

ODASIS NEWSLETTER

Vol. 17



Overcoming Obstacles: Gabriel Colley
Rutgers University, Class of 2021
Temple University School of Medicine

**Office for Diversity
and Academic
Success in the
Sciences (ODASIS)**

RUTGERS
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Inspiration from Rutgers' President



In the virtual world that has become our new normal in the aftermath of the global pandemic, ODASIS has adapted its program to continue doing the utmost for its students while operating remotely. A large aspect of that adaptation is using technology such as Zoom to continue holding events that establish the sense of community that characterizes ODASIS. Though the 2021 Alumni Reception was held virtually, the event remained a hallmark of the program's success.

In a joyous celebration, a host of ODASIS alumni and various Rutgers officials conveyed their congratulations and best wishes to the graduating seniors. They shared their own experiences as former students and partners of the program, as medical

professionals, and as minority individuals, commenting on how integral ODASIS is to all who are involved in it.

Rutgers University President Jonathan Holloway was one of the esteemed speakers at the Alumni Reception, his first experience at an ODASIS event. President Holloway commended the new graduates as well as the alumni tuning in, congratulating them on their success in this unprecedented time.

President Holloway shared a story from his Assistant Professor days in San Diego that has stuck with him throughout his career. A young woman on the pre-medical track entered the student help center one day when President Holloway was sitting inside. "I'm so sick and tired of being stared at every time I enter my biology lecture because I am the only black person," she lamented, feeling frustrated. President Holloway said that he felt for the student; being an underrepresented minority student in STEM fields is a uniquely tough experience.

Another student sitting nearby turned to her. He was, President Holloway said, a dark-skinned black man clad in athletic hip-hop fashion. He was also a high-achieving biology major on the pre-medical track. "I understand," the senior told the young woman as President Holloway observed the conversation. They expressed the shared struggles of what it is to be black while studying in predominantly white fields, such as biology and medicine.

What the senior told his fellow classmate has stuck with President Holloway ever since. "Look at me, my dress, my style," he said. "It implies certain things about me. But I don't allow their narrative to become mine. Stereotypes will always exist, but I will write my own narrative. I tell myself; I must look particularly fine today."

Write your own narrative despite the path that societal stereotypes have laid out for you. Work to achieve your own goals by working hard and dedicating yourself to your aspirations. This is the advice that President Holloway passed on to the ODASIS alumni and graduates during the 2021 Alumni Reception.

Of course, to do that, it is vital to have a support system, a network of like-minded individuals that take pride in one another's success. President Holloway expressed his admiration for the ODASIS program for providing such a network. "You all are the embodiment of phrase 'it takes a village,'" he said. The success of ODASIS is the combined success of all those who have participated in the program and supported each other throughout their journeys. President Holloway's advice, and the story he shared, is something that those present at the Alumni Reception will hold close as they continue working on their paths in medicine.

FRUITFUL PARTNERSHIPS

ODASIS and Africana Studies



For over 30 years, ODASIS has been partnering with the Africana Studies Department in its mission to assist underrepresented students in the sciences. The goal of Africana Studies at Rutgers is to educate students on black history and the cultural and social implications of the African diaspora, to make the black experience visible. At its inception, its aims were threefold: firstly, to be talking about the black experience and their roles in the making of American and global history; secondly, to correct dominant stereotypes of the African experience; and thirdly,

to transform institutions of higher education and society at large. These goals are intimately tied to the ODASIS mission of elevating underrepresented populations in STEM.

"The medical field is unique in that it combines science with intense human interaction," said distinguished Professor of Africana Studies, Dr. Edward Ramsamy. "You want a doctor to understand the physiology, but you also want a doctor who understands how humans function in this society. It's crucial to emphasize both those aspects." And that's where Africana Studies comes in. In making the black experience visible through education, Africana Studies instills a sense of empathy in the minds of future physicians- many of whom

choose to minor or double major in Africana Studies. Dr. Corey Smith, ODASIS alum, minored in Africana Studies and is now a practicing healthcare professional who understands the culture of his patients.

"Part of education is how we understand each other. It's how we develop empathy," said Dr. Ramsamy. "In medicine specifically, that development of empathy is vital." Africana Studies teaches students how medicine has been used historically to justify racial segregation; one of the most prominent examples covered are the Tuskegee experiments. "Doctors need to understand that history, because the residue of that experience remains in healthcare today." There is a huge disparity in the proportion of minority healthcare professionals vs minority patients in America. To combat this, programs like Africana Studies push to teach future physicians about the minority experience to make them more understanding practitioners.

Dr. Ramsamy, an advocate for inclusive and comprehensive education within universities and schools in our country, says that the intersectionality between ODASIS and Africana Studies will continue to bolster the support for underrepresented students pursuing health professions. "The COVID crisis highlighted a couple of things," he said. "It made us acutely aware of the discrepancies in healthcare. We need a higher number of doctors from these communities who understand their plight. Thus, education is not solely about technical knowledge. Education is about learning about human values, so it must be beyond simply learning how to splice a gene."

ODASIS and Career Services and Exploration



The partnership between ODASIS and Career Exploration and Services (CES) is an integral part of the ODASIS mission. CES provides career-related advertising, resources and programs to students with the aim of helping them discover their interests and potential career path. Working in conjunction ODASIS, the Medical Professions and Life Sciences Career Communities cluster at CES has been vital in providing pre-medical students with the resources they need to attain their post-graduation goals in the healthcare industry.

