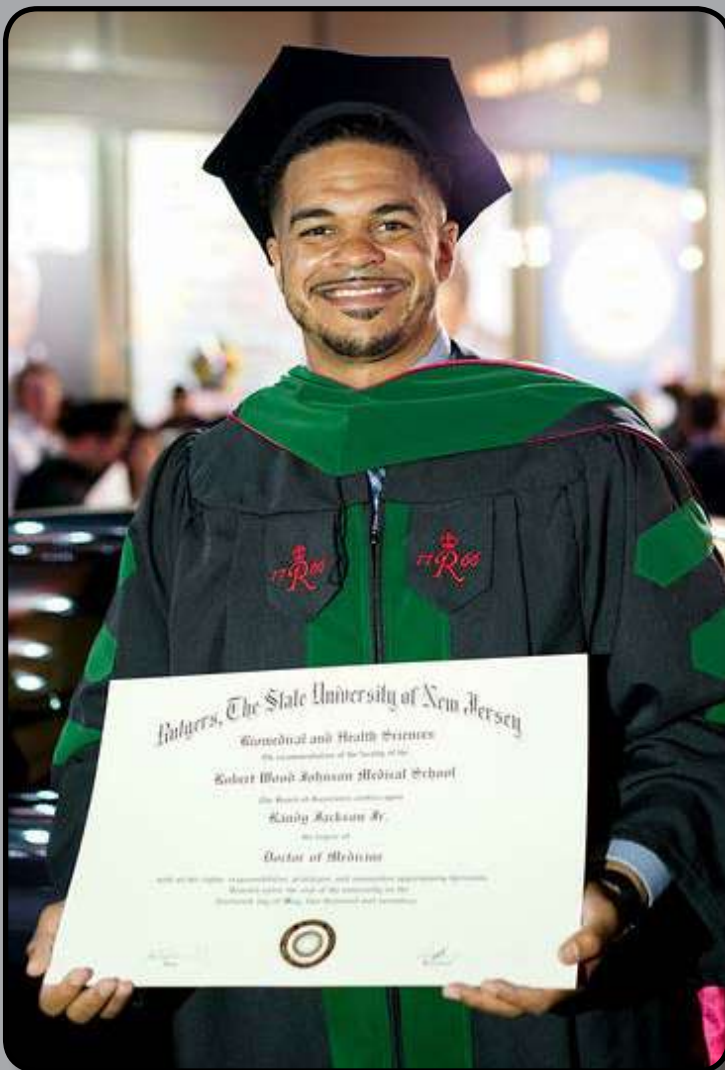


# ODASIS NEWSLETTER

Vol. 13



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

*Passion...Perseverance...Physician.  
Read about the incredible journey  
of ODASIS and EOF alumnus,  
Randy Jackson, M.D., page 6.*

**RUTGERS**

School of Arts and Sciences



## Thanks to all alumni donors!

ODASIS would like to thank all alumni for their generosity and contributions and would like to highlight those that donated during 2016-2017:

- Dr. Kelvin Adjei-Twum
- Mr. Robert Alexander
- Dr. Shirley Angel
- Dr. Ayobamidele Balogun
- Dr. Carl Casimir
- Mr. Alex Castro
- Mr. Leonard Haas
- Dr. Gladston Randall Hackett
- Mr. Joseph Magadaleno Jr.
- Dr. Ronniel Mercado
- Dr. Ramon Nunez
- Dr. Oluseun "Alfy" Olufade
- Dr. Charlton Olayemi
- Dr. Herbert Pardes
- Dr. Schubert Perotte
- Ms. Renee Reed
- Dr. Angelique Ridore
- Mr. Paul Samuel
- Mr. Squire Servance
- Dr. Corey Smith
- Dr. Nnajindu Ugoji
- Dr. Ricardo Verdiner
- Dr. Tanya D. Williams



Congratulations to Dr. Karen Stubaus, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Administration, for earning the ODASIS Lifetime Achievement Award for her continuous, collaborative work with ODASIS and Rutgers University.

## More than 3 Decades of Excellence



ODASIS had the privilege of hosting their 31st annual ODASIS Graduation and Awards Ceremony on Thursday, April 27, 2017. The event was received by over 300 guests, including alumni, undergraduates, and their proud parents, as well as fellow Rutgers faculty/staff members. One of ODASIS' very own alumni, Dr. Ronniel Mercado, kicked the evening off with words of encouragement and salutations for a job well done. Dr. Karen Stubaus, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Administration, delivered an inspirational Welcome Address; Dr. Kenneth Breslauer, Dean of the Division of Life Sciences and Vice President for Health Science Partnerships, reflected on the importance of ODASIS and introduced Dr. Robert L. Johnson, M.D., the Sharon and Joseph L. Muscarelle Endowed Dean, who provided Words in Celebration to those in attendance. We were extremely proud to celebrate the acceptance of 41 ODASIS students into medical professions and graduate programs this year. We also celebrated 53 alumni graduating from medical, dental, osteopathic, and public health schools.

