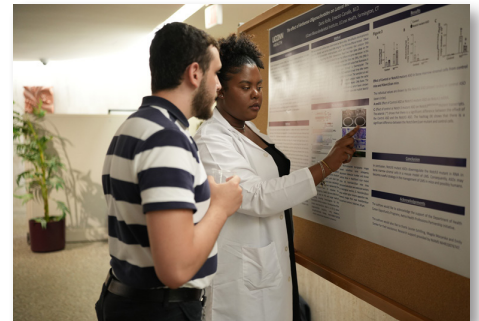


UConn HEALTH

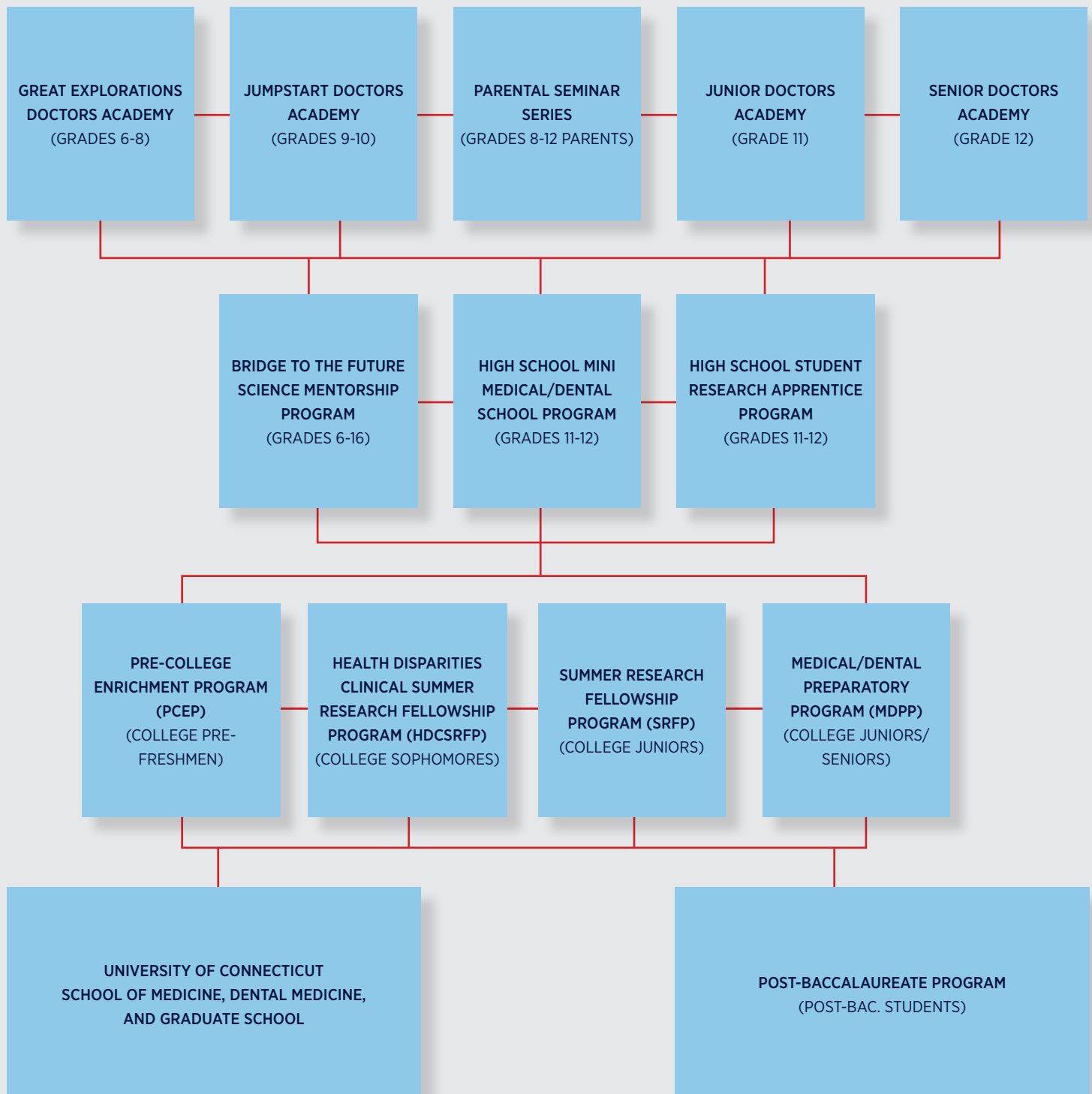
HEALTH CAREER
OPPORTUNITY PROGRAMS



Read about the Aetna Health Professions
Partnership Initiative and Pipeline
Programs at: health.uconn.edu/hcop

DECEMBER 2023

AETNA HPPI PIPELINE



WELCOME FROM DR. MARJA HURLEY



The Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs remains integral to the Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine 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. On July 21, we proudly celebrated

27 years of the Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative (Aetna HPPI) during the 2023 Summer Closing Ceremony. Ms. Tiffany Donelson, president and CEO of the Connecticut Health Foundation, served as our keynote speaker. Dr. Brianna Muñoz, community pediatric dentist at CT Pediatric Dentistry and President of the Connecticut Oral Health Initiative, a graduate of the UConn School of Dental Medicine Class of 2016, and former Aetna HPPI pipeline participant, served as our dental alumna speaker.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic impacted many aspects of our programs for middle school, high school, and college students over the last three years, the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs successfully reinstated most programs as in-person while continuing others as virtual or hybrid.

The Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs continues to support currently enrolled medical, dental, and graduate students of diverse backgrounds. We expanded these efforts by implementing a Medical and Dental Alumni seminar series, now in its third 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 and developed new collaborations with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Hartford.

This year, I congratulate our graduating seniors participating in the high school Aetna HPPI Doctors Academy, who were all accepted into colleges. Special congratulations to the Health Career Opportunity Programs scholars in the School of Medicine (SOM) and School of Dental Medicine (SODM) graduating class of 2023. In the SOM, 20% of the graduating class are Health Career Opportunity Programs scholars, while 26% of the graduating class in the SODM are Health Career Opportunity Programs scholars. We are also proud

that 60% of the underrepresented students currently enrolled in the SOM are Aetna HPPI pipeline students, and 50% 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 first-generation and underrepresented groups in the health professions. The Aetna HPPI programs have sent more than 1200 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 medicine and dental medicine in Connecticut or have embarked on careers in academic medicine or dental medicine.

We had 105 middle school, high school, and college students participate in our 2023 summer programs through the Aetna HPPI. During the 2023-2024 academic year, we anticipate approximately 300 students participating in our Aetna HPPI middle school, high school, and college programs. 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 27 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, which supports some of our existing programmatic initiatives.

MARJA HURLEY, MD

UConn 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

A NOTE FROM DR. DANIELLE WATT



I am ecstatic to join the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs as the new Associate Director with the retirement of Dr. Granville Wrensford, who had 14 years of dedicated service to the department. This year, we began our programming in a virtual environment and transitioned to in-person programming over the summer with the return of our High

School Student Research Apprentice Program and several college programs after a three-year interruption due to the pandemic. Although the Doctors Academy was virtual most of the academic year, we were excited to hold the last session and the closing ceremony in-person at UConn Health to honor the graduating seniors, all of whom have been accepted to four-year colleges, and to celebrate the achievements of all the Doctors Academy scholars. I applaud the instructors, peer counselors, mentors, staff, parents/guardians, and participants for their commitment to ensure another successful program virtually and with the return to in-person. The Doctors Academy programming included hands-on STEM sessions at the Connecticut Science Center, special mentoring sessions with the UConn Rowe Scholars; Dr. Brendan Dolan (UConn School of Dental Medicine alumnus) who organized healthcare professional speakers; biomedical research professionals; graduate students; UConn alumni; and Doctors Academy alumni who focused on tips for academic success, preparing for college, professional or graduate school, financial literacy, and career readiness.

Over the summer, the Doctors Academy participants visited with UConn Storrs graduate students, faculty, and staff of the School of Pharmacy, the Department of Chemistry, and the Pre-Medical and Pre-Dental Advising Office to learn about the different degree

programs, research, and resources for graduate and professional school preparation. Also, we piloted an art course with the Jumpstart 9 Program, which included a tour of the UConn Health art collection to emphasize the importance and connection between art and science especially in physical healing spaces. The participants used their knowledge of the structure and function of the heart to create artwork for the end of summer program heART Exhibit. We look forward to incorporating this course into the Doctors Academy curriculum.

Our Great Explorations in-school/after-school program also returned after a hiatus at West Middle School, Jumoke Academy Honors SMaRT, Renzulli Academy, several Boys and Girls Clubs of Hartford sites, and The Village at Burr where students participated in six sessions focused on hands-on biology and chemistry activities. The High School Mini Medical/Dental School Program had over 60 students participate from 25 high schools in Hartford and New Haven counties. We will have the program continue virtually to increase the participation of students across the state to provide access and exposure to health care and research professionals. In addition to the high school programs, our Pre-College Academic Enrichment Program, two college summer research programs, and the Medical/Dental School Preparatory Programs hosted participants from across the U.S. including Puerto Rico to support their educational and professional pursuits.

I sincerely thank all our program participants, parents/guardians, department staff, UConn medical, dental, and graduate students, faculty, professional staff, volunteers, speakers, and institutional and community partners for welcoming me to the UConn family and for contributing to the success of this year's programs. A special recognition to the members of the Student National Dental Association/Hispanic Student National Dental Association, Student National Medical Association, Latino Medical Student Association, Doctors Academy alumni, Dr. Kathy Martin-Troy and her Central Connecticut State University staff, and Dr. Stephany Santos and her UConn School of Engineering Vergnano Institute for Inclusion staff for supporting and partnering with our programs during my transition.

Danielle Watt, Ph.D.