The assistance that CES provides ODASIS students in particular is two-fold, says Dr. Mindy O'Mealia, Program Director of the Medical Professions and Life Sciences Career Communities within CES. "On the one hand, we help pre-med students with the process of applying to medical school through mock interviews, resume reviews, job searches and personal statement critiques. But on the other hand, we also sit down with them to help narrow down their interests in the vast field of medicine to find specialties they might

want to pursue in particular, such as pediatrics or a particular type of surgery, based on their individual goals."

Dr. O'Mealia goes above and beyond in assisting ODASIS students in their undergraduate, pre-medical journey. In addition to helping students reach out to and cultivate relationships with alumni working in the fields they want to pursue, she helps students throughout the application process for medical, dental and graduate schools. One such instance was when she assisted a student who had all of the qualifications on paper, but was struggling with the interview portion of their medical school application. After sitting down with Dr. O'Mealia during several mock interview sessions, the student went on to ace their interview at medical school and receive a full scholarship, all thanks to the personalized assistance Dr. O'Mealia provided.

The ODASIS mission is to support underrepresented students in their pursuit of careers in the field of healthcare. CES, with many dedicated staff such as Dr. O'Mealia, is committed to assisting students in making connections between their academic experience and career paths. The partnership between these two Rutgers departments has doubly assisted pre-medical students in pursuing future careers within the health sciences. "Dr. Khan and the ODASIS program supporters have perfected the art of creating strategic partnerships," says Dr. O'Mealia.

Alumni Highlights



Dr. Nia Carty

Dr. Nia Carty, an ODASIS and Rutgers University alum, graduated from the Keck School of Medicine at USC in the spring of 2021. She matched into her number one choice for residency in family medicine at Kaiser Permanente in Napa Valley. Dr. Carty credits much of her success to the support she received while at ODASIS. Speaking about her journey at the annual Alumni Reception amidst the applause from her fellow alumni, she said: “Dr. Khan changed my life. Working with Dr. Young changed my life. ODASIS

changed my life. It’s just mind-blowing when I think of the impact that ODASIS had on my life.”

Dr. Carty’s journey began when she was deciding where to go for college. She wanted to find a school that catered to her needs as a pre-medical student with the aspirations of becoming a doctor. At the ODASIS open house she attended, the words Dr. Khan had a profound impact on her: “If you attend Rutgers and join ODASIS, and stay consistent throughout the entirety of the program, I can guarantee that you will become a doctor.” Although it was grueling- the MCAT course in particular- Dr. Carty found that in placing her trust in ODASIS, she attained her goals.

“There are three major things I credit ODASIS for,” she said. “Discipline, accountability, and support.” Her experience within the ODASIS program helped her cultivate her work ethic, hone her time management skills and understand importance of holding oneself accountable. Dr. Carty also found a network of like-minded peers and outstanding faculty. “You never felt like you were alone,” she said. “One of the first friends I made during my time in

the ODASIS STP Program the summer before my freshman year ended up going to the same med school as me, and we’ve remained close friends.”

Dr. Carty’s experience doing lab research at the WM Keck Center for Neuroscience over the summer with Dr. Wise Young was equally as impactful. Dr. Carty researched and analyzed neuroimmune responses to various spinal cord injuries. During this foray into the world of clinical research, Dr. Carty was able to not only collaborate with peers in an emulation of a research conference, but also meet with people suffering from various forms of spinal cord injuries. Seeing her research being applied clinically to help others was incredibly rewarding.

Under Dr. Young’s tutelage, Dr. Carty was also able to begin her foray into the advocacy of medicine and medical research, particularly in the field of spinal cord injury. “I continued to pursue and develop these interests in medical school,” said Dr. Carty. “Health policy determines how healthcare is delivered in this country, so understanding it is super important.” Dr. Carty is making strides for young physicians across the country.

Dr. Mike Ruzek

Dr. Michael Ruzek, Medical Director of the Department of Emergency Medicine of Capital Health at Deborah Emergency Services and ODASIS alum, has been instrumental in combatting COVID over the past year and a half. Not only has he been mobilizing fellow physicians and healthcare professionals in the seemingly never-ending war against the virus; he has also been advocating for mental health, both for the public and for those on the frontlines.

The pandemic has greatly impacted both healthcare and those who work in healthcare. It’s changed the way we do things, and has forced us to take a step back and look at all the things we’ve taken for granted. And it hasn’t been easy. Dr. Ruzek has advocated tirelessly for mental health awareness, for both patients and their families, as well as the healthcare professionals working tirelessly to support and treat them. “We

need to support one another in these challenging times,” he said, “for that is part of the residual impact of dealing with the scars after battle.” Dr. Ruzek and his colleagues give credit to our communities, and particularly to those individuals who have taken steps to prevent the spread of the virus. In protecting themselves and their loved ones, they are easing the immense burden shouldered by those working in healthcare.

“This has been a battle and a war with a virus. We are battling an unseen enemy,” said Dr. Ruzek. “There are many unsung heroes in this battle. The word ‘hero’ can sound cliché, but there is an immense amount of truth to it. It goes beyond just our physicians and nurses; the list goes on and on and on. There are many people who have been forced to stay separate from their loved ones in our communities, and this selfless sacrifice is a testament to them going out of their way

to save their neighbor.”

Dr. Ruzek has witnessed that selflessness unendingly throughout the pandemic, within the healthcare industry, within neighborhood communities, within universities. Speaking about ODASIS specifically, he said: “Any individual who goes through this program knows the meaning of selflessness and paying it forward. Seeing the example of Dr. Khan and our wonderful mentors, when you needed someone to advocate and support you, you grow an appreciation for community selflessness and doing good unto others.”



