

Newsletter

MEYERHOFF PARENTS ASSOCIATION

CELEBRATING *Excellence*

MEYERHOFF SENIOR RECEPTION

On Wednesday, May 6, the Meyerhoff Scholars Program gathered with families, alumni, faculty, staff, and friends to celebrate the extraordinary accomplishments of the Seniors and the 2025–2026 Meyerhoff Scholars graduating class during the annual Senior Reception.

The evening marked not only the achievements of this remarkable cohort but also a historic milestone for the program, celebrating more than 500 Meyerhoff Scholar graduates earning PhDs, a testament to nearly four decades of transforming the landscape of STEM education.



JULY 2026



Newsletter Highlights

**Celebrating Excellence:
Meyerhoff Senior Reception**

**A Tribute to the
Class of 2026**

**Four Scholars, One
Extraordinary Legacy**

**Making Waves with AI and
Aquaculture**

**Spring Stress Buster: A
Night to Unwind, Connect
& Recharge**

Volunteer with a Purpose

**Your Support Makes a
Difference**

Meyerhoff by the Numbers

527 Ph.D.s and Counting

MEYERHOFF
PARENTS
ASSOCIATION

HELPING OUR STUDENTS
HOLD FAST TO THEIR DREAMS.

CELEBRATING Excellence

INSPIRING KEYNOTE ADDRESS



The evening's keynote address was delivered by Dr. Kafui Dzirasa ('01, M8), physician-scientist, professor, and internationally recognized neuroscientist.

Drawing back from his own Meyerhoff experience, Dr. Dzirasa encouraged graduates to embrace the journey ahead with perseverance, humility, and purpose. He challenged Scholars to pursue excellence not simply for personal success, but to create meaningful change for others.

“Life is a marathon, not a sprint. But if you are going to run, run to be a champion.”

-Dr. Kafui Dzirasa '01, M8

As the newest Meyerhoff alumni crossed this important milestone, the evening served as both a celebration of their accomplishments and a reminder that they now carry forward a legacy built on scholarship, leadership, service, and community.

Congratulations to the Class of 2026

as they join the growing network of Meyerhoff alumni who continue to redefine what is possible in STEM and beyond.



A LEGACY THAT INSPIRES

The celebration reflected on the program's incredible journey from its humble beginnings. Keith Harmon, Senior Director of the Meyerhoff Scholars Program, reminded attendees of the vision launched by the program in 1988:

“What started as a one-year experiment involving 19 Black males from the state of Maryland has now become not a national model, but a global model for inclusive excellence in STEM.”

His remarks highlighted the enduring impact of the Meyerhoff Scholars Program and the generations of scientists, engineers, physicians, researchers, and leaders who continue to advance its mission worldwide.

A TRIBUTE TO THE *Class of 2026*



Congratulations to the Meyerhoff Scholars Class of 2026! As you cross the graduation stage, you join a distinguished network of alumni who are transforming STEM, advancing research, serving their communities, and leading with purpose around the world. Your years at UMBC have been marked by academic excellence, resilience, collaboration, and an unwavering commitment to making a difference.

While each journey has been unique, you have all contributed to the rich legacy of the Meyerhoff Scholars Program. We celebrate your achievements, applaud your perseverance, and look forward to the many ways you will continue to inspire others and shape the future through your leadership, innovation, and service.



As you begin the next chapter, the Meyerhoff Parents Association offers both our congratulations and a challenge. Continue to pursue excellence with humility, lead with integrity, and never lose sight of the purpose that brought you to UMBC. Use your knowledge not only to solve complex problems, but also to uplift communities, mentor those who follow, and create opportunities for others to succeed. Let your accomplishments be measured not only by the discoveries you make, but by the lives you touch. Wherever your journey leads, carry forward the values of the Meyerhoff community: curiosity, collaboration, compassion, and an unwavering commitment to making the world better than you found it. We are proud of you and cannot wait to see the extraordinary impact each of you will make.

Congratulations, Class of 2026!

SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT

FOUR SCHOLARS,

One Extraordinary Legacy

The Meyerhoff community proudly celebrates Deeya Mistry (M35), Jessica Slaughter (M35), Phoenix Bryant (M35), and Amir Walton-Irvin (M36), recipients of the prestigious 2026 Barry Goldwater Scholarship—one of the nation's highest honors for undergraduate students pursuing research careers in science, engineering, and mathematics.

Selected from nearly 1,500 nominees nationwide, these exceptional scholars exemplify the curiosity, innovation, perseverance, and commitment to research that define the Meyerhoff legacy. Their achievement reflects not only their individual excellence but also UMBC's continued leadership in developing the next generation of STEM researchers.