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



GREETINGS FROM DR. KERRY-ANN STEWART



We are extremely proud of the Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative (HPPI) pipeline participants as they transition to the next stage of their educational and professional journeys. It was a pleasure to congratulate the 2023 graduates of the Senior Doctors Academy as they begin their academic careers as undergraduate students, as well as the 2023 graduates of the UConn Schools

of Medicine and Dental Medicine as they proceed to residency programs or dental practice.

This past academic year and summer, we continued to provide a community for students to learn engaging and innovative concepts to gain more exposure to the health professions. Through these enrichment events, we introduced the Junior and Senior Doctors Academies participants to the daily activities of practicing physicians and dentists and held a college application workshop with Dr. Gian Grant-McGarvey, an alumna of UConn School of Medicine.

The Bridge to the Future Science Mentoring Conference continues to prepare college students for careers in medicine, dental medicine, and research. Our participation in events with community partners such as the Urban League of Greater Hartford, and in



conferences such as the Student National Medical Association Region VII Medical Education Conference and the Student National Medical Association Annual Medical Education Conference allowed us to reach a large group of students from around New England and the country who are interested in the health professions. 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 and in-person networking and professional development events. It was exciting to meet with UConn Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) undergraduate students who are interested in biomedical research and have them interact with UConn Health Aetna HPPI pipeline medical, dental, and graduate students and alumni through a virtual panel.

This summer, the Medical/Dental Preparatory Program offered undergraduate and recent college graduates the opportunity to prepare for medical or dental school admissions and academic life as a first-year medical or dental student. Additionally, we were able to return to in-person programming for the Health Disparities Clinical Summer Research Fellowship Program and the Summer Research Fellowship Program. It is always wonderful to witness the outstanding research presentations given by the participants of these programs as they discuss their projects in areas of the biomedical sciences to community-based research, clinical medicine, and public health.

Seeing our middle school, high school, and college Aetna HPPI participants accomplish their goals is truly rewarding. We also extend our appreciation to our UConn medical, dental, and graduate students, who mentored students at various academic levels through Aetna HPPI pipeline programs and through community outreach. I thank the UConn community for its continuous support of the Aetna HPPI programs. I would especially like to thank Dr. Yvonne Grimm-Jorgensen, Dr. Anne Kim, Mr. Michael Petro, Dr. Stacey Brown, Dr. Brendan Dolan, and Dr. Gian Grant-McGarvey. Our faculty, instructors, mentors, tutors, seminar speakers, and peer counselors continue to help make these programs a great success each year.

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

CURT HANENBAUM, MD

Physician, Medical Student, Mentor



Dr. Curt Hanenbaum graduated from the UConn School of Medicine in May 2023.

Dr. Hanenbaum attended the University of Connecticut in Storrs, Connecticut, for his undergraduate education, where he was in the Honors Program. In 2015, he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Biological Sciences with a minor in Molecular and Cellular Biology.

Dr. Hanenbaum decided that he wanted to become a physician when he was in 5th grade. At that time, he did not really understand what a career in medicine entailed, but he knew he wanted to go into a field where he could help people and enjoy his day-to-day work. “As I started working towards this goal in college and [after graduating] I realized that the field of medicine was a place where I could really do something meaningful and impact many people’s lives. I also just found myself continually curious about the human body and wanted to learn more; this love of learning helped me push forward through all the tough times and make it through medical school,” shares Dr. Hanenbaum.

Currently, Dr. Hanenbaum is attending a 3-year internal medicine residency at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine. After residency, he is considering specializing, and sees himself in clinical practice. He is also interested in training residents and using his background in bioethics to help impact patient care.

Dr. Hanenbaum was introduced to the Health Career Opportunity Programs during high school through his acceptance to the 2010 High School Student Research Apprentice Program where he conducted research in the areas of regenerative engineering and orthopaedics. At this time, he was looking for opportunities to become involved in the medical field, but realized that as a high school student his options were more limited. Incidentally, he heard about Health Career Opportunity Programs and applied to the summer research program. “After I was accepted, I spent an incredible summer working in a lab and shadowing physicians. While

I had always had an interest in medicine, this summer helped solidify my desire to truly pursue [this] field,” states Dr. Hanenbaum.

As a result of his participation with Health Career Opportunity Programs, Dr. Hanenbaum was able to gain exposure to the field of medicine that he believes many people are not afforded. It was largely through these programs that he decided it was worth it to pursue a career in medicine. He has been able to make lasting relationships and continue to conduct research in the lab of Dr. Lakshmi Nair from high school (High School Student Research Apprentice Program) to college (Summer Research Fellowship

“The most memorable thing about these programs were the people I met. My best friends in medical school all did the Medical/Dental Preparatory Program with me.”

Program) to his capstone project in medical school due to his connections through Health Career Opportunity Programs. With his continuation in the Aetna HPPI pipeline, Dr. Hanenbaum also participated in the 2011 Pre-College Research Program and was a mentor for the 2014 Junior Doctors Academy. “The most memorable thing about these programs were the people I met. My best friends in medical school all did the Medical/Dental Preparatory Program with me and those summers we spent playing basketball...were some of my fondest memories,” shares Dr. Hanenbaum. Through the 2017 Medical/Dental Preparatory Program Track II-Basic Medical Sciences Program, he started medical school with a strong foundation as well as familiarity both academically and socially.

Dr. Hanenbaum leaves the following words of advice and encouragement to the younger generation of students interested in the health professions: “I don’t think there is a single person who would say that going into medicine is easy. There are a lot of challenges and often times failures, but ultimately if you push through those experiences, you can succeed and accomplish things you didn’t dream would be possible. There are many ways to help people in life, but the unique opportunity to be involved in people’s lives and really make an impact through medicine makes all the challenges worth it”.

ANISHA LEWIS, MD

Physician, Medical Student, Mentor



Dr. Anisha Lewis graduated from the UConn School of Medicine in May 2023.

Dr. Lewis attended Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Public Health in 2016. Dr. Lewis later completed the Post-Baccalaureate Program at the University of Connecticut in 2018 and the Certificate in Biomedical Science at the

University of Connecticut through the Young Innovative Investigator Program in 2019.

During her senior year of high school, Dr. Lewis decided she wanted to pursue a career in medicine after participating in a program sponsored by the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs. She also had an interest in mental health, and this is when she discovered the path to becoming a psychiatrist. This was her first official exposure to professionals with a medical degree. Dr. Lewis recounts, “It was the first time I had mentors who looked like me, who were in positions that I had never dreamed of before”. Her mentors were willing to help her as well as expose her to many specialties through networking and mentoring activities and enrichment through workshops and seminars.

Currently, Dr. Lewis is attending a 3-to-4-year psychiatry residency at Boston University Medical Center. She also plans to become involved in academic medicine through a clerkship in a faculty and program director position. In the future, she hopes to complete a 2-year child and adolescent psychiatry fellowship and/or a 1-year forensic fellowship. “As a future psychiatrist and an advocate for my community, I aspire to eliminate barriers to healthcare in order to achieve health equity... In the future, I envision myself working for a community center in a predominantly underserved community. I hope to provide mental health care for low income, underserved youth or justice-involved youth. My form of activism would be through providing equitable mental healthcare,” states Dr. Lewis.

Dr. Lewis became involved with the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs through her participation in the 2011 High School Student Research Apprentice Program as a rising high school senior. Her participation in this program allowed her to learn the importance of presenting and sharing information on her research project, public speaking skills, and to gain confidence. Although at first she was nervous, she realized it was a great learning experience.

“As a future psychiatrist and an advocate for my community, I aspire to eliminate barriers to healthcare in order to achieve health equity”

Dr. Lewis’s best Health Career Opportunity Programs experience was participating in the 2013 Health Disparities Clinical Summer Research Fellowship Program during her undergraduate studies, where she worked with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Connecticut. Through this experience she learned about the agency’s initiatives as well as shadowed in different specialties. “I made amazing friends that summer who I still see to this day and was blessed with amazing mentors who helped me get to where I am today”, she recalls of the experience. This created a community that allowed her to network with other program participants and to know other students coming into medical school. Additionally, through Health Career Opportunity Programs, Dr. Lewis learned about the Student National Medical Association (SNMA) prior to joining medical school and was interested in growing the community and the resources for initiatives that the organization sees as important. Through involvement with SNMA, Dr. Lewis continued to solidify her commitment to becoming a physician. She also was elected to the UConn School of Medicine’s SNMA chapter as Vice President in 2019 and President in 2020, as well as took on regional leadership as the SNMA Region VII Social Media Chair in 2020.

Dr. Lewis leaves the following words of advice and encouragement to the younger generation of students interested in the health professions: “Your journey is unique and specific to you! Don’t compare yourself to other people and enjoy the lessons that you learn on the way to where you are meant to be! Seek out mentors and don’t be afraid to ask for help because you are not alone! If someone offers you help, accept it graciously!”

FLAVIAH MUCHEMI, DMD

Dentist, Dental Student, Mentor



Dr. Flavia Muchemi graduated from the UConn School of Dental Medicine in May 2023.

Dr. Muchemi attended Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Connecticut, where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing in 2016.

Dr. Muchemi's early exposure to the field of nursing inspired her to want to pursue a career

in healthcare. This introduction to the health professions allowed her to think more deeply about what she wanted to do specifically in healthcare and to explore the possibility of becoming a doctor, which she decided on at age 21. "I decided later [to become a dentist] because although I had a passion for taking care of people, I lacked the proper guidance and mentorship to set me on a path during my undergraduate years. It is not until I met my friend, Chidera [a UConn dental student] and started working that I felt I had the right resources and support to apply. I chose to enter dental school because I am passionate about patient care and believe that oral health is a crucial component of general health. Poor dental care can be both humiliating and life-threatening – dentistry improves health, can alleviate debilitating pain, allows you to build long lasting relationships, and has been shown to have an influence on self-esteem and confidence", states Dr. Muchemi.

