



2011 Minority Scholars Awards
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Erica Alvarez

Texas Tech University Paul L. Foster School of Medicine



The first in her family to graduate from college, Erica Alvarez was raised by her mother in El Paso, TX. She worked two jobs during her undergraduate education, and graduated Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Science in Microbiology. Since starting medical school, Erica was a founding officer of the Pediatric Interest Group and currently serves as community outreach director. Her outreach includes service projects in a local home for children, a shelter for battered women, a child crisis center and mentorship for pre-med students. Her interests expand internationally as well, as she recently participated in a medical mission trip to Honduras with the Catholic Diocese of El Paso. She is active in the Christian Medical Student Association and student government and served as the founding secretary. Her research investigates chronic kidney disease among the Mexican American population, which has led to presentations at the NIH National Institute of Diabetes Digestive and Kidney Diseases Network of Minority Medical Research Investigators and 5th Annual Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center Research Colloquium.

“Her heart is clearly one of service to others and she has shown a commitment to El Paso. I see her as one of the leaders of our community in the near future as she seeks ways to address the health inequalities in our border city.” - Kathryn Horn, MD, Associate Dean for Student Affairs, Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center Paul L. Foster School of Medicine

Kali Cyrus

University of Illinois at Chicago College of Medicine



At the age of twelve, Kali Cyrus witnessed her mother’s diagnosis of lymphoma and the frustration her mother experienced regarding insurance coverage for her illness. This situation ignited her interest in medicine and public health. Kali has shown extensive leadership in the efforts to reduce health disparities. She is enrolled in the Urban Medicine curriculum, a special track that provides training to students desiring to practice in underserved communities, and she is a participant in the James Scholars Program, a selective research honors initiative. Kali also holds a Masters degree in Public Health. Her research has investigated the topics of patient-physician communications and medical student volunteerism. Kali has volunteered at the Howard Brown Youth Center, a diverse health care network for the LGBT population, and has actively sought clinical experiences at the Cook County jail, an in-hospital social work office and a low-income HIV clinic. She is President of the UIC College of Medicine Queers and Allies in Medicine, increasing awareness of LGBT issues in medicine.

“Kali’s institutional presence is felt. She is respected by her peers and has taken great strides to add to the health disparities discourse, while working to help train and educate the next cadre of culturally competent physicians.” - Javette C. Orgain, MD, MPH, Assistant Dean, Urban Health Program, UIC College of Medicine

Ana Elizabeth Iten

UC Berkeley-UCSF Joint Medical Program



Ana Elizabeth Iten was born in the U.S. and moved to her father's homeland of Guatemala at the age of two. Witnessing violence, suffering, poverty and corruption, she realized the huge need for better access to health care. At the age of 16, she and her family decided it was best that she move to the U.S. to pursue her goal to become a physician. She worked her way through her undergraduate education and then joined the Jesuit Volunteer Corp, where she worked at a Washington D.C. free clinic that provided services to the Latino population. In the UC Berkeley-UCSF Joint Medical Program, Elizabeth is a member of the Program in Medical Education for the Urban Underserved (PRIME-US), a special initiative that is designed for medical students committed to caring for underserved populations. She has volunteered as a Spanish interpreter during patient interviews at la Clinica de la Raza, participated in health fairs, and is the clinic coordinator at the General Suitcase Clinic, which provides medical services for the homeless population. She also mentors pre-med students through the Latino Medical Student Association.

"She has demonstrated amazing resilience and dedication to pursue a career in medicine. Not only will she be an excellent clinician, she is certain to become a health care leader as a researcher and advocate to reduce health disparities that affect Latinos and other underserved communities in the United States." - Ann Stevens, MD, Associate Director, UC Berkeley-UCSF Joint Medical Program

Laurence James

Vanderbilt University School of Medicine



Dedication to reducing health care disparities and increasing diversity in medicine has been a central focus of Laurence James' time at Vanderbilt University. As Diversity Chair for the university's American Medical Student Association chapter, he led outreach efforts at local high schools to help underserved youth prepare for college, organized a health disparities week, created a panel discussion regarding health care reform and the underserved and participated in regional and national conferences to increase diversity in medicine. He also serves as liaison between the Student National Medical Association and the Minority Pre-Medical Student Association. Additionally, Laurence is a volunteer at a free clinic in East Nashville, serves as a health fair coordinator for refugee communities and is helping to design, write and direct videos highlighting HIV transmission in the African-American community.

