

# CELEBRATING 25 YEARS • 2021

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CAREER OPPORTUNITY PROGRAMS



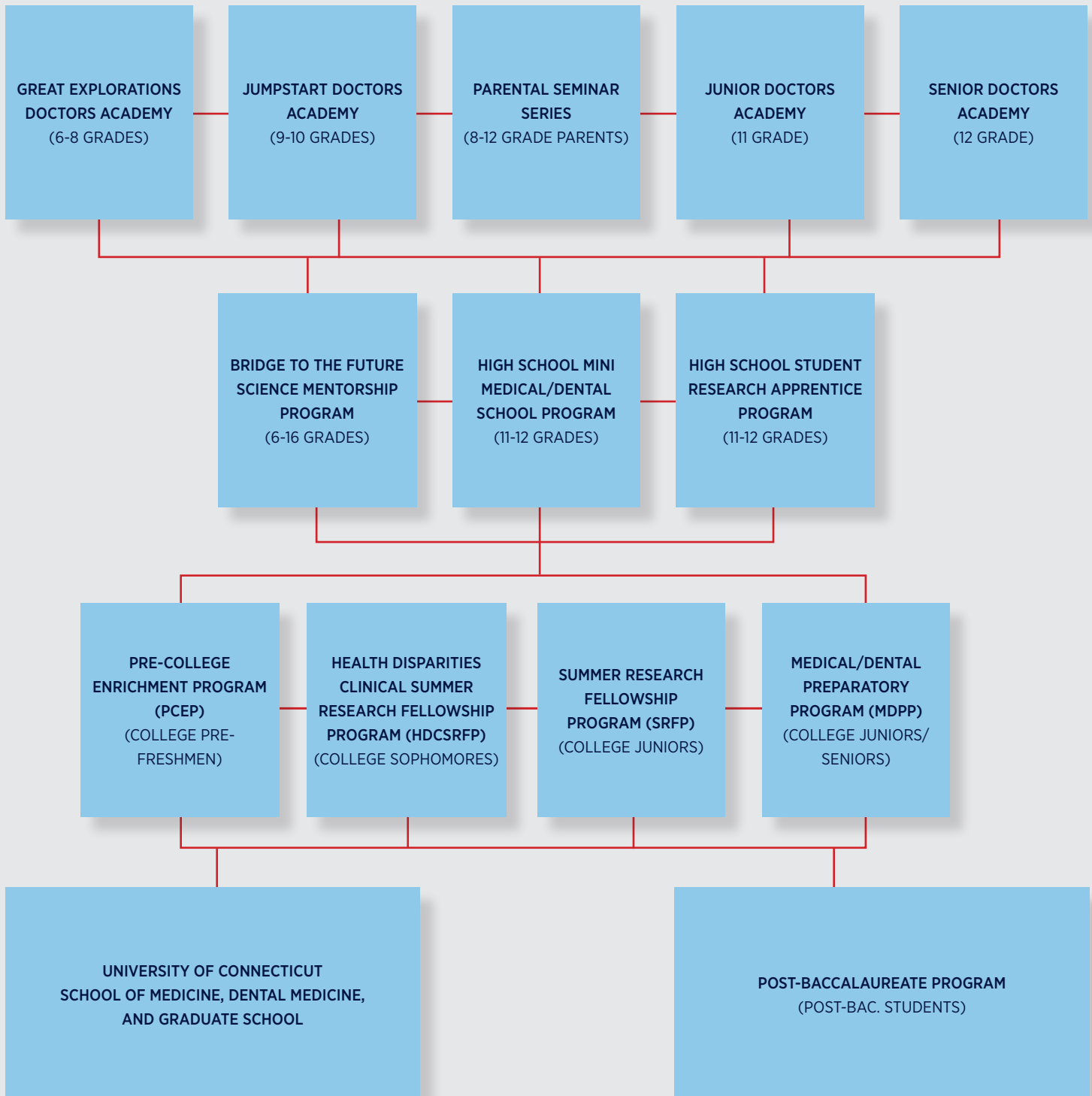
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Partnership Initiative and Pipeline  
Programs at: [health.uconn.edu/hcop](https://health.uconn.edu/hcop)

DECEMBER 2021

**UConn**  
**HEALTH**

HEALTH CAREERS  
OPPORTUNITY PROGRAMS

# AETNA HPPI PIPELINE



## CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF SUCCESS



The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact many aspects of our programs for middle school, high school, and college students. Yet, the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs (HCOP) has successfully delivered many components of the Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative (Aetna HPPI) programs virtually. The department is an integral part of

the School of Medicine, School of Dental Medicine, and Graduate educational community at UConn Health. The Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine are actively committed to the recruitment, retention, and graduation of diverse medical and dental students capable of providing culturally competent health care.

The Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs continues to support currently enrolled medical, dental, and graduate students of diverse backgrounds and expanded these efforts through the implementation of a Medical and Dental Alumni seminar series, now in its second year. Virtual mentoring by currently enrolled medical and dental students of middle school and high school students has been expanded. To increase STEM awareness for students in our Doctors Academy, we continued our collaborations with the Connecticut Science Center.

This year, I congratulate our graduating seniors participating in the high school Aetna HPPI Doctors Academy who were all accepted into colleges, and special congratulations to the Health Career Opportunity Programs scholars in the School of Medicine (SOM) and School of Dental Medicine (SODM) graduating class of 2021. In the SOM, 24% of the graduating class are Health Career Opportunity Programs scholars, while 21% of the graduating class in the SODM are Health Career Opportunity Programs scholars. We are also proud that 58% of the underrepresented students currently enrolled in the SOM are Aetna HPPI pipeline students, and 45% of the underrepresented students currently enrolled in the SODM are Aetna HPPI pipeline students.

The Aetna HPPI programs sponsored by the Department of Health Career Opportunity programs are recognized as a national model. In 1996, UConn Health, along with the Hartford School District, Central Connecticut State University, the University of Connecticut, and Wesleyan University, developed the Aetna HPPI in response

to the Association of American Medical Colleges' Project 3000 By 2000 initiative to increase the number of students from underrepresented groups in the health professions. To date, the Aetna HPPI programs have sent more than 700 participants to medical school, dental school, graduate school, or other health professional schools. Further success of the programs is noted by the number of physicians and dentists from diverse backgrounds who currently practice primary care, medicine, and dental medicine in Connecticut or have embarked on careers in academic medicine or dental medicine.

On July 30, we were proud to celebrate 25 years of the Aetna HPPI during the 2021 Summer Closing Ceremony. United States Senator Chris Murphy for the State of Connecticut served as our keynote speaker. Dr. Wayne Lloyd DeBeatham, Urologic Hospitalist, Phelps Hospital, New York; UConn School of Medicine Class of 2008; and former AHPPI pipeline participant served as our medical alumnus speaker.

Despite COVID-19, we had 132 middle school, high school, and college students participating virtually in our 2021 summer programs through the Aetna HPPI. During the 2021-2022 academic year, we anticipate approximately 300 students participating in our Aetna HPPI middle school, high school, and college programs virtually. It is gratifying that the community recognizes the importance of these programs in promoting diversity in the health professions and has continued to support these efforts over the last 25 years.

I thank our faculty, staff, and students at UConn Health and partner institutions for their dedication and support. Also, special thanks to our funders, including the John and Valerie Rowe Health Professions Scholars Program Endowment Fund that supports some of our existing programmatic initiatives.

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### MARJA HURLEY, MD

Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor  
 Professor of Medicine and Orthopaedic Surgery  
 Associate Dean of Health Career Opportunity Programs  
 Founding Director of Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative  
 UConn Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine

## **THRIVING AMID CHALLENGES**



It has been another tumultuous year for our department as we continue to operate under the pandemic environment. We were optimistic that conditions would improve to allow us to resume in-person activities. However, that was not possible, and we had to continue instruction and activities in a virtual format. We were able to do this armed with the

knowledge and experience from the previous year. I must again commend the teachers, counselors, mentors, and staff who made the necessary adjustments to ensure that we had a successful year. We had another amazing virtual closing ceremony where we celebrated the achievements of all the participants, especially the graduating seniors of the Doctors Academy. All graduating seniors have been accepted at four-year colleges, and several received full scholarships. We also celebrated the graduation of two former Doctors Academy students from the UConn School of Medicine and one from the UConn School of Dental Medicine.

Despite the challenges, we were still able to engage in several activities besides academic instruction in a virtual format. We continued our collaboration with the Connecticut Science Center, where our students interacted with staff and students to explore scientific principles. We also had special mentoring and other sessions by the Rowe Scholars, practicing health professionals, graduate students, and faculty who provided wide-ranging exposure to our students from anesthesiology, physiology, and neuroscience to financial literacy and a day in the life of a graduate student and health professional.

It is heartwarming to see so many students excited about the health sciences and careers in the health professions. I am eternally grateful to the many individuals who contributed to the success of the programs, which can be seen at various stages of the pipeline. At the middle and high school levels, we have seen a high persistence rate from one grade to the next. The graduating high school seniors have consistently performed at a higher level on the SAT compared to other students in the Hartford school district. Each year all of the graduating seniors have been accepted and matriculated in college. This year one former Doctors Academy student matriculated in UConn School of Medicine.

As we prepare for another year, I must acknowledge the parents, guardians, and students of the programs for their firm commitment. A special thank you to the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs staff, faculty, students, and other professionals here at UConn Health and the larger community who have volunteered their time to mentor and interact with the participants in our programs.

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### **Granville Wrensford, Ph.D.**

Assistant Dean and Associate Director  
Health Career Opportunity Programs  
UConn Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine



## FOSTERING INNOVATION AND COLLABORATION



It is truly gratifying to observe the growth and development of the Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative (HPPI) participants as they transition to the next level of their education. I always look forward each year to welcoming the first-year medical and dental class and congratulating the fourth-year students as they graduate and go on to residency or practice.

Even though we operated virtually this past academic year and summer, we continued to provide an enriching environment for students to learn exciting and innovative concepts to gain more exposure to the health professions. Throughout the academic year and summer, we introduced the Aetna HPPI Doctors Academy participants to medical specialties like obstetrics & gynecology, as well as social determinants of health and cultural competence, genetic diversity, and quantitative medicine. Likewise, the Medical/Dental Preparatory Program allowed undergraduate students to make greater strides as they prepared for the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT), the Dental Admission Test (DAT), or the basic medical sciences curriculum. Additionally, this summer, we hosted rising high school seniors for a virtual experience in the High School Student Research Apprentice Program. It was wonderful observing the presentations of their research projects.

Our participation in virtual events with community partners such as the Urban League of Greater Hartford and the Boys & Girls Club of Hartford, and virtual conferences such as the Student National Medical Association Region VII Medical Education Conference, the UConn Black Male Enterprise Summit/Black History Celebration, the Biomedical Sciences Careers Program Conference, and the New England Science Symposium allowed us to reach a large

group of students interested in the health professions and the biomedical and allied health sciences. We also continued to expand our collaborations with the UConn Storrs and Hartford campuses through virtual presentations to pre-medical and pre-dental college students.