Justin Rodriguez

My name is Justin Rodriguez and I am an M1 at the University of Michigan Medical School. Looking back on my undergraduate journey, I had three major experiences that helped me get accepted into and prepared for medical school: 1) ODASIS, 2) Research, 3) EMT. ODASIS provided me with a strong support network and helped change the way I studied. Through ODASIS, I began tutoring and even taught the MCAT class. These experiences showed me that teaching others actually helps one to learn more about themselves. I learned about my own learning and studying strategies. I learned how to provide feedback and, in turn, know how to implement feedback I receive from others. ODASIS also helped

secure my research position which I held for 3 years as an undergraduate. I worked under Dr. Wise Young who taught me not only how to conduct scientific research but also challenged me to think critically. Dr. Young exposed me to the discovery side of medicine which changed the way I thought about the advancement of modern medicine. Finally, it was a mentor I met in ODASIS who helped me become an EMT. As I reflect on my 4 years at Rutgers, the only thing I wish I could change would have been to be even more involved with and dedicated to ODASIS during my first year. Thank you, Dr. Khan and the entire ODASIS staff, for all the work you have put in to build an organization that creates amazing students and future doctors.

“Thank you for believing in my success.” —Justin Rodriguez



Lindsay Benitez

My name is Lindsay Benitez, alumna of Rutgers University class of 2020 and matriculant into Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University, class of 2025. ODASIS has played an instrumental role in changing my life. When I first began my journey at Rutgers as a Freshman five years ago, I had no idea what the path to becoming a doctor looked like. As a first-generation college graduate who had no idea how to succeed in this pre-med journey, I was excited. I would become the first person in my family to become a doctor. I knew it. Yet, my journey had barely begun when I found out I failed my very first chemistry exam. I was dumbfounded, crying in the dorm by myself. Thankfully, my dad encouraged me to be a part of ODASIS. I spoke to one of the advisors and we came up with a plan. I dropped the class and resolved to get extra help and join extra tutoring

sessions. With the support system of ODASIS friends and staff, I came back and hit the ground running. It was because of a freshman year advisor that I ended up on the right path. When I had failed, he guided me and showed me another way. If it weren’t for Dr. Khan, Shama, Jon, and all the ODASIS staff, my life would not be the same. ODASIS taught me how to work collaboratively and efficiently with peers, and to value the importance of diversity. We need African-American, Latinx and socioeconomically underrepresented peers in medicine. We have a background and culture that is beautiful and needed in this field, giving us the opportunity to connect to ignored and underrepresented patient populations. The work that is being done in this office has generational impact, and I am proud to say that I’m a part of that impact. I thank God for the tremendous blessing that the ODASIS program has been!



Undergraduate Highlight



Jesus Benites

Entering Rutgers as an incoming freshman was nerve racking to say the least. However, after joining the STP program at ODASIS the summer of my freshman year, I was able to learn the true ins and outs of how to get by as an undergraduate. Apart from the educational support that the program provided, I was able to walk away with the sense that I had made a new family at Rutgers. With this mindset, I went into my first semester with high spirits alongside everyone from STP. From my first semester, I was lucky enough to have work study. With this, I had the opportunity to work alongside Dr. Khan for several years. Getting to know Dr. Khan on a deeper level than just being our advisor/mentor was a unique experience for me. He went above and beyond helping me out with frequent advice. He became a father figure to me at school and the person that I would end up relying on the most. I realized that thanks to the tough love he showed me, I was able to mature quickly, and that is something I am very grateful for. As the years progressed,

I drew nearer to the dreaded MCAT class (no offense to any instructors). During this time, life became hectic for several reasons not including the pandemic. With the class lasting for a whole school year, it felt like I was taking that course for an eternity. Nonetheless, I was able to push through these challenging times with the support of my family and everyone from ODASIS. After taking the MCAT exam and applying early-decision to NJMS, my adulting life officially kicked in as I had to search for housing. Fortunately, one of my close friends from ODASIS, Xyala Jones, also got accepted to NJMS so we decided to live together. Living with Xy will help me stay on top of my studies and focus on getting things done. From being late to Dr. Khan's class and being called out in front of everyone to receiving my white coat in a couple months, all I can say is we made it.

Xyala Johnson

Spring of 2017 I was a senior in high school and I was introduced to ODASIS through a student that was currently taking the MCAT class. From there I went to orientation, completed STP and completed all of my sciences which allowed me to become a member of the same MCAT class as a Junior at Rutgers. During this class I was taking biochemistry and basic stats for research while working and being involved in my sorority. To say that this was easy would be an absolute lie; however, I can say that my friends who were in the MCAT class helped to keep me grounded and focused. Consistently, students such as Ronald and Jordan have been there to answer any questions that I have and to provide an explanation. We also helped each other keep track of all of our exams, quizzes, mock exams and assignments that were due. Among this group there is a "no person left behind" mentality. That type of attitude is not easy to find in life, but especially among pre-med students. There are an overwhelming number of people in this world that will abandon you as soon as you are no longer beneficial to their success. Knowing that the friends I

found in ODASIS were some of the best at knowing how to balance studying and other life activities influenced my decision on which medical school I would attend. After much consideration, and many lists of pros and cons, I turned down offers from other schools and chose to attend NJMS, not only because of the curriculum and staff but because of the support system that I knew I would find. There are countless ODASIS students walking the halls of NJMS in all years of medical school and even as staff. As I was looking for housing, I even decided that I would live with Jesus Benites, who I met during STP the summer before I began my freshman year at Rutgers. Now, as I am writing this, we are 3 days away from starting medical school and officially becoming student doctors. I can confidently say we are more ready than ever knowing that we can ask almost any other ODASIS alumni for help along the way and they will be there with all resources available. That is a level of confidence and comfort that simply cannot be found without programs such as ODASIS. As much as I hate to say it, truly it pains me, Dr. Khan is right; eat your books!