Dr. Muchemi is currently attending a 5-year Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery residency at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, which will also allow her to earn a Doctor of Medicine (MD) degree. For the future, Dr. Muchemi is considering going into private practice, but also considering a role in academia.

Dr. Muchemi's initial exposure to the Health Career Opportunity Programs was as a Junior in high school through the 2011 Mini Medical/Dental School Program. Additionally, as a junior in college, she participated in the 2015 Health Disparities Clinical Summer Research Fellowship Program, which she notes as her best Health Career Opportunity Programs experience. Through this experience, she worked with an epidemiologist at the Hartford Department of Health and Human Services on the Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention's Community Assessment for Public Health Emergency Response. "We gathered health and basic needs information that could provide a way for public health and emergency managers to prioritize their responses in the distribution of resources during crises in Hartford, Connecticut. I was also given the opportunity to present an educational poster on the data and research findings I had collected that summer. Health Career Opportunity Programs [HCOP] is such a great resource because it continues to propel participants to realize their dreams of becoming health care professionals and build a more inclusive health network. My UConn experience would not have been possible without HCOP", shares Dr. Muchemi. Furthermore, she states that "I was not only able to conduct meaningful research, but I was also able to meet like-minded individuals who had similar aspirations and goals. The program allowed me to shadow many different physicians and dentists in various fields which ultimately aided me in making the decision to apply to dental school".

"I chose to enter dental school because I am passionate about patient care."

During her time as a dental student, Dr. Muchemi continued her involvement with Health Career Opportunity Programs by being a mentor in the Doctors Academy program on Saturdays during the academic year. She enjoyed the experience of giving back to the students by sharing advice and providing guidance that she wishes she had when she was in middle and high school. Dr. Muchemi was also involved in the UConn chapter of the Student National Dental Association/Hispanic Student Dental Association for her four years of dental school. She was Co-president of the chapter for the 2021-2022 academic year and enjoyed giving back to the community through the organization's events and programs.

Dr. Muchemi leaves the following words of advice and encouragement to the younger generation of students interested in the health professions: "We do not talk enough about the concept of being uncertain about one's career path and dedicating time to self-improvement and seeking out experiences that help in making an informed decision. Experiencing uncertainty is very normal but what matters most is maintaining an open mind and having an unwavering dedication to hard work".

RAFAEL OLIVIERI ORTIZ, MD

Physician, Medical Student, Mentor



Dr. Rafael Olivieri Ortiz graduated from the UConn School of Medicine in May 2023.

Dr. Olivieri Ortiz attended the Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico, Metro Campus in San Juan, Puerto Rico, for his undergraduate studies. In 2019, he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology.

Between the ages of 18 and 19, Dr. Olivieri Ortiz started to think

more seriously about becoming a doctor after he graduated from high school and completed his first year of college. He has always been attracted to the sciences but had not really thought of pursuing medicine as a career early on. At first, he wanted to pursue a career in the merchant marine industry or as a pilot, but later decided on a career in medicine. “It was not until I had a couple of opportunities to shadow that I finally realized that medicine was a good fit for me. The moment that really did it for me was when I shadowed in orthopedic surgery”, shares Dr. Olivieri Ortiz. Seeing surgeons work quickly and witnessing patients rapidly improve after surgery really captured him. He realizes that shadowing physicians is a way for undergraduate students to really experience what life is like as a physician. Even though he did not pursue careers in flying or sailing, he still enjoys these activities during his time off.

Currently, Dr. Olivieri Ortiz is attending a preliminary medicine year at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine in diagnostic radiology. After this 1-year training, he will do a 4-year radiology residency at the University of Texas in Austin, Texas. For the future, he is also considering completing a 1-year fellowship in either neuro or musculoskeletal imaging.

Dr. Olivieri Ortiz became involved with the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs by learning about the programs through a friend who previously participated in the summer enrichment programs. His first experience was through his

participation in the 2018 Medical/Dental Preparatory Program Track I-MCAT Preparation. “My first experience with Health Career Opportunity Programs [HCOP] was with the MCAT prep, one program that I highly recommend because without it I most likely wouldn’t have scored what I wanted. The program also allowed me to experience UConn and meet students and faculty. It really helped cement my decision to come to UConn,” states Dr. Olivieri Ortiz. Dr. Olivieri Ortiz’s best Health Career Opportunity Programs experience was through his participation in the 2019 Medical/Dental Preparatory Program Track II-Basic Medical Sciences (BMS) Program, which is a program offered to incoming medical and dental students the summer immediately before matriculation. He liked that the program allowed for an introduction to the medical school curriculum and also for him to make lifelong friends with whom he would also go through school with during the next four years. “Having best friends whom you can rely on is super important as medical school is a long marathon”, he shares. A year later, Dr. Olivieri Ortiz was selected as a 2020 BMS program tutor. He thought it was an excellent experience to hone in on skills as an educator and to learn about the administrative perspective of programming.

“Follow your dreams no matter how hard they get. You will fall but the most important thing is to get back up and learn.”

Dr. Olivieri Ortiz leaves the following words of advice and encouragement to the younger generation of students interested in the health professions: “Follow your dreams no matter how hard they get. You will fall but the most important thing is to get back up and learn. It is a long road and not an easy one, but if it is what you love and drives you, at the end you will appreciate all that you went through. Keep Reaching!”

EZIGBOBIARA UMEJIEGO, MD, MPH

Physician, Medical Student, Graduate Student, Mentor



Dr. Ezigbobiara Umejiego graduated from the UConn School of Medicine in May 2023.

Dr. Umejiego attended Kennesaw State University in Kennesaw, Georgia, where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology in 2014. Prior to his time in Georgia, he completed a Bachelor of Science degree in Library and Information Science from Imo State University in Owerri, Nigeria in 2006.

Dr. Umejiego's decision to pursue a career as a physician occurred at the age of 24. Two events that helped to inform his decisions were: 1) his experience participating in the UNICEF-sponsored reproductive health and HIV/AIDS advocacy program during his yearlong national service in Nigeria; and 2) immigrating to the United States to rejoin his family. "The former allowed me to see the need in medicine and impact I could make as a health professional, while the latter provided me with the opportunities and resources needed to embark on this journey", shares Dr. Umejiego. On his journey to medicine, he was able to meet individuals in the health professions and receive guidance from these professionals by reaching out early and consistently. Currently, Dr. Umejiego is attending an ophthalmology residency at Howard University in Washington, District of Columbia. In the future, he intends to pursue a fellowship training at the end of residency in a sub-specialty in ophthalmology. He also plans to work in medically underserved communities, locally and globally, throughout his career to better inform patients of their care and health needs.

Dr. Umejiego heard about the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs through an alumna, Dr. Faith Ajiboye, and got to learn more about the department during his interview day visit to the UConn School of Medicine. "From what I learned, I knew I needed to get involved. Not only for the invaluable resources it afforded me to thrive as medical student at UConn, but also for the many opportunities it provided me to positively impact the lives and career-interests of the students coming behind me", states Dr. Umejiego. Meeting current students was impactful and welcoming to him as he was introduced to UConn School of Medicine.

Additionally, through his participation in the 2017 Medical/Dental Preparatory Program Track II-Basic Medical Sciences Program, he was able to have a smooth transition to UConn while meeting other matriculating students.

Dr. Umejiego's best experience through the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs was his experience as a mentor with the Doctors Academy on Saturdays during the academic year. "It was a joy to work with my fellow mentors curating activities for our mentees, and it was humbling to witness firsthand the incremental growth and progress our mentees made as they imbibed the knowledge, attitudes, and skillsets we worked assiduously to inculcate in them. Witnessing the transformation of our mentees, from shy and insecure individuals to confident and assertive students who affirmed with conviction their career goals, made the experience memorable and worthwhile", shares Dr. Umejiego. Additionally, Dr. Umejiego served as the Resident Assistant/ Tutor for the 2018 Pre-College Enrichment Program, where he assisted students in their transition from their senior year of high school to their freshman year of college.

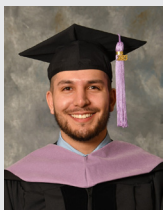
Dr. Umejiego leaves the following words of advice and encouragement to the younger generation of aspiring health professionals: "It is a huge responsibility and privilege to be a part of the health professions. As you embark on this journey, you will face arduous yet rewarding challenges. You will most likely remember the challenges and setbacks you endured more than you will recall your numerous victories. So please, do not forget to celebrate your victories along the way, no matter how small or big they are. I also want to share three key advice that I hope you will keep close to your heart and carry along with you throughout this journey: 1) Regardless of the path you take, your success will be determined by your journey and not your destination. Invest in your journey and focus on making the best out of it. 2) As with all careers, you will need some iota of luck along your journey. Luck requires two key ingredients – preparation and perseverance. You cannot be at the right place at the right time if you are not prepared and do not persevere through the highs and lows of your journey. 3) Lastly, you can achieve everything you desire in life. But to do so, you have to help as many people as you humanly can to achieve all their goals. In all, stay grounded and plug into whatever outlet that keeps you sensitized and reminds you of why you are pursuing this career path...And when you feel down or out, always remember a life of service to others is a life well-lived."

2023 BRIDGE MENTORING AWARD

The Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs recognized four dental students and three medical students for their continued participation and involvement in the Aetna HPPI Programs with the Bridge Mentoring Award. The 2023 recipients were: Edward Amelemah, DMD, general practice residency, St. Francis Hospital & Medical Center, Hartford, Connecticut; Carlos Cardenas Peralta, DMD, advanced education in general dentistry, University of Florida College of Dentistry, Seminole, Florida; Rocio Casanova Torres, MD, internal medicine residency, New York Presbyterian-Columbia University Medical Center, New York, New York; Flaviah Muchemi, DMD, oral & maxillofacial surgery residency, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio; Talia Staiger, DMD, general practice residency, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah; Ezigbobiara Umejiego, MD, MPH, ophthalmology residency, Howard University, Washington, D.C.; and Kolu Wynne, MD, internal medicine residency year 1, St. Mary's Hospital, Waterbury, Connecticut and radiology/diagnostic residency, Beth Israel Deconess Medical Center, Boston, Massachusetts.



