

## Program Message

*Below is the retirement announcement for Earnestine Baker, Executive Director of the Meyerhoff Scholars Program.*

On December 10, 2012, Earnestine Baker announced at a combined Meyerhoff Scholars Family Meeting that she will retire from UMBC this month. Ernie has been an extraordinary member of the UMBC community for almost 30 years, and it is fitting that the Meyerhoff Scholars be among the first to receive this news, as she has spent most of her career at UMBC working to support the growth and success of this program and its students.

Ernie joined UMBC in 1983 as the Coordinator of Minority Recruitment in the Office of Admissions. Between 1987 and 1992 she served as Associate Director for Scholarships at the University. In 1992, she was appointed Director of the Meyerhoff Scholars Program. For two decades, she has worked tirelessly alongside President Freeman Hrabowski and campus faculty and staff to build the program into a nationally recognized model for talented students interested in pursuing terminal degrees in the sciences, mathematics, engineering, and computer science.

Ernie, now Executive Director of the program, has a well-earned reputation as a firm but fair mentor, colleague, and leader. More than 1,000 Meyerhoff Scholars have been introduced to "Ms. Baker" at Meyerhoff scholarship "selection weekends" and Summer Bridge programs as a demanding, but dedicated and compassionate presence. Her deep relationships with Meyerhoff Scholars have extended far beyond graduation, just as her work has extended beyond our own campus. Ernie has served on numerous STEM advisory boards and has represented the Meyerhoff Program at conferences and events throughout the nation and abroad.

For almost 30 years, Ernie has served the UMBC community with dignity, grace, and wisdom. She will continue to serve on a number of commissions and boards, and will consult with UMBC and the Meyerhoff Scholars Program on several on-going initiatives. We intend to host a reception in January for Ernie to celebrate her numerous contributions to the UMBC community, and we will share that information as details are solidified. Until that time, we invite you to read more about Ernie's time at UMBC [here](#) – and please join us in congratulating her for all that she has accomplished at UMBC!

### MAAB OFFICERS

**President** – Kamili Jackson, M4  
**Vice President** – Tiffani Bright, M11  
**Secretary** – Shawnielle Predeoux, M4  
**Treasurer** – Torria Ellis, M4  
**Parliamentarian** – Jason Lee, M3  
**Historian** – Ahmad Ridley, M1

### MAAB REPRESENTATIVES

**M1** – Michael Haywood  
**M3** – Angelique Blanding  
**M5** – Jason McCullers  
**M7** – Camelia Owens  
**M9** – Raj Stewart  
**M11** – Aolat "Abi" Chike  
**M13** – Nwokedi Idika  
**M15** – Tiffany Williams  
**M17** – Nancy Chiles  
**M19** – Lydia Gmai  
**Graduate Fellow** – Joseph Washington

**M2** – Vacant!!  
**M4** – Jattu Senesie  
**M6** – Jonta Williams  
**M8** – Alexandra Harryman  
**M10** – Sabrina Johnson Turner  
**M12** – Erica Reaves  
**M14** – Donel Sequea  
**M16** – Stephen Mobley  
**M18** – Natee Johnson

## Officer's Corner

*A few words from M12 Cohort Representative Erica Reaves of the MAAB Events Committee.*

Hello Meyerhoff/MARC U\*STAR Family,

Season's Greetings! I hope this message finds you healthy and happy!

As we reflect on the events of 2012 and plan for the new year, the MAAB Events Committee is very excited to work with all of you in moving our group forward and expanding our programming to better reflect the interests and needs of Meyerhoff and MARC U\*STAR alumni. While it is essential that we continue to be supportive of each other in challenging times, it is equally important to come together in more cheerful times to fellowship, network, and volunteer (interview candidates during Selection Weekend, maybe?). To this end, we hope that the various MAAB web-based communications and organized alumni events help you maintain a sense of connection to UMBC and to your Meyerhoff brothers and sisters.

Can you believe that the Meyerhoff Program will soon celebrate its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary? We hope that you will join us as we celebrate this milestone with the campus and larger UMBC community. We've had some fantastic events in the past year – Homecoming Meet and Greet, White House Tour, Film Screening – and we promise that 2013 will be even better! If you have any ideas for events, please do not hesitate to contact me or your cohort representative. As always, we enjoy hearing from you and appreciate receiving your up-to-date contact information.