These exceptional scholars are tackling some of today's most pressing challenges, including stroke recovery, psychiatric disorders, equitable healthcare technologies, and the use of artificial intelligence to better understand neurological disease and health disparities.



From left to right, UMBC sophomore Amir Walton-Irvin (M36), and juniors Jessica Slaughter (M35), Deeya Mistry (M35), and Phoenix Bryant (M35).

Their scholarship reflects the curiosity, perseverance, and commitment to research that define the Meyerhoff legacy. Congratulations to these outstanding students on this remarkable achievement. We look forward to the discoveries and innovations they will bring to the future of STEM. Click [here](#) to read the full article.

“Never underestimate the power of dreams and the influence of the human spirit...” - Wilma Rudolph

RESEARCH IN ACTION | SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT

MAKING WAVES WITH AI AND AQUACULTURE



Krish Bakshi (M35)

Meyerhoff Scholars Krish Bakshi (M35) and Mason Chialastri (M35) are contributing to a new UMBC initiative that combines artificial intelligence, advanced imaging, and aquaculture technology to improve sustainable seafood production.

The project will establish the Aquaculture Research Center (ARC), expanding research opportunities while strengthening partnerships with industry and government agencies.

Bakshi's (M35) research focuses on AI-powered imaging technologies to improve fish health and production efficiency.



Mason Chialastri (M35)

Chialastri (M35) is helping develop sustainable aquaculture solutions that support domestic seafood production and protect marine ecosystems.

Together, their work showcases how Meyerhoff Scholars are using research and innovation to solve real-world challenges.

Read the full story [here](#).

SPRING STRESS BUSTER

A NIGHT TO UNWIND, CONNECT & RECHARGE

As final exams approached, the Meyerhoff Parents Association (MPA) once again demonstrated its unwavering commitment to supporting students by hosting the annual Spring Stress Buster on Tuesday, May 12, 2026. Designed to provide a much-needed break from studying, the evening transformed the student center into a welcoming space filled with laughter, friendship, creativity, and encouragement.

Scholars used the evening to step away from textbooks to recharge through hands-on activities, games, and meaningful conversations with peers. Some relaxed with colorful crafts, while others gathered around tables to share stories, make slime, and even get massages. Plenty of snacks, refreshments, and smiles helped create a relaxed atmosphere where Scholars could unwind before the demands of finals week.

More than just a social event, the Spring Stress Buster reflects one of the defining strengths of the Meyerhoff community—a culture that values the whole student. While academic excellence remains at the heart of the program, the Parents Association recognizes that success also depends on wellness, balance, and a strong support network. By creating opportunities for Scholars to pause, connect, and encourage one another, the MPA helps foster the sense of family that has become a hallmark of the Meyerhoff experience.



SPRING

Stress Buster

A NIGHT TO UNWIND, CONNECT & RECHARGE

The Meyerhoff Parents Association extends its sincere appreciation to the parent volunteers whose generosity, planning, and dedication made the evening possible. Their continued support reminds Scholars that they have an entire community cheering them on—not only during finals, but throughout their academic journey.



WHY WE DO IT

The Meyerhoff Parents Association believes that student success extends beyond the classroom. Events like the Spring Stress Buster promote wellness, strengthen community, and remind every Scholar that they are supported by families who care deeply about their well-being and success.



VOLUNTEER

With Purpose

**SUPPORT OUR SCHOLARS.
STRENGTHEN OUR COMMUNITY.**

The Meyerhoff Parents Association (MPA) plays a vital role in creating meaningful experiences, resources, and support for our Scholars throughout their academic journey.

Behind every successful event, resource, and program is a team of dedicated volunteers like you!



WHY VOLUNTEER?

Your time and talents help:

- Create **memorable events** and programs for Scholars
- Provide **resources and support** that make a difference
- **Build community** and connection among families
- Encourage and **uplift the next generation** of leaders

It takes a village to build extraordinary futures.

Be part of the village!

READY TO GET INVOLVED?

Whether you have a little time or a lot, there is a place for you. Every effort counts and is deeply appreciated!



If you are interested in volunteering to support any of the upcoming MPA activities, please contact the MPA at umbcmpa@gmail.com.

Your support is important and always welcome!

YOUR SUPPORT MAKES A DIFFERENCE!