Bryan Cabeza Alvarez

For Bryan Cabeza, graduate of the Rutgers University class of 2021 and matriculant into Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, community has always been a central aspect of life. From a very early age, the value of community and togetherness has been ingrained into Bryan's lifestyle. "Connecting and breaking bread with others is a feeling like no other and is how I live my life," he said. It was this value of community that made Bryan want to become a doctor, one who served struggling and marginalized populations. "Medicine is the way I can reach out to people and make lasting connections," he said. This was a calling that would allow him to both

hone his skills in science and honor his love for community. Bryan's long-term aspirations are to run a clinic to provide underrepresented populations with holistic and high-quality care. Bryan's own experiences during his first year, initially at Purdue University before transferring to Rutgers New Brunswick, cemented his resolve. Away from home for the first time, Bryan overworked himself by taking on too many responsibilities without a solid support system behind him, and ended up being hospitalized. Bryan then chose to transfer back to the East Coast to continue his college education. This is where his experience with ODASIS came in. Bryan credits ODASIS with

providing him with the mentoring, advising and academic support that allowed him to succeed during his undergraduate career. The community that he found in the ODASIS staff and fellow students was vital to Bryan's success. "It's like a family," Bryan says fondly while reminiscing on his times at ODASIS. "They adopt you, take you in, and give you advice and strategies for success that you would normally have to pay someone for." Community has long been important to Bryan, and he is thankful for the ODASIS community's role in his journey to becoming a healthcare professional.

AAMC stats for 2020-2021

In 2020-2021, the AAMC ranked Rutgers:

- 3rd out of 95 schools in number of African American applicants to medical school
- 30th out of 125 schools in the nation in number of Hispanic/Latino applicants to medical school

In Their Words—Charting a Path to Success



ODASIS Alum Climbing the Ladder

Yet another notable ODASIS alum making strides to better the community is Dr. Alister Martin, an emergency physician at Massachusetts General Hospital. In March of 2021, the Boston Globe published a story highlighting his efforts to distribute COVID-19 vaccines to underserved and inaccessible communities.

Dr. Martin was particularly worried about the elderly and disabled individuals from these communities, who would have an even more limited ability to get to a vaccination site. “You have to bring the vaccine to them,” said Martin. “If you don’t get to those folks, you will always have embers of COVID burning.”

Working with Jon Santiago, a state representative running for mayor, Dr. Martin created a plan called GOTVax to do just that. By employing methods used by political campaigns and recruiting 160

physicians, nurses, and medical students, they were able to reach the target populations. “It’s exactly as it were trying to get folks out to vote,” said Martin.

Dr. Martin reached out to the Boston Housing Authority to set up clinics to create easy-access vaccination sites. They partnered with various medical agencies in and around Boston, helping them reach approximately 4,000 elderly and disabled people in 35 buildings around the city.

GOTVax has hired staff and plans to hold clinics every Friday. “Dr. Martin’s team is a great help to us,” said Lydia Agro, the BHA Chief of Staff and Public Affairs. His efforts have succeeded in aiding these disadvantaged communities. “This is what vaccine equity looks like. Bringing vaccines to where people live, meeting them where they are.”

Brandon Roberson, Alum of ODASIS, EOF and Access Med, Graduates from RWJ

Brandon Roberson, an alumnus of the Rutgers University Class of 2015, recently graduated from Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School in May of 2021. He is presently doing his residency in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. He credits EOF, ODASIS and Access Med for his present accomplishments. Brandon’s journey is a testament to the success of the partnership between the ODASIS program and Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF).

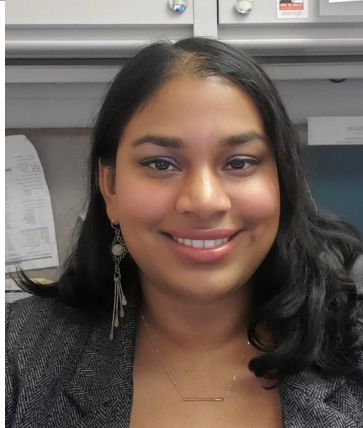
Introduced to the ODASIS program through the EOF Summer Enrichment Program during the summer before his freshman year, Brandon remained a dedicated participant throughout his undergraduate journey at Rutgers University. During the following semesters in Brandon’s academic career, he made full use of the resources available to him through ODASIS. Brandon made fast friends who were also part of these

programs and they helped one another study and succeed both academically and professionally.

During his time at ODASIS, Brandon found himself ensconced in the network and community that makes up the program. He found a number of mentors who were ODASIS and EOF students like himself, and they walked him through the program and the pre-medical track in preparation for medical school. Once he became an upperclassman, Brandon paid in forward, choosing to give back to the community that had supported him by mentoring incoming students who were also part of ODASIS and EOF. Thus, the partnership between the programs cultivates a sense of belonging in each of the participants, one that lends itself to the creation of a supportive community and network that extends throughout and beyond each year of students.



A Heartfelt Goodbye



Ms. Shama Huq, our beloved Administrative Coordinator, has worked at ODASIS for seven years. She has been the glue that has held our ODASIS family together, a shining example of hard work and kindness throughout the office. Both staff and students have relied greatly upon Shama and her calm confidence, and it is with both joy and sadness that we bid her farewell as she moves on to further her studies to obtain her Ph.D.