Happy Holidays!

Erica Reaves, '04, '11, MAAB Events Committee Member





## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

In this section of the newsletter, alumni answer questions submitted by other alumni. Thank you to all who participated and keep the questions and answers coming.

**Question 1:** *I am highly considering going back to pursue my PhD, however, the one thing that has me on edge is having to take the GREs! It has been over ten years since taking a standardized test. I have some materials that I have been using to practice, but I'm wondering if there are any other suggestions from fellow Ms on how to conquer the beast?*

**Response 1:**

CONDUCT AMPLE PREPARATION and PRACTICE.

Indeed, as I was preparing my doctoral applications, I was stressed about the verbal reasoning and spent night after night practicing. It paid off! My score was over the 90 percentile range. While taking the test, it becomes very apparent that this examination is more about how quickly a person can reason through the questions. Also, with having practiced as thoroughly as I did, I felt comfortable and at ease while taking the test.

PRACTICE EACH PART, EVEN THE AREAS THAT ARE YOUR STRENGTH.

With having been a mathematics major and having taken various statistics courses during my master's program, I mistakenly spent less time preparing for the quantitative reasoning. Sure enough, during the examination, the computer recognized my ability and gave me every hard problem in the quantitative modules.

ETS HAS THE BEST PRACTICE BOOKS

The maker of the test, ETS, provides a very close approximation of the test in their preparation books. Their most recent guide to the Revised General Test contains four practice tests.

**Response 2:** I used the Princeton Review book for math and logic questions. It really helped to shave off the time it took for me to do questions and thus I could do more and my score was higher. It was also pretty good bang for the buck

**Response 3:** I never took the GRE. I am an MD now. Generally though, do practice questions with answer explanations, over and over again. Remember tests assess your ability to prepare for something (i.e. the test) not necessarily content. So prepare for the test with practice questions

**Question 2:** *What factors should I consider when choosing summer internships?*

**Response 1:** Deciding on a summer internship should be influenced by what your long-term goal is. On the professional/career side, an internship can help you make useful contacts at a certain institution or in a certain field of study. You can't underestimate contacts when you start looking for employment. Also, if you are able to work with a principal investigator who publishes a lot you may be able to get your name on a paper. On the personal side, you can use the internship to evaluate a certain area of the country and make contacts in a place you may want to live.

**Response 2:** Connections and/or inspiration. A summer internship is only as good as it gets you somewhere. If you want to end up at that place, perfect! If it gives you an exciting talking point with depth on an interview, that's valuable too.

**Question 3:** *What types of extracurricular activities can I accommodate given my demanding academic load?*

**Response 1:** You make time for the important things in life."

This is a phrase I've heard uttered in many conversations when people are discussing how busy they are. When it comes to extracurricular activities, there's no specific formula to what you should and shouldn't do. There is probably a limit to how many things you should do, and you should also ask yourself why you're doing something. If you have a particular passion outside of the academic world you regularly live in, make time for it! It may feel like you don't have the time for it, but often when you structure your schedule to include something you enjoy so much, the rest of your time may be more focused and better spent. Some may consider physical fitness an extracurricular, some not, but either way it is imperative to make time for this. The wellness triangle of mental, physical, and social health should be balanced as much as possible.

**Response 2:** Picking extracurricular activities is the same in grad/professional school as in undergrad. Figure out what you enjoy doing and see where you can do it. Optimally, try to combine activities if you can. For example, if you already regularly attend a worship service and you want to do volunteer work, volunteer at your place of worship. If you like to exercise and you want to meet other fitness-minded people, join a running group or an intramural sports team. The key is to let people know you may not be able to attend every time but you want to participate.

**Response 3:** Whatever you want. If you don't make time you won't have time. Protect and prioritize your 'self' time and non-academic pursuits. These things are important to keep you balanced, healthy, and interesting.



## ALUMNI NEWS

**Joe Washington** (M4 Mechanical Engineering) and wife Daphne just welcomed their third child and first daughter on November 26<sup>th</sup>. Jada Elisabeth Washington (pictured below) was born at Greater Baltimore Medical Center and weighted 7 lbs 15 oz. She is joined at home by big brothers Joe and Jadon.