"Laurence James is a remarkable individual who is capable of great things. He is compassionate, enthusiastic, empathic and dedicated – characteristics that we desire in our physician and educator colleagues...he is a true asset to our program here at Vanderbilt." - Cathleen Pettepher, PhD, Professor, Cancer Biology and Cell & Development Biology, Vanderbilt University School of Medicine

Alison Lima

University of Massachusetts Medical School



Alison Lima has dedicated herself to both global and domestic health care issues. During her undergraduate experience at Iowa State University, she had the opportunity to conduct research on HIV/AIDS and traditional healers in South Africa, as well as investigate health care issues in Chile, Mexico, Belize and the Republic of Georgia. Also during that time, she co-founded the Student International Medical Aid Club, which organized the collection and delivery of medical supplies to countries in need. After college, Alison continued her international interests by serving as a Community Health Educator in the Peace Corps in Nicaragua for over two years. Following the Peace Corps, she coordinated a program in Boston that encouraged high school students to document health disparities in their communities. In medical school, Alison is the Co-President of the Student National Medical Association and has coordinated a pre-medical mentoring program. She is active

in the American Medical Association and the Massachusetts Medical Society and is currently helping to form a Latino Medical Student Association chapter at the University of Massachusetts. She is a participant in the university's Multicultural Pathways Program and was trained in health disparities, cultural competency and immigrant health. As a Pathways participant, Alison travelled to Cape Verde last year for language immersion and to conduct research on how to improve health care for Cape Verdean communities there and in Massachusetts.

"Alison is a true 21st century physician. She has taken ownership of the global perspective of health care; the fight for basic health rights around the world, including the fight against poverty, and that these rights begin here at home. Ms. Lima doesn't just talk the talk, she definitely walks the walk." - Danna Peterson, MD, Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, University of Massachusetts Medical School

Sheena McDaniels

Rush Medical College



Sheena McDaniels has overcome much adversity to follow her dream of becoming a physician. Her service to the community began early, when she volunteered throughout high school at the National Runaway Switchboard organization as a crisis counselor, mediator and youth advocate. At DePaul University, she received the competitive Chemistry Department Graduate Assistantship and gained experience in the research lab. After graduating with honors and awards, she taught chemistry as an adjunct instructor at Chicago area institutions. During medical school, Sheena has taken an active role in two student-run free clinics and serves as secretary of the Student National Medical Association.

"Ms. McDaniels is an exceptional person. She is a role model, an inspiration to her peers and is well respected. She demonstrates professional promise, scholarship and social responsibility." – Cynthia Boyd, Associate Professor of Medicine, Rush Medical College

Gabriel Moreno

Wayne State University School of Medicine



Gabriel Moreno became inspired to become a physician as he watched his father's Parkinson's disease progress. His Mexican-American mother put herself through nursing school and his father stopped attending school in the fifth grade in Mexico so he could work to support his widowed mother and siblings. This familial work ethic was ingrained in Gabriel as he pursued his studies and eventually medicine. During medical school, he noticed that Latinos were not very well represented in the student body. He proactively is working with the Admissions Department to implement a new recruitment method and represented the school at a recruitment fair at a national Hispanic meeting. He became a member of the Black Medical Student Association and

then formed the Latin American and Native American Medical Student Association. He has volunteered at health fairs at a free clinic in inner city Detroit, which serves a primarily Hispanic community. Gabriel is currently working in schools to develop mentorship programs for Hispanic students. He has participated in many national meetings, such as the National Hispanic Medical Association, the American Medical Association and the American Medical Student Association.

