

**Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs**  
Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative



Great Explorations, Jumpstart,  
Junior & Senior Doctors Academy  
UConn Health

**2019-2020 Academic Year Program**

May 20, 2020

**UConn**  
**HEALTH**

# **Congratulations to the Class of 2020**

**We are indeed very proud of your  
success and commitment to your  
educational goals.**

The Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs sponsors the Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative (Aetna HPPI) summer and academic year programs. This initiative was developed to promote diversity in the health professions and is a formal educational consortium offering a comprehensive program of educational enrichment and support activities for under-represented, disadvantaged and first generation students applying to medical and dental schools, graduate programs in biomedical sciences, nursing, pharmacy and allied health programs.

The program is a continuous pipeline for middle/junior high school, high school and college level students. The Department supports students of diverse backgrounds and has expanded its programs for middle, high school and college students to realize their dreams of becoming health professionals.

The Aetna HPPI programs has proven to be top-notch because many of the program participants have successfully completed their undergraduate degrees and have actualized their goals of entering medical, dental and graduate school. We continue to develop new programs and fine-tune the existing ones to expose students to the various fields in the biomedical sciences which will ultimately increase the diverse pool of students pursuing careers in the health professions.



**Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs**  
Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative

# Message From Dr. Marja Hurley

## Associate Dean, Health Career Opportunity Programs



I would like to congratulate you, the Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative Doctors Academy Jumpstart, Junior Doctors and Senior Doctors participants for your outstanding performance and a very special recognition to the alumni of the High School Research and Doctors Academy who are graduating from colleges, graduate school, medical school, dental school and pharmacy school this year.

Today, we especially celebrate the Doctors Academy Senior Class of 2020, on behalf of myself and the staff of the Department, for the exemplary jobs you have done as part of the Senior Doctors Academy. You are the first and hopefully only group of high school graduates that will ever have to watch your virtual graduation as if you were your proud parents, relatives, and friends.

I never envisioned, nor did your parents, the pandemic of COVID and the consequences of health disparities that confirms the need for a diverse health care workforce, and I hope many, if not all of you, will continue to participate in our college pipeline programs because of your love of science and dedication in helping others.

It is bitter sweet that the Doctors Academy was developed to encourage you, even at this early stage, to consider careers in the health professions. It has been a pleasure to have worked with and mentored you during these past several years.

I wish all of you the very best in college and we will continue to be supportive as we see you off on the next leg of your journey.

Finally remember to *“Lift As You Climb”*.

Marja M. Hurley, M.D.  
Professor of Medicine and Orthopaedics,  
Member Institute of Systems Genomics,  
Institutional Designee, AAMC, Group Women in Medicine and Science,  
Associate Dean Health Career Opportunity Programs,  
Founding Director, Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative  
UConn Health  
Schools of Medicine & Dental Medicine

# Messages from Staff



Congratulations to all students on the completion of the program. This year has been challenging because of COVID-19. However, you all adjusted to the circumstances and continued with our transformation to an online format. This is a testament of your commitment to the program. A heartfelt thank you is extended to the parents/guardians, teachers, mentors, counselors and department staff who facilitated the seamless transition to the online format.

Special congratulations to the graduating class of 2020. I have known many of you since you were in middle school and it pleases me to see the growth that you have achieved over the years. I am very proud of you all! As you move to the next phase of your academic career, remember to strive for excellence at all times.

Once again congratulations to all!

Granville Wrensford, Ph.D.  
Assistant Dean and Associate Director  
Health Career Opportunity Programs  
UConn Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine



It has been wonderful working with all of our Doctors Academy students this school year! Although our 2019-2020 academic schedule did not end the way that we anticipated, I hope that you will hold many fond memories that will stay with you into the future. This year you interacted with individuals at various academic and professional levels from honors students in the UConn Rowe Scholars Program to prominent Hartford-area physicians at the Black Doctors Day event. Our aim is to continue to provide a rich environment for you to learn exciting and innovative concepts as you gain more experiences



together in your classes and mentoring sessions, and you have excelled at your presentations, projects, and standardized tests. It is truly rewarding to see your hard-work pay off as you accomplish your goals.