MEYERHOFF SCHOLARS PROGRAM



UMBC's Meyerhoff Scholars Program, which was established in 1989, has supported more than 1,750 scholars in the STEM fields. With the numbers growing and the goal of increasing diversity amongst future leaders, the success of the program is built upon the support of family and friends who understand the value of the program.

MAKE AN ANNUAL GIFT

You may make an annual gift to the UMBC Foundation to benefit the MPA via check, postal mail or [online](#).



SHOW YOUR MPA PRIDE

[order a polo shirt!](#)

VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

If you are interested in volunteering to support any of the upcoming MPA-sponsored activities or the Meyerhoff Program in any way, please send an email to out to umbcmpa@gmail.com with the title *VOLUNTEER*.



All funds raised will be administered by the UMBC Foundation, Inc., for the benefit of UMBC.

MEYERHOFF BY THE NUMBERS

A LEGACY OF EXCELLENCE. A FUTURE OF DISCOVERY.

For nearly four decades, the Meyerhoff Scholars Program has been transforming lives and advancing the future of STEM through excellence, research, mentorship, and community.



UMBC

MEYERHOFF SCHOLARS PROGRAM

EXCELLENCE.
IMPACT.
LEGACY.

1 ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

99%

**First-Year
STEM Retention**

of first-year
Meyerhoff students
retained in STEM

95%

**Meyerhoff Bridge
Graduation Rate**

of participants receive
an undergraduate
degree in STEM

3.63

**Average
Cumulative GPA**

311 Scholars
(Fall 2025)

2X

More likely to
graduate with a
STEM degree

5X

More likely to
pursue or
complete a
STEM graduate
degree

2 NATIONAL RECOGNITION

33

Goldwater Scholars

81

NSF Graduate
Research Fellows

8

HHMI Gilliam Fellows

2

Rhodes Scholars

NUMEROUS

GEM, Truman &
Fulbright Scholars

Meyerhoff Scholars
consistently earn some of the
nation's most prestigious
academic and research
fellowships.

3 MAJOR MILESTONES

500th

Ph.D. Degree
completed in
December 2025

527

Doctoral Degrees Earned
Ph.D., M.D./Ph.D., D.D.S.,
D.V.M., and more
(as a July 2026)

10

UMBC Valedictorians

3

UMBC Salutatorians

4 NATIONAL LEADERSHIP

86.8%

**UMBC GOLDWATER
AWARDEES SINCE 2005**
33 of UMBC's 38 Goldwater
Scholars have been
Meyerhoff Scholars

67%

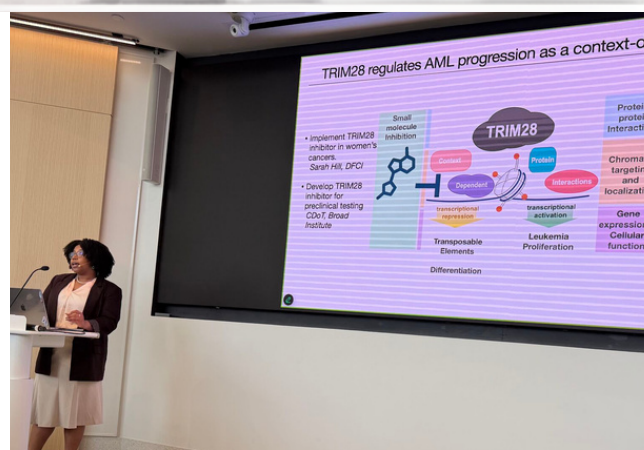
**NSF GRADUATE RESEARCH
FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENTS
(2020-2026)**
36 of UMBC's 54 awardees were
Meyerhoff Scholars

52.2%

**NSF-GRFP HONORABLE MENTIONS
(2020-2026)**
12 of UMBC's 23 honorable mentions
were Meyerhoff Scholars

527 PH.D.S AND COUNTING

A LEGACY OF SCHOLARSHIP.
A FUTURE OF IMPACT.



Policy, Place, and Practice: Mapping Data into Decisions for Environmental Investment

December 2, 2025 | 3:00 PM
5103 Jordan Hall & Zoom (hybrid)



Uchenna Osia
Geospatial Analytics
Advisor: Bethany Cutts

geospatial.ncsu.edu/events

Center for
Geospatial Analytics

Graduate Student
Dissertation Defense

BEYOND THE DEGREE. A LIFETIME OF IMPACT.

From advancing knowledge to transforming communities, Meyerhoff Ph.D. alumni are leaders, innovators, and changemakers across the globe.

527 Ph.D.s. Hundreds of journeys. Countless contributions. One Meyerhoff legacy.