Gabriel received the Minority Scholars Award funded by the *Ronald M. Davis, MD Memorial Scholarship Fund*. The National Business Group on Health partially supports this special award in honor of the late Ronald M. Davis, MD, Past-President of the AMA. This specific scholarship is granted to a minority medical student who has an interest in becoming a primary care physician

"Gabriel Moreno is an amazing student. He has vision and he is a leader. He is transforming our medical school and has increased awareness of the needs of our Hispanic community. He is a jewel and I am honored to have had the opportunity to teach and mentor him." - Diane Levine, MD, Associate Professor of Medicine, Wayne State University School of Medicine

Lindsay Morgenstern

Mayo Medical School

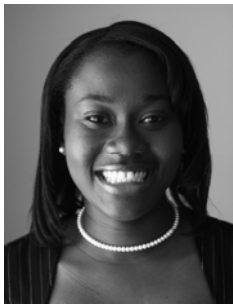


Lindsay Morgenstern's own personal experience with cancer has triggered a true passion for caring for others with cancer. She is the first person in her family to ever attend college. She has received training as an emergency medical technician, as well as a phlebotomist. During her time at medical school, Lindsay has become extremely involved in numerous community advocacy organizations for children with cancer, including Wishes and More, the Children's Hospital in Minneapolis and the Minnesota Ovarian Cancer Alliance. She currently serves as a coordinator for the student-run free clinic, helping underserved members of the Rochester community. Lindsay is in the process of founding an oncology student interest group. She is working with her community of Mdwakanton Sioux to better understand the relationship between environmental factors and the development of breast cancer and other malignancies.

"She has continued to show commitment to serving the underserved and improving the health of all community members...Lindsay Morgenstern is a young woman who works in a quiet way with grace and kindness." - Patricia Barrier, MD, MPH, Associate Dean for Student Affairs, Mayo Medical School

Shariska Petersen

Charles Drew/UCLA Medical Education Program



Shariska Petersen's experiences growing up in St. Croix are a stark contrast to the picturesque view that many tourists have of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Many of the residents of these islands, when diagnosed with cancer or heart disease, leading causes of mortality in African-Americans, have to seek specialized care on the mainland. Getting adequate health care to those who need it is not always possible. Witnessing many people, particularly women, die of cancer inspired Shariska to become interested in women's health. Shariska's family was unable to contribute to her education, so she worked as a Teaching Assistant for an eighth grade class on Chicago's south side during her undergraduate education at the University of Chicago. After graduation, Shariska became a fellow in the Biomedical Research Training Program for Underrepresented Groups at the National Institutes of Health, and this summer she will be joining Charles Drew's summer research program, investigating mammography follow-up among low-income women. She currently mentors inner city high school students in Los Angeles and encourages them to attend college and volunteers at health fairs in the community.

"She has already shown that she has the drive and dedication to pursue the challenge of including clinical research in her promising medical career. Shariska is truly an extraordinary young woman who will exceed even the highest expectations." - Daphne Calmes, MD, Associate Dean of Medical Student Affairs, Charles Drew/UCLA Medical Education Program.

Coridon Quinn

University of Minnesota Medical School, Duluth



Coridon Quinn's rural Oklahoma upbringing exposed him not only to his Cherokee heritage, but also to the difficulties of accessing quality health care. Even after his family moved east, he has made a conscientious effort to maintain ties to his roots. After working as a research scientist for six years, Coridon entered medical school and has committed himself to the Native American community. He participated in the Native Americans into Medicine program as an instructor for college students interested in the health professions. He provides monthly health and Brain Awareness presentations to the local elementary schools, which has a large native population. He has attended a Cross-Cultural Medicine Workshop to increase his knowledge of how traditional and modern medicine can co-exist and work together. Coridon has also volunteered with the American Cancer Society by

presenting information about cancer on tribal reservations in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Coridon balances his tremendous community involvement and outstanding academic achievements with his commitment to his wife and two sons. He finds time to provide monthly health presentations at his son's school.