Watching you grow personally and professionally has been gratifying. Congratulations to the members of the Senior Doctors Academy! You are definitely empowered to make great contributions to your college campuses and to the wider-society. The Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs is here for you and I look forward to seeing you in the near future. Additionally, I would like to thank all of the parents and guardians for your continuous support and the teachers, mentors, and counselors for working diligently to make this program a success. We could not have done it without all of your assistance and dedication. This year we have been faced with unexpected situations, but don't let anything stop you from being the best you can be!

Kerry-Ann Stewart, Ph.D.  
Assistant Director, Health Career Opportunity Programs  
Assistant Professor, Public Health Sciences  
UConn Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine

Congratulations! I am so happy to have been a part of your journey through the Doctors Academy. You have worked hard and accomplished so much. There will always be obstacles in life, which the past few months have demonstrated, but you have overcome them. This proves there is nothing you cannot conquer. Now it's over, or just beginning, depending on how you look at it. New places to go, new people to meet and new achievements to attain.

I wish you success and happiness as you continue your academic journey.

Tracey Higgins  
Administrative Program Assistant II  
Health Career Opportunity Programs  
UConn Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine

# Student Reflection



Good evening and welcome students, parents, and guests. This day is a day that we will remember. This day should be filled with joy because we, the members of the Senior Doctors Academy, will be taking our next step towards college. Even though we had to wake up at 5 am on Saturdays and add homework from the Doctors Academy to our pile of homework from school, in the end it was all worth it to prepare us for this day. Today is also filled with sadness. Today is the last time we will all be together. Please give a round of applause for the graduating Class of 2020. We have accomplished so much thus far, and I know there are even greater things ahead for us. What does this program mean to us? Well, it is a program that offers opportunities to meet and interact with professionals in the medical field who look like us and it is a program that offers the opportunity to immerse into the medical field.

The health professionals in the Health Career Opportunity Programs and at UConn Health inspired us to have an interest in the medical field. Seeing minorities working in a field in which they are traditionally underrepresented is not just inspiring but heart moving. The health professionals we've met throughout our years in the program have laid a path for us to walk. Our peer mentors, who are medical, dental, and graduate students, have helped us to get to the finish line of this year and prepared us for college. I express my gratitude to all health professionals, and especially to our mentors, Mr. Aloys, Ms. Gian, Mr. Aaron, and Ms. Kaussar for getting us prepared for what lies ahead.

The Health Career Opportunity Programs has provided students with a diverse amount of enrichment trips, panels, and sub-programs that not only entertained us, but also filled us with greater knowledge. With the enrichment trips such as Mystic Aquarium, the Hartford Stage, American Red Cross, Life Star, the Supreme Court, the Museum of Connecticut History, and forensics demonstration from the State Medical Examiner we were able to learn about things outside of the medical field and also learn about careers and opportunities in the medical field. I want to thank Ms. Tracey, Dr. Wrensford, Dr. Stewart, and others for organizing and planning this program and its enrichment trips. We especially thank Dr. Hurley, and also the Aetna Foundation along with other funders who made this program possible.

Finally I want to thank our instructors, Mr. Jeff, Ms. Kargul, Ms. Washington, Ms. Maurissa, Ms. Drapeau, and all of the SATs instructors for their commitment in teaching students efficiently in their respective fields.

Everyone who invested in this program; you have invested your time into us. You have motivated students like myself to start the movement towards change, and develop a passion for medicine. For that we all thank you. Congratulations class of 2020!