I am always excited to see the graduates of the Senior Doctors Academy embarking on the next phase of their academic journey as college freshmen. It is truly rewarding to see our middle school, high school, and college Aetna HPPI participants accomplish their goals. It was a very proud moment to host our first Doctors Academy Reunion and to see our alumni pursuing graduate and professional level degrees in medicine, nursing, pharmacy, engineering, to name a few. We also extend our appreciation to the members of the UConn chapters of the Student National Medical Association, the Latino Medical Student Association, and the Student National Dental Association/Hispanic Student Dental Association, who mentored Doctors Academy participants and Bridge to the Future Science Mentoring Conference college participants. I thank the UConn Health community for its unwavering support of the Aetna HPPI programs, especially during these challenging times. Our faculty, instructors, mentors, tutors, seminar speakers, and counselors continue to help make these programs a great success.

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### **Kerry-Ann Stewart, Ph.D.**

Assistant Director of Health Career Opportunity Programs  
Assistant Professor of Public Health Sciences  
UConn Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine



**OMAR ALLAM, MD**

Physician, Medical Student, Mentor



Dr. Omar Allam graduated from UConn School of Medicine in May 2021.

Dr. Allam attended the University of Connecticut for his undergraduate education where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry in 2016.

Dr. Allam has always had a love for science, especially chemistry and physics.

However, those fields did not allow him to interact with others and his communities in a meaningful way. “I decided I wanted to be a surgeon around high school as it allowed [me] to combine my love for scientific thinking and social connections. I also loved working with my hands and felt that surgery was the best for me,” said Dr. Allam. One instance that truly fortified his decision to pursue a career in medicine was a misunderstanding between a close family member and a physician due to a lack of awareness of cultural differences. He knew that if more doctors looked like him and understood the cultural differences, his close family member’s health would have improved.

Currently, Dr. Allam is attending a 6-year plastic and reconstructive surgery residency at Yale New Haven Hospital in New Haven, Connecticut. In the future, Dr. Allam sees himself as an academic plastic surgeon, researching the intersection between plastic surgery and technology and discovering new ways to incorporate the latest technological findings into the field.

Dr. Allam first became involved with the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs in high school when participating in the High School Mini Medical/Dental School Program. “I then became more involved with the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs as I progressed into college, as it allowed me to interact with other budding scientists, physicians, and dentists that shared different and similar experiences,” said Dr. Allam. He is extremely grateful for the experiences and opportunities that the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs provided him, giving him insight and helping him get to where he is today. He is also very appreciative of the availability of Dr. Marja Hurley and the Health Career Opportunity Programs staff to mentor him throughout his career in medical school.

**“We collectively went through many applications and learned what it took to be a successful applicant into medical school.”**

Dr. Allam’s best experience through the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs was being part of a mock Admissions Committee with the Dean of Admissions while participating at a Bridge to the Future Science Mentoring Conference. “We collectively went through many applications and learned what it took to be a successful applicant into medical school,” said Dr. Allam.

Dr. Allam leaves the following words of advice and encouragement to the younger generation of students interested in the health professions: “The truth is no one will believe in yourself more than you. One of the hardest things to overcome was convincing myself that I was worthy of becoming a surgeon when everyone else was saying otherwise. Never be afraid to reach out and ask for help; I always found myself asking others for guidance, and I could not be where I am if it weren’t for the village of people that supported me, including the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs.”

**ASHLEY ARTHUR, DMD**

Dentist, Dental Student, Mentor



Dr. Ashley Arthur graduated from UConn School of Dental Medicine in May 2021.

Dr. Arthur attended the University of Connecticut for her undergraduate studies and graduated magna cum laude in 2017 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Marketing.

Currently, Dr. Arthur is attending a general practice residency at Rochester General

Hospital in Rochester, New York. Her future career plans include owning and operating a private practice, serving as a mentor, working in academic medicine, and taking part in dental mission trips both in the US and overseas, particularly in her parents' country of Guyana.

Dr. Arthur first became interested in becoming a dentist while pursuing her undergraduate education. She was on a pre-dental track and strategically majored in Marketing with the thought of someday opening a private practice. "I spent some time shadowing local dentists when I realized my passions lay in the field of dentistry. Growing up, I learned home remodeling skills under the watchful eye of my dad. He inspired me to be creative and to think outside of the box," said Dr. Arthur. Seeing the similarities dentistry shared with home remodeling, Dr. Arthur knew it was the right fit for her and realized that to be fulfilled as a person, she would pursue a career in the health professions. What further solidified Dr. Arthur's vision were her experiences visiting UConn Health.

Dr. Arthur's first exposure to the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs was during her participation in the Junior Doctors Academy Program. From there on, Dr. Arthur participated in several other programs provided by the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs, including the 2014 Health Disparities Clinical Summer Research Fellowship Program, the 2015 Medical/Dental Preparatory Program Track I - DAT Prep, and the 2017 Medical/Dental Preparatory Program Track II - Basic Medical Sciences program. "I learned about the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs as I was looking for extracurricular

activities. I enjoyed the fact the programs focused on preparing students for a career in health care. I was able to explore and learn the steps it took to accomplish my dreams of becoming a dentist," said Dr. Arthur. She is very grateful for the guidance that the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs provided her from high school through dental school. With the desire to give back, while in dental school, Dr. Arthur engaged in mentoring students in the Great Explorations Doctors Academy program as well as mentoring pre-dental students at the Bridge to the Future Science Mentoring Conferences provided by the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs.

**"I spent some time shadowing local dentists when I realized my passions lay in the field of dentistry."**

Dr. Arthur's best experience through the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs was her participation in the Bridge to the Future Science Mentoring Conferences. "I remember sitting in the audience and dreaming of a day when I would be on the student panel. I have gotten to see that dream come true. I remember spending time in Grasso Lab with the dental students and could not wait until I would be in that lab as a dental student," said Dr. Arthur. Being in Grasso Lab was her best experience; she would go to the Grasso Lab every year. "All the health professions students were there. Getting to see the [Doctors Academy] alumni that were once in the program, now in dental school, helped me see that it was possible that I too could become one of the students," said Dr. Arthur. Her participation in the Bridge to the Future Science Mentoring Conferences further confirmed her choice to go into dentistry.

Dr. Arthur leaves the following words of advice and encouragement to the younger generation of students interested in the health professions: "Be fearless and never let anyone set your limits for you. Know that life is full of opportunities; stay focused on your goals, find mentors, and be humble. When the going gets tough, because it will, remind yourself you are strong and capable of anything you set your mind to."

**FAITH CRITTENDEN, MD, MPH**

Physician, Medical Student, Mentor



Dr. Faith Crittenden graduated from UConn School of Medicine in May 2021.

Dr. Crittenden attended the University of Connecticut for her undergraduate education and was part of the Rowe Scholars Honors Program. In 2014, she earned a Bachelor of Science degree with honors in Chemistry and a minor in Molecular and Cell Biology.

Dr. Crittenden also earned a

Master in Public Health with a concentration in Health Policy from the School of Public Health at Yale University in May 2020.

Dr. Crittenden became interested in becoming a physician at age 16 when participating in the Junior Doctors Academy Summer Program provided by the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs. “I realized that becoming a physician would allow me to achieve more of my personal goals in caring for patients from my community, and allowing me to diversify my interests in the health care field and beyond,” said Dr. Crittenden.

Dr. Crittenden has been involved with the American Medical Association (AMA) for three to four years while pursuing her graduate studies at UConn Health. She initially became involved as a liaison for the Student National Medical Association (SNMA) to the student section of the AMA. In that role, she was able to sign on herself and SNMA to some of the biggest policies that have been very historic: *Racism is a Public Health Threat*, *Racial Essentialism*, *Race is not Biology*, and *Combating Police Brutality*. All policies aim to promote and establish health equity, which is Dr. Crittenden’s passion. Through the AMA, she is currently working on *Combating Natural Hair and Cultural Headwear Discrimination in Medical Professionalism*, adopted in the medical student section of the AMA. Dr. Crittenden is also bringing this resolution to the American Academy of Pediatrics to take on natural hair and cultural headwear discrimination among children as a health issue that they should tackle.

Currently, Dr. Crittenden is a post-graduate, year-1 pediatrics resident in the residency program at Yale New Haven Hospital in New Haven, Connecticut. Dr. Crittenden chose Yale University, as

she would like to reconnect with the people she met while pursuing her Master of Public Health who are doing a lot of health equity work. In the future, Dr. Crittenden would like to do what she loves: conducting health equity research, getting involved more in multi-media space, and getting more patients and people who are not in health care more educated in health disparities and health equity work. She would like to devote herself to becoming an advocate to increase health equity and decrease health disparities.

Dr. Crittenden became involved with the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs at age 15 when she participated in the Jumpstart Doctors Academy-Academic Year Program. After, she participated in the Junior and Senior Doctors Academy Programs, the 2010 Pre-College Academic Enrichment Program, the 2011 College Enrichment Program, the 2012 Medical/Dental Preparatory Program Track I – MCAT Prep, the 2013 Health Disparities Clinical Summer Research Fellowship Program-Community Component, and the 2015 Medical/Dental Preparatory Program Track II – Basic Medical Sciences program. “I spent my summer and Saturdays at different HCOP [Health Career Opportunity Programs] programs throughout my life and love the community I was able to build each year,” said Dr. Crittenden. Since her second year of medical school, she has mentored the students participating in the Great Explorations through Junior Doctors Academy programs. She believes they will be amazing leaders in the future and, regardless of whether they go into medicine or not, she will maintain a connection with them. “Making connections is very important. This is the benefit of Health Career Opportunity Programs,” said Dr. Crittenden.

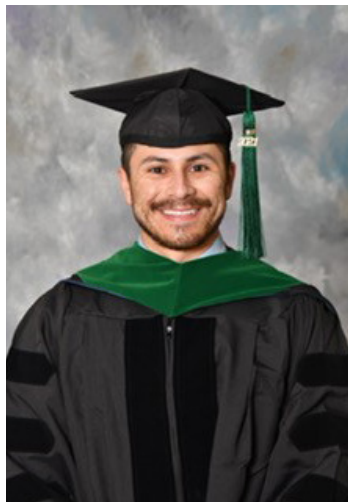
Dr. Crittenden’s best experience through the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs was meeting other students with similar backgrounds. “I think that it is important to have other people in the fight. It makes you want to continue on the journey. Medicine is not easy, but having a community eases the burden. It’s a community I will continue to be in contact with for the rest of my life,” said Dr. Crittenden.

Dr. Crittenden leaves the following words of advice and encouragement to the younger generation of students interested in the health professions: “Embrace others who are on the journey to medicine, reach for your dream program, and do not worry about Standardized Testing. ... Remember to help someone else who is coming up behind you. We all have to be willing to see ourselves as mentors for those behind us to increase the pipeline.”



## **JUSTIN DE LA GUERRA, MD**

Physician, Medical Student, Mentor



Dr. Justin De La Guerra graduated from UConn School of Medicine in May 2021.

Dr. De La Guerra attended the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology in 2016. Dr. De La Guerra also obtained certifications as a licensed emergency medical technician and phlebotomist.

In 2017, Dr. De La Guerra worked as a Clinical Research

Coordinator for the Emergency Department in the Olive View Hospital affiliated with UCLA, which furthered his interest in applying to medical school.

Dr. De La Guerra became interested in becoming a physician at an early age after seeing a video on the digestive tract in his 5th grade science class. This was the first time he can remember hearing the word “doctor.” “That was the moment that initially planted the idea in my mind. I initially wanted to become a Navy SEAL, but with time realized I wanted to help people, and was intrigued with the human body,” said Dr. De La Guerra.