"Coridon has a gentle and kind manner, unobtrusive and attentive. It was easy to see that he had the qualities that would make an excellent physician. It is clear that he has a dedication to service leadership, a trait that will work well in his medical practice, especially as it pertains to Native American patients." - Joycelyn Dorscher, MD, Director, Center of American Indian and Minority Health, University of Minnesota School of Medicine, Duluth

Vanessa Sarfoh

University at Buffalo School of Medicine & Biomedical Sciences



Vanessa Sarfoh's dedication to both pediatric hematology and increasing the number of underrepresented minorities in medicine started close to home. Learning about sickle cell disease in her own family, and later seeing firsthand the disproportionate number of African and Hispanic families affected by certain blood disorders while working at the Children's Hospital in Philadelphia, Vanessa decided to focus her career on these issues. As a premedical student, she also saw high rates of minority student attrition out of the premedical track. She has since been a tireless advocate in connecting minority high school and college students with minority physicians, and coaching and recruiting minority students through the medical school application process. Her leadership on the national level with the American Medical Association Minority Issues Committee, as well as the Student National Medical Association, Lighthouse Free Medical Clinic, and various tutoring and mentoring programs demonstrate her commitment to advancing minority health and the medical profession.

"Vanessa has shown a commitment to preventative health and to increasing the care of the underserved and in decreasing health disparities. She has also been passionate about increasing the number of underrepresented students in the field of medicine. She is clearly a role model for these activities." - David A. Milling, MD, Senior Associate Dean for Student and Academic Affairs, University at Buffalo School of Medicine & Biomedical Sciences

Brett Thomas

Florida State University College of Medicine



Growing up in a poor, rural, and single parent home shaped Brett Thomas's views on health care inequities. Receiving health care was difficult due to lack of resources, a local hospital, and unreliable transportation. Witnessing his brother's health complications with sickle cell disease and the financial consequences of his family having to use the emergency room for their primary care, Brett became dedicated to helping underserved communities. Brett excelled in high school, college, and graduate school, earning a Master of Science degree and completing a research study on the factors that lead to success for black men in medicine. Generous with his time, he also mentors minority high school students, volunteers at a homeless shelter, serves as president of his medical school class, and coordinates weekly prayer meetings with the Christian Medical Association.

"He is smart, dedicated, compassionate and principled. He is committed to service to the underserved and to reaching back to mentor those who may follow him in his path." - Christopher A. Leadem, PhD, Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Admissions, Florida State University College of Medicine

Estell Williams

University of Washington School of Medicine



Despite growing up in the underserved community of East Oakland, and having few role models and mentors to guide her in her educational path, Estell Williams became the first in her family to go to college. Displaced by Hurricane Katrina, she eventually transferred out of New Orleans to a different school but never forgot the disparities in care that she witnessed of the poor during the storm's aftermath. Estell is committed to mentoring other minority students who grew up in environments like she did. One of the most popular and sought after mentors, she shares her background story to motivate and inspire her students towards success and maintains contact with them long after the program has ended. A true leader, she serves as co-president of the Washington Chapter of the Student National Medical Association and helped establish the Alliance for Equal Representation of Minorities, a new organization aimed at enhancing diversity of students and faculty within her medical school. Actively and continually seeking out experiences to broaden her understanding of people and the worlds they live in, Estell is driven in her pursuit to care for impoverished communities and address health disparities.

"She is bright, articulate, in excellent academic standing, and has surpassed my expectations with her community service and leadership. She is clearly one in a million, and will make our medical profession proud. She has the potential, the conviction and the dedication to remain true to her dream – that is, of playing a significant role in eliminating health care disparities especially in the African American community."
- David Acosta, MD, Associate Dean for Multicultural Affairs, University of Washington School of Medicine