Shama has been such an integral part of ODASIS. Facilitating communication between faculty and students like a whiz, she has kept everything running smooth as a well-oiled machine. She always responds to requests and concerns from fellow faculty and from students at lightning speed. From working with students to reaching out to alumni to facilitating communication between departments, Shama’s presence has been a vital part of our program.

At a farewell Zoom celebration on August 17, many of her fellow staff members, both within and outside of ODASIS, gave glowing reports of their experience working with Shama. “To see you flourish has kept me going,” said Dr. Michelle Shostack,

Director of the EOF Program. “You exemplify the highest level of work ethic in all that you do, and it has been the greatest pleasure working with you for the past seven years.”

Almost the entire MCATs class tuned in-from the dorms as fresh, first year medical students, from the apartments as graduates from Rutgers, from the bus as they headed home from work-to say a word of thanks. “You were the reason I was able to apply to medical school on time; you helped me manage all of my deadlines,” said one student. “Being around you made me feel at ease, and you could always help me figure out ways to stay focused and reduce stress during the MCATs class,” said another. They were all exceptionally grateful, as are all the students that Shama has worked with over the past seven years.

Shama goes above and beyond in making the ODASIS office feel like home to all who enter. Her kindness to everyone she meets knows no bounds. Her calm presence allows those around her to feel at ease. Shama is a paragon of excellence, and we will miss her dearly. We know that she will do wonderful things in the future, and cannot wait to see it. We wish you all the best Shama!

*Thank you for everything-
From, your ODASIS family.*

A Story of Success, Perseverance and Determination

Jayanne Pierre, member of the undergraduate class of 2021, has a unique and inspiring story. A cell biology and neuroscience major, she will be matriculating into Columbia University Dental School in the fall of 2021. A nontraditional student, Jayanne dropped out of high school in 2012 to return to Dominica and support her family when her mother fell ill. Despite being labeled a high school dropout, she returned to America three years later in 2015 to take her GED and study for her SATs, determined to continue pursuing her ambitions to become a health professional.

When deciding between colleges, Jayanne looked for two things: support and community. She found herself hesitant when visiting Rutgers, and wondered whether she’d find community in a school so large. But when she attended the ODASIS open house and met Dr. Khan, her worries melted away. “He was charismatic, he was boisterous,

and he immediately connected to us as a fellow Caribbean.” Jayanne found the program and its dedication to creating a supportive network for underrepresented minorities interested in health sciences heartwarming.

“I knew I wanted to be successful but I didn’t really know how, which is where ODASIS came in,” said Jayanne. “As a nontraditional student, they gave me resources that I would otherwise not have been able to have.” Jayanne was able to attend recitations for Biology, Chemistry and Physics, in addition to a DAT preparatory course. She scored in the 90th percentile of the entire nation in her DATs. And as a way to give back to the community that had given her so much support throughout her journey, Jayanne became an instructor for the DAT prep course.

“As an immigrant with limited resources, the opportunities that are here have played such a huge role in my success. It’s given me the opportunity to

achieve my dream –going to Columbia for dental school, and also becoming a Dean’s Scholar for Columbia, something I didn’t even think was a possibility.” The culmination of her unique journey is a testament to both Jayanne’s unwavering perseverance despite the many obstacles she’s had to face, and to the supportive ODASIS network that served as a second family to her during her time at Rutgers.



Summer Research Programs

Emmanuel Worede *SPURS, Columbia University*



Over the summer, I was a part of the SPURS Program at Columbia University. During this time, I was paired up with a lab and a mentor and over 2 months, began working on studying individual recognition with mice. During this time, I learned various tools for olfaction research and different software used in research. During the program, there were also different guest speakers varying from doctors to researchers and they explained their journeys to being where they are. This was such a beneficial experience for my own journey as I was able to hear different perspectives of why people went into medicine and the different struggles that came with their journeys.

Emmanuel Adekanye *NERA III, Rutgers NJMS*



My experience with NERA III was very fruitful, as I was able to dip my feet into the world of medical research and understand what it means to think like a researcher, as well as a physician. Dr. Steven Keller and Dr. Pinghsin Chen led our research groups through the rigors of patient QA's and QI's for our respective fictitious practices, simply based on the various diseases and conditions assigned to us. Whether it was Hypertension, Diabetes, or Depression, us students were readily engaged in our given topics and focused on finding ways to treat these conditions in the patients we identified. My specific group focused on Immunizations, which has been a very polarizing topic in the world as of late due to the prominence of various COVID-19 vaccines. This piqued my interest, as I desired to learn more

about how prevalent general vaccinations are in the lives of the average patient. With that being said, I certainly learned a lot in this avenue and I'm very glad I took the opportunity to participate in NERA III.

Samuel Almodovar *Bridging the Gaps, USC Keck*



This summer, I completed the virtual Bridging the Gaps Summer Research Program with Keck School of Medicine. I worked with Dr. Yassine to conduct a literature review on the effects of omega-3 supplementation on brain functional connectivity. Patients with Alzheimer's Disease have reduced resting-state functional connectivity in their default mode network. Functional connectivity is defined as a correlation in activity between brain regions that are anatomically separate. Previous studies suggest that omega-3 supplementation has a positive correlation with increased functional connectivity. Aiming to understand the relationship between the two, I conducted a literature review to support the hypothesis that omega-3 supplementation aids in increasing functional connectivity by assisting in the maturation of the neuronal network connectivity, enhancing cerebral blood flow, and having other effects on neurons. From the literature review, one study used mouse models to understand the effects of omega-3's on the brain and observed an increased number of excitatory synapses, pre and post synaptic specializations, dendritic arborization, and increased synapse size after DHA supplementation. A cross-sectional study analyzed plasma lipid levels from 96 healthy elderly adult patients and suggested a positive correlation between DHA levels and brain connectivity. Finally, an interventional study that administered low and high doses of DHA to 33 boys (ages 8-10) suggested a positive association between supplemental DHA levels and task-oriented functional connectivity. These studies support examining the effects of omega-3 supplementation on functional connectivity for Alzheimer's Disease prevention.