Elis Diaz  
Senior Doctors Academy, Class of 2020  
University of Connecticut, Class of 2024

## Alumni Reflection



I was in the Doctors Academy 9<sup>th</sup> grade to 12<sup>th</sup> grade and during this time, I also participated in the High School Student Research Apprentice Program at UConn Health. These programs allowed me to get a deeper understanding of the medical field and prepare me for the independent learning and discipline needed for college. The summer before freshman year I participated in the Pre-College Academic Enrichment Program/BRIDGE Program in Storrs. I always knew I wanted to apply into UConn's pharmacy program the winter of my sophomore year of college. In order to prepare to take my PCAT in the fall of my sophomore year, Health Career Opportunity

Programs enabled me to take the first half of organic chemistry over the summer which allowed me to have a more solid knowledge base going into the exam. Being in the Doctors Academy also allowed me to gain entry into the John and Valerie Rowe Scholars Program in college. This program was the cornerstone of my college experience. The Rowe Program allowed me to build leadership skills and do meaningful work in the community. It taught me how

I could use my skillset to contribute to the world of healthcare. But most importantly, participation in these programs have allowed me to build a network of lifelong friends who have built successful careers in many fields.

Julise Marsh, Pharm.D.

Senior Doctors Academy, Class of 2014

UConn School of Pharmacy, B.S.;

John & Valerie Rowe Health Professions Scholar, Class of 2018

UConn School of Pharmacy, Doctor of Pharmacy, Class of 2020



Ten years ago, I was in your seat as I entered the Doctors Academy as a rising high school senior. I knew that I wanted to be a doctor. I did not, however, know then all that would be involved in the process. My summers in Health Career Opportunity Programs provided me with the tools I needed in order to convert my dream into a reality. Through my summers, I met fantastic Health Career Opportunity Programs faculty/staff, mentors, and friends who supported me on both an academic and personal

level. With their guidance and support, I had the opportunity to work with underserved populations, address health disparities, conduct translational basic science research, and learn what study strategies were most effective for my personal learning style. I began to see my future not just as a physician, but as a physician-scientist and advocate. I am extremely grateful for my time in Health Career Opportunity Programs. These summers helped me breathe life into words I have always been attracted to and try to live by: *“If you can’t fly then run, if you can’t run then walk, if you can’t walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward.”* – Martin Luther King, Jr. Good luck to the graduating Senior Doctors Academy class! I cannot wait to see what your futures hold!

Nia Harris, M.D.

Senior Doctors Academy, Class of 2010

Amherst College, B.A. in Psychology, Class of 2014

UConn School of Medicine, Doctor of Medicine, Class of 2020



As I look back on my four years at UConn, and think about the future that lies ahead, I often reflect on how grateful I am for the Health Career Opportunity Programs. As challenging as it was to wake up early on Saturday mornings and work hard Monday through Fridays during the summer, these experiences provided me with a strong foundation that helped me to succeed throughout college and as a John and Valerie Rowe Health Professions Scholar. Thanks to the Health Career Opportunity Programs Doctors Academy, I was able to perform well on the SAT and earn a spot in the UConn Honors Program. Through the Health Disparities Clinical Summer Research Fellowship Program, I gained research experience after my freshmen year and continued to explore my health care passions. Now, as a graduate of UConn, I am proud to say that I was able to perform research in a Physiology and Neurobiology lab on campus as well as create a film about female physicians. Through all of these opportunities, I continued to learn about the different aspects of the healthcare field. I am proud to share that my next professional development goal is to pursue a master's degree in nursing. This journey would not have been possible without all of the friends and mentors I have met through Health Career Opportunity Programs and the Rowe Scholars Program, and I look forward to hearing about all of your college success stories as well. Congratulations Class of 2020, you did it!

Tanya Miller, B.S.