This year's keynote speaker was Dr. Herbert Pardes, Executive Vice Chairman and member of Board of Trustees of New York Presbyterian Hospital, who discussed his professional journey and reminded the audience of the importance of staying true to one's goals. Later, Dr. Ramon Nunez, an ODASIS alumnus and member of the Rutgers-New Jersey Medical School Class of 2002, shared his experiences from medical school, as well as his journey as a practicing physician. All speakers generously offered motivating assurances and commemorated our students' successes. Attendees walked away with a newfound appreciation for the medical field after the heartfelt speeches from our distinguished guests.

ODASIS was additionally honored to present Dr. Karen Stubaus with an ODASIS Lifetime Achievement Award for her continuous, collaborative work with ODASIS and Rutgers University. The evening was closed by Dr. Nyarai Mushonga, an ODASIS alumna who gave a touching meditation on never giving up and thanked Dr. Khan and his staff for their endless support of their students. Having the opportunity to share the evening with students, old and new, made the evening a night to remember.

# Cultivating Student Success at the 2016 ODASIS Motivational Workshop

*People like you and me are very rare, we are special, but it is up to us to set the path for others to follow.*

*—Gene Hall*

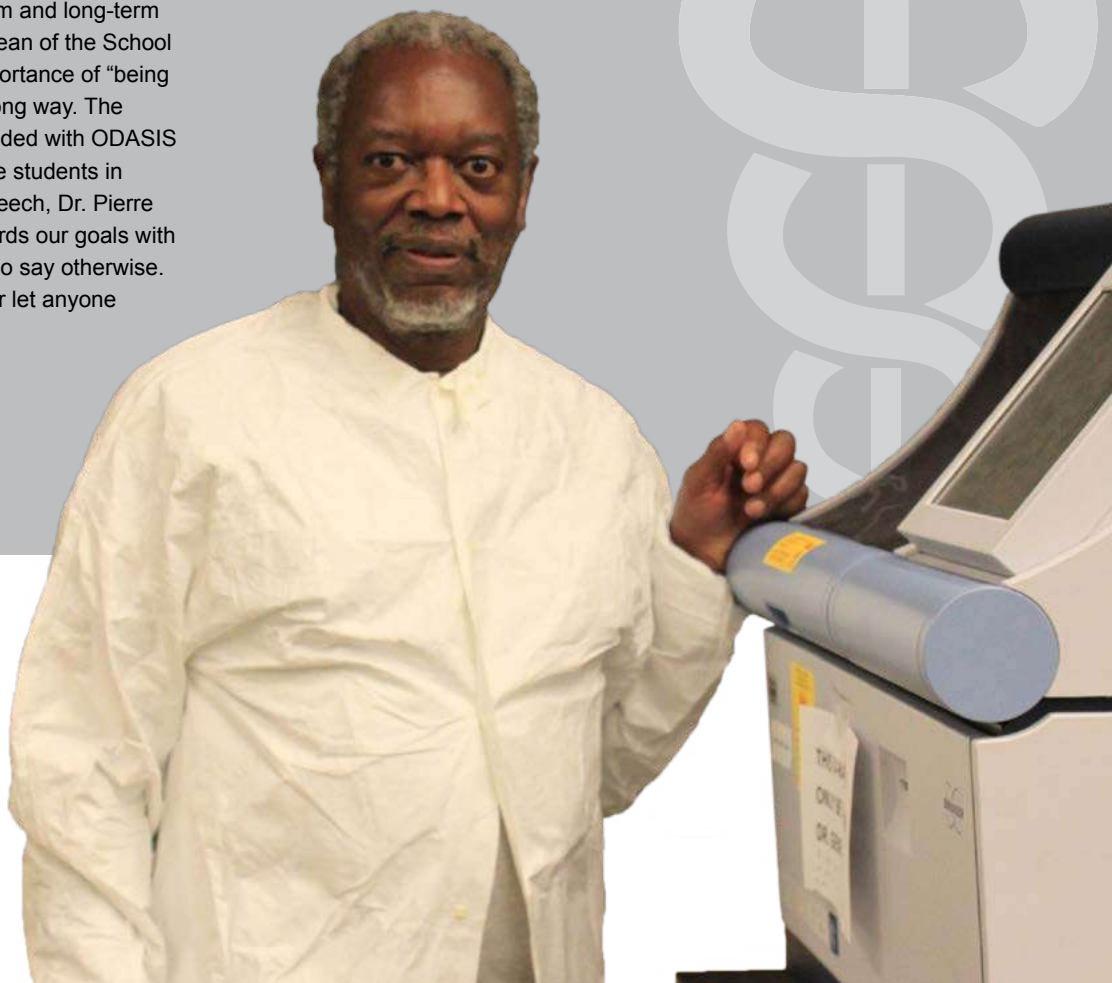
The 2016 ODASIS Motivational Workshop was an excellent opportunity for 450 of our students to immerse themselves in a celebratory, yet professional, environment, as health professionals representing numerous medical, nursing, osteopathic, podiatry, public health, physical therapy, dentistry, and pharmacy schools came to instill in the students the inspiration needed to achieve their professional goals.