Currently, Dr. De La Guerra is attending a three-year family medicine residency in Southern Regional Area Health Education Center in Fayetteville, North Carolina. In the future, he plans to devote himself to tactical medicine in the military, sports medicine, and emergency medicine and become an advocate of primary care.

“There is this saying ‘no te olvides de tus raíces, no te olvides de donde te sacaron’ (do not forget your roots, do not forget where you were taken from).”

Dr. De La Guerra became involved with the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs during the summer of 2017 while participating in the Medical/Dental Preparatory Program Track II – Basic Medical Sciences program. Shortly after, while in medical school, Dr. De La Guerra started mentoring students in the Doctors Academy programs. “There is this saying ‘no te olvides de tus raíces, no te olvides de donde te sacaron’ (do not forget your roots, do not forget where you were taken from),” said Dr. De La Guerra. With the desire to give back to people with similar roots and see more people like him in medicine, Dr. De La Guerra became a mentor in the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs.

Dr. De La Guerra’s best experience with the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs was his participation in the Medical Dental Preparatory Program Track II - Basic Medical Sciences program. “The small group of us got so close and became such good friends; we looked out for each other, helped each other, taught each other, and motivated each other. It was a challenging summer, but a good summer,” said Dr. De La Guerra. Meeting a group of students with similar backgrounds and interests and staying connected with them throughout medical school is what Dr. De La Guerra appreciates about the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs.

Dr. De La Guerra leaves the following words of advice and encouragement to the younger generation of students interested in the health professions: “Remember where you started. You have come so far, keep going.”

**NJERI DODSON, DMD**

Dentist, Dental Student, Mentor



Dr. Njeri Dodson graduated from UConn School of Dental Medicine in May 2021.

Dr. Dodson attended Eastern Connecticut State University (ECSU), where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology in 2017 with a minor in Anthropology to prepare her for dental school.

Currently, Dr. Dodson is attending a one-year general practice residency program at Hartford Hospital in Hartford, Connecticut. In the future, she plans to return to her hometown of Bridgeport, Connecticut, and devote her career to underserved populations by opening a private practice or working at a community health center.

At about the age of 19, Dr. Dodson decided she wanted to become a dentist while pursuing her undergraduate education at ECSU and during her participation in a summer program for pre-medical and pre-dental students at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut. She became fascinated with dentistry, and shortly after, she started shadowing dentists at Pyramid Dental in Hamden, Connecticut. She enjoyed working at the dental office and met a dentist with a similar background who was a great mentor to her. With her interest in dentistry and the desire to give back to her community of Bridgeport, Dr. Dodson applied to the School of Dental Medicine at UConn Health. "I knew that I wanted to be in Connecticut because I wanted to go back to Bridgeport, and it was nice to have my dental training in Connecticut," said Dr. Dodson.

During the summer of 2017, right before entering the UConn School of Dental Medicine, Dr. Dodson participated in the Medical/Dental Preparatory Program Track II – Basic Medical Sciences program provided by the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs. "This program was an awesome opportunity for several classmates and me. It allowed us to enter [medical/dental] school

with confidence and motivation to succeed," said Dr. Dodson. After, Dr. Dodson became a mentor to middle school students in the Great Explorations program, which she states was her best experience in the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs. "This was an incredible opportunity to build relationships and act as a role model through motivating the students to put their best effort into their education and aim high in terms of their career goals," said Dr. Dodson. She also participated on a panel directed to high school students interested in becoming health professionals for the 2019 Urban League of Greater Hartford – Young Professionals: National Day of Empowerment at the Hartford Public Library in Hartford, Connecticut.

Dr. Dodson leaves the following words of advice and encouragement to the younger generation of students interested in the health professions: "Know that you are more than capable of pursuing a successful career in any health profession that interests you. I never considered becoming a dentist until I met one that I could relate to, which is a barrier for many individuals who are choosing their career paths. Have confidence in your abilities, and don't be afraid to be the first person in your family or friend group to fulfill your dreams."

**"This program was an awesome opportunity for several classmates and me. It allowed us to enter [medical/ dental] school with confidence and motivation to succeed."**

**GIAN GRANT-MCGARVEY, MD, MPH**

Physician, Medical Student, Graduate Student, Mentor



Dr. Gian Grant-McGarvey graduated from UConn School of Medicine in May 2021 with dual degrees of Doctor of Medicine (MD) and Master of Public Health (MPH).

Dr. Grant-McGarvey attended the University of Connecticut where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Pathobiology with a minor in Human Rights in 2014. She also completed the Post-Baccalaureate Program

provided by the UConn Pre-Medical Office and the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs from 2014-2015 to prepare her for medical school.

Dr. Grant-McGarvey became interested in becoming a physician at an early age while witnessing the passing of a family member who could not receive medical attention due to the lack of access to health care in her hometown in Jamaica. From this personal experience, she was determined to become a physician and promoter of access to health care for underserved populations.

Currently, Dr. Grant-McGarvey is attending a three-year family medicine residency at UConn Health. Afterward, she wants to pursue her passion for public health, working with the Caribbean populations, and she hopes to have a career in academic medicine one day.

Dr. Grant-McGarvey became involved with the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs during the summer before her senior year in high school after a guidance counselor recommended that she participate in the Senior Doctors Academy program.

“I decided to apply because, at the time, I knew that I wanted to become a doctor. As a child from a single-parent immigrant household, it was difficult to know the right path to take to achieve my goals,” said Dr. Grant-McGarvey. She also participated in the 2010 Pre-College Enrichment Program – Research Component,

the 2011 Health Disparities Clinical Summer Research Fellowship Program, the 2013 Medical/Dental Preparatory Program Track I – MCAT Prep, and the 2016 Medical/Dental Preparatory Program Track II – Basic Medical Sciences program. Dr. Grant-McGarvey is immensely grateful to the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs for the opportunities and enriching experiences that inspired her and served as motivation throughout her journey in medical school.

**“I decided to apply because, at the time, I knew that I wanted to become a doctor. As a child from a single-parent immigrant household, it was difficult to know the right path to take to achieve my goals.”**

Dr. Grant-McGarvey’s best experience at the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs was touring the University of Connecticut’s Storrs campus for the first time as a member of the Senior Doctors Academy program. The experience was rewarding and enriching for Dr. Grant-McGarvey. After that, while pursuing her undergraduate education at the University of Connecticut and as a medical student at the UConn School of Medicine, Dr. Grant-McGarvey became a mentor to high school students in the Doctors Academy programs. “It’s been truly an honor to watch underrepresented high school students decide to embark on a career in STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics], and [to] help them along the way,” said Dr. Grant-McGarvey.

Dr. Grant-McGarvey leaves the following words of advice and encouragement to the younger generation of students interested in the health professions: “Find a mentor but also become a mentor. It is important to find someone who can guide and support you throughout your academic journey. Do not discount how far you have come and how you can use your experiences to help someone who may be a bit further behind on the same journey as well.”

## JAHNEA WILLIAMS, MD

Physician, Medical Student, Mentor



Dr. Jahnea Williams graduated from UConn School of Medicine in May 2021.

Dr. Williams attended the University of Connecticut for her undergraduate education and was part of the Special Program in Medicine, the Rowe Scholars Program, and the Honors Program. In 2016, she graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biological Sciences with a

minor in Psychological Sciences.

Currently, Dr. Williams is attending a four-year obstetrics and gynecology residency at WellSpan York Hospital in York, Pennsylvania. After that, she plans to pursue a fellowship in gynecologic oncology. In the future, Dr. Williams sees herself working with students, mentoring, and in academic medicine.

Dr. Williams was interested in the STEM fields from a young age and became interested in medicine while participating in a health program in affiliation with her high school in Waterbury, Connecticut, where she learned about the variety of careers that were possible in the health field. She furthered her interests in medicine through shadowing and family experiences where she saw a close family member have surgery and physical therapy. She was able to accompany her family member to medical appointments and see the doctor-to-patient relationship. “I realized that a career as a physician most aligned with how I wanted to serve my community,” said Dr. Williams.

“I realized that a career as a physician most aligned with how I wanted to serve my community.”

Dr. Williams became involved with the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs while pursuing her undergraduate education at the University of Connecticut. “As a John and Valerie Rowe Health Professions Scholar, I was able to participate in several events held by the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs, such as the Bridge to the Future Science Mentoring Conference, which allowed me to learn about the other programs the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs offers,” said Dr. Williams. She participated in this program – Basic Medical Sciences program in the summer of 2017 before starting medical school. Dr. Williams is grateful for the Medical/Dental Preparatory Program - BMS Track II, which she found very valuable since it helped her meet students with similar backgrounds and experiences, structure her day of study, and helped her prepare for her first year in medical school.

After completing her first year of medical school, Dr. Williams became a tutor for the 2018 Medical/Dental Preparatory Program Track I - MCAT Prep, which was her best Health Career Opportunity Programs experience. “It allowed me to work with students like myself as they prepared to apply and interview for medical schools. Knowing firsthand how daunting that process can be, I enjoyed working to make it a little easier for students in the program,” said Dr. Williams.

Dr. Williams leaves the following words of advice and encouragement for the younger generation of students interested in the health professions: “Remember that obstacles don’t make your goals impossible to reach, just harder. I am much more proud of myself to get to this point after all the challenges, more so than if I had not faced any challenges at all.”

## 2021 BRIDGE MENTORING AWARD

The Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs recognized one dental student and two medical students for their continued participation and involvement in the Aetna HPPI Programs with the Bridge Mentoring Award. The 2021 recipients were: Njeri Dodson, DMD, general practice residency, Hartford Hospital, Hartford, Connecticut; Faith Crittenden, MD, MPH, pediatrics residency, Yale New Haven Hospital, New Haven, Connecticut; and Gian Grant-McGarvey, MD, MPH, family medicine residency, UConn Health, Farmington, Connecticut.



Njeri Dodson, DMD



Gian Grant-McGarvey, MD, MPH



Faith Crittenden, MD, MPH

## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR MENTORS AND PAST PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

### 2021 UConn Medical, Dental, and Graduate School Graduates

Omar Allam, MD  
Ashley Arthur, DMD  
Kodilichi Baldino, MD  
Elena Carrington, DMD  
Maria Cebula, MD, MBA  
Faith Crittenden, MD, MPH  
Justin De La Guerra, MD  
Njeri Dodson, DMD  
Ayesha Ejaz, DMD  
Gian Grant-McGarvey,  
MD, MPH

Trisha Kwarko, MD  
Tiffani-Amber Miller, MD, MPH  
Deandra Momah, MD  
Stephanie Patterson, DMD  
Gabriel Paul, MD  
Aaliyah Riccardi, MD  
Moe Uddin, MD  
Jahnea Williams, MD  
Cameron Wilkinson, MD



Deandra 'Uju' Momah, MD

## 2021 OUTSTANDING STUDENT AWARD

The Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs recognized a member of the Class of 2021 for outstanding performance throughout their professional education. The 2021 recipient was Deandra 'Uju' Momah, MD, anesthesiology residency program, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Boston, Massachusetts.