**Torria (Ellis) Dugar** (M4 Chemistry) and her husband welcomed their second son Connor Alexander Dugar on October 30.

**Donna Person-Taylor** (M7 Chemistry) and her husband Tajh announce the birth of their baby boy on September 20th.

**Talmesha Richards** (M11 Chemical Engineering & Mathematics) graduated this year from Johns Hopkins School of Medicine with a Ph.D. in Cellular and Molecular Medicine. She is also currently one of four captains for the Washington Redskins Cheerleaders.



**Mela Johnson** (M13 Mechanical Engineering) married Brandon Carroll on November 11, 2012 on a beautiful day in Durham, NC.



**Seth Miller** (M13 Biological Sciences) was invited to participate in the Radiologic Society of North America (RSNA)/Association of University Radiologists (AUR)/American Roentgen Ray Society (ARRS) Introduction to Academic Radiology (ITAR) Program. This grant allowed him to attend the 2012 RSNA Annual Meeting, where he participated in a week-long program on the development of a successful research career in radiation oncology. The meeting was held as a part of the RSNA Annual Meeting in Chicago, Illinois, from November 25-30.

**Ashley (Mentlik) James** (M14 Biochemistry and Molecular Biology) received her PhD on August 6<sup>th</sup>. She ranks feeling the need to thank the Meyerhoff program for helping her find the drive to conquer that hurdle high on her list. "I'll never forget where I came from!"

Also, she and her husband (fellow UMBC alum Kyle James) are expecting their first child on December 25th.

**Kezia Alexander** (M18 Biological Sciences & Health Administration and Public Policy) completed her Master's in Public Health in July and started a new job in November. She is the Research Associate/Chief Staff Liaison for the NFL Subcommittee on Cardiovascular Health. She has been brought on by the Subcommittee to develop a 10 year longitudinal study that will track the cardiovascular health of current and recently retired NFL players to see how their health status changes as their physical conditioning changes post-retirement. She works alongside NFL team physicians for various teams across the country and will be developing health education materials for the players, with hopes that the research can be translated to athletes across all sports.

## FEATURED ALUMNUS

### Redefining STEM Professional – Rabiah Mayas (M8)

*Article written by Jattu Senesie (M4) after an interview with Rabiah*



When most freshmen enter the Meyerhoff Scholars Program, they have a rather limited idea of what being a STEM professional looks like. Usually the image evoked involves spending a lot of time in a lab and writing grants. What M8 Rabiah Mayas's career path exhibits is there are nontraditional ways to use a terminal degree in a STEM field. Rabiah graduated from UMBC with a degree in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. From there she went on to obtain a PhD in the same field from the University of Chicago. After spending six years doing traditional basic science research, she opted to take a post-doctoral position outside of the laboratory. This led her to the position of science director for the Science Chicago program at the Museum of Science and Industry. Rabiah states she always had a passion for youth outreach and science education, especially their potential for improvement of public health. During graduate school she participated in several volunteer programs as a mentor to science students from grade school to graduate school. The goal of Science Chicago was to engage the Chicagoland community in science education by increasing access to science learning experiences and stimulating discussion about the contribution of science and technology to everyday life. Among the events for children and adults were seminars, panel discussions, traveling science festivals and behind-the-scene museum tours.

When the two years for the Science Chicago position were completed Rabiah recognized she enjoyed applying her doctoral level STEM experience to science education programs. The relationship she established with the Museum of Science and Industry from the Science Chicago program allowed her to create a position as the director of the brand new Department of Science and Integrated Strategies in their Center for the Advancement of Science Education (CASE). In this role, she works with the other departments in CASE for oversight of educational program development, digital learning initiatives coordination, and program evaluation and research. Her current daily undertakings are very different from the investigation of the cellular level activities involved in gene expression she did to complete her PhD. However, Rabiah is able to apply the skills she acquired in research design and data evaluation to the assessment of science learning initiatives. She collaborates with engineers, statisticians, learning scientists and artists, among others, to help reach her objective of bridging the gap between the scientific and health communities and the general public. When asked to reflect on how her Meyerhoff experience influenced how she approached her career path, Rabiah credits the multiple summer internships she had during college. Graduate school was focused on spending years on a project in the same laboratory with a single principal investigator. In contrast, the summer research opportunities encouraged by the Meyerhoff program allowed her to get exposure to a variety of labs and projects. This allowed Rabiah to feel comfortable with the idea of doing something new and departing from the known entity. Her decision to explore outside basic science research has brought her to a science education leadership position in the largest science center in the Western Hemisphere. One thing we can learn from Rabiah Mayas's journey is following a path that combines your passion with your skills usually leads to the proper place.