ODASIS was honored to have distinguished speakers provide essential advice and guidance on achieving success in the health professions. ODASIS Assistant Director Jonathan Langowski opened the event with some welcoming words and was followed by Dr. Larnie Booker, who spoke about the need to continue to work on and refine your tools, for whatever they may be. He emphasized the importance of resourcefulness and how ODASIS provides a platform for such resourcefulness to be utilized. Dr. Martha Haviland spoke next, discussing appropriate study habits and encouraging students to develop short-term and long-term study goals. Dr. Peter March, Executive Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, spoke about the importance of “being nice” and how simple cordiality can go a long way. The decorated lineup of guest speakers concluded with ODASIS alumnus Dr. David Pierre, who assured the students in attendance to #PerfectYourCraft. In his speech, Dr. Pierre reminded all of us that we must work towards our goals with steadfast commitment and reject those who say otherwise. All speakers encouraged students to never let anyone

dismiss their dreams or goals.

The workshop was not only a time of practical education, but also a time for recognition. Dr. Gene Hall, of the Rutgers Department of Chemistry and Chemical Biology, was given the ODASIS Lifetime Achievement Award for his unwavering support and commitment to our mission. The award was presented by current ODASIS students Victoria Adeleke and Rikelle White. They acknowledged Dr. Hall’s endless dedication to ODASIS and his field, stating that “Dr. Hall is an embodiment of the dedication and success ODASIS pushes to instill into each and every one of us.” This award acknowledges the immense contributions to academic success that Dr. Hall has made throughout his career.

The afternoon was closed out by the director of ODASIS, Dr. Kamal Khan, who emphatically led the crowd in a chant of “I know, I know, I know, I am special! I know, I can, I will, do well!” and reminded the students of ODASIS to “Eat your books!”





# Student Spotlights

## Forging Partnerships

For nearly 20 years, ODASIS has been sending some of their brightest and most talented students to participate in a six-week summer research program at Rutgers-New Jersey Medical School called the Northeast Regional Alliance (NERA) MedPrep Scholars Program. The program uniquely builds on the collective expertise of four outstanding institutions to expand health careers preparation for underrepresented and disadvantaged students from junior high school through medical school with the goal of increasing competitiveness for medical school. Ultimately, it is expected that our scholars will have the humanism, professionalism, and interpersonal skills required of a future physician caring for a diverse population. The program exposes students to an opportunity to experience the clinical setting and complete an intensive MCAT prep course designed to maximize their performance. Finally, after years of collaboration, the Rutgers Curriculum Committee approved NERA II & NERA III for college credit to be counted as elective credits for a student's Biological Sciences major, as well as factoring into their vital BCPM. This has been a tremendous experience for our 25 participants this summer as expressed by one of our rising seniors, Daniel Marte, as he proudly states, "Coming to the NERA program has been a fulfilling experience. I have been able to explore the environment of a medical school that is completely different than what I was used too. It helped me network with professional staff and medical students, which in turn has helped me discover my passion for medicine and reinforce my aspirations to be a physician."



## Family Ties



Corey Smith, M.D. and Sheronda Smith, M.D.

It would be safe to say that Sheronda and Corey Smith's medical careers would not have begun had it not been for their family pediatrician. Their interactions with him were particularly important in sparking an interest in the health professions; and so, began two connected yet different journeys on the path to professional success and fulfillment.

Five years apart, Corey and Sheronda Smith are emblematic of the tenacity and determination that is a distinguishing characteristic of ODASIS alumni. Much like their family pediatrician, ODASIS served as a necessary catalyst in establishing Corey and Sheronda's deep desire

to practice medicine. ODASIS provided the two with a critical structure of camaraderie and mentorship. With absolute conviction, Dr. Khan would say to them "this is what you're going to be doing", to reinforce that their inclusion in the ODASIS program was a commitment that would inevitably lead to their success. In their own ways, Corey and Sheronda developed a tighter academic focus, built relationships with those who had similar life experiences, and acquired an intensely rigorous sense of discipline.

While Corey and Sheronda were never in school together at the same time, their age difference hardly deterred them from working as a unit while also charting their own paths. As a Rutgers undergraduate, Corey would often send over the rough drafts of his papers to Sheronda, who was still a high school student, to proofread and provide criticism. Unfortunately, Corey was absent from Sheronda's high school graduation, due to his commitment to ODASIS' rigorous MCAT preparatory course and his dream. Even so, Sheronda urged him to stay focused on his studies, understanding that the prospect of becoming a doctor was extremely important to Corey as well as herself.

Described by Corey as "the smartest person I've ever met," Sheronda would be the first one to tell you that she is more than just one-half of a sister-brother duo. In fact, Sheronda has always been "very independent" almost to the point where she is "hard on herself". To avoid living in the shadow of her older brother, Sheronda worked twice as hard to set an example of her fierce independence. After all, everyone wants to be acknowledged and respected as an individual.

Corey and Sheronda are now successful physicians who have crafted their own path to success via different avenues. They love their careers because, simply put, they love helping people. Their mother would often say, "if you have the opportunity to help someone, do it". It seems that this tightly knit duo has taken that to heart. ODASIS thanks these two for their hard work and dedication to success in the sciences; they make all of us proud wherever they go.