Senior Doctors Academy, Class of 2016

UConn College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, B.S. in Physiology & Neurobiology;

John & Valerie Rowe Health Professions Scholar, Class of 2020



# *Great Explorations Doctors Academy (GE)*



Alana  
Betancourt



Markeda  
Carnegie



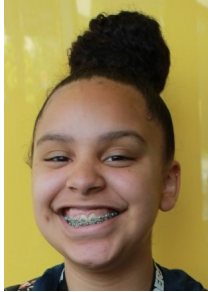
Chelsea  
Coleman



Kellie  
Cooper



Carlos  
Flor



Zarileyxis  
Gomez



Shalon  
Hardy



Mia  
Khan



Tamara  
Lopez



Seiwa  
Lukelwa



Makiah  
Morris



Nataly  
Rodriguez



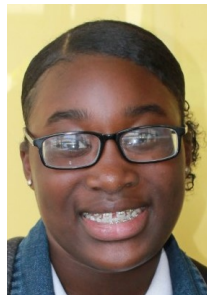
Izabella  
Rosa



Valerie  
Rosa



Neha  
Shanavar



Naziyah  
Walton



Amir  
Wilson

“The best way to predict the future is to  
create it.”

Peter Drucker

## *Jumpstart 9 Doctors Academy (JS9)*



Audrey  
Addy



Duke  
Addy



Abigail  
Brown



Keyanno  
Cohen



Jose  
Cruz-Gomez



Devonte  
Daley



Zion  
Gaynor



Travon  
Hardy



Sayee  
Kannah



Kristen  
Koka



Mark  
Manson



Markeeda  
Marshall



Jalese  
Roman



Micah  
Russell



Shazia  
Syed

“Successful people are not gifted, they just work hard and succeed on purpose.”

G.K. Nielsen



## ***Jumpstart 10 Doctors Academy (JS10)***



Arianna  
Acevedo



Yusuf  
Allam



Kacia  
Allen



Najay  
Campbell



Praneet  
Dangol



Emma  
Dargenio



Rafy  
DeLosSantos



Annalyees  
Hill



David  
Hinds



Nikay  
Jones



DayAvian  
Mayo



Kwaku  
Nyame



Tamia  
Percy



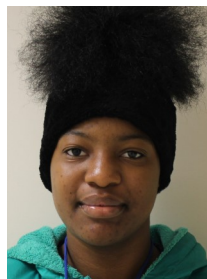
Sanyu  
Ponnala



Ciara  
Solivan



Natalee  
Steele



Trinyty  
Thomas



Abigail  
Williams



Amayah  
Wimberly-Whaley

**“The future belongs to those who believe  
in the beauty of their dreams.”**

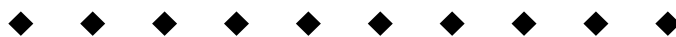
Eleanor Roosevelt



## Advice from the Senior Doctors Academy to the Junior Doctors Academy

Don't ever ask yourself "why am I getting up every single Saturday morning for UConn?" You should be asking yourself "what wouldn't I do without UConn on a Saturday morning?" This program has dramatically improved my school academics. The volunteers look out for you and are on you about college. Always know that they have your back and will never give up on you no matter how frustrated and hard it may be.

Jannell Brown



Health Career Opportunity Programs allowed me to branch out and network in the various medical fields and for that, I am extremely grateful. You also see yourself mature as you go through the program. There are so many opportunities that come with this program especially as you get older. I know SAT preparation is a long process, but it prepares you for your future. Stay focused and always strive for improvement. Remember, improvement and growth are never linear.

Aaliyah Anthony

They say go hard or go home but when things get tough you shouldn't give up that easily. You should go hard then go harder.

I selected these words because when I first joined the Health Career Opportunity Programs I didn't understand anything and I felt like giving up but then I asked for help and I just kept going. I tried harder then eventually I got it.

Junica Robinson



Rejection is temporary, but regret can last forever. So enjoy your last year and soak all the memories.