# MEDICAL



Kodilichi Baldino, MD



Aaliyah Riccardi, MD

## **STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS** **2021 EXEMPLARY SERVICE AWARDS**

The Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs and the UConn Chapters of the Student National Medical Association (SNMA) and Student National Dental Association/Hispanic Student Dental Association (SNDA/HSDA) recognized medical and dental student members of the Class of 2021 for their exemplary service. The SNMA recipients were Kodilichi Baldino, MD, transitional year, Eastern Connecticut Health Network, Manchester, Connecticut, and Aaliyah Riccardi, MD, otolaryngology residency program, UPMC Medical Education, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The SNDA/HSDA recipients were Elena Carrington, DMD, endodontics residency program, University of Connecticut School of Dental Medicine, Farmington, Connecticut, and Syed Saud, DMD, general practice residency, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, New York.

Elena Carrington, DMD

Syed Saud, DMD



# DENTAL

**SENIOR DOCTORS ACADEMY GRADUATING CLASS OF 2021**



**Daquan Caulton**  
California University of  
Pennsylvania



**Chantae Chambers**  
Central Connecticut State  
University



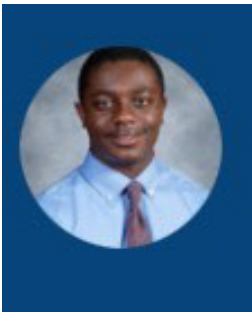
**Cameron Cohen**  
Springfield College



**Leslie Cruz-Gomez**  
Springfield College



**Lacey Dargenio**  
University of Saint Joseph



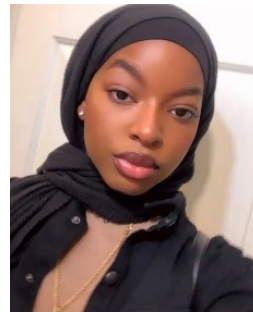
**Donald Derello**  
Johns Hopkins University



**Sabrina Green**  
Rochester Institute of  
Technology



**Savannah Greene**  
University of Connecticut



**Aisha Haidara**  
University of Massachusetts



**Saffiya Heyligar**  
University of Connecticut



**Excel Leonard**  
Middlebury College



**Saskia Linton**  
Northwestern University



**Adriana Mantilla**  
University of Connecticut



**Lahela Martinez**  
Eastern Connecticut State  
University



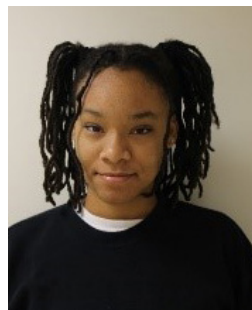
**Kaci Minto**  
Southern Connecticut State  
University



**HughDante Morant**  
University of Connecticut



**Diamond Rolle**  
Springfield College



**Jelena Waldron**  
Wells College



**Jevante Wallace**  
Delaware State University

## THE JOHN AND VALERIE ROWE SCHOLARSHIP



**John Rowe, MD and Valerie Rowe, Ph.D.**

The Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs provides John & Valerie Rowe Scholarships in the form of book awards to Senior Doctors Academy students from the Aetna HPPI Doctors Academy who will enroll as freshmen at UConn. John D. Rowe, MD, and Valerie A. Rowe, Ph.D., are longtime donors to UConn, supporting students and

institutional advancement. The Rowe Health Professions Scholars Program Endowment has helped hundreds of students from underrepresented populations succeed in UConn's undergraduate, medical, and graduate programs through scholarships, academic, and experiential opportunities.

**“Jack and Valerie Rowe understand that the gift of education transforms lives. We are immensely grateful for their investment in the prestigious Rowe Scholar program, which has assisted dozens of talented students from underrepresented backgrounds succeed at UConn.”**

Dr. John Rowe is a professor of health policy and management at Columbia University and former chairman and CEO of Aetna, Inc. He previously served on the UConn Board of Trustees and the UConn Health Board of Directors. Dr. John Rowe was awarded the Carole and Ray Neag Medal of Honor for his remarkable contributions to medicine and UConn Health in 2012. Dr. Valerie Rowe is a retired clinical associate professor at the Graduate School of Education at Fordham University. “Jack and Valerie Rowe understand that the gift of education transforms lives. We are immensely grateful for their investment in the prestigious Rowe Scholar program, which has assisted dozens of talented students from underrepresented backgrounds succeed at UConn,” said Mr. Joshua R. Newton, past president and CEO of the UConn Foundation.

## 2021 Recipients

**Adriana Mantilla**



**HughDante Morant**



The 2021 John and Valerie Rowe Scholarships were awarded to Adriana Mantilla and HughDante Morant. The scholarships were awarded to each recipient by Dr. Marja Hurley, Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor, professor of Medicine and Orthopaedic Surgery, associate dean for Health Career Opportunity Programs, and founding director of Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative.



## **AETNA HPPI DOCTORS ACADEMY**

The Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative Doctors Academy (Aetna HPPI Doctors Academy) is designed to provide mentoring and educational opportunities that may otherwise not be available to many Connecticut middle and high school students. The Aetna HPPI Doctors Academy consists of the Great Explorations program, the Jumpstart 9 and 10 programs, and the Junior and Senior Doctors Academies. The purpose of the Aetna HPPI Doctors Academy programs is to provide access and to prepare students interested in health professions who come from backgrounds where they are the first in their family to earn a four-year degree, come from modest family means, or are from backgrounds traditionally underrepresented in health care. Students participating in the Aetna HPPI Doctors Academy are generally recruited from the Hartford area schools and strive to become physicians, dentists, biomedical research scientists, pharmacists, nurses, and other health professionals.

The Aetna HPPI Doctors Academy has two major components: the summer program and the academic year program. The summer and academic year programs are designed to advance students' academic skill levels in math, science, and English. The programs promote personal growth through extracurricular experiences designed to help students develop the skills necessary to succeed in the Pre-Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT), the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), and the American College Test (ACT). A total of 90 students participated in the Aetna HPPI Doctors Academy virtual program during the 2020-2021 academic year, and 83 students participated in the virtual program during the 2021 summer.

During the 2020-2021 academic year and 2021 summer, the Aetna HPPI Doctors Academy participated in mentoring activities hosted by student and faculty members of the UConn community, focused on the health professions, college preparation, science fields, and cultural awareness. They also participated in a virtual Women in Science Event sponsored by the Connecticut Science Center and the virtual Student Conference hosted by the Biomedical Science Careers Program. Additionally, the members of the Junior and Senior Doctors Academies took part in a mentorship program with practicing health professionals and a financial literacy session hosted by Dr. Brendan Dolan, a general dentist, and alumnus of the UConn School of Dental Medicine.

## **PARENTAL SEMINAR SERIES**

The Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative's Parental Seminar Series is an opportunity for our Doctors Academy students and parents to learn more about important health issues affecting their community and important tips to prepare for college. Parents are asked to submit a survey on the topics they are most interested in learning about and the series of lectures is then tailored to their needs. The 2020-2021 Parental Seminar Series commenced with a college admissions and financial aid panel. The panel included Mr. Nilvio Perez, associate director of Office of Recruitment and Admissions, Central Connecticut State University; Ms. Sierra Colon, admissions counselor, Eastern Connecticut State University; Mr. Alick Letang, director of admissions, Southern Connecticut State University; Ms. Caroline McCall, admissions officer, University of Connecticut; and Mr. Jonathan Barden, associate director of admissions, University of Saint Joseph.

**Additionally, the Parental Seminar Series included presentations on different health topics.**



**Christine Crawford, MD, MPH**

A presentation on anxiety and stress was given by Dr. Christine Crawford, associate director of Medical Student Education in Psychiatry and assistant professor of Psychiatry at Boston University School of Medicine and associate medical director for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).



**Mario Pérez, MD, MPH**

Another topic of interest was e-cigarettes and pulmonary diseases presented by Dr. Mario Pérez, assistant professor of medicine, specializing in pulmonary, critical care, and sleep medicine, UConn School of Medicine.



**Camelia Lawrence, MD, FACS**

The seminar series also included a presentation on breast cancer given by Dr. Camelia Lawrence, board-certified surgeon specializing in benign and malignant breast disease and assistant professor of surgery, UConn School of Medicine.



**Henry Anyimadu, MD, FACP, FIDSA, AAHIVS**

The seminar series concluded with information on COVID-19 given by Dr. Henry Anyimadu, infectious disease consultant at the Hospital of Central Connecticut and Midstate Medical Center, director of the Hepatitis C Clinic of the Hospital of Central Connecticut, and associate professor of medicine, UConn School of Medicine, with a special video on COVID-19 created by members of the UConn Chapter of the Latino Medical Student Association.

# 2021 Aetna HPPI Doctors Academy Reunion Facilitators



**Kitsha Alvarado**



**Lucia Duenas-Bianchi**



**Julise Marsh, PharmD**



**Tanya Miller**



**I'jaaz Muhammad**

## **DOCTORS ACADEMY REUNION**

On Saturday, April 17, 2021, the Aetna HPPI Doctors Academy celebrated a virtual reunion and special mentoring event sponsored by the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs. Aetna HPPI Doctors Academy alumni were able to reunite and discuss their career pathways since graduating from the Doctors Academy, answer questions, and advise current Doctors Academy participants. The event moderator was Tanya Miller, Senior Doctors Academy Class of 2016 and incoming Johns Hopkins School of Nursing Masters Student. The event began with a warm welcome by Dr. Granville Wrensford, assistant dean and associate director of Health Career Opportunity Programs, UConn Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine and Dr. Kerry-Ann Stewart, assistant director of Health Career Opportunity Programs, assistant professor of Public Health Sciences, UConn Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine followed by opening remarks given by Dr. Marja Hurley, Board of Trustees distinguished professor, professor of Medicine and Orthopaedic Surgery, associate dean of Health Career Opportunity Programs, founding director of Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative, UConn Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine.

The event included Doctors Academy alumni who acted as event facilitators and panelists: Kitsha Alvarado, Dental Hygienist; Lucia Duenas-Bianchi, incoming UConn Medical Student; Dr. Julise Marsh, Pharmacy Resident at Holyoke Health Center; I'jazz Muhammad, UConn Biomedical Engineering Doctoral Student; Joshua Crittenden, Duke University Environmental Engineering Doctoral Student; Gian Grant-McGarvey, UConn Medical Student in the graduating Class of 2021; Paris Pruitt, UConn Educational Psychology Masters Student in the graduating Class of 2021; Julian Rose, Georgia Institute of Technology Biomedical Engineering Doctoral Student.

## HIGH SCHOOL MINI MEDICAL/DENTAL SCHOOL SEMINAR SERIES

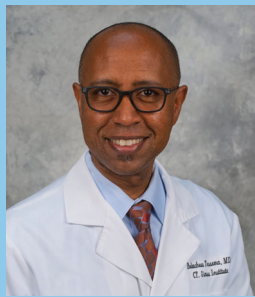
The High School Mini Medical/Dental School Seminar Series offered nine weekly lectures and demonstrations presented by faculty members of the UConn Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine. The 2021 seminar series held virtually included topics in medicine, dental medicine, and biomedical research. Ninety-four Connecticut high school juniors and seniors participated in the 2021 program.

Participants are selected by their school guidance counselors or science teachers. All students have shown a strong interest in pursuing careers in medicine, dental medicine, or the biological sciences. For more information, contact Anastasia Rollins at 860-679-3484 or rollins@uchc.edu.