## Looking Back, Paying it Forward

When Dr. Ramon Nunez was enrolled in the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) the summer before his freshman year, he never knew that his life and career would soon be profoundly impacted by his general biology professor. That professor was none other than Dr. Kamal Khan.

At the time, Dr. Khan explained to his students that when the semester would start, the ODASIS program would be able to provide supplemental instruction, test preparation, and guidance. Dr. Nunez had to seriously consider this vitally important decision. He hailed from a background of hardships and conflicts, having suffered from the tragic passing of his father when he was three and having experienced difficult financial hardships within his family. He understood that he would not get any second chances.

Dr. Nunez ultimately decided to join, taking into consideration the great experience that he already had during the EOF program. Despite its intense focus on academic rigor, ODASIS was never intimidating to Dr. Nunez. It felt like an environment of family, providing a vast network of scholarly and personal support. Like any pre-med undergraduate, Dr. Nunez would sometimes feel the immense pressure of his credit-intensive course of study. While many students would spend the weekends partying at tailgates or grabbing a bite to eat at the grease trucks, Dr. Nunez would find himself “eating his books” at the library.

ODASIS made this experience much more palatable. By being able to associate with people of similar backgrounds taking similar courses of study, Dr. Nunez never felt like he was missing out; it felt as if he and his companions were all working towards the same thing. ODASIS, interwoven with EOF, was essential to Dr. Nunez’s success. It provided him a means to interface the big bureaucratic system that is Rutgers and navigate the intimidatingly large campus.

Now, Dr. Nunez resides in Orlando, Florida, where he is the Medical Director of one of the busiest Emergency Departments in Osceola County. After becoming a partner with Florida Emergency Physicians in 2006, Dr. Nunez quickly applied the wide array of interpersonal and professional skills acquired at ODASIS to move up the ranks and ultimately become Medical Director. Dr. Nunez is tasked with managing a staff of approximately 90 people, working relentlessly to provide vital



*Ramon Nunez, M.D.*

healthcare and improve the lives of their patients.

To Dr. Nunez, the word “family” means a lot of things. It means your support system and your roots; where you go when you need help. Family also means your legacy, as the brevity and fragility of life only provides us so much time to make an impact. Staying connected to your family is the best source of strength, something that we here at ODASIS live by. When it comes to Dr. Nunez and his family, whether it be here at ODASIS or back at his home, he has certainly made his family very proud.

## Gold Humanism Scholars

The Gold Humanism Honor Society is sponsored by the Arnold P. Gold Foundation. Each year, through peer nomination, they “recognize students, residents and faculty who are exemplars of compassionate patient care and who serve as role models, mentors, and leaders in medicine.” This year, ODASIS is honored to announce that ODASIS alumni Gabrielle Abissi and Ijeoma Eleazu at Rutgers-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, and Khushboo Baldev, Jessi Munoz, and Andy Reyes at Rutgers-New Jersey Medical School were all named as 2017-2018 recipients of the Gold Humanism Award.



*Ijeoma Eleazu*



*Gabrielle Abissi*



*Andy Reyes*



*Jessi Munoz*



*Khushboo Baldev*

# Randy Jackson, M.D.: An EOF Success Story



Randy Jackson, M.D.

This one here is for anyone who has ever struggled with self-doubt, feelings of inadequacy, or insecurity. The journey to obtain this degree was one that tested every limit I thought I had. From being the first in my family to graduate high school and go to college, to being the first to strive towards a doctoral degree, the deck was always stacked to the ceiling, but that's what makes this one just that much sweeter. SEVEN YEARS it took me to finish this degree, and I'm not ashamed to admit the struggles I faced along the way.

These struggles started well before medical school though; this journey began the day I was rejected from Rutgers University as a senior at Franklin High School. I was a late bloomer in high school, not getting my act together until the end of my sophomore year, so by the time I started applying for college, I was behind the curve. After receiving the devastating news of my rejection, I had a teacher who brought me up to Rutgers personally and kicked down every door she could until I was introduced to the directors of the EOF program and Dr. Khan. They reviewed my coursework and resume and deemed that I had fallen through the cracks and they managed to help me gain acceptance to school. This was one of many hurdles that the EOF and ODASIS programs helped me overcome.

Throughout my time at Rutgers University, I faced financial and family adversity. There were times where I couldn't afford my term bill for

classes, but every time I faced an issue Dr. Khan and EOF were there to offer me a helping hand. In no way did he make things easy for me though, he made sure I earned every bit of help he offered. There were times where I was sure he would kick me out of the program (especially after I did horribly in biology and he told me if I didn't change I would never make it to medical school). But he never turned me away; instead he demanded more from me and constantly challenged me to be better. He never let me use my background or my lack of support as a crutch. Rather, he made me use it as fuel. I guess that is the true beauty of this program though; it took a kid with untapped potential who had no real guidance and molded him into someone who would rather die than to fail at the goals he set forth for himself.