Joseph Annan-Kingsley



Being introduced to Health Career Opportunity Programs by my mentor, I was truly excited at the prospect of being part of the Jumpstart Doctors Academy. Enticed by all the opportunities I could receive, I could not wait for my time to begin. Very soon, I was enraptured by the preparation and inspiration instilled within all the students. Being recognized as capable and future physicians were all remarks my class did not truly understand. Although I did not recognize it then, my time with Health Career Opportunity Programs and the various programs I participated in were well worth it. Prepping for standardized tests, drafting resumes, and being exposed to as many health careers as possible was the hallmark of my time. My class and I worked a hard four years from a full load of school to thirty long Saturdays and to six weeks every summer, and we are now enjoying the fruits of our labor. Being able to confidently contend for the nation's top schools and scholarships while enjoying class time and time with my peers, I fully enjoyed my time and thrived from my experience. I came in as an 8th grader with aspirations and now I leave as a senior with a future.

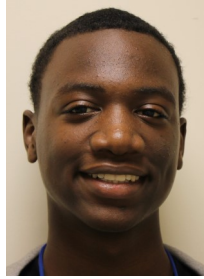
Syed Ali



## ***Junior Doctors Academy (JDA)***



Oriel  
Birt



Daquan  
Caulton



Chantae  
Chambers



Cameron  
Cohen



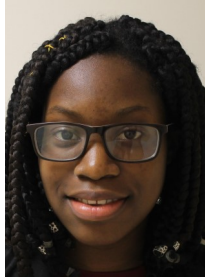
Leslie  
Cruz-Gomez



Lacey  
Dargenio



Sabrina  
Green



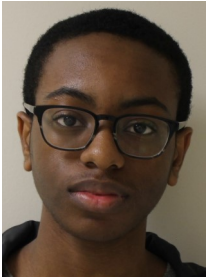
Savannah  
Greene



Aisha  
Haidara



Saffiya  
Heyligar



Excel  
Leonard



Saskia  
Linton



Adriana  
Mantilla



Lahela  
Martinez



Kaci  
Minto



HughDante  
Morant



Diamond  
Rolle



Jelena  
Waldron



Jevanta  
Wallace

**“Education breeds confidence; Confidence breeds hope; Hope breeds peace.”**

Confucius

# Thoughts from the SDA Mentors

To the Senior Doctors Academy,

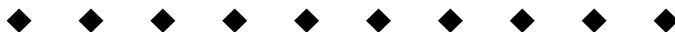
I have had the pleasure of working with many of you since you were in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, since then I have watched you all mature and grow. You all have consistently provided deep thoughtful responses to our questions, participated in our activities and have been a joy to mentor. As you get ready to begin your post-high school journey at a unique time in history, I hope that you are not defeated by the loss of your graduation but motivated and excited for what lies ahead of you. Regardless of what career you choose or where you go in the world, I hope you always remember that I am here for you if you ever need to talk or have any questions. And just know that I truly believe that whatever goals you have for yourself, no matter how long it may take, how costly, how hard, I know that you can accomplish it and I look forward to hearing about your successes in life.

To my favorite students, thank you for being the best part of my week for 5 years now. I'll truly miss each and every one of you!

Congratulations!!!

Gian Grant, MD/MPH Candidate

UConn School of Medicine, Class of 2021



Congratulations seniors!! I know this is not the high school graduation you dreamed of when you were young, but I celebrate you and I'm so proud of your accomplishments. I also know that you may be a bit nervous about starting college, but believe in yourself and know that you are more equipped for college than you can imagine. You've worked very hard and your effort, determination and resiliency has brought you to this point. Always remember, you are not in this alone. Reach out for help, and never hesitate to reach out to me for advice or any questions regarding college or career guidance. I am very proud of the young men and women you've become, and it was certainly a highlight of my medical school journey to play a small part in your education. I'm very proud of you. Keep up the great work, and NEVER EVER Give up on your dreams.

Aloys Nserekko, M.D.