2021 STP

While most high school graduates were in the midst of celebrating the completion of a very challenging year of learning during the global pandemic, 17 highly qualified and carefully selected students participated in the coveted Strategic Plan (STP) program. STP, which is made possible through the generosity of Rutgers University and ODASIS alumni, provides incoming freshmen interested in pursuing careers in the sciences with a strong foundation and exposure to their core fall courses. For the 2021 STP cohort, the program was offered completely virtually with enhanced co-curricular programming and scheduling modifications to provide a greater emphasis on community building and the development of effective learning strategies. The students spent five weeks immersed in learning the essential skills, mindsets, and foundational topics of Calculus, General Chemistry, and Expository Writing in preparation for their fall courses. In addition to their academic experiences in the classroom, the STP scholars attended workshops on mental health

with Counseling, Alcohol and Other Drug Assistance Program & Psychiatric Services (CAPS), study strategies with the Learning Resource Center, and advice for first year students with a first year SAS dean. They were able to attend virtual medical school visits at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, New Jersey Medical School, and The Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University. Finally, they benefited from a chemistry lab demonstration, weekly alumni panels, and collaborative study hall sessions led by recent alumni five nights per week. Our Strategic Plan scholars began their summer with great enthusiasm as new members of the Rutgers community and invested a lot of energy into learning how to gauge their efforts to the rigor of the university curriculum. They are well on their way to starting their academic careers with ODASIS and discovering how they can become contributors to the university and future science communities.



Academic Year 2021 Grade Comparisons

General Biology

	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥B	49.39%		43.67%
	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥C	78.66%		78.24%

General Chemistry

	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥B	33.14%		36.89%
	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥C	68.02%		72.41%

Mathematics

	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥B	59.6%		22.34%
	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥C	87.21%		48.78%

Biochemistry

	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥B	92.78%		67.65%
	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥C	94.05%		93.24%

Organic Chemistry

	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥B	33.14%		36.89%
	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥C	68.02%		72.41%

Genetics

	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥B	75.34%		59.54%
	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥C	94.72%		84.55%

Physics

	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥B	83.27%		60.25%
	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥C	97.89%		90.21%

Systems Physiology

	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥B	72.89%		52.55%
	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥C	97.89%		76.35%

test super-scores of 610 on the Evidenced-Based Reading & Writing section, 631 on the Math section, and a 1240 Composite score, which were higher than both the New Brunswick and State average scores! Students who prepped for the ACTs program had average practice test super-scores of 25 in English, 25 in Math, 24 in Reading, 25 in Science, and 25 Composite. These scores were higher than the New Brunswick and State ACT average scores as well.

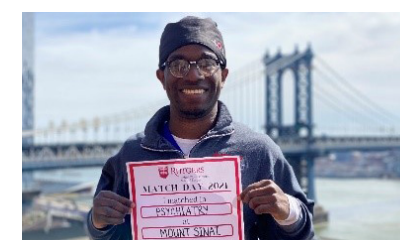
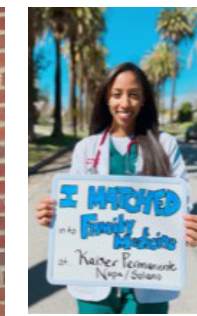
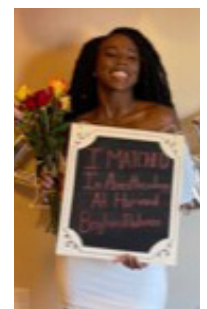
We are so proud of our recently graduated seniors of both the Bridge to Employment and Saturday Scholars programs. Every student in our program that applied to one or more higher education institution (either a 2-year or 4-year school) received an acceptance. Our graduates are off to Rutgers University, The College of New Jersey, Saint Peter's University, Middlesex College, Montclair State University, Gwynedd Mercy University, Stevens Institute of Technology, Monmouth University, New Jersey Institute of Technology, Barnard College of Columbia University, and Cornell University. We also had two students choose to enlist in the United States Air Force and the United States Navy. We wish all our now alumni the best of luck in their next chapters!

Shannon, along with the rest of the staff of ODAIS, is so grateful for the involvement, support, and encouragement of our partners. There is an African proverb that says, "It takes a village to raise a child", which means that it takes an entire community to positively interact with and guide children for them to grow and develop successfully. Our high school programs have their own village, and without it, we

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Congratulations To Our 2021 Graduates from Professional Schools!