Through unwavering guidance from the dedicated staff of the ODASIS program, I managed to maneuver through undergrad and gain acceptance into Robert Wood Johnson Medical School through the Access-Med Phase 2 program. This was all while managing to work 3-4 jobs per semester and maintaining grades that Dr. Khan deemed necessary for success. At this point I thought I had made it, the toughest part of the journey was complete, or so I thought.

While in medical school I would face some of the most challenging obstacles I had ever encountered. From struggling with first year coursework to losing friends to gun violence, I had found myself in the middle of utter turmoil with no clear way out. Personal tragedies had begun to pile up all while I was trying to pass my board exams so that I could graduate. It was clear to me that things had to get worse before they could get better.

After I buried my grandmother who passed from leukemia in 2013, depression hit me and rattled me to my core. It was so bad, that I tried to quit, tried to walk away. But the people in my corner wouldn't let me. Every time I tried to throw in the towel, I would walk over to Dr. Khan's office and he would pat me on the back and say "you've come too far to give up, look at all that you've overcome... its too late to turn back now". As I continued to stay the course, a very close family friend also struggled with cancer. On her deathbed she gave me a stethoscope and told me "finish what you started".

So this degree is not only for the people who helped me see this process through, but also for any and everyone who thinks that they are going through the struggle alone. You can do it. Every time you feel like giving up, just remember there are people rooting for you even when you can't see. I can honestly say that without the guidance and help from ODASIS and EOF I would not be where I am today. I wouldn't have even made it to college without their help. The next time that you think you may not have what it takes to reach your goal just remember that there is a world of untapped potential inside of you, do not be afraid to bring it out.

## Academic Year 2016-2017 Grade Comparisons

### General Biology

	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥B	69.19%		42.90%
	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥C	91.89%		72.31%

### Organic Chemistry

	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥B	49.73%		29.77%
	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥C	88.24%		65.67%

### General Chemistry

	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥B	52.60%		34.80%
	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥C	86.31%		67.66%

### Genetics

	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥B	71.13%		52.28%
	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥C	96.91%		79.20%

### Mathematics

	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥B	49.48%		29.52%
	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥C	78.89%		58.67%

### Physics

	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥B	79.87%		55.52%
	ODASIS	vs.	Rutgers
≥C	100.00%		85.58%



# In Their Words—Charting a Path to Success

## Viemma Nwigwe



When I joined ODASIS in the beginning of my freshman year, I had no idea I'd be where I am today, four years later. I had no idea that I would be forced to redefine my standard of excellence or to become a better person in every regard. I had no idea that I'd get to fly across the country and conduct research at an amazing institution or that I would gain admission to my first-choice medical school on a full scholarship. Without God, my family, and ODASIS, I would not be able to proudly say that I will be attending Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons.

Because of ODASIS, I knew exactly what courses I would take and when, in order to complete my Biological Sciences degree and medical school prerequisites on time. I realized very early on that I would have to work twice as hard just to get half of what others had. ODASIS instilled in me the importance of being uncompromising when it came to pursuing something you love. As a result, I never found myself being hesitant about putting in work. I had to learn how to study smarter, not harder. I had to study to apply, not to regurgitate.

ODASIS has granted me so much opportunity. During my junior year, I was fortunate to be a part of the program's MCAT prep class which helped me master the skills required to do well on the MCAT. If someone told me during my freshman year that I would spend eight months studying for just one test, give up 32 weekends in addition to my winter break and spring break, I would've laughed at them. It still baffles me how I made it through. Through thick and thin, my friends and peers motivated me to push through any adversity I faced during that year. In addition, the ODASIS staff was always there to lend a helping hand during this tough time. Dr. Kamal Khan, Taruna Chugeria, Jon Langowski, Anika Francis, Shama Huq, I thank you. I thank you for seeing potential in me and reminding me that I could do it when I forgot.

"To whom much is given, much is required." When the chance to give back arose, I did not hesitate. During my senior year, I served as an instructor for the same MCAT class that fostered my growth and development. I had the opportunity to teach 40 amazing individuals who are also on the pursuit of medicine. They have all touched my life and I hope to have touched theirs.

Now, as I get ready to start medical school, I am not anxious or intimidated. I am ready for what comes next. I am a testament to ODASIS's work and I am so grateful for everything this program has done for me. When dreams become reality, it is so important to stop, reflect, and thank whoever played a role. So, thank you, ODASIS. I hope to make you proud!

## Nate Baffoe Mensah

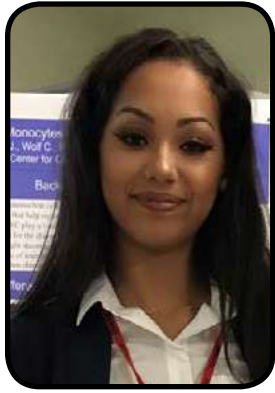


*It's about two minutes to 11:00pm. For the last few hours, my head has been buried in a Princeton Review Book in preparation for a test that my future career hinges on, the MCAT. For a moment, I think of calling it a night and spending the rest of the night out and being merry like other students. As I begin to pack up and head home, I notice a piece of paper with a scrawny cartoon of a boy eating a book -- I can't help but smile as I recognize the meme which captures a phrase I have heard about a thousand times at the ODASIS Office in Nelson: eat your books. Remembering this phrase provoked a desire to work harder. I stop packing up and put in two more hours before heading home grateful for the little things I'd learned from ODASIS over the years.*