Edward Amelemah, DMD



Carlos Cardenas Peralta, DMD



Rocio Casanova Torres, MD



Flaviah Muchemi, DMD



Talia Staiger, DMD



Ezigbobiara Umejiego, MD, MPH



Kolu Wynne, MD

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR MENTORS AND PAST PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

2023 UConn Medical, Dental, and Graduate School Graduates

Nizida Acharte, DMD
Brianna Alves, DMD
Edward Amelemah, DMD
DeCeilia Browne, DMD
Carlos Cardenas Peralta, DMD
Rocio Casanova Torres, MD
Nicole Colon Cruz, DMD
Curt Hanenbaum, MD
Marques Johnson, MD
Chinaka Joseph, MD
Anisha Lewis, MD
Flaviah Muchemi, DMD
Kaimen Obeng, DMD

Rafael Oliviera Ortiz, MD
Romoye Sohan, MS
Marina Spinelli, MD
Ezigbobiara Umejiego, MD, MPH
Kolu Wynne, MD



Ezigbobiara Umejiego, MD, MPH

2023 OUTSTANDING STUDENT AWARD

The Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs recognized a member of the Class of 2023 for outstanding performance throughout their professional education. The 2023 recipient was Ezigbobiara Umejiego MD, MPH, ophthalmology residency, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

Medical and Dental Award Recipients



Carlos Cardenas
Peralta, DMD



Anisha Lewis, MD



Flaviah Muchemi,
DMD



Talia Staiger, DMD



Rocio Chang,
MA, PsyD



Lenworth Ellis, MD



Lenora Williams,
MD

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS 2023 EXEMPLARY SERVICE AWARDS

The Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs and the UConn Chapters of the Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA), 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 2023 for their exemplary service. The LMSA recipient was Carlos Cardenas Peralta, DMD, advanced education in general dentistry residency, University of Florida College of Dentistry, Seminole Florida. The SNMA recipient was Anisha Lewis, MD, psychiatry residency, Boston University Medical Center, Boston, Massachusetts. The SNDA/HSDA recipients were Flaviah Muchemi, DMD, oral & maxillofacial surgery residency, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio, and Talia Staiger, DMD, general practice residency, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah. Additionally, the UConn Chapters of the Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA) and the Student National Medical Association (SNMA) also recognized faculty members for their service to the student organizations. The 2023 LMSA faculty award recipient was Rocio Chang, MA, PsyD, and the 2023 SNMA faculty award recipients were Lenworth Ellis, MD, and Lenora Williams, MD.



SNDA/HSDA Award presented by dental students and Chapter Co-Presidents, Tyler James and Barbara Shehata to Flaviah Muchemi, DMD and Talia Staiger, DMD



SNMA Award presented by medical students and Chapter Co-Presidents, Chayanne Gumbs and Fleur Kabala to Anisha Lewis, MD



LMSA Award presented by medical student and Chapter Co-President, Cesar Rubio Ramos to Carlos Cardenas Peralta, DMD



Dr. Marja Hurley with the medical and dental student award recipients

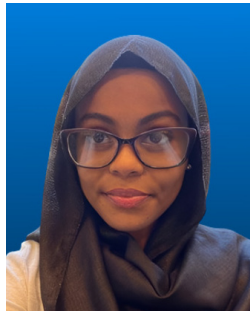
SENIOR DOCTORS ACADEMY GRADUATING CLASS OF 2023



Duke Addy
Saint Anselm College



Yusr Al Lami
University of Connecticut



Shahd Ali
University of Connecticut



Jabez Boyd
University of Connecticut



Gabriel Garcia
Central Connecticut State University



Travon Hardy
Western Connecticut State University



Mark Manson
University of Connecticut



Shazia Syed
University of Connecticut



THE JOHN AND VALERIE ROWE SCHOLARSHIP

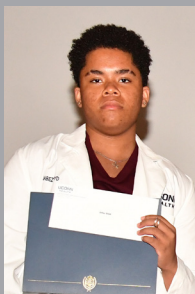


John Rowe, MD and Valerie Rowe, Ph.D.

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. Dr. John D. Rowe and Dr. Valerie A. Rowe, are long-time 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. 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. The 2023 John and Valerie Rowe Scholarships were awarded to Jabez Boyd and Mark Manson by Dr. Marja Hurley, UConn 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.

2023 John & Valerie Rowe Scholarship Recipients

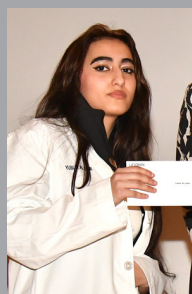


Jabez Boyd



Mark Manson

2023 Boake L. Plessy Scholarship Recipients



Yusur Al Lami

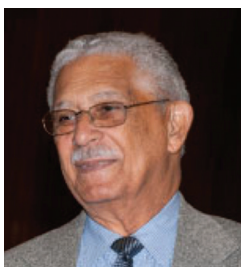


Shadh Ali



Shazia Syed

BOAKE L. PLESSY, PH.D. SCHOLARSHIP



In honor of Dr. Boake Plessy's contributions, UConn Health has established a scholarship fund that is used to support educational enhancement for students who participated in the Aetna HPPI Doctors Academy and are planning to continue their education at the postsecondary level. The Friends of the

Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs – 2023 Boake L. Plessy, Ph.D. Scholarship was awarded to Yusur Al Lami, Shadh Ali, and Shazia Syed at the Academic Year Closing and Recognition Ceremony. All three award recipients are attending UConn this Fall. To contribute to the Boake L. Plessy, Ph.D. Scholarship Fund or for more information about philanthropy to support the Health Career Opportunity Programs at UConn Health, please visit health.uconn.edu/hcop.

GREAT EXPLORATIONS

Great Explorations is an enrichment program designed to provide extracurricular activities in math, science, and language arts for sixth to eighth grade middle school students. A total of 99 students who participated in the Great Explorations Program in the 2022-2023 academic year were enrolled in one of four middle schools: Jumoke SMART Academy, West Middle School, The Village at Burr School, and Renzulli Academy/Classical Magnet School.

Great Explorations also offers a four-week summer academic enrichment program for rising eighth grade participants and a 30-week Saturday Academy for current eighth-graders. The summer activities are conducted at the Learning Corridor in Hartford, and the Saturday Academy is held at the UConn Health campus. A total of nine students participated in the 30-week 2022-2023 academic year component of the program. During the summer of 2023 a



total of eight students participated in the program. Additionally, the Great Explorations students visited the Connecticut Science Center during the 2022-2023 academic year, and Mystic Aquarium and the arboretum at The Institute of Living in Hartford during the summer of 2023.

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 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 healthcare. 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 PSAT and the SAT exams. A total of 58 high school students participated in the Aetna HPPI Doctors Academy virtual program during the 2022-2023 academic year, and 48 students participated in the in-person program during the 2023 summer.



During the 2022-2023 academic year and 2023 summer, the Aetna HPPI Doctors Academy participated in mentoring activities focused on college preparation, the health professions, relevant health topics, and scientific research hosted by undergraduate students in the UConn Rowe Health Professions Scholars Program; medical students in the UConn Chapter of the Student National Medical Association; and UConn Health Ph.D. graduate students. Additionally, the members of the Junior and Senior Doctors Academies took part in a mentorship program with practicing health professionals and scientists hosted by Dr. Brendan Dolan, a general dentist, and alumnus of the UConn School of Dental Medicine, and a college application workshop hosted by Dr. Gian Grant-McGarvey, family medicine resident, and alumna of the UConn School of Medicine. Additionally, the high school students took enrichment trips to the Connecticut Science Center during the 2022-2023 academic year. They also visited the UConn Storrs campus and the New Britain Museum of American Art during the summer of 2023.

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 are then tailored to their needs. The 2022-2023 Parental Seminar Series commenced with a college admissions and financial aid panel. The panel included Ms. Jomaira Rincon, senior admissions officer, University of Connecticut; Ms. Sierra Colon, assistant director of Admissions, Eastern Connecticut State University; Ms. Stacey Downing, director of Student Financial Services, University of Saint Joseph; Ms. Molly Minor, director of Admissions, University of Saint Joseph; Mr. Nilvio Perez, director of First Year Admissions, Southern Connecticut State University; and Mr. Carlos Soler, assistant director of Admissions & Recruitment, Central Connecticut State University.

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



Lenworth Ellis, MD

A presentation on cardiovascular disease was given by Dr. Lenworth Ellis, an assistant professor of Medicine in the Division of Occupational Medicine at UConn Health.



Luriza Glynn, APRN, CDE

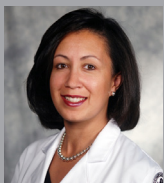
Another topic of interest was healthy eating and nutrition including information on diabetes and obesity presented by Ms. Luriza Glynn, a nurse practitioner, and Diabetes Education Program Coordinator at UConn Health.

HIGH SCHOOL MINI MEDICAL/DENTAL SCHOOL SEMINAR SERIES

The High School Mini Medical/Dental School Seminar Series offers eight weekly lectures and demonstrations presented by faculty members of the UConn Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine. The 2023 seminar series held virtually included topics in medicine, dental medicine, and biomedical research. One hundred-four Connecticut high school juniors and seniors participated in the 2023 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.