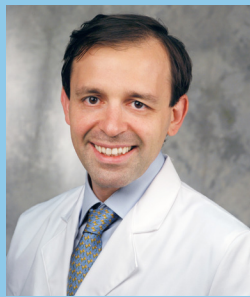
## 2021 High School Mini Medical/Dental School Seminar Series Speakers and Topics



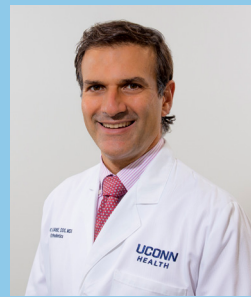
**Liisa Kuhn, Ph.D.**  
Biomaterials



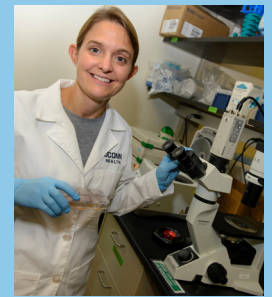
**Belachew Tessema, MD**  
Otolaryngology



**Alex Merkulov, MD**  
Radiology Imaging



**Flavio Uribe, DMD, MDentSc**  
Orthodontics



**Stormy Chamberlain, Ph.D.**  
Neurodevelopmental Disorders



**Jason Ryan, MD, MPH**  
Cardiology



**Janelle Mallett, MD**  
Dermatology



**Donna Paoella, DMD**  
BA/BS-DMD Combined Degree Program



**Thomas Regan, MD**  
BA/BS - MD Combined Degree Program



**Cato Laurencin, MD, Ph.D.**  
Surgeon Scientist

## HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT RESEARCH APPRENTICE PROGRAM

Eight students had the opportunity to be a part of a research team from UConn Storrs and UConn Health in the 2021 High School Student Research Apprentice Program to develop a project in the biomedical sciences with topics in physiology & neurobiology, molecular cardiology, cell analysis & modeling, and orthopaedics & regenerative engineering. The 2021 summer program was

held virtually for four weeks. The students also participated in a presentation by the UConn Rowe Scholars Program, a workshop with the Connecticut Science Center, and a virtual UConn Health clinical simulation tour. At the end of the summer, the students gave oral presentations of their research results during a special virtual research symposium.

## MEDICAL/DENTAL PREPARATORY PROGRAM

Medical/Dental Preparatory Program students, including Aetna Health Professions Pipeline participants, are selected from various universities throughout the United States to work on academic skills to prepare for medical school or dental school admission. Participants of the Medical/Dental Preparatory Program Track I prepare for either the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) or the Dental Admission Test (DAT), while the participants of the Medical/Dental Preparatory Program Track II take courses in the basic medical sciences (BMS) to prepare them for the first-year curriculum of medical and dental school. A total of 52 college students and recent college graduates participated in virtual academic classes, seminars, workshops, test-taking strategies, and other enrichment activities during the six-week summer 2021 program.

Students enrolled in the Medical/Dental Preparatory Program enjoyed a series of virtually held seminars presented by 15 UConn Health faculty from June 21 through July 30, 2021. The Summer Seminar Series topics included medical and dental specialties, professionalism, cultural competence, and basic science and translational research. The participating students appreciated personal anecdotes and reflections by faculty. MCAT Prep, DAT Prep, and BMS program participants were able to engage in each seminar by communicating directly with faculty; obtaining insight and learning from the faculty in medicine, dentistry, and biomedical sciences; and finding new mentors.

## Medical/Dental Preparatory Program Seminar Series Speakers and Topics



**Tannin Schmidt, Ph.D.**  
Basic and Translational Research



**Liisa Kuhn, Ph.D.**  
Biomaterials



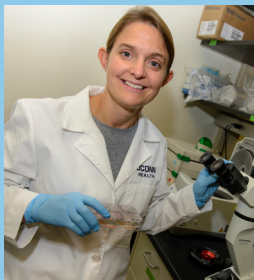
**Jason Ryan, MD, MPH**  
Cardiology



**Eliane Dutra, DDS, MSD, Ph.D.**  
Craniofacial Morphogenesis and Cartilage Function



**Stacey Brown, Ph.D.**  
Cultural Competence



**Stormy Chamberlain, Ph.D.**  
Neurodevelopmental Disorders



**Shontreal Cooper, MD**  
Obstetrics and Gynecology



**Flavio Uribe, DMD, MDentSc**  
Orthodontics



**Marja Hurley, MD**  
Osteoarthritis



**Karen Kemp-Prosterman, DDS**  
Pediatric Dentistry



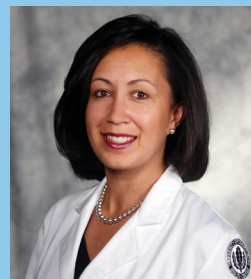
**Gualberto Ruano, MD, Ph.D.**  
Personalized Medicine



**Thomas Regan, MD**  
Professionalism



**Alex Merkulov, MD**  
Radiology



**Biree Andemariam, MD**  
Sickle Cell Disease



**Kwame Amankwah, MD, MSc, FACS, FSVS, RPVI**  
Vascular Surgery

## **BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE SCIENCE MENTORING CONFERENCE**

The 2021 Bridge to the Future Science Mentoring Conference was held virtually on Saturday, April 17, with approximately 80 college students participating. The students were brought together with UConn Health faculty, staff, medical, dental, and graduate students to interact in a series of activities to raise awareness about health and biomedical science careers and the admissions process for medical, dental, and graduate schools. The Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs, the Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative Fund, the Friends of the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs Fund, and the John and Valerie Rowe Health Professions Scholars Program Fund sponsored this year's conference. The keynote speaker, Dr. Tamara Gravely Griffin, UConn School of Dental Medicine class of 2000 graduate and an associate in a private group endodontic practice in Tennessee, spoke to students about *Pivoting for Safety and Success*.

The virtual Bridge to the Future Science Mentoring Conference included an Admissions Panel, a Scholar-Athlete Panel, and a Medical and Dental Student Panel. College students interested in a medical or dental degree and combined degree programs learned about the admissions process for medical, dental, and graduate school programs offered at UConn Health. There were also concurrent sessions that included a Dental Impressions Workshop and an informational session on Southern Connecticut State University's BioPath program. For college students specifically interested in dental medicine, the Dental Impressions Workshop led by Dr. Sarita Arteaga, professor of craniofacial sciences and associate dean for students for the UConn School of Dental Medicine, and current dental students included information on a career in dental medicine and more information about dental school admissions. For college students specifically interested in bioscience education, Dr. Rachel Jeffrey, assistant professor of biology at Southern Connecticut State University, presented the BioPath program that provides academic and experiential learning.

Conference participants also received advice from scholar-athletes on balancing academics and athletics and successful matriculation to medical, dental, and other professional schools. They also had the opportunity to listen to personal anecdotes from UConn Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine students. The 12 panelists participating in the Scholar-Athlete session consisted of UConn Storrs alumni who are an anesthesiologist and a veterinarian, and current students of UConn Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine

## Keynote Speaker



**Tamara Gravely Griffin, DMD, MS**, was born and raised in Connecticut. Dr. Gravely Griffin participated in the Medical/Dental Preparatory Program before attending UConn School of Dental Medicine. After graduation from dental school in 2000, she completed her Endodontics Residency at the Texas A&M School of Dentistry in Dallas, Texas. In addition to a certificate in Endodontics, Dr. Gravely Griffin received a Master's Degree in Health Professions Education. She was an assistant professor at the University of Tennessee College of Dentistry in Memphis, Tennessee, and chair of Endodontics at Meharry Medical College School of Dentistry in Nashville, Tennessee. For nine years, Dr. Gravely Griffin maintained a private endodontic practice, and she is an associate in a private group endodontic practice. She is the mother of two daughters and lives in Brentwood, Tennessee.

representing sports such as baseball, basketball, cheerleading, cross country, football, lacrosse, soccer, swimming and diving, tennis, and track and field. In addition to the Scholar-Athlete Panel, the conference included the Medical and Dental Student Panel where enrolled students shared their progression through their respective schools and allowed the college students to ask questions.

**AETNA HPPI DOCTORS ACADEMY**  
**2020-2021 ACADEMIC YEAR**  
**CLOSING CEREMONY**

The Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs virtually held its annual Academic Year Closing and Recognition Ceremony for the Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative (Aetna HPPI) Doctors Academy on May 19, 2021. The Aetna HPPI is an education consortium offering a comprehensive program of educational enrichment and support activities to increase the competitive applicant pool of diverse students interested in careers in the health professions.

This Academic Year Closing and Recognition Ceremony marked the culmination of a very positive academic year enrichment experience for middle and high school students from the Greater Hartford area who participated in the Great Explorations, Jumpstart, and Junior and Senior Doctors Academies. Welcoming remarks were given by Dr. Marja Hurley, professor of medicine and orthopaedic surgery; associate dean, Health Career Opportunity Programs; founding director, Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative, UConn Health. The keynote speaker was Mr. Michael Bradford, Vice Provost for Faculty, Staff, and Student Development of the University of Connecticut who commended the Doctors Academy participants for taking up interests in the sciences and health professions and encouraged them to continue towards their career goals. Student reflections were given by Sabrina Green, Senior Doctors Academy Class of 2021; Diamond Rolle, Senior Doctors Academy Class of 2021; and by past Senior Doctors Academy graduates, Wesia Malik, Class of 2017, UConn Class of 2021; Faith Crittenden, Class of 2010, UConn Class of 2014, UConn School of Medicine Class of 2021; and Gian Grant-McGarvey, Class of 2010, UConn Class of 2014, UConn School of Medicine Class of 2021.

The evening's festivities also included Special Recognition Awards to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of Great Explorations, Jumpstart, and the Junior Doctors Academy participants. The recipients of these awards were: Kevin Green and Genesis Sanclamente of Great Explorations; Seiwa Lukelwa and Neha Shanavas of Jumpstart 9; Duke Addy and Kristin Koka of Jumpstart 10; and Najay Campbell and Nikay Jones of the Junior Doctors Academy. All of the Senior Doctors Academy graduates are furthering their education at four-year colleges and universities, with four enrolling at UConn. Adriana Mantilla and HughDante Morant were each awarded the John and Valerie Rowe Scholarship Award.

# Keynote Speaker



**Michael Bradford**

## 2020-2021 Doctors Academy Recognition Awards Recipients



**Kevin Green**



**Genesis Sanclamente**



**Seiwa Lukelwa**



**Neha Shanavas**



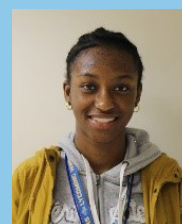
**Duke Addy**



**Kristin Koka**



**Najay Campbell**



**Nikay Jones**

## **SUMMER ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS CLOSING CEREMONY**

*Article written by Ira Morrison, UConn Health*

More than 200 high school and college students are now graduates of UConn Health's summer Health Career Opportunity Programs.

The closing ceremonies of the 2021 Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative Summer Enrichment Programs were held virtually on July 30. Sponsored by the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs (HCOP) at UConn Health, this event marks the culmination of six-week summer enrichment experiences designed to stimulate interest in the health professions for approximately 220 students from the ninth-grade level through college. Program participants were awarded certificates before invited faculty, preceptors, special guests, friends, and family members.

Dr. Marja Hurley, associate dean and founding director of the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs at UConn Health, said she was asked, in 1996, to develop a consortium to provide mentoring and STEM opportunities for first-generation and students underrepresented in medicine and dental medicine to help diversify the health professions.