\* \* \*

Ever since I first joined ODASIS, it's taken me a long way. This year, I graduated and will be matriculating into my first choice medical school with a scholarship. My success story is just one among many others that serve as a testament to the goal-seeking culture the ODASIS program creates and the soundness of its model. Combined with hard work and determination, the program provided played a key role in getting me into the health professional school of my choice. It's also through the ODASIS program that I met many like-minded peers with whom I've built long-lasting friendships. It's rare to find a whole community of underrepresented students pursuing excellence in one place – something I valued about the program. Having a community of students, going through the same difficulties and challenges I was experiencing really made all the difference; it showed me I wasn't alone and motivated me to work harder. Looking forward, I'm a bit anxious about starting medical school but I know I'll be ready to handle any hurdles I might face because being a part of the ODASIS program taught me how to succeed not just in my undergraduate studies but in any academic environment I might find myself in. If I had to start college all over again as a premedical student, I'd choose to attend Rutgers again because of the ODASIS program. To any incoming first years and anyone interested in the program, the best advice I can give is to take advantage of the resources and opportunities ODASIS has to offer.

# Summer Research Programs



**Cameron Wolf, Honors College, Dean's List**  
**W.M. Keck Center for Collaborative Neuroscience Research**

This summer, I worked at the W.M. Keck Center for Collaborative Neuroscience Research with Dr. Wise Young. This program allowed me to not only design a research project, but perform the experiments and analyze results under the guidance of an M.D./Ph.D. student. The goal of my team's research this summer was to isolate and characterize monocytes (a mononuclear leukocyte) in peripheral blood. We wanted to design the most affordable and efficient method for collecting and identifying these monocytes so that a standard could be used world-wide. Our next step is to understand the morphology of monocytes in human umbilical cord blood, which is a novel and effective therapy for individuals suffering from spinal cord injury. If monocytes can be isolated and characterized in umbilical cord blood, their function in recovery from spinal cord injury can be better understood and observed.



**Christopher Stevens, Honors College, Dean's List**  
**Aresty Research Center**

A variety of driver mutations are known to cause the onset of colorectal cancer. The serrated tumor pathway, unlike the conventional pathway of colorectal cancer progression, commonly involves mutations in the BRAF gene. The molecular oncogenic progression of serrated polyps is poorly characterized despite it occurring in around 20-30% of colorectal cancer cases.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the lack of characterization, the prognosis of a patient with a progression of serrated polyps is distinctly worse due to the fact that current forms of chemotherapy are not effective at treating this form of the cancer. Activation of the mutated BRAF oncogene, BRAFV600E, not only inefficiently induces tumor formation in the intestinal epithelium, but induces the loss of stem cells in the intestine of the available mouse models. Due to the constant renewal of epithelial tissue in the intestine, any mutation not existent in stem cells would be lost, thereby making stem cells the perfect vector for oncogenic mutations. This phenomenon is seemingly counter intuitive given that a tumor driver dependent on stem cells would cause the loss of stem cells, indicating that an unknown process must be responsible for allowing such a mutation to survive. Using the in vitro organoid system, the characteristics of the BRAFV600E mechanism can be studied without the many variables present in the in vivo models. With an established organoid system, the mutated gene can be expressed, and the effects of certain drugs can be tested against the BRAFV600E mechanism in order to better understand its physiology.



**Hesbon Isaboke, EOF, Dean's List**  
**BCP II at Rutgers–RWJMS**

The Biomedical Careers Program Level II is a six-week program, which consisted of two courses per day from Monday to Thursday and included the opportunity to be involved in various hospital experiences through a shadowing program at RWJUH. The courses of the program at RWJMS focused on enhancing our knowledge of Biochemistry, Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills (CARS), and MCAT prep, focusing on the science portion. The Biochemistry course aimed to prepare those of us who would be taking the course in the fall. The MCAT prep course gave me an opportunity to better understand what the MCAT is like, the questions it consisted of, and how to approach them. In addition to this course, we also had "Study Strategies" and "Cognitive Skills" courses where we learned useful skills and were tested on CARS section of the MCAT. This type of schedule required rigorous studying outside of class as well as collaborating with other students in order to excel in the weekly quizzes and exams. We also did case studies to apply our scientific knowledge and presented two projects on drugs and diseases. At the end of the week on Friday, another student and I shadowed different physicians and nurses each week at the Emergency department where we witnessed very interesting trauma and non-emergency cases. Overall, this experience was very insightful and productive, providing me with excellent resources to help better myself as a future medical student.

# Strategic Plan Summer Scholars



In an effort to provide incoming first year students with a strong foundation and exposure to their core fall courses, ODASIS had the privilege to host 40 incoming freshmen students in this year's 5 week Strategic Plan Program. After a highly selective recruitment process, an

elite group of students was selected to enroll in the rigorous program. Students partook in classes that prepared them for their Rutgers Chemistry, Calculus, and Expository Writing courses.