Honor Board Member

UConn School of Medicine, Class of 2020

Dear Seniors,

I met you all this past year and quickly learned how much of an energetic and thoughtful group you are. I really loved the times we had to laugh, have fun, and learn from each other. My highlight was definitely seeing some of your faces during the water tub experiment! You are all going to be well prepared for college, and I hope you have the best experience possible! If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out. It has been a pleasure to work with you!

Congratulations!

Aaron Holmes

UConn School of Medicine, Class of 2022



Congratulation class of 2020! It has been an honor to work with you all this academic year. I am so proud of every single one of you! I know you will accomplish amazing things in college and beyond. I understand this wasn't the ending you had hoped for, but you hold the power to new beginnings; take charge of that! College won't be easy, but know that you are equipped with the tools and skills to accomplish all your goals. You are capable and able! Push forth with all your goals and don't let hardships stop you from reaching for the stars. I believe in you and your goals and I know you will excel in everything you put your mind to. I wish you all the very best! You got this! Please don't hesitate to reach out to me.

Kaussar Rahman

UConn Graduate Student



"Congratulations! Be proud of your achievements and take the time to celebrate yourselves, you've earned it. Continue to move forward and impose your will on all adversity that crosses your paths. Be determined, act with intent, and remember that no dream is too big or impossible. Above all- continue to challenge yourselves!

Jeremy Figueroa-Ortiz, DMD

UConn School of Dental Medicine, Class of 2022



It has been a privilege working with you all and getting to know you. Stay committed and don't forget where you came from. I wish you much success!

Richard (Richie) Jimenez, DMD

UConn School of Dental Medicine, Class of 2022



## *Senior Doctors Academy (SDA)*



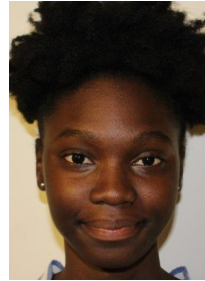
Lisbette  
Acosta



Kristin  
Alexander



Syed  
Ali



Lloydia  
Anderson



Joseph  
Annan-Kingsley



Aaliyah  
Anthony



Diandra  
Bennett



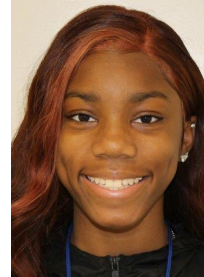
Jannell  
Brown



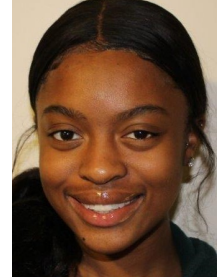
Preeya  
Diana



Elis  
Diaz



A-Shira  
Douglas



Kacia  
Flynn



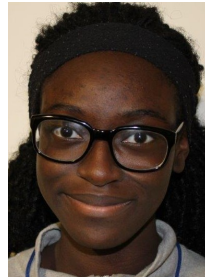
Kayla  
Jaman



Bushrah  
Khan



Samee  
Malik



Adwoa  
Mansa



Thais  
Mantilla



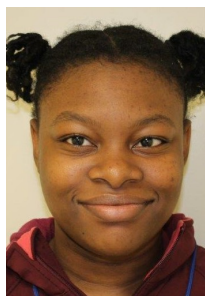
Yasmin  
Mohamad



Oge  
Okoh



Pocahontas  
Parker



Junica  
Robinson



Khadijah  
Stanford



Dawud  
Zakir

“Today is your day, your mountain is waiting. So get on your way.”

Dr. Seuss



# SDA Through the Years



Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs  
Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative



# Mementos



## **Acknowledgement of Funding Sources:**

Aetna Foundation

Connecticut State Legislative Fund

John and Valerie Rowe  
Health Professions Scholars Program

The Hartford

University of Connecticut Foundation  
Friends of the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs

UConn Health

William and Alice Mortensen Foundation

## **Acknowledgement of our Parents, Teachers, Peer Counselors and Mentors:**

We thank you for your support and continued encouragement  
and commitment to the students

**UConn  
HEALTH**

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