Connecticut universities and urban public school partners were identified to develop a pipeline program in response to the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Project 3000 x 2000, and the UConn Health School of Medicine was one of only 10 US medical schools selected by the AAMC to receive funding provided by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, in 1996.

The pipeline comprises 14 distinct programs, with the newest program, the High School Doctors Academy, added in 2007-2008 with funding from the John and Valerie Rowe Foundation and the Aetna Foundation. The overall effort was subsequently renamed the Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative (Aetna HPPI).

Participating students are from diverse backgrounds, typically focused on first-generation achievers and groups underrepresented in the health professions. To reach this point, Hurley said, each had successfully completed one of several challenging and rigorous research and educational programs where, in addition to health care-related studies, they are offered a range of other useful tools to help prepare them for future careers in the health professions.

"Academic year and summer enrichment programs also offer test preparation (PSAT, SAT, MCAT, DAT), medical- and dental-related seminars, mentoring, professional development, interviewing tutelage, tutelage on how to write a personal statement, and much more focused learning," Hurley said. "Students who have attended these programs go into the medical, dental, pharmacy, nursing, biomedical research, and other health professions, and a number of graduates do come back to practice in Connecticut and the underserved communities."

**"The battle against the Coronavirus also amplified the schism that exists in our country today over access to medical care, the importance of reliable information, the critical role of education, and the need for champions in our community dedicated to ensuring equal access, treatment, and outreach."**

Acting UConn President Dr. Andy Agwunobi was a special presenter at the ceremony. US Sen. Chris Murphy, a longtime supporter of health care and educational equity, congratulated the graduates in a pre-recorded video message. Agwunobi mentioned the role UConn Health caregivers have played in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and how this battle revealed health care discrepancies that must be addressed.

"The battle against the Coronavirus also amplified the schism that exists in our country today over access to medical care, the importance of reliable information, the critical role of education, and the need for champions in our community dedicated to ensuring equal access, treatment, and outreach," Agwunobi said.

"Since 1996, the programs we celebrate today have seen more than 700 participants move on to medical and dental school, graduate school, or other health professional studies. After college or post-graduate work, some will stay in Connecticut, conduct research, teach, or eventually set up practices serving underrepresented communities. Many, I hope, will end up attending our Schools of Medicine or Dental Medicine or pursue residency and fellowships."

# Alumnus Speaker



**Wayne Lloyd DeBeatham, MD**, is a first-generation Jamaican-American and a native of Hartford, Connecticut. Prior to entry to medical school, Dr. DeBeatham earned his Bachelor of Arts in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. During his time there, he actively participated in the marching band and wind symphony and was a

member of the Nathan Smith Pre-Medical Society. Dr. DeBeatham also served as the undergraduate liaison to the Black Alumni of Dartmouth Association and earned a citation for his work in Comparative Literature. He also actively participated in the Biomedical Science Careers Program (BSCP) Conferences in 1996 and 1998 and the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) Science Network Program.

Following his graduation in June of 1999, Dr. DeBeatham relocated to Boston, Massachusetts, where he enrolled in post-baccalaureate courses at the Harvard University Extension School. He was also employed as a Research Assistant and Lab Technician under the direction of Drs. J.D. Coffman and Robert Eberhardt in a Vascular Medicine lab at Boston Medical Center. The following summers, Dr. DeBeatham participated in the Medical/Dental Preparatory Program and the Summer Research Fellowship Program sponsored by the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs at the University of Connecticut Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine. During that time, he applied and was subsequently accepted into UConn's Post-Baccalaureate Program. Following successful completion of that program, Dr. DeBeatham chose to matriculate at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine in the fall of 2001.

Academically, Dr. DeBeatham participated in research during the summers and medical school, spanning observations of microtubule motility in the lab of Dr. Vladimir Rodionov; assessments of professionalism in US medical schools and preparation of an initial draft of a professionalism curriculum under Dr. Lynn Kosowicz and Ms. Karen Harrington, MSW; and assessed the impact of glucocorticoids in osteoblasts over expressing fibroblast growth factor in the lab of Dr. Marja Hurley. As his final project in medical school, Dr. DeBeatham undertook a project assessing student performance and preference in different forms of educational media.

Dr. DeBeatham was an active participant in Surgical Scholars, a surgery interest group. He was active in many areas of school life

and community service, serving as a medical student volunteer and manager at numerous clinics in the Greater Hartford area and as a student teacher for the Hartford Health Education Program. A member of the Student National Medical Association since the day he enrolled, Dr. DeBeatham served as the University of Connecticut chapter president for two years. During that time, he co-chaired the New England Region's (Region VII) Annual Medical Education Conference. Following his tenure, Dr. DeBeatham served as the Region VII Community Service Liaison, overseeing and facilitating the community service activities of the member schools in New England.

Locally, Dr. DeBeatham was the catalyst behind several programs, including the first-ever school and community orientation for matriculating medical and dental students of color, a student-initiated contact list for accepted students of color, and recruitment of dual-degree candidates of color. In his time at UConn, he was very active in recruitment, hosting students, conducting interviews, tours, informational sessions, mock interviews, problem-based learning sessions, and assisted in the annual "Second Look Weekend." He was one of the first two individuals to serve as Student Admissions Assistant and was an unofficial liaison to the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs, speaking on behalf of the office at student functions. He was one of the first people that applicants of color saw, providing advice and assistance as needed.

In his latter years at the university and beyond, Dr. DeBeatham expanded his mentorship roles, serving as a panelist, keynote speaker, mentor, and Big Brother, candidly speaking about his journey and experiences, and always willing to help someone in need.

In March of 2008, Dr. DeBeatham matched in General Surgery. He completed his intern year at Howard University Hospital, where he had the privilege of learning under the tutelage of Dr. Wayne Frederick and Dr. Lori Wilson and the late Dr. Lasalle Lefall. Following this, he migrated to Atlanta, Georgia, where he studied the impact of HIV-specific factors on the growth of cancer in the lab of Dr. Harvey Bumpers, and completed his PGY-2 year at Grady Memorial Hospital (at the time the only level 1 trauma center in a 100-mile radius) with the Morehouse School of Medicine. Dr. DeBeatham furthered his education at Lincoln Hospital in New York City and completed a fellowship in Endourology with Dr. Michael Grasso, III, specializing in innovative approaches to urologic diseases.

Dr. DeBeatham currently lives in Riverdale, New York, and works with Dr. Grasso as a Urologic Hospitalist at Phelps Hospital in Sleepy Hollow, NY.



# Keynote Speaker



**Chris Murphy**, the junior United States Senator for Connecticut, has dedicated his career to public service as an advocate for Connecticut families. Senator Murphy has been a strong voice in the Senate, fighting for job creation, affordable health care, education, sensible gun laws, and a forward-looking foreign policy. As a member of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee (HELP), Senator Murphy has

worked to make college more affordable and ensure that our public education system works to serve all students. Senator Murphy also led a bipartisan effort to reform our mental health system, working across the aisle to craft the first comprehensive mental health bill in the Senate in decades. Senator Murphy has laid out a forward-thinking foreign policy vision for the United States. As a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, he has been an outspoken proponent of diplomacy, international human rights, and the need for clear-eyed American leadership abroad. Following the tragic shooting at Sandy Hook elementary school in 2012, Senator Murphy became one of the leading proponents of commonsense reforms to reduce gun violence. He has championed several bipartisan bills aimed at expanding background checks and keeping guns out of the hands of criminals.

As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Senator Murphy has fought to increase investments in Connecticut manufacturing and promote procurement of world-class national defense products made in the state. He has fought to expand American manufacturing and create jobs through his Buy American initiative, which urges the US government to spend taxpayer dollars on American-made goods. Additionally, Senator Murphy has worked in partnership with local city and town leaders to rehabilitate former brownfields and factory sites so that they can be developed into new community spaces and businesses. Prior to his election to the US Senate, Murphy served Connecticut's Fifth Congressional District for three terms in the US House of Representatives. During his time in the House, Murphy worked to improve access to housing for homeless veterans, foster job creation, and advocate for affordable health care for all Americans. Murphy authored the Frank Melville Supportive Housing Investment Act to revitalize housing programs for people with disabilities. The bill was signed into law by the president in 2010. Before getting elected to Congress, Murphy served for eight years in the Connecticut General Assembly where he was the author of the state's historic stem cell investment legislation and the state's workplace smoking ban.

Senator Murphy grew up in Wethersfield, Connecticut, and attended Williams College in Massachusetts. He graduated from the University of Connecticut School of Law and practiced real estate and banking law with Ruben, Johnson & Morgan in Hartford, Connecticut.

He is married to Catherine Holahan, an attorney. They have two young sons, Owen and Rider, and a cat, Ramona.

## 2021 FACULTY RECOGNITION AWARD

The Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs recognized two UConn Health faculty for their outstanding and exceptional service at the Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative (Aetna HPPI) 2021 Summer Programs Closing Ceremony. The 2021 Outstanding Faculty Recognition Award recipients were Stacey Brown, Ph.D., associate professor, Public Health Sciences and Melinda Sanders, MD, professor, Pathobiology and Laboratory Medicine. The Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs acknowledges Dr. Brown's and Dr. Sander's dedication and efforts to the training of future health professionals in the Aetna HPPI pipeline through instruction and research activities over the years.



**Stacey Brown, Ph.D.**



**Melinda Sanders, MD**

## **CHANGING THE FUTURE FACE OF HEALTH CARE — AND THE LIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE**

*Excerpt of article written by Lauren Woods, UConn Health*

On Saturday, May 8, the medical and dental schools at UConn Health celebrated their 50th commencement milestones. Among the successful Class of 2021 graduates were new physicians and dentists inspired by the longstanding Health Career Opportunity Programs.

For two decades, the 14 distinct Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative-sponsored programs have been critical in getting more young people from across Connecticut, of all ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, interested in medicine and science, and to enter medical and dental school or the health professions, to be the next generation of physicians, dentists, and scientists.

“Our programs have substantially increased the number of underrepresented and first-generation students attending the UConn Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine by serving as a continuous pipeline for education opportunities for middle school, high school, and college students of diverse backgrounds across Connecticut,” says Dr. Marja Hurley, professor of medicine and orthopedics who is founding director and associate dean for the Health Career Opportunity Programs.

Impressively, of the nearly 900 youth from the state’s elementary, high school, and colleges participating in the programs so far, more than 600 have successfully gone on to enter medical school, dental school, or other health profession schools and practice as providers in these fields.

“Our programs have substantially increased the number of underrepresented and first-generation students attending the UConn Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine by serving as a continuous pipeline for education opportunities for middle school, high school, and college students of diverse backgrounds across Connecticut,”

“Some of the UConn Health Class of 2021’s bright graduating students began participating in the Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative Doctors Academy while they were still in high school, and some were even undergraduate Rowe Scholars at UConn. We are so proud of our students and grateful for the support they have received through The John and Valerie Rowe Health Professions Scholars Program fund providing ongoing generous program support for our Doctors Academy, other programs, and annual events such as our Bridge to the Future Mentoring Conference,” says Hurley.

Just like the Rowes, Hurley is an inspiration to many HCOP students. While she is a pioneering bone physician-scientist, she is also the first Black woman to graduate from UConn School of Medicine, the first to become a tenured full professor, and UConn has named her one of its most outstanding women in 100 years.