2023 High School Mini Medical/Dental School Seminar Series Speakers and Topics



Biree Andemariam, MD
Medicine



Jenna Bartley, PhD
Aging Research



Liisa Kuhn, PhD
Biomaterials Research



Ian McNeill, MD
Neurosurgery



Donna Paoletta, DMD
BA/BS-DMD Combined Degree Program



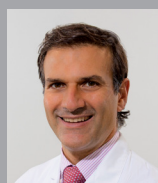
Thomas Regan, MD
BA/BS-MD Combined Degree Program



Jason Ryan, MD, MPH
Cardiology



Belachew Tessema, MD
Otolaryngology



Flavio Uribe, DMD,
MDentSc
Orthodontics

DOCTORS ACADEMY REUNION

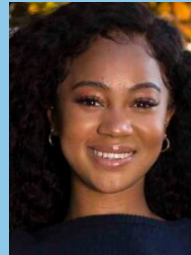
On Saturday, March 25, 2023, the Aetna HPPI Doctors Academy celebrated a virtual reunion and special mentoring event sponsored by the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs. Aetna HPPI Doctors Academy alumni were able to reunite and discuss their career pathways since graduating from the Doctors Academy, answer questions, and advise current Doctors Academy participants. The event facilitators were Tiffany Addy, Senior Doctors Academy Class of 2019, UConn Class of 2023; Kiera Flynn, Senior Doctors Academy Class of 2017, Trinity College Class of 2021; and Julie-Ann Williams, Senior Doctors Academy Class of 2019, UConn Class of 2023. The event began with a warm welcome by Dr. Danielle Watt, associate director of Health Career Opportunity Programs, 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 moderators and panelists for breakout sessions focused on college preparation and career exploration through interactive cases and team-building exercises; as well as a discussion on medical careers and alternate pathways: Lisbette Acosta, Yale University Class of 2024; Joshua Crittenden, Environmental Engineering Graduate Student at Duke University, Class of 2023; Lucia Duenas-Bianchi, UConn School of Medicine Class of 2025; Kayla Jaman, Springfield College Class of 2024; Giovanni Jones, Trinity College Class of 2021; Tanya Miller, Johns Hopkins School of Nursing Class of 2023; Yasmin Mohamad, UConn Class of 2024; Qristine Owusu, UConn Class of 2023; Julian Rose, Biomedical Engineering Graduate Student at Georgia Institute of Technology, and an educational strategies director; and Justin Ude, UConn School of Nursing, Class of 2023.

2023 Aetna HPPI Doctors Academy Reunion Participants



Tiffany Addy



Kiera Flynn



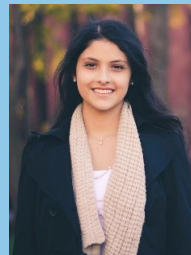
Julie-Ann Williams



Lisbette Acosta



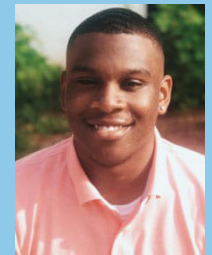
Joshua Crittenden



Lucia Duenas-Bianchi



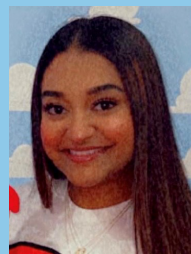
Kayla Jaman



Giovanni Jones



Tanya Miller



Yasmin Mohamad



Qristine Owusu



Julian Rose



Justin Ude

CONNECTICUT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS CONDUCTING RESEARCH AT UCONN HEALTH

Excerpt of article written by Lauren Woods, UConn Health

UConn Health's programs are having an enormous impact on the youth of Connecticut, the future of science and the research and health care workforce. Learn how and meet some of this year's graduates of the High School Research Apprentice Program of the longstanding Health Career Opportunities Program.

This summer UConn Health's High School Research Apprentice Program was back in action after being halted for several years because of COVID-19. The Health Career Opportunity Programs' (HCOP) research apprentice program is graduating 14 talented high school students from across the state this July.

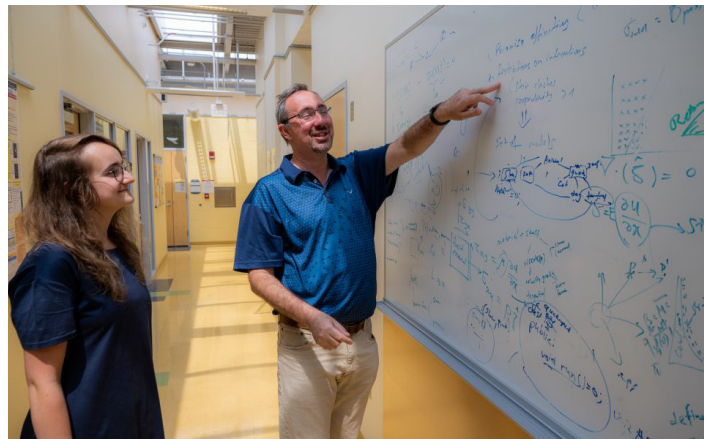
For five weeks the high school students have been conducting real-life, exciting research projects inside the laboratories of UConn School of Medicine or UConn School of Dental Medicine researchers in Farmington and also even at Central Connecticut State University Department of Biomolecular Sciences.

Two of this summer's many bright Research Apprentice Program high school students with a passion for medicine and science are Sophia Pidvysotski, 16, of Hartford and Savannah Reid, 17 of Manchester. In addition to launching their research career explorations at UConn Health, Pidvysotski starts her senior year this fall at Miss Porter's School while Reid starts 12th grade at Manchester High School.

Reid's research mentor is Nilanjana Maulik, Ph.D., a professor of surgery and director of the Molecular Cardiology and Angiogenesis Laboratory at UConn School of Medicine. Her lab focuses on the rescue, repair, and regeneration of sick hearts.

"Savannah is a very bright and intelligent student. She is a quick learner," says Maulik. "I wish her every success in life."

Maulik adds: "The High School Student Research Apprentice Program, run by Dr. Marja Hurley, is unique. This program provides opportunities for young school students to get out of the classroom, gain awareness of the workplace culture of the research labs and enhance wet lab skills and techniques. It is providing young students confidence, positivity and mainly engagement with the team members which provide them a lot of confidence. It is a very important program for high school students."



Pidvysotski's summer research mentor is Michael Blinov, Ph.D., associate professor in the Center for Cell Analysis and Modeling. Pidvysotski is gaining research experience in Blinov's lab which focuses on mathematical modeling of biological systems which are useful to verify biological hypotheses, predict cellular behavior, and suggest scientific experiments.

"I love mentoring high school students and I love to see how they succeed," says UConn Health Scientist Blinov. "UConn Health's programs have an enormous impact on the future of science."

"We thank the UConn Health and Central Connecticut State University faculty and staff for their support and continued encouragement and commitment to our students," shared Dr. Marja Hurley, founder and director of the Health Career Opportunities Programs at UConn Health as well as UConn Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor of Medicine and Orthopedic Surgery.

Blinov adds: "These programs allow talented high school students to feel the taste of real science and be more prepared for future careers. I enjoyed working with Sophia this summer. Her project requires digging into the biological details of mathematical models in order to provide an appropriate description of the model and its results. It requires hard work and interest, and Sophia is up to this task."

The High School Research Apprentice Program at UConn Health is sponsored and funded by the Aetna Foundation, the Connecticut State Legislature Fund, John and Valerie Rowe Health Professions Scholars Program, The Hartford, the UConn Foundation, Friends of the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs, and UConn Health.

PRE-COLLEGE ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

The Pre-College Enrichment Program is a residential enrichment program primarily for incoming students at UConn. Designed to provide solid development of scientific, mathematical, communications, problem solving, and test-taking skills, it is intended to enhance the preparedness of college freshmen. It allows the students to experience life on a college campus at UConn Storrs prior to their matriculation to college in the fall. Students participate in the academic track (completion of academic courses) in collaboration with the UConn School of Engineering BRIDGE Program at Storrs.

This past summer, five Pre-College Enrichment Program participants along with 12 BRIDGE Program participants also engaged in numerous enrichment activities at UConn Health including tours of basic science and dental laboratories, research presentations, a team-based learning clinical exercise led by



members of the UConn Chapter of the Student National Medical Association, professional development seminars, and meet & greet sessions with college Aetna HPPI students and UConn medical and dental students.

HEALTH DISPARITIES CLINICAL SUMMER RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The Health Disparities Clinical Summer Research Fellowship Program is an eight-week clinical enrichment experience designed for rising college sophomores, juniors, seniors or recent graduates. In the summer of 2023, six students participated in the program. The program is designed to provide the following: clinical research and enrichment experiences; an introduction to health disparities across cultures; principles of clinical medicine; public health issues, research and interventions; an overview of cultural definitions; and discussions of specific techniques for working with diverse populations in community settings. All of the participants completed a clinical research project and presented a poster with their results at the end of the program. The community partners who participated in the 2023 program were: Community Health and Well-Being, Trinity Health of New England; UConn Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities; UConn Department of Public Health Sciences; and Wheeler Health and Family Wellness Center, Hartford.



SUMMER RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The Summer Research Fellowship Program is an eight-week research enrichment experience designed for college sophomores, juniors, seniors, and recent graduates who are interested in a career in medicine, dental medicine, or biomedical research; and for applicants who have completed some college coursework in biology and chemistry (preferably through organic chemistry). Minority Access to Research Careers (MARC) students are encouraged to apply. A faculty sponsor is identified for each student. The faculty develops and makes available suitable project descriptions. The student contacts his/her faculty sponsor in April or May and develops a research protocol. Students devote approximately 32 hours per week to a research project and 8 hours per week to clinical experiences. In the summer of 2023, a total of five students participated in the program. At the end of the summer, the students gave a poster presentation of their research results during a special 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 21 college students and recent college graduates participated in academic classes, seminars, workshops, test-taking strategies, and other enrichment activities during the five or six-week summer 2023 program. Students enrolled in the Medical/Dental Preparatory Program enjoyed a series of seminars presented by UConn Health faculty and enrolled students from June 12 through July 21, 2023. The Summer Seminar Series topics included medical and dental specialties, professionalism, and basic science and translational research. The participating students appreciated personal anecdotes and reflections by faculty. They were able to engage in each seminar by communicating directly with faculty; obtaining insight in medicine, dentistry, and biomedical sciences; and finding new mentors.