## Health and Wellness



### THE IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP Jattu Senesie, MD, FACOG

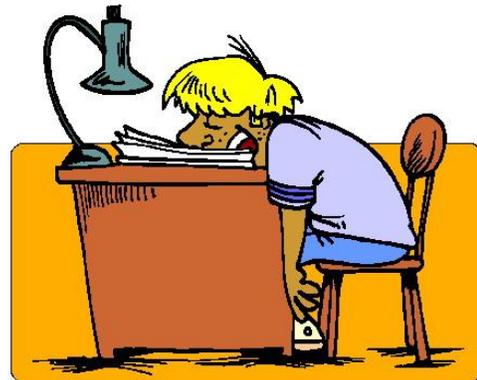
As we enter a new calendar year many people reflect on habits and behaviors they want to change. In light of this I thought it would be a good time to discuss the importance of sleep. Many people have lives where the control over how much sleep they get is not completely their own. A lot of parents of children under 5 years of age (and many times even older) have not experienced more than 6 hours of consecutive rest in years. Also, on-call physicians cannot dictate the number of times during the night a nurse or patient may awaken them for issues of varying importance. We are also extremely busy during the day with school, work, family and attempts at recreation so it is hard to fit everything into a 24-hour period. Despite that being the case, we need to prioritize getting enough rest when it is possible.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and the National Sleep Foundation, inadequate sleep can lead to increased risk for type 2 diabetes mellitus because of impaired insulin function. There is also an association between short sleep duration and excess body weight, especially in children. The science shows that inadequate sleep leads to a decrease in the amount of the hormone leptin which controls appetite. More obvious issues with lack of sleep are the increase in drowsy driving, irritability, and poor cognitive function. The 2009 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System reports 37.9% of adults fell asleep unintentionally during the day at least once in the previous month. The same report shows that 4.7% of adults fell asleep or nodded off while driving at least once in the previous month.

National Sleep Foundation recommendations state adults should get 7 to 9 hours of sleep every night. Pre-teens and teens (10-17 y.o.) should get 8.5 to 9 hours. School-age children (5-10 y.o.) should get 10 to 11 hours per night. For those of you who scoff at those numbers, you are in good company. The BRFSS shows that 35.3% of adults get <7 hours of sleep during a typical 24 hour period. However, just because the numbers are on your side doesn't mean you are in the right. I know that I have prided myself in the past at my ability to "function" on little to no sleep. That is definitely a beneficial skill if necessary. Unfortunately, sometimes we just get in the habit of not sleeping so we don't even when we can.

As I think about my own life I recognize that one large contributor to inadequate sleep over the years has been poor time management. Despite every intention of getting to bed at a decent time often it does not quite work out. An exercise that I have found helpful is to periodically make a schedule of things that I need to do during the day. Instead of just making a list, I ascribe an amount of time to complete each task. It has made me realize that some things take way longer to complete than I would have thought. This is how it gets to be 10 pm before you know it and you still have 5 things to do before you go to bed. Also, TV is quite a time drain. Watching live programming is a 20<sup>th</sup> century concept. DVR is what God has given us to deal with our hectic 21<sup>st</sup> century lives. You can save up your shows and watch them when you have more time. You can also fast forward through all those commercials. Lastly, the most important thing I learned from working as an ob/gyn is to sleep when you are sleepy. You might feel lame by going to bed at the same time as a grade school child but your body will thank you.