## 2021 HCOP GRADUATE SUCCESS STORIES



UConn School of Medicine graduate **Faith Crittenden '14 (CLAS)** of Windsor earned an undergraduate degree in chemistry and molecular and cell biology at UConn. She is headed back to Yale this summer to begin her pediatric residency training where she previously earned her health policy MPH.

In high school, Crittenden was inspired by Hurley while attending the Doctors Academy and again as a UConn undergrad Rowe Scholar.

Crittenden reports that HCOP is the first place she saw individuals becoming medical professionals with a background, heritage, and ethnicity similar to hers. "It was the first time I actually felt comfortable seeing myself going into this field and knowing I belong there," says Crittenden. "I think HCOP is a special program that is essential to increasing diversity within medicine. I believe the most important benefit these programs created was a sense of community in the journey to becoming a physician."



**Ayesha Ejaz '17 (CLAS)**, of East Windsor, graduated from UConn School of Dental Medicine. She received her UConn undergraduate degree in biological sciences with a minor in sociology.

"Being a Rowe Scholar was an amazing experience. I was able to attend a few dental conferences and meet other pre-dental students

who are now my classmates and colleagues. Through HCOP, I participated in a few summer programs. I believe that all of these experiences really kept me on track in pursuing my dream of going to dental school," says Ejaz.



Having graduated with a dual MD/MPH degree, **Gian Grant-McGarvey '14 (CAHNR)** is originally from Brown's Town, St. Ann, Jamaica. She migrated to the US at 5 years old and earned her UConn undergraduate degree in pathobiology with a minor in Human Rights. She will be staying at UConn to complete her family medicine residency training.

While attending Windsor High School, she was also additionally inspired to become a doctor by HCOP. "I had the privilege of attending the Senior Doctors Academy during my senior year of high school and went on to become a Rowe Scholar at UConn. Being a member of both the HCOP pipeline programs and a Rowe Scholar was a great experience that allowed me to meet other individuals interested in STEM careers who had similar backgrounds as myself."

Grant-McGarvey says: "My time at UConn medical school has truly been a journey of resilience and joy. I will be taking away the lesson that UConn School of Medicine has taught me that hard work does bring true joy."



**Jahnea Williams '16 (CLAS)** of Waterbury earned her UConn undergraduate degree in biological sciences and minor in psychological sciences. After graduation, she is headed to Pennsylvania's Wellspan Health York Hospital for residency training in OB/GYN.

I realized that I wanted to apply my passion for science and health toward pursuing a career in medicine," says Williams, a UConn Rowe Scholar.

She believes HCOP's mentoring has supported her throughout her medical school endeavor and will even help her in her clinical practice.

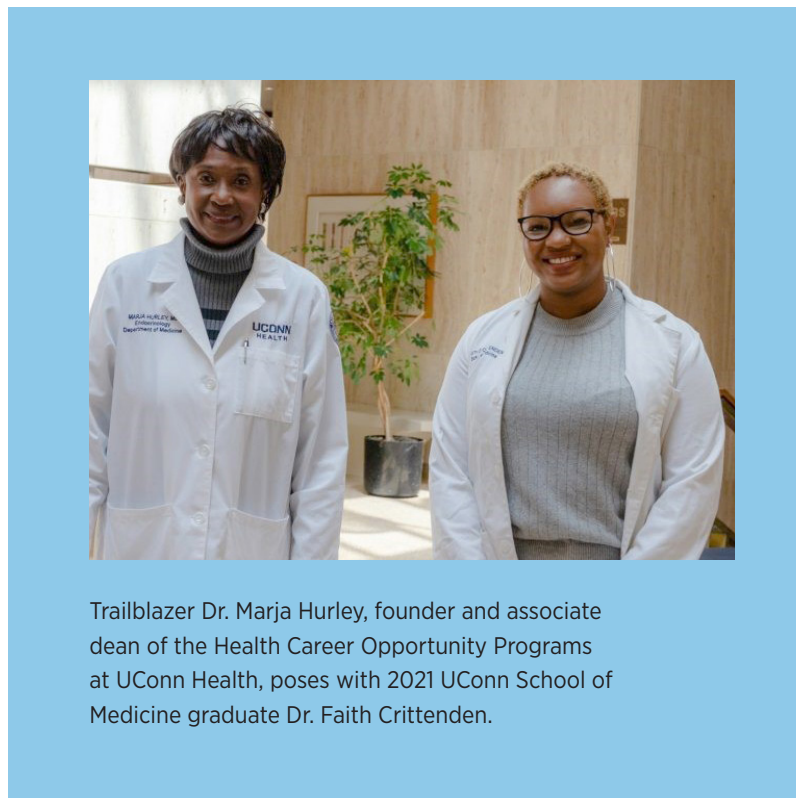
"The opportunities I have been afforded through HCOP have been invaluable in preparing me to not only become a well-rounded physician but also never forget the importance of uplifting the next generation of students," says Williams. "The sense of community I have felt since my first day at UConn has demonstrated to me the importance of commitment to bettering the communities in which my patients live and work, as well as the health care environment as a whole to truly be able to provide the care my patients deserve."



Dentist **Ashley Arthur '17 (BUS)**, of West Hartford, graduated from UConn's dental school. She studied marketing at UConn before deciding to become a dentist.

While attending William H. Hall High School, Arthur was part of the Doctors Academy at UConn Health.

"My Doctors Academy experience was fantastic! I learned a lot about health care and the health professions," says Arthur. "Coming from an immigrant family and being a first-generation DMD holds a special place in my heart. HCOP provided me with wonderful opportunities that have enhanced my learning experience and helped make my dream of becoming a dentist a reality."



Trailblazer Dr. Marja Hurley, founder and associate dean of the Health Career Opportunity Programs at UConn Health, poses with 2021 UConn School of Medicine graduate Dr. Faith Crittenden.

## **GUIDING MEDICAL AND DENTAL STUDENTS**

The Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs plays an integral role in recruiting diverse students from around the country to UConn Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine and providing support for currently enrolled medical and dental students. At the beginning of each academic year, the department hosts a reception to welcome the first-year class. The 2020 Welcome Reception was held virtually on September 1 for the Class of 2024. This was an opportunity for first-year medical and dental students to learn more about: department resources, support services, and programs; UConn Health student organizations such as the Student National Medical Association (SNMA), the Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA), and the Student National Dental Association/Hispanic Student Dental Association (SNDA/HSDA); and research opportunities.

Over the four years of academic training, Health Career Opportunity Programs' medical and dental students have the opportunity to participate in seminars based on their career interest; engage with the broader community; coordinate hands-on activities for younger students; interact with visiting students, faculty, and community leaders; and mentor and tutor Aetna HPPI middle school, high school, and college students. The monthly newsline, compiled and distributed by the department, also keeps students apprised of externships, fellowships, conferences, scholarships, and residency programs that they are eligible for. A key component of the department's mission is to foster mentorship of current medical and dental students by alumni of UConn Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine and by current faculty to provide them with further guidance for their professional training. In doing so, a Health Career Opportunity Programs Alumni Seminar Series was instituted in the spring of 2021 to cover various topics, from starting a practice to confronting bias in health care. The department has also established an online Alumni page to connect current students with alumni.

Additionally, the department continues to support the professional and cultural events of the SNMA, LMSA, and SNDA/ HSDA chapters and encourages student leadership at the university, regional, and national levels. These student organizations continue to be at the forefront of student life at UConn Health and the greater community. In the 2020-2021 academic year, members of SNMA, LMSA, and SNDA/HSDA participated in virtual career presentations to discuss health topics and health careers with middle school students of Global Communications Academy, Hartford, and high school students of the Boys & Girls Club of Hartford. Additionally, members of these organizations also participated with Health Career Opportunity Programs in the Urban League of Greater Hartford's 2020 Virtual STEAM Career Expo. The department is proud that the UConn Chapter of SNMA won the *Regional Chapter of the Year Award* for the 2020-2021 academic year. The department is also proud of the UConn Chapter of SNDA, which placed second for *National Chapter of the Year* for 2020-2021.

The Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs also celebrates the accomplishments of the UConn Medical and Dental Class of 2021. A Celebration was held virtually on May 2 to recognize the 2021 Health Career Opportunity Programs graduates. Dr. Marja Hurley and the members of Health Career Opportunity Programs wish continued success to the graduates as they begin their residency programs and professional training. It is an honor to see their achievements as they continue to positively impact patient care, education, and research.

## MINI MEDICAL SPANISH WORKSHOP

Despite the detrimental effects of the current COVID-19 pandemic in the education system, the **UConn Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA)** used online software to teach Medical Spanish through virtual workshops. During the 2020-2021 academic year, LMSA organized two mini-medical Spanish workshops focused on introduction, physical exam commands, history of present illness, and common vocabulary words used in a clinical setting. The workshops took place on Saturdays for 90 minutes.

The idea of organizing this virtual event came about through the LMSA chapter board members. With roughly 60 million Spanish speakers in the United States, students will likely encounter one of these patients during their careers. The LMSA members believe that the skills learned in these workshops could be applied immediately to medical students' CLIC (Clinical Longitudinal Immersion in the Community) sites and dental students at their UConn Dental Student clinic. "Being able to talk with patients in their preferred language makes a big difference as it makes them feel welcomed while waiting for interpreters. This is an important part of delivering high-quality health care, and LMSA wanted to pinch-in a grain," states Maria Navedo, UConn medical student, co-president of UConn LMSA.

## UConn HEALTH CHAPTER DEVELOPS LMSA+ UNDERGRADUATE CHAPTER AT UConn STORRS CAMPUS

The UConn chapter of the **Latino Medical Student Association** established an affiliated pre-medical student chapter – Latino Medical Student Association Plus (LMSA+) in the 2020-2021 academic year for UConn undergraduates interested in pursuing medicine. The mission of this program is to provide underrepresented in medicine (URiM) students with the resources and support they may need to help them achieve their goals of becoming physicians. UConn LMSA helped the LMSA+ chapter at UConn, Storrs form an E-board that now independently organizes events and continues to work with the medical students to plan mentorship and social/service events for its members.

In the spring of 2021, LMSA began a one-on-one mentorship program in which members of LMSA+ and other undergraduate organizations were paired with UConn medical students to receive individualized guidance as they prepared to apply to medical schools. The LMSA chapter has held medical student-led panels for all pre-medical students on various topics related to the road to medicine. The chapter reports that these panels have had excellent turnouts, and they will continue to hold them in the 2021-2022 academic year so that pre-medical students can interact and gain these experiences, in addition to service/volunteering events. LMSA hopes to expand the mentorship program this year to reach as many URiM students as possible.

## HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH EVENT

The UConn Chapters of the **Student National Dental Association/Hispanic Student Dental Association (SNDA/HSDA)** and the **Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA)** with the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs celebrate Hispanic heritage and traditions through various activities and programs, including an annual event for Hispanic Heritage Month. This event is a way to show appreciation for the Hispanic culture of the UConn Health community through food, song, dance, and other artistic presentations. Last year's event was held virtually over the course of four nights, from September 28 to October 1, 2020. The event included a cooking class; a Latin inspired arts and crafts class; salsa dancing lessons; an informational video on COVID-19 and important health hygiene topics; and a virtual trivia night about different Latin American countries. Contents on aspects of Hispanic culture were highlights of each of the evening activities.