UConn Health Hosts Premedical Students for the 2023 Student National Medical Association Annual Medical Education Conference

The Student National Medical Association (SNMA) hosts its Annual Medical Education Conference (AMEC) to bring together premedical students, medical students, medical residents, physicians, and faculty from around the country to discuss pertinent issues in health and medical education. The 2023 AMEC was held at the Connecticut Convention Center in downtown Hartford from April 5th to 9th. The theme of the conference was *Brilliance Embodied: Elevating the Mission and Revitalizing our Purpose*. Students, faculty, and staff of UConn School of Medicine took an active part in the conference as participants, speakers, panelists, judges, and exhibitors. 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 Health, served as a judge for the Wilbur C. Jordan Research Forum and was an invited Panelist for the AMEC Women in Leadership Plenary. Dr. Granville Wrensford, assistant dean and associate director, Health Career Opportunity Programs, UConn Health and Dr. Danielle Watt, associate director, Health Career Opportunity Programs, UConn Health also presented in the Black Males in Medicine Summit hosted by the conference, which was open to Doctors Academy participants and youth in Greater Hartford. Dr. Wrensford's presentation was focused on Tips for Careers in Health & Science Careers and Dr. Watt's presentation was focused on the Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative pipeline programs.



Career Opportunity Programs and the UConn Chapter of SNMA for a morning of tours and enrichment activities through a site visit of the UConn Health campus on Friday, April 7th. The day's activities commenced in the Patterson and Friends Auditoriums with welcoming remarks from Dr. Bruce Liang, dean, UConn School of Medicine, interim CEO and Executive Vice President for Health Affairs, UConn Health, as well as greetings from Dr. Hurley. An overview of college programs and resources offered by Health Career Opportunity Programs through the Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative was presented by Dr. Watt.



In addition to participating in the main conference events and activities in Hartford, the UConn School of Medicine also hosted premedical college students through the Department of Health

Following the opening remarks, conference attendees engaged in a discussion focused on medical school admissions with faculty panelists of the School of Medicine. Attendees were able to learn more information about the admissions process and had their questions answered about applying to medical school. Additionally, conference attendees learned more about the UConn School of Medicine's MDelta curriculum through participation in a team-based learning clinical exercise led by members of UConn SNMA in the academic rotunda and anatomy presentations led by Dr. John Harrison, associate professor, Craniofacial Sciences; Dr. Dharamaender Choudhary, assistant professor, Surgery; and UConn SNMA members in the virtual anatomy lab. To learn more about the academic support given to medical students at UConn, conference attendees also had an opportunity to tour the library and the Clinical Simulation Center. The UConn Health visit concluded with a Q&A session with medical students and Health Career Opportunity Programs faculty.

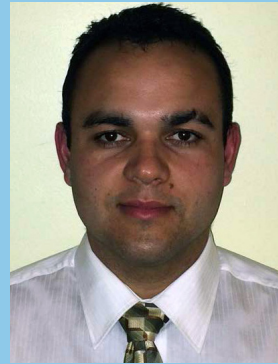
BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE SCIENCE MENTORING CONFERENCE

The 2023 Bridge to the Future Science Mentoring Conference was held virtually on Saturday, April 22, with approximately 35 college and Junior and Senior Doctors Academies 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. Danilo Gomes, UConn School of Medicine class of 2011 graduate, attending, Penn State Health Community Medical Group, adjunct assistant professor of Radiology, gave an inspirational message to students.

The virtual Bridge to the Future Science Mentoring Conference included an Admissions Panel, a Scholar-Athlete Panel, and a Medical and Dental Student Panel for the college participants. College students 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 a Clinical Skills Workshop. 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, UConn School of Dental Medicine, and members of the Student National Dental Association/Hispanic Student Dental Association, included information on a career in dental medicine and more information about dental school admissions. For college students specifically interested in a career in medicine, members of the Latino Medical Student Association and the Student National Medical Association gave an interactive workshop on clinical skills.

Conference participants also received advice from scholar-athletes on balancing academics and athletics and successful matriculation to medical and dental schools. The eight panelists participating in the Scholar-Athlete session consisted of current UConn Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine students, representing sports such as basketball, football, lacrosse, soccer, track and field, and volleyball. In addition to the Scholar-Athlete Panel, the conference included the Medical and Dental Student Panel where enrolled UConn Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine students shared their personal anecdotes about their progression through their respective schools and allowed the college students to ask questions.

Keynote Speaker



Danilo Gomes, MD completed his undergraduate degree at the University of Connecticut and earned his MD degree from the University of Connecticut School of Medicine. While attending UConn, he participated in the Pre-College Enrichment Program the summer of 2003, the UConn Health Clinical College Enrichment Program in 2004 (now the Health Disparities

Clinical Summer Research Fellowship Program), and the Medical/Dental Preparatory Program MCAT Prep in 2005. Dr. Gomes then completed his residency in Diagnostic Radiology at the University of Connecticut Health Center where he was elected as chief resident in 2015-2016. Dr. Gomes went on to pursue a fellowship in Diagnostic Neuroradiology at Yale where he was also elected chief neuroradiology fellow in 2016-2017. He spent three years in private practice in California before joining Penn State Health in 2020. Dr. Gomes is currently an attending for Penn State Health Community Medical group. Given his expertise in the field of neuroradiology, Dr. Gomes was also appointed adjunct assistant professor of Radiology and is a member of the Academic Neuroradiology Section at the Penn State Health School of Medicine in Hershey, Pennsylvania, which allows him to focus fifty percent of his work on academic neuroradiology, teach, mentor and supervise radiology residents.

AETNA HEALTH PROFESSIONS PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE 2022-2023 ACADEMIC YEAR DOCTORS ACADEMY CLOSING CEREMONY

The Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs held its annual Academic Year Closing and Recognition Ceremony for the Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative (Aetna HPPI) Doctors Academy on May 17, 2023. 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. Danielle Watt, associate director, Health Career Opportunity Programs, UConn Health. Greetings were also given to the Aetna HPPI Doctors Academy participants and their parents/guardians by Dr. Marja Hurley, UConn Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor, 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 Britt-Marie Cole-Johnson, Esq., partner in the Labor + Employment Group at Robinson+Cole, who gave inspiring words of encouragement to the Doctors Academy participants. Student reflections were given by Shazia

Syed, Senior Doctors Academy Class of 2023; Mark Manson, Senior Doctors Academy Class of 2023; Audrey Addy, Junior Doctors Academy Class of 2024; and Kiera Flynn, Senior Doctors Academy Class of 2017, Trinity College Class of 2021. Mr. Daniel Addy, a parent of Doctors Academy participants, also gave an inspiring message about how his children and the other Doctors Academy participants have benefitted from the program over the years.

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: Prodigy Edwards, Laniyah Morgan, and Abraham Olasunkanmi of Great Explorations; Joshua Smith of Jumpstart 9; Elissa Matthews and Xavier Rosario of Jumpstart 10; and Audrey Addy and Nathan Morgan of the Junior Doctors Academy. All the Senior Doctors Academy graduates are furthering their education at colleges and universities, with five enrolling at UConn. Jabez Boyd and Mark Manson were each awarded the John and Valerie Rowe Scholarship Award, and Yusur Al Lami, Shahd Ali, and Shazia Syed were each awarded the Friends of the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs – Boake L. Plessy, Ph.D. Scholarship Award. Additionally, the family of Asa Etienne Modeste, a student participating in the Doctors Academy, was recognized for their participation in the 2022-2023 Parental Seminar Series.

Keynote Speaker



Britt-Marie Cole-Johnson, Esq. receives recognition from Dr. Marja Hurley at the Academic Year Closing and Recognition Ceremony

Britt-Marie Cole-Johnson, Esq.

A noted employment lawyer, board member, and speaker, Britt-Marie counsels companies, from startups to the Fortune 500, in many areas of employment law, including sensitive, high-risk personnel issues, workplace investigations, DEI, compliance and separations. She is a partner in the Labor + Employment Group at Robinson+Cole, an *AmLaw 200* law firm, and was elected to the firm's

Managing Committee. Britt-Marie offers insightful, forward-thinking, and practical counsel, is well-versed in the key responsibilities of directors, and supports clients' boards of directors seeking guidance on governance, risk, and strategy. She is also a trained workplace investigator and regularly conducts, manages, and provides advice regarding workplace investigations involving all types of employment-related issues, particularly those requiring Board of

Director and senior management involvement and high-profile matters. She serves as a faculty member for the UConn School of Business and the Association of Workplace Investigators.

Britt-Marie was appointed by Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont to serve on the Board of the Connecticut Paid Leave Authority and also serves on a number of other Boards, including the Association of Workplace Investigators, Oak Hill, UConn Health, The Connecticut Project, and Teach for America – Connecticut, where she serves as Board Chair. She has been ranked in *Chambers USA: America's Leading Lawyers for Business* in the State of Connecticut in the area of Labor & Employment since 2014 and in the *Connecticut Super Lawyers* list since 2020 after being recognized as a Rising Star from 2013 to 2018. Most recently, she was recognized as a 2023 Women in Business Honoree by the *Hartford Business Journal*.

Britt-Marie earned her B.A. in English from Emory University and her J.D. from Emory University School of Law.