Strategic Plan scholars were also provided with additional opportunities including workshops, one-on-one tutoring, a chemistry lab demonstration conducted by chemistry professor Robert Porcja, seats at the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School's BCP Symposium, as well as a medical school trip to Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University. Our Strategic Plan scholars began their summer with great enthusiasm as new members of the Rutgers community and performed above expectations. With great pride, we share that we are pleased to report that 12 students received A's, 11 received a B+, 6 received B's, 8 received C+'s, and 3 received a final grade of C. These students are well on their way to becoming exceptional contributors to the university as 100% of participants successfully completed the program!





**Irene Martinez, Dean's List  
NERA at Rutgers–NJMS**

This summer I had the opportunity to participate in the Northeast Regional Alliance (NERA) program at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School. As part of the level three cohort, I was paired with a laboratory at NJMS that was conducting cancer research. My small study, which looked into the induced changes of mesenchymal stem cells by breast cancer cells, contributed to the large-scale research that was being conducted in the lab. It was a fantastic opportunity to see countless procedures and lab techniques that I knew from previous course material in application to a particular study. Furthermore, I was able to get invaluable insight into the world of publishing scientific articles and how to assess the validity of an article based on the evidence and discussion provided. The biggest takeaway that I had from this program was a deeper appreciation for scientific research and its significance to the medical field. Having had close experiences with cancer in my family has always made me consider specializing in oncology and being able to work alongside scientists at the front of cancer research was amazing. To see how a seemingly small and extremely specific topic could transcend, and with contribution of other work, could ultimately lead to potential diagnostic tools or interventions for patients was awe-inspiring and in a way, humbling. From this experience I have grown not only as a future physician but also as a future scientist and look forward to continuing to nurture these skills as I enter medical school and beyond.



**Sopuru Ezeonu, Dean's List  
CURE at Cancer Institute of New Jersey**

Through the CURE (Continuing Umbrella of Research Experience) Program, I was given the chance to work as a student research assistant at the Cancer Institute of New Jersey. As a student research assistant, I gained hands-on experience and conducted research in Dr. Kim Hirshfield's laboratory. When I first began, I assisted the senior lab members with their projects on breast cancer research. During this time, I learned basic laboratory methods, such as pipetting, western blot, gel electrophoresis, and cell culture. After three months of training, I was given my own project. The purpose of the research we do in our lab is to understand the role unique genetic rearrangements play in breast cancer. These rearrangements are gene fusions that involve the kinase RET. Novel RET fusions were discovered after we completed genomic profiling on tissue that was received from a breast cancer patient. In particular, my project focuses on the cellular localization of the protein product. My project will offer additional information and help of us determine whether the fusion causes cancer. If it does, the next step would be to target it. The goal is that our research will provide breast cancer patients more personalized methods of treatment. I am so grateful for this opportunity here at CINJ; I feel like I am truly making a difference.



**Tochi Unegbu-Ogbonna, Dean's List  
USC Keck Bridging the Gaps**

This summer I participated in Bridging The Gaps; a program at Keck School of Medicine, University of Southern California. During this eight week research program I worked in Dr. Florence Hofman's laboratory in the department of Pathology. The research I conducted revolved around brain tumors, specifically Gliomas. My project was to test the efficacy and optimal mode of treatment for a specific drug we were testing. During My time here I had the opportunity to learn about the numerous programs at Keck and the amazing faculty and staff. We received a Biostatistics lecture once a week along with a physiology lectures from various fields and faculty members. I also got the opportunity to shadow at the Los Angeles County Hospital and a private practice. Here I gained insight in the Emergency department, Pediatric Surgery, and Internal Medicine. Bridging The Gaps allowed me to make many bonds and lifelong friends. I gained a further understanding of what it means truly be in the fields of science and medicine.

## **ODASIS High School Programs: Possibility Through Partnership**

ODASIS recognizes the importance of community partnership and the need for pipeline programs that help high school students make their dreams of attending university a reality. ODASIS is a proud partner of Johnson & Johnson (J&J), FHI360, and the New Brunswick Public School District and provides such programs to New Brunswick students.

### **Saturday Scholars SAT Prep Academy:**

Students enrolled in the J&J 11th Grade Saturday Scholars SAT Prep Academy attend weekly SAT Math and English classes. This year, participants saw an overall average improvement on their SAT scores by over 175 points, with some seeing an increase by close to 300 points!

### **Rutgers 12th Grade College English Program:**

The 12th Grade College English Program allows seniors to earn up to six college credits through the successful completion of Rutgers Basic Composition and Expository Writing courses. In 2016-2017, 39 out of 58 participants were accepted to Rutgers University.

### **Bridge to Employment Program:**

Bridge to Employment (BTE) is a J&J sponsored program that collaborates with FHI360 and has been established worldwide for 25 years. 2017 was the New Brunswick BTE site's final year with the 2013-2017 cohort. The project developed various activities and methods to enhance students' academic and extracurricular performance, and transform them into competitive college applicants.