**ECHO: WHERE VOICES, MEDIA, AND HISTORY MEET**

*Excerpts of article written by UConn SNMA E-board membes and medical students: Edesiri Igbuya, Anisha Lewis, Anita Luxkaranayagam, and Jasmine Miller*

The UConn chapters of the **Student National Medical Association (SNMA)** and the **Student National Dental Association (SNDA)/Hispanic Student Dental Association (HSDA)** hosted a virtual book/media club kick-off event sponsored by the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs called Echo: Where Voices, Media and History Meet, on September 2, 2020. The event provided UConn medical and dental students with the opportunity to discuss current issues in a thought-provoking manner, educate themselves about their past, and analyze and discuss Black history through the echoes of time. Nearly 100 medical and dental students, as well as UConn professors and faculty, attended the event.

“Just as an echo reverberates long after the words have been said, so does history,” states UConn SNMA. This statement was the reasoning behind the name for the book and media club, Echo: Where Voices, Media, and History Meet. Echo was created by UConn SNMA executive board members and second-year medical students, Edesiri Igbuya and Anita Luxkaranayagam, along with UConn SNDA/HSDA members Paul Nwokeji, third-year dental student, Farah Themistocle, third-year dental student, and Talia Staiger, second-year dental student. Igbuya and Luxkaranayagam were quite familiar with hosting book clubs for UConn SNMA and decided to target their trajectory toward racial injustice. Inspired by UConn’s apparent desire for change, SNMA teamed up with SNDA/HSDA to create a refreshing platform designed to “educate, listen, discuss, and learn about Black history and contemporary racial issues in a healthy, thought-provoking way.”

The Echo kick-off event at UConn Health in September 2020 hosted Mr. Shane Lloyd, a diversity consultant with expertise and research in the context of race and socioeconomic class. Since then, Igbuya and Luxkaranayagam have co-led two subsequent Echo meetings, on November 18 and December 16, centered on the New York Times 1619 Podcast series by journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones. The podcast focuses on the history of American slavery, and students and faculty were inspired to discuss the podcast and supplementary essays, and address any questions or ideas they had. “It is a safe space for students — it is an innovative space for the University,” states UConn SNMA.

Igbuya and Luxkaranayagam believe the future is brighter ahead



**Shane Lloyd,**  
Echo Kick-off Event Speaker



**Anita Luxkaranayagam,**  
UConn SNMA



**Edesiri Igbuya,**  
UConn SNMA

as they “set in motion a small wave that will ripple throughout time.” For UConn SNMA, “Echo addresses fear, and makes room for the uncomfortable. Features of resilience, joy, prosperity, unity, and community shall ‘echo’ in the minds and hearts of the UConn community and beyond through empowered conversations and understanding.”

# Guest Speaker



Munachim I. Uyanwune MD, MBA

## BLACK HISTORY MONTH CELEBRATION

In celebration of Black History Month, the UConn chapters of the **Student National Medical Association (SNMA)**, **Student National Dental Association (SNDA)/Hispanic Student Dental Association (HSDA)**, and the **Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA)** jointly organized various virtual events to which multiple students attended.

On February 26, 2021, UConn SNMA hosted a Black History Month Movie Night with a virtual screening of “Sylvie’s Love,” and on February 28, 2021, they invited all students, residents, fellows, and faculty at UConn Health for a fun interactive evening of trivia about Black music, history, and film.

On March 4, 2021, UConn SNMA, SNDA/HSDA, and LMSA organized an informative virtual event sponsored by the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs titled “Radical Healing: Promoting Wellness in Communities of Color.” The guest speaker, Munachim I. Uyanwune, MD, MBA, gave an insightful presentation

promoting mental health awareness and wellness in communities of color. Dr. Uyanwune is a board-certified psychiatrist. She holds dual undergraduate degrees from the University of Connecticut, including a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry and a Bachelor of Arts in French. She obtained her medical degree at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine. While enrolled in medical school, she also received a Master’s in Business Administration from the University of Connecticut School of Business. Dr. Uyanwune had worked in outpatient psychiatry care in private practice and community health. She currently provides psychiatric services on various telepsychiatry platforms to clients. Dr. Uyanwune is also part of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) and serves on the advisory council/board of the APA Foundation, Center for Workplace Mental Health.



UConn Chapter of the Student National Medical Association members during a virtual meeting.



**UCONN SCHOOLS OF MEDICINE AND DENTAL MEDICINE ALUMNI SPEAKER SEMINAR SERIES**

The Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs together with the **Student National Medical Association (SNMA)**, **Student National Dental Association (SNDA)/Hispanic Student Dental Association (HSDA)**, and the **Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA)** coordinate the UConn Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine Alumni Speaker Seminar Series events. The Alumni Seminar Series provides current UConn medical and dental students from the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs with an opportunity to learn more about various topics and experiences from our Health Career Opportunity Programs alumni currently in the health care professions. In the seminars, the medical and dental students are able to have an open conversation with the alumni guest speakers. Students ask questions, and the alumni guest speakers give information and advice on the topic chosen during the event.

The UConn Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine Alumni Seminar Series commenced virtually on Thursday, March 25, 2021, with a panel speaking on the topic of starting a medical or dental practice. The alumni guest speakers were Akinpelumi Beckley, MD, MBA; Lenora Williams, MD; David Woods, DMD; and Michael Woods, DMD. Dr. Beckley works as an associate program director of the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Residency Program, medical director of the Acute Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit, and director of the Vascular and Amputee Rehabilitation Program at New York-Presbyterian Hospital affiliation with Columbia University. Dr. Williams is an associate professor of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at UConn School of Medicine and was president and owner of Ellington Obstetrics and Gynecology, a private practice for 27 years. Dr. David Woods is an associate of Main Street Pediatric Dentistry and Children’s Orthodontics in Elkton and Havre de Grace, Maryland, and craniofacial orthodontist at Johns Hopkins Pediatrics in Baltimore, Maryland. Dr. Michael Woods serves in his private practice, Simply Southern Smiles, Michael Woods DMD, MS, PLLC in Statesville, North Carolina.

The second virtual Alumni Speaker Seminar was held on Thursday, May 6, 2021, with a panel speaking on their experiences in health care. The alumni guest speakers were Claudia Grogan, MD, Victoria Massey, DMD, and Prince Morgan, DMD. Dr. Grogan is an obstetrician and gynecologist at Specialists in Women’s Care in Southbury and Waterbury, Connecticut. Dr. Massey is a general dentist at Fairhaven Community Health Center in New Haven, Connecticut. Dr. Morgan serves as an attending dentist at Bronx Care Health Care Systems in Bronx, New York.



**Akinpelumi Beckley, MD, MBA**



**Lenora Williams, MD**



**David Woods, DMD**



**Michael Woods, DMD**



**Claudia Grogan, MD**

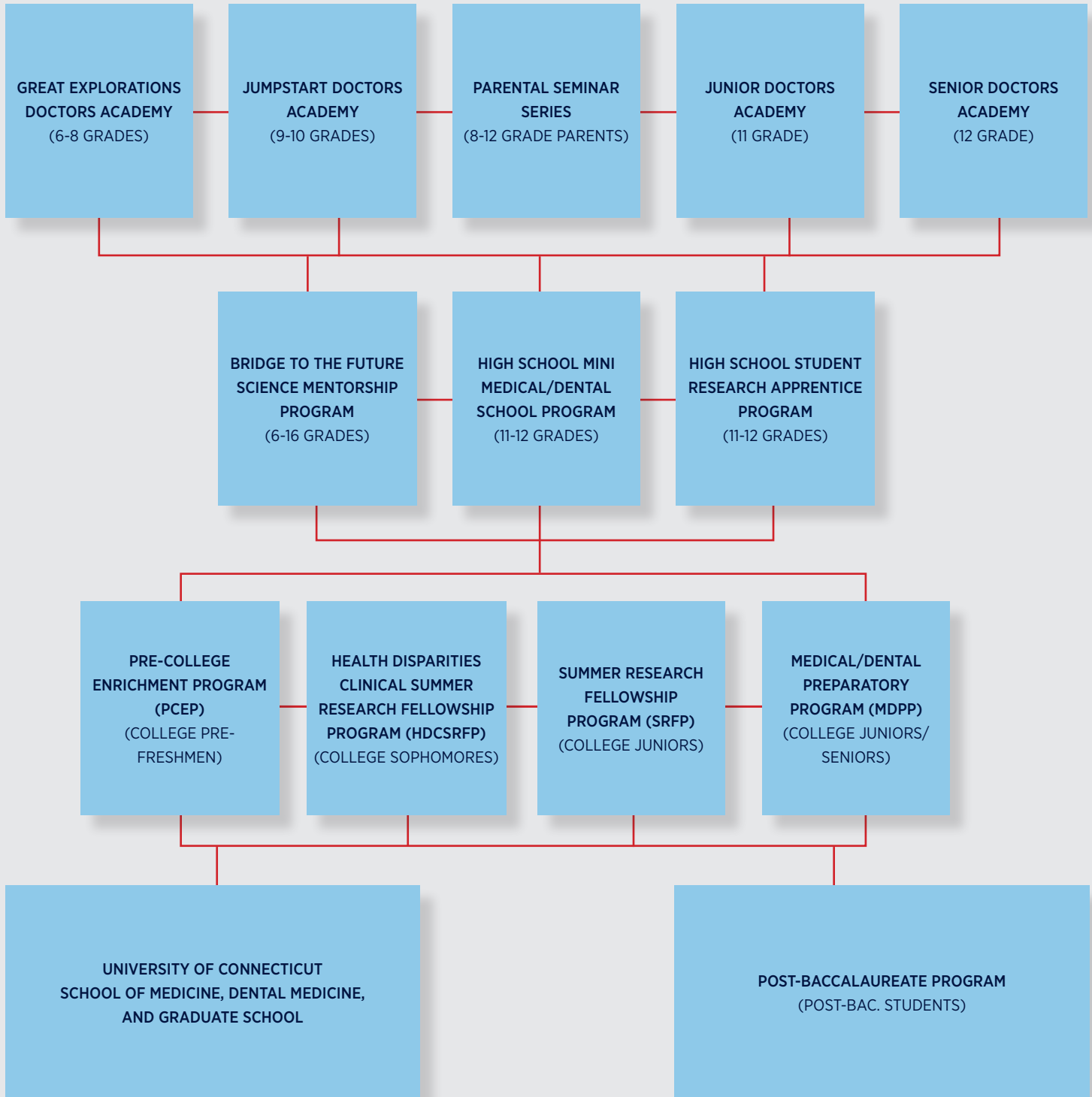


**Victoria Massey, DMD**



**Prince Morgan, DMD**

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PIPELINE PROGRAMS,  
VISIT US AT: [HEALTH.UCONN.EDU/HCOP/](https://health.uconn.edu/hcop/)



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and commitment to the students.

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This land on which the University of Connecticut Health Center stands was originally part of the O'MEARA farm property. O'MEARA family members emigrated from the Republic of Ireland in the middle 1800's. They farmed this property continuously until 1953, when the State of Connecticut purchased it from MARTIN J. and WILLIAM F. O'MEARA, the last members of three generations to actively work the land. The State of Connecticut for the Health Center Campus continues the O'MEARA family's long-standing tradition of commitment.



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