DOCTORS ACADEMY AT UCONN HEALTH MAKING DREAMS COME TRUE

Excerpt of article written by Lauren Woods, UConn Health

Graduates of the Health Career Opportunity Programs were celebrated at its annual closing ceremony. Mark Manson, a senior at Bloomfield High School, has dreamed of becoming a doctor since he was four years old and is now UConn bound to earn both his undergraduate and medical degrees.

For the first time since 2019, UConn Health hosted its annual Doctors Academy program's closing ceremony in-person on May 17 for its Greater Hartford middle school, high school, and college-bound students.

Mark Manson, 17, of Bloomfield was one of the several talented local high school seniors graduating from this year's Senior Doctors Academy and honored for their health science achievements.

Thanks to UConn Health Doctors Academy program and its strong mentorship Manson's dream of becoming a future doctor are coming true.

"I have wanted to be a doctor since I was four!" exclaims Manson, a senior at Bloomfield High School, who applied and was accepted to join the Doctors Academy in the summer of his ninth grade.

The Doctors Academy is an intense program with the students attending classes on Saturdays during the school year and also a six-week enrichment academy over the summer focusing on pre-calculus, calculus, biology, physics, anatomy, physiology, and writing.

Now Manson has been accepted into both the University of Connecticut and its UConn School of Medicine for its specialized program in medicine. Over the next eight years Manson will have the opportunity to pursue his dual degree of Bachelor of Science in biomedical engineering as well as his medical doctorate (MD).

Manson is really looking forward to becoming a UConn Husky.

"I can't wait! I am so excited for the special program. This program will allow me to become a doctor faster. UConn is close to home and has an amazing medical program. The HCOP program helped me with this amazing opportunity. I'm interested to see what I can learn in bioengineering and how I can apply it to what I want to do in medicine so I can understand the innerworkings of technology that I can use in medicine."

Doctors Academy is one of the programs within the Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative (HPPI) of UConn Health's Health



Career Opportunity Programs. For more than two decades the successful programs, founded and directed by Dr. Marja Hurley the UConn Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor, have built a continuous pathway for Connecticut's youth of all backgrounds looking to realize their dream of becoming future doctors, dentists, and health professionals.

"Because of this UConn Health program I was able to go into more advanced classes at high school," says Manson. "The program's mentoring was great because it gave me an insight into the different medical specialties I could go into too."

He especially enjoyed how the program taught him some clinical skills such as how to take his own blood pressure manually and even exposed him to the research world.

"I loved the most the research program," Manson says. "I got the feel of a research lab and how they are working to help improve myocardial infarction. I may want to become a physician-scientist someday."

Manson also wants other young people like him to follow their career dreams. He recommends middle school students interested in pursuing careers in medicine or science apply by eighth grade to the HCOP program.

"Apply to everything you can early – and don't change your goals just because someone ever tells you that you can't." And Manson is already thinking of his career plans after medical school.

"Right now I want to go into cardiology," he says as he is fascinated by the interworking of the heart and tackling the world's increased prevalence of heart disease.

Dental Alumna Speaker



Brianna Muñoz, DMD, M.P.H., is a board-certified pediatric dentist and represents the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) as a public policy advocate for the state of Connecticut. She obtained her Doctor of Dental Medicine from the University of Connecticut School of Dental Medicine at which time she was inducted into the Omicron Kappa Upsilon (OKU)

National Dental Honor Society. Dr. Muñoz completed a residency in pediatric dentistry at Connecticut Children's Medical Center (CCMC) and concurrently attained her Master of Public Health (MPH) degree along with a Certificate of Interdisciplinary Disability Studies through a UConn-HRSA Dual Degree Training Program.

With an avid interest in oral health advocacy, Dr. Muñoz is currently president of the Connecticut Oral Health Initiative (COHI), a non-profit organization that promotes equity, access, and quality of oral health care. She also serves as Legislative Representative for the Connecticut Society of Pediatric Dentists (CSPD), Board Member of the Hispanic Health Council (HHC), ADA Alternate Delegate for the Connecticut State Dental Association (CSDA), and Region 1 Representative for the AAPD Pediatric Dental Medicaid & CHIP Advisory Committee of the Council

on Government Affairs. Her interest in public health was first incited as a UConn dental student while volunteering on a service trip to Neltume, Chile. Since then, it became her personal and professional goal to impact policy in promoting oral health equity.

In recognition of the instrumental role that she played in the advocacy campaign to expand the period in which Connecticut youth may retain dental insurance coverage on a parent's policy to age 26, Dr. Muñoz was presented with the Oral Health Champion Award. Throughout the years, she also has received the CSDA Rising Star Award, the Mulvihill Medal for Academic and Research Excellence, the AAPD Resident Recognition Award, the AAPD Samuel D. Harris Research and Policy Fellowship, the Provost's Outstanding Senior Woman Academic Achievement Award, the Pierre Fauchard Academy Academic Achievement Award in the Profession of Dentistry, the Special Care Dentistry Award for Achievement in Dental Care for Disabled Persons, and the Dean's Award.

As a graduate of the Aetna Health Professions Partnership Initiative Summer Research Fellowship Program and a recipient of the Health Career Opportunity Scholarship, Dr. Muñoz is profoundly grateful for the many opportunities that arose from her time at UConn Health and changed the trajectory of both her life and career. She is honored and humbled to return to Keller Auditorium as the Alumni Speaker and wishes all the graduates much success in their future endeavors!

Keynote Speaker



Tiffany Donelson, M.P.H., is president and CEO of the Connecticut Health Foundation, overseeing the independent health philanthropy's work in grantmaking, policy advancement, strategic communications, and leadership development. She brings to the role a deep knowledge of health care systems and policy, extensive experience in grantmaking, and

a commitment to equity. Ms. Donelson previously served as the foundation's vice president of program. Before joining the foundation in 2014, she held several leadership roles at Aetna, including as the deputy chief of staff for Aetna's National Businesses Office and as a director in corporate strategy. Before joining Aetna, Ms. Donelson was a consultant at Ingenix Consulting and PricewaterhouseCoopers. She is a member of several boards and advisory committees, including the boards of the United Way of Connecticut, the Connecticut Council for Philanthropy, and Grantmakers In Health. Ms. Donelson is a graduate of Georgetown University and received her MPH in health policy and management at Emory University's Rollins School of Public Health.



HEALTH CAREER OPPORTUNITY PROGRAMS 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 2022 Welcome Reception was held on August 31 at UConn Health for the Class of 2026. This was an opportunity for first-year medical and dental students to learn more about: department resources, support services, and programs; UConn 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. The medical and dental Class of 2026 was also invited to a holiday reception on December 2, 2022 at the Pond House Café in West Hartford where they were able to meet the other classes of medical and dental students, as well as UConn Health alumni, medical residents, and faculty.

Over the four years of academic training, Health Career Opportunity Programs' medical and dental students can participate in seminars based on their career interests; 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 to cover various topics, from professional and personal life balance to technological advances in medicine. 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 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. During the 2022-2023 academic year, members of SNMA, LMSA, and SNDA/HSDA participated in medical Spanish workshops; volunteered with the Hartford Public Library, Park Street, Hartford; led panels, workshops, and tours with pre-medical college students; volunteered at oral health screenings at various sites in Connecticut; participated in social events and Lunch & Learn seminars in honor of Black History Month; led cultural fundraising events for local charities; and pioneered a pen-pal program with Renzulli Academy in Hartford, CT and Laurel Elementary School in Bloomfield, CT.

The Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs also celebrates the accomplishments of the UConn Medical and Dental Class of 2023. The 2023 Graduation Celebration was held on April 29th at the Pond House Café in West Hartford. 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.



CELEBRATING HISPANIC HERITAGE

Article written by Courtney Chandler, UConn School of Dental Medicine

For School of Dental Medicine students, Hispanic Heritage Month is not only an opportunity to gather and have fun, it's also a chance to spread cultural awareness, create memories, and foster community. For students in the Student National Dental Association/ Hispanic Student Dental Association (SNDA/HSDA), Hispanic Heritage Month is one of the most eventful months of the year.

Salsa nights, lunch-time trivia, cultural cookoffs, and empanada fundraisers are the events that students in SNDA/HSDA plan during the celebratory month, spanning from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15.



Students with the SNDA/HSDA attend a national conference in Seattle during the month of September

Not only is Hispanic Heritage Month an opportunity to gather and have fun, but it's also a chance to spread cultural awareness, create memories, and foster community at the School of Dental Medicine.

"Hispanic Heritage Month is one month a year and highlighting these events allow our students the opportunity to share their culture and experiences," said Dr. Sarita Arteaga, associate dean for students at the School of Dental Medicine. "It is a small example on how the students impact their environments and colleagues, now and throughout their time here."

"My goal is to spread the culture throughout the school and cultivate memorable experiences for anyone who wants to participate," says Anthony Perez-Pino, social events chair for the

student organization and third-year student. "For HSDA, this is one of the most active months of the year. We are proud of our heritage!"

UConn SNDA and HSDA work together to foster a community at the School of Dental Medicine that supports and promotes minority students and advocates for better dental care for minority populations. All dental students—no matter their background—are encouraged to come together to participate in community service, socialize through various cultural events, and create connections with alumni.

"SNDA/HSDA is transparently an organization for minority students that supports and promotes minority communities," said Tyler James, co-president and third-year dental student. "While we are bold in our mission to uplift these specific groups, we are by no means exclusive, in that we invite the entire UConn community to participate. We embrace all cultures, languages, cuisines and more, and it is very special to have a dedicated space to celebrate this with everyone."

The UConn SNDA/HSDA chapter currently has approximately 70 active members.

"I love the tight-knit sense of community and family that SNDA/HSDA cultivates for its students. It's such a wonderful space to come together to celebrate and embrace the many cultures that make up our student body and our shared commitment to serve underserved communities," says Barbara Shehata, co-president and third-year student.



