toliver

“To Whom Much is given . . .”

It is understood that you are leaders. As leaders, your families, your communities, and your country demands of you the courage to dream, the faith to believe, and the bravery to attempt what is deemed impossible. We need this generation of leaders to have the dignity, the character, and the integrity to generate behavior and action beyond what is convenient and political; beyond what is reasonable and safe.

We need all your efforts to be heroic. Not the kind of heroism that ends in either glory or recognition - but the kind that ends up being what is best for the community and for humanity. We need you to fight the urge to be average – for we know that average thoughts, average words, and average deeds are not going to be enough to move us forward.

The demands of this age are extraordinary and to meet them, extraordinary leaders are needed. I can neither offer motivation nor reward for you and others to lead and to make this age succeed. There is just your humanity and your commitment to the greater good - and the premise and obligation that says, “of those to whom much is given, much is required.”

“Hold fast to dreams.”

Alumni News!

Catch up on the personal and professional lives of your fellow Meyerhoffs.

Jamille Giles (M6) is the coordinator for the AVID program at Gwynn Park Middle School in Brandywine, MD. Part of the AVID program is to get students career and college minded. To that end, she needs public speakers to come and talk to the students. She can be reached by email at jamille.giles@pgcps.org

Letitia (Thompson) Dzirasa (M11) completed residency at Johns Hopkins in Pediatrics in June 2010 and started working as a general pediatrician at Johns Hopkins Community Physicians in Odenton, MD. She is accepting new patients and has early morning and evening hours.

Shawnielle Predeoux (M4) graduated from Georgetown University Law Center in May 2010.


Darniet Jennings (M6) recently married Elaina Lene in a beautiful ceremony in Napa, CA in October.

Jerome Adams (M4) is an Assistant Professor of Anesthesiology at Indiana University School of Medicine. He recently wrote a chapter on "Pharmacology Principles" for the recently published book, Anesthesia Student Survival Guide, (Springer New York, 2010)

Aliya Frederick (M13) won the Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Awards (NRSA) For Individual Predoctoral Fellowships (F31), Grant number 1F31DA029499-01 ("Molecular Maladaptations Following Developmental Loss of D1 Receptor Signaling") from the National Institute on Drug Abuse, April 2010

Grace-Ann Fasaye (M4) was very active with Inova Breast Cancer institute during Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Her role at the events was to educate the community about hereditary breast cancer and Inova’s cancer genetic counseling program. She presented a paper, served as a panel member and manned a table. In addition she gave a radio interview which can be heard here: http://www.inovabreastcare.org/resource-center/podcasts

We love hearing about your accomplishments. Keep the good news coming!
So Who Writes this Newsletter Anyway???

Well, this newsletter is brought to you by the Meyerhoff Alumni Advisory Board Communications Committee. We are four members strong and we work on this newsletter in our spare time. For us it has definitely been a labor of love. Sometimes maybe a little more stress on the labor part!! But it has also been extremely rewarding seeing it all come together. This is a newsletter created by alumni and for alumni and we are so proud of it!

This inaugural year of the alumni newsletter has seen much success. It has received praise from the Program, from alumni and from other administrators on the UMBC campus. In fact, someone thought that it was an institutional publication because it was done so well!

As hard as we have worked, we couldn’t have done it without you! We welcome all your comments, feedback and news items. We loving hearing about and sharing all the exciting things going on in your lives! No need to be shy…share it all! Send us pictures too – we really like those. And if you would like to join us, we would love that too!

Thanks for helping us with a great year!

Stephanie, Kamili, Tiffani and Von

We would like to take this time to wish you all a Happy Holiday and a Happy New Year!!

Cohort Giving and a New Treasurer

Holiday Greetings!

Let me take a moment to introduce myself. My name is Torria Ellis-Dugar, an M4 and the new Treasurer for the Meyerhoff Alumni Advisory Board. I am very excited to be taking on this role and look forward to working with everyone in the future.

I wanted to start out by giving everyone an update on our annual giving drive, the Cohort Challenge, for the year. As of December 2010, we have made double digit increases in both the number of individual pledges and the total number of dollars received this time last year. This is great progress for an organization that is less than 3 years old.