Congratulations to the Class of 2021

RUTGERS
Robert Wood Johnson
Medical School

Ronald Gibson
Gloria Awuku
Christopher Vargas – Phase II
Kailyn Ramirez – Phase II
Aaliyah Phillips – Phase II
Idemudia (Michelle) Osaumwense – Phase II
Andres Alba – Phase II
Ava Dawn Anigbogu – Phase II
Jennifer Delgado – Phase II

Drexel University

Physical Therapy Programs
Ariel Cifuentes
Cristina Umanzor-Alvarado

**DONALD AND BARBARA
ZUCKER SCHOOL of MEDICINE
AT HOFSTRA/NORTHWELL**

Julian McDonald

RowanUniversity
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF
BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES

Paul Mera

RUTGERS
New Jersey Medical School

Jesus Benites
Bryan Cabezas
Michelle DeFreitas
Aushenay McNeill
Carlos Pareja
Rebecca Mulwa
Xyala Johnson-Jones
Valeria Alvarado

COLUMBIA | COLLEGE OF DENTAL MEDICINE

Jayanne Pierre

**NOVA SOUTHEASTERN
UNIVERSITY**
College of Dental Medicine

Brittany Urena

**School of Medicine
TEMPLE UNIVERSITY®**

Gabriel Colley

RUTGERS
School of Public Health

Laurny Okendi

Jefferson
Philadelphia University +
Thomas Jefferson University
HOME OF SIDNEY KIMMEL MEDICAL COLLEGE

Lindsay Benitez
Christopher Garrick
Siani Harding
Obeloye Isesele
Jesutomisola Onafowokan

Tufts
School of
Medicine

Sabrina Lima

**MEDICAL SCHOOL
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN**

Justin Rodriguez

**Hackensack Meridian
School of Medicine
at Seton Hall University**

Charly Oscano

**ROWAN UNIVERSITY
School of
Osteopathic Medicine**

Okezia Cole
Kenneth Castro
Yazmin Williams
Rahyan Mahmud
Ummar Sannoh
Clifford Adams

**NOORDA COLLEGE
of OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE**

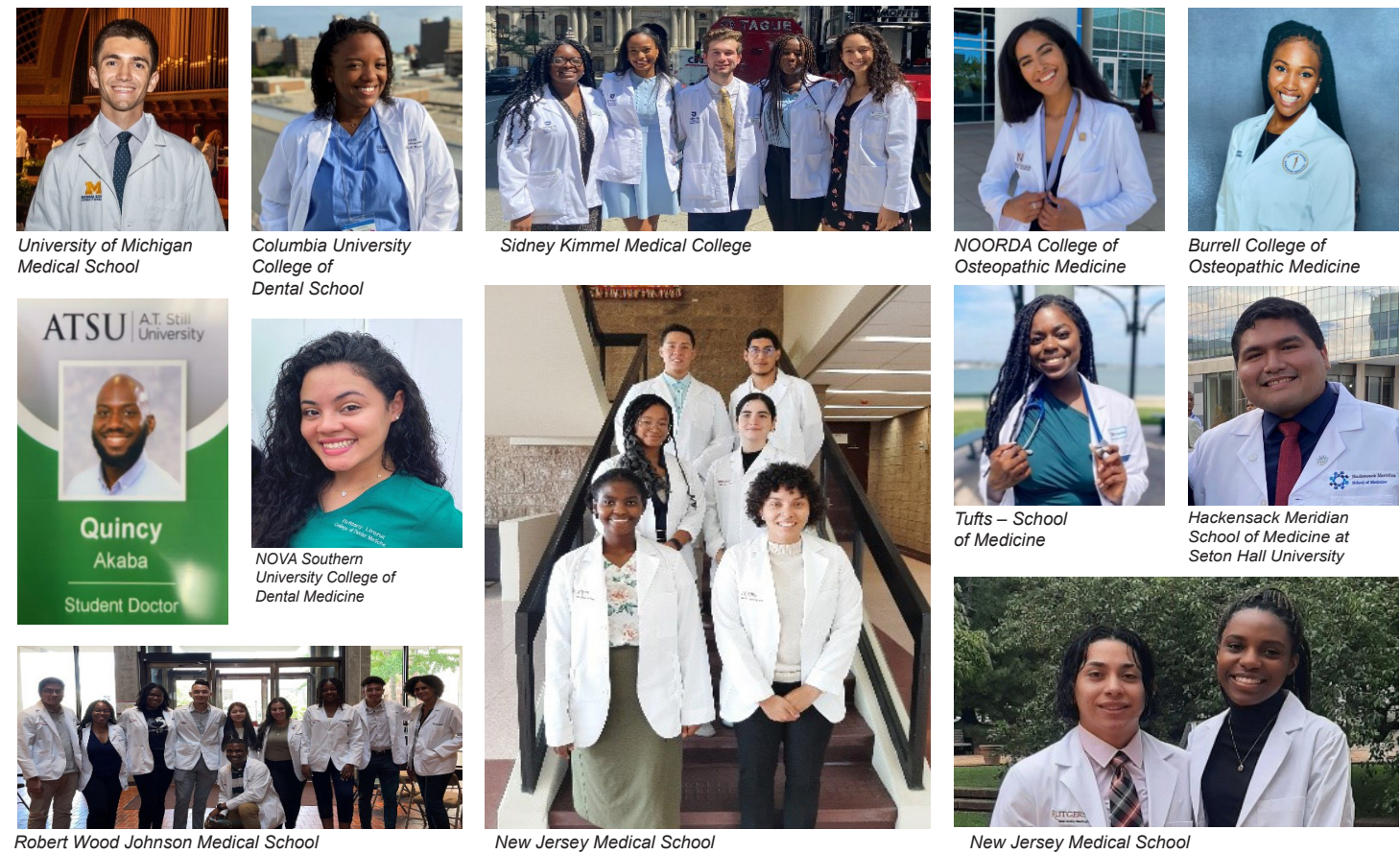
Emely Fernandez

**BURRELL COLLEGE
of OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE**
at
New Mexico State University

Rikelle White

**ATSU
A.T. STILL
UNIVERSITY**

Quincy Akaba



Alumni Graduating in 2021

RUTGERS
Robert Wood Johnson
Medical School

Valerie DeJesus, M.D.
Breta Osei Bonsu, M.D.
Lester Julian McRae, M.D.
Efua Bolouvi, M.D.
Melissa Encarnacion, M.D.
Brandon Roberson, M.D.
Daphney Noel, M.D.
Anevea Tinnery, M.D.
Joshua Akinsanya, M.D.
Becky Adu Motunrayo, M.D.
Nanaama O'Hene, M.D.
Iman Ali, M.D.
Raymond Amponsah, M.D.
Joel Okech, M.D.
Cassandra Soto, M.D.
Victor Mensah, M.D.
Jessica Ohiri, M.D