Students volunteer in Norwich during Hispanic Heritage Month

To kick off Hispanic Heritage Month, the students hosted a fundraiser where members got together to bake empanadas and host a trivia event on Hispanic heritage. At the end of September, the group hosted a salsa night to give students an opportunity to learn how to salsa dance.

To close out Hispanic Heritage Month in October, there will be a “Cultural Food Cook-off” to encourage students to cook a dish from their native country. Through sharing a piece of their culture, members of SNDA/HSDA are hopeful that everyone will learn about their fellow peer’s culture through food. All of the dishes will be scored, which will be a “be a fun, friendly competition that will give people bragging rights about their native cuisine,” said Perez-Pino.

The students team up with the Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA) to organize these Hispanic Heritage Month events. The dental students enjoy collaborating with LMSA and the Student National Medical Association in the UConn School of Medicine, as it helps expand the student’s reach in cultural awareness and build a stronger interprofessional community of minority. Perez-Pino serves as the social chair for LMSA in addition to the SNDA/HSDA.

Students in SNDA/HSDA are active year-round. They host panels and fundraisers, events during Black History Month, alumni events in collaboration with the oral health screenings, and multiple other volunteer opportunities to name a few.

“I joined SNDA/HSDA because I am passionate about community service,” James says. “The organization offers members many opportunities to service in the local Hartford community through oral health screenings, improve oral health education at elementary schools, and become mentors for other aspiring young dentists, especially those that belong to underrepresented minority groups.”

The students also get involved nationally through conferences, events, meetings, and scholarship opportunities. This month, a group of six students traveled to Seattle for the annual Student National Hispanic Dental Association Regional Conference. Three students won scholarships, and the group received honorable mention for their submission to the Orgullo Video Competition—an education advocacy video competition that UConn students have won in the past.

“I personally think this organization highlights the diversity at UConn. When I moved here from Miami, I was worried that it would lack the diversity I was so accustomed to back home. I was very happy to see such a tight knit and collaborative community of brilliant future dentists of all different ethnic backgrounds. I believe we all do a great job of promoting our respective cultures and collaborating,” Perez-Pino says.

STUDENT NATIONAL MEDICAL ASSOCIATION—UConn HEALTH CHAPTER CULTURE SHOCK EVENT

Each year the Student National Medical Association (SNMA) hosts Culture Shock, a school-wide event sponsored by the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs. The purpose of the event is to celebrate the cultural diversity of the UConn Health community through performances, fashion, music, dance, and other artistic presentations by bringing together medical and dental students and faculty. Participants enjoy a wide array of local and international cuisine through generous donations from many restaurants. This year, Culture Shock was held on December 9, 2022, in UConn Health’s Keller Auditorium. Proceeds from the event were donated to ConnectiKids Inc. and continue to benefit the mission and efforts of UConn SNMA.

SNMA is a nationally run student organization whose mission is to “support current and future underrepresented minority medical students, to address the needs of underserved communities, and to increase the number of clinically excellent, culturally and socially conscious physicians.” “ConnectiKids Inc. is a nonprofit positive youth development organization that focuses on educating, enriching, and empowering Hartford’s youth.” They work directly with West Middle Community School, Michael D. Fox Elementary School, and Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School. They provide tutoring, mentoring, arts, and enrichment throughout the academic year and a summer program. For this December event, UConn SNMA raised over \$1500 for this organization.

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 healthcare professions. In the seminars, the medical and dental students can 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 2022-2023 Alumni Seminar Series was held virtually on Thursday, October 20, Tuesday, December 13, Monday, February 27, and Thursday, May 18. The first seminar focused on the topic, *Balancing Personal and Professional Life*. The alumni guest speakers were Christine Castater, MD, M.B.A., and Stephanie Stoddart, DMD, M.B.A. Dr. Castater is double boarded in general surgery and surgical critical care and returning to Grady Hospital as an assistant professor in Surgery at Morehouse School of Medicine in Georgia. Dr. Stoddart is a practicing general dentist at various locations in Connecticut.

The second seminar focused on the topic, *Taking off the Mask: Recognizing and Confronting Practitioner Burnout*, with alumni guest speakers Vanessa Wanjeri, MD, and Andria D. Matthews, MD, M.P.H. Dr. Wanjeri is board certified in physical medicine and rehabilitation and is working as a medical director of inpatient rehabilitation at Southern Ohio Medical Center. Dr. Matthews started a new role as assistant professor in UConn's Department of Family Medicine. In this role she continues to serve as a primary care physician for families in Hartford at the Asylum Hill Family Medicine Center and St. Francis Hospital, as well as teach residents and medical students.

Dr. Castater also joined the third seminar in the series as a guest speaker, along with alumna guest speaker, Kafi Charles, DMD. The title of the third seminar was *Technological Advances in Medicine*. Dr. Charles is a practicing pediatric dentist at Children's Dentistry of Coral Springs & Orthodontics in Coral Springs, Florida. In addition

Guest Speakers



Christine Castater, MD, M.B.A.
General Surgery



Stephanie Stoddart, DMD, M.B.A.
General Dentistry



Vanessa Wanjeri, MD
Physical Medicine and
Rehabilitation



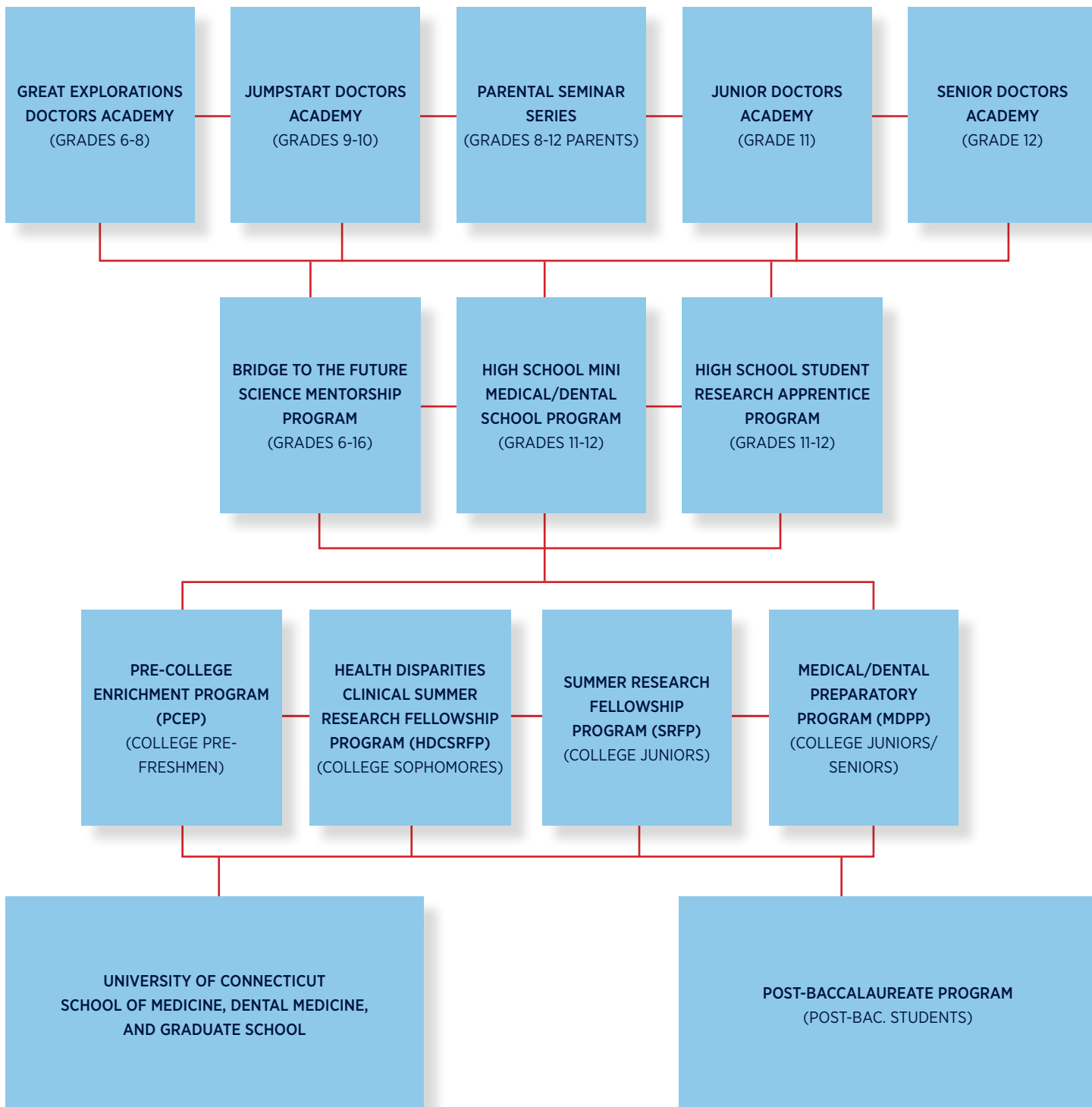
Andria D. Matthews, MD, M.P.H.
Family Medicine



Kafi Charles, DMD
Pediatric Dentistry

to learning about the previous topics, medical and dental students were also able to attend a fourth seminar titled, *Mental Health and Mental Rejuvenation are Important Topics to Discuss in Dental Medicine*, presented by Dr. Stoddart.

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



ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF FUNDING SOURCES

Aetna Foundation

Connecticut State Legislative Fund

Connecticut Health Foundation

John and Valerie Rowe Health Professions Scholars Program

University of Connecticut Foundation

Friends of the Department of Health Career Opportunity Programs

UConn Health

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF OUR PARENTS, TEACHERS, PEER COUNSELORS, MENTORS, FACULTY, AND STAFF

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

**For more information about the Pipeline Programs, visit us at
health.uconn.edu/hcop/**

This publication was funded by the Aetna Foundation Fund.