- We received 57 gifts/pledges, up 24% from last year’s pledge count of 46 at this time last year.
- We raised $4,210, up 43% from last year’s total at this time of $2,935.
- Meyerhoff alumni participation is at 8% compared to 6% last year at this time. The M17s are leading the way with a cohort giving percentage of 13%. Not far behind, M1s, M4s, M6s, M13s and M16s are in second place with 11%.

Here’s a great tip. Look to see if your employer matches alumni contributions. If they do, that is a great way to contribute to the cohort challenge.

In conclusion, we are trending in the upward direction for all metrics related to the cohort giving challenge. In the new year, we challenge every Meyerhoff to find a buddy and work to engage them in the Meyerhoff Alumni Association. Let us encourage each other to give not only of our money but also our time. Both are invaluable resources as we work to build this organization.

To make an online gift, go to http://retrievernet.umbc.edu/mhoffgiving

If you wish to mail in a payment, please send to:

UMBC Office of Institutional Advancement
Attn: Donna Garland
1000 Hilltop Circle
Baltimore, MD 21250

Checks should be made payable to the “UMBC Foundation” with the designation of your choice written in the memo line. If you have any questions, please contact Mrs. Earnestine Baker at 410-455-3786 or erbaker@umbc.edu
FEATURED Alum: Dr. Nwokedi Idika

When the graduation announcer called Nwokedi Idika to figure out how to appropriately pronounce his name for graduation the announcer said in his announcer voice “Congratulations Dr. Idika.” It was at that point that Nwokedi realized he was a Doctor forever and that “begin with the end in mind” had been realized, at least for that goal.

Before even meeting or talking to Dr. Idika, you get the feeling that this is a tech savvy young man who is very comfortable with a life lived in the flesh and in cyberspace simultaneously. Having just recently been the first black to earn a PhD in computer science from Purdue University, it is understandable that Nwokedi has a strong internet presence. What you might not guess is how he puts it to use.

With no less than five different places on the internet, it is interesting to see the thoughts and views of Nwokedi. Perhaps the most relevant to us is opensourcephds.com. This website is a wealth of information about the unwritten rules of earning a PhD. Those of us who have this experience will be nodding their heads wishing we had this website when we were in graduate school. For instance one quote from a thread entitled “How to Ensure Graduating” is “But the key to graduating is your advisor, so choose wisely.” Absolutely so true! While hard work is certainly key, the advisor can make or break you. The front page of the site has this general statement: “Every year, PhD candidates successfully complete PhD programs with 20/20 vision of what they’ve embarked on and what they’ve been through. However, this clairvoyance is rarely passed down to the junior PhD students. For this reason, PhD students frequently end up making the same mistakes their predecessors made.” So while Dr. Idika states that he currently is not involved in any service, it is clear that his site is a conduit for knowledge being passed on to the next group of students.

If you can’t relate to opensourcephds.com, wander on over to lifedefacto.com and take a look at “The Key to Breaking Procrastination’s Back”. The promise at the start is to “juice you” to ending procrastination. Who among us has not procrastinated and then been upset with yourself when there was clearly enough time for everything. Nwokedi encourages us to thinking of all the things we “have” to do a little differently. “You see, when I’m procrastinating I am in some way saying “I have to do...”, … Newsflash... You don’t have to do anything... all this stuff that you’re procrastinating on, saying that you “have to do,” are all things you *want* to do. The minute you come to the realization that you’re telling yourself this lie, immediately set the record straight with the truth: you WANT to do x.” While this may or may not change your view on procrastination, a perusal of this blog will give you something to think about.

If all that isn’t technical enough for you, you can also read Dr. Idika’s dissertation on research on measuring security at the enterprise level and providing optimal countermeasure selection strategies in its entirety from the Purdue website.

Asked for a last word to his Meyerhoff brothers and sisters, the newly minted Dr. Idika responds: “While STEM is awesome, our impact will be exponentially increased with economic empowerment. Mr. Meyerhoff (an MIT engineer) is a great example. From a technical background, he took an entrepreneurial route that ultimately put him in an economic position that allowed him to seed the Meyerhoff Scholarship program. How different would all our lives be if he chose an alternative path.”

Above article based on an interview of Dr. Idika by Kamili Jackson (M4).