**JOHNS HOPKINS
SCHOOL of MEDICINE**

Kene Ezeigwe, M.D.

**UNIVERSITY of MARYLAND
SCHOOL OF DENTISTRY**

Matthew Sawaged, D.M.D.

Penn Medicine

Nathaniel Baffoe-Mensah, M.D.

**Cooper Medical School of
Rowan University**

Keiry Rodriguez, M.D.
Abisola Oyeniran, M.D.
Claudia Rugama, M.D.
Avril Betances, M.D.

**ROWAN UNIVERSITY
School of
Osteopathic Medicine**

Francisca Aguilar, D.O.

**Keck School of
Medicine of USC**

Emilio Feliz, M.D.
Nia Carty, M.D.

**PHILADELPHIA
COLLEGE OF
OSTEOPATHIC
MEDICINE**

Katie Lucianny Soler, D.O.
Chizoba Akunwanne, D.O.

COLUMBIA

Viemma Nwigwe, M.D.

RUTGERS
New Jersey Medical School

John Bertot, M.D.
Adam Ahmad Chaustre, M.D.
Ayodeji Folarin, M.D.
Murka Jeanchares, M.D.
Neil Bhavsar, M.D.
Marc Henry Estriplet, M.D.
Nigel Scott, M.D.
Ashley Gallagher, M.D.
Flor Lema, M.D.
Andre Esteves, M.D.
Jillian Paredes, M.D.
Kayla Fowler, M.D.

RUTGERS
Graduate School of
Biomedical Sciences

Gabriella Bahamondes,
M.B.S.

**NYU | COLLEGE
OF DENTISTRY**

Lemuel Rodriguez, D.M.D.

**School of Medicine
TEMPLE UNIVERSITY®**

Sunday Ebo, M.D.
Abim Okulaja, M.D.

**Kornberg
School of Dentistry
TEMPLE UNIVERSITY®**

Sabine Page, D.M.D.

**TEMPLE
UNIVERSITY®
School of Podiatric Medicine**

Esther Exantus, D.P.M.

LECOM

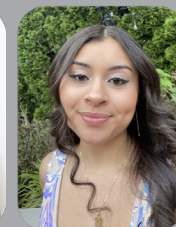
Tatiana Fech, D.O.

1327 ODASIS GRADUATES FROM 1990-2019

Profession	Number (%)	Profession	Number (%)
Medicine (MD)	568 (42.9%)	Medicine / Public Health (MD / MPH)	4 (0.3%)
Osteopathy (DO)	110 (8.3%)	Chiropractic (DC)	4 (0.3%)
Biomedical Sciences (MBS)	53 (4.0%)	Biomedical Engineering (MBE)	3 (0.2%)
Dentistry (DMD / DDS)	40 (3.0%)	Law (JD)	3 (0.2%)
Biomedical Research	15 (1.1%)	Optometry (OD)	4 (0.3%)
Physician Assistant (PA)	13 (1.0%)	Medicine / Biomedical Sciences (MD / MBS)	3 (0.2%)
Podiatry (DPM)	15 (1.1%)	Research (PhD)	3 (0.2%)
Nursing (RN / BSN / LPN / MSN)	13 (1.0%)	Medicine / Business (MD / MBA)	1 (0.1%)
Medicine / Research (MD / PhD)	8 (0.6%)	Osteopathy / Law (DO / JD)	1 (0.1%)
Pharmacy (Pharm D)	18 (1.4%)	Master of Science (MS)	1 (0.1%)
Osteopathy / Biomedical Sciences (DO / MBS)	7 (0.5%)	Veterinary (DVM)	2 (0.1%)
Public Health (MPH)	6 (0.5%)	Other (e.g., business, education)	412 (31.0%)
Physical Therapy (PT)	20 (1.5%)		

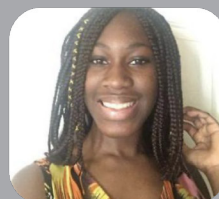
ODASIS

Office for Diversity and Academic Success in the Sciences



Summer 2021 ODASIS Scholarship Recipients from top left around clockwise: Aaliyah Witherspoon, Brittney Morales Ramos, Emmanuel Worede-kal, Yanika Arevalo Rodriguez, Inaya Thompson, Juliana Lozano, Siani Harding, Obehioye Iselele, Oluwaseyi Odutayo, Rhoda Ukenna-Izuwa, Tiffany Enemu, Justin Rodriguez, Emmanuella Abeni.

Funding for these scholarships was made possible through the generous support of Dr. Norman Einstein, Dr. Herbert Pardes, Dr. Foluso Fakorede, Dr. Owano Pennycooke, Dr. Corey Smith and Dr. Elo Adibe.



RUTGERS

School of Arts and Sciences

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