I recognize that this topic may be a little less popular than some of the others discussed in this space but I do think it is important. In order to function at a decent level, we need to be well-rested. Sleep isn't the most obvious component of healthy living but it does contribute to overall well-being. You are better able to tolerate the irritations of life without participating in negative habits when you aren't sleep-deprived. Similarly, you are better energized to exercise and to prepare healthy meals when you are well-rested. Even if it is impossible to get more than 7 hours of sleep per night in your life, try to get as much rest at you can. I have struggled with the sleep issue for years but as I age I realize that it is a crucial part of wellness. For those who have sleep issues or want to learn more about sleep and health let me direct you to the CDC page on sleep, <http://www.cdc.gov/sleep/>. Enjoy a restful holiday season.



## Cohort Giving Challenge Standings



1 <sup>st</sup> Place	M6; 13% participation (5/38)
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	M4; 11% participation (5/44) M5; 11% participation (4/38) M17; 11% participation (5/47)
3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	M11; 10% participation (4/40)
Overall	6.2% participation (53/851)

These standings are current as of December 3, 2012.

You can give to the **LaMont Toliver Alumni Memorial Scholarship Fund** by going to:

[alumni.umbc.edu/mhoffgiving](http://alumni.umbc.edu/mhoffgiving)

Once you fill in your information (don't forget to choose "*Meyerhoff Alumnus/a: Parent or Friend*" beside "*Your Affiliation*") you will be able to choose the "*LaMont Toliver Alumni Memorial Scholarship Fund*" from the drop down menu beside "*Designation*".

All donations received by December 31, 2012 are eligible for 2012 tax deductions. The Cohort Giving Challenge will run until the end of the UMBC fiscal year on June 30, 2013.

## MAAB FALL EVENTS

### White House Tour

On September 29, 2012 the MAAB Events Committee arranged a tour of the White House and a brunch in DC. The event was a rousing success with over seventy alumni, parents and guests present at one or more of the different activities that day. The participants enjoyed all the interesting White House facts and spectacular views of the nation's capital.



### Ron Shapiro Negotiations Workshop

On December 14, 2012 over thirty Meyerhoff alumni participated in a dynamic workshop with attorney, sports agent, best-selling author and expert negotiator Ron Shapiro. Mr. Shapiro shared with the attendees his keys to successful deal-making in the professional and personal arenas. The alumni left with better tools to make sure everyone comes out a winner in tough negotiations.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### THANK YOU!!

The Meyerhoff Alumni Advisory Board (MAAB) has been very active in 2012. We would like to thank everyone involved for their tireless efforts in this emotional year for the Meyerhoff family. A new scholarship fund was established. The alumni mentoring program had its inaugural year. Several social events took place where alumni were able to get together, catch up, and reminisce. Alumni were able to stay in touch using our MAAB Google group, Facebook page, and brand new Twitter account. In addition to the MAAB officers and individual cohort representatives these projects would not have been possible without the MAAB committee leadership. Please see the committee chairs listed below. We are looking forward to another productive year in 2013!

#### Communications Chair

Vondell Coleman

#### Events Chair

Tiffani Bright

#### Fundraising Co-Chairs

Jason Lee  
Raj Stewart

#### Mentoring Chair

Bruk Berhane



**HAPPY NEW YEAR**

### MAAB Holiday Gathering



The MAAB Events Committee will be sponsoring a holiday gathering on Friday, December 28, 2012 at 5:30 pm. The event will be held at the home of M4 Vondell Coleman in Bowie, MD. This is an opportunity to catch up with your fellow Meyerhoffs while everyone is in town for the holidays. Please RSVP to [maabevents@gmail.com](mailto:maabevents@gmail.com) ASAP if you will be able to attend.

### How to Get Involved

The MAAB desires the involvement of the alumni. In the upcoming year, we will be holding elections for cohort representatives for each class. Consider whether you or someone you know may want to serve the two-year term as a member of the Meyerhoff Alumni Advisory Board. For those who do not want to commit to two years, please contact the current MAAB members if you have a suggestion for an event, a fundraising idea, or an article for the newsletter. At the very least, we look forward to seeing you at some of the events and contributing to the alumni news. We encourage everyone to participate in any way possible so that we can continue to maintain the close ties within the Meyerhoff family.

This newsletter was brought to you by the MAAB Communications Committee:

Editor: *Jattu Senesie (M4)*

Staff: *Christopher Aberg (M11), Stephanie Bates (M4), Vondell Coleman (M4), Nwokedi Idika (M13)*

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