### **New Brunswick AVID Supplemental Instruction Program:**

The New Brunswick Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) Supplemental Instruction program is designed to assist students who are in the academic middle; most are minorities pursuing careers in the sciences. The supplemental instructors are Rutgers University juniors and seniors who are or have been ODASIS participants. Through sponsorship by the New Brunswick Board of Education, ODASIS provided over 35 AVID instructors in 2016-2017.

# Congratulations to the Class of 2017

## Graduating Seniors and Alumni accepted to Dental, Graduate Medical, Osteopathic, Physical Therapy, MD/PhD, or BA/MD Programs



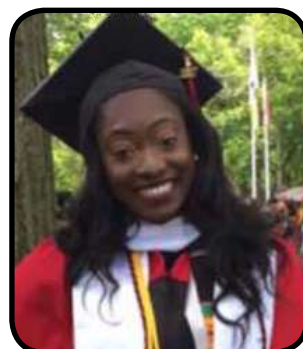
Francisca Aguilar



Nate Baffoe Mensah



Abim Okulaja and Sunday Ebo



Nanaama O'Hene

**Rutgers–RWJMS**  
 Motunrayo Becky Adu  
 Joshua Akinsanya  
 Iman Ali  
 Stephanie Chisom Amaefuna  
 Duniel Coke  
 Valerie DeJesus  
 Lester Julian McRae\*  
 Nanaama O'Hene  
 Anevea Tinnery

**Rutgers–NJMS**  
 Adam Ahmad Chaustre  
 Joshua Akinsanya  
 John Bertot  
 Ayodeji Folarin  
 Ashley Gallagher  
 Murka Jeanchares  
 Flor Lema  
 Breta Osei Bonsu  
 Jillian Paredes  
 Darius White

**Cooper Medical School**  
 Marie Beauvais  
 Sofia Fils  
 Keiry Rodriguez  
 Claudia Rugama\*

**EOF Students**  
 Travis Garth\*  
 Pablo Ortiz\*  
 Jinalben Parikh\*  
 Nitish Sharma\*

**DO Schools**  
 Francisca Aguilar - Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine  
 Tatiana Fech - Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine

**Dental Programs**  
 Lika Natour\* - Rutgers School of Dental Medicine  
 Sabine Page - Temple School of Dentistry  
 Matthew Sawaged - University of Maryland School of Dentistry  
 Dorin Yakubov - NYU College of Dentistry and Touro College of Dental Medicine

**Other Professional Programs**  
 Lindsey Michelle Williams - Workforce- MIT Office of Digital Learning (Integrated Learning Initiative Team)

**University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine**  
 Nathaniel Baffoe Mensah  
 Michael Boateng  
 Alexis Holmes  
 Anchi Numfor

**Graduate Programs**  
 Chizoba Akunwanne - Case Western Reserve Master's Program and Rowan GSBS  
 Kayla Fowler - Rutgers School of Public Health  
 Joanna Ma - Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University

**Other Medical Programs**  
 George Asham - Meharry Medical College School of Medicine  
 Sunday Ebo - Temple School of Medicine  
 Kene Ezeigwe - Johns Hopkins School of Medicine  
 Viemma Nwigwe - Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons  
 Abim Okulaja - Temple School of Medicine

\* Indicates an EOF Student

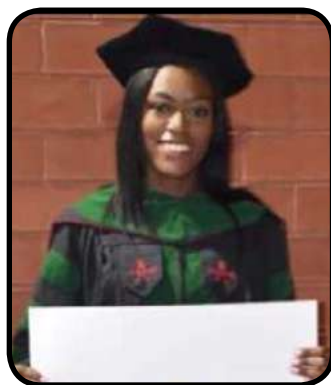


# Alumni Graduating in 2017

## Congratulations to our ODASIS Alumni Graduating in 2016 from Graduate, Doctoral, or Professional Programs



Chukwudi Okafor and Lauren Evans



Darnell Alexandre



Felipe Guzman and Brianna Wapples



Kelsey Bonilla and Kevin Bonilla

### 1224 ODASIS GRADUATES FROM 1990-2017

Profession	Number (%)	Profession	Number (%)
Medicine (MD)	503 (41.1%)	Medicine / Public Health (MD / MPH)	4 (0.3%)
Osteopathy (DO)	93 (7.6%)	Chiropractic (DC)	4 (0.3%)
Biomedical Sciences (MBS)	50 (4.1%)	Biomedical Engineering (MBE)	3 (0.2%)
Dentistry (DMD / DDS)	35 (2.9%)	Law (JD)	3 (0.2%)
Biomedical Research	13 (1.1%)	Optometry (OD)	4 (0.3%)
Physician Assistant (PA)	11 (0.9%)	Medicine / Biomedical Sciences (MD / MBS)	3 (0.2%)
Podiatry (DPM)	14 (1.1%)	Research (PhD)	3 (0.2%)
Nursing (RN / BSN / LPN / MSN)	10 (0.8%)	Medicine / Business (MD / MBA)	1 (0.1%)
Medicine / Research (MD / PhD)	8 (0.7%)	Osteopathy / Law (DO / JD)	1 (0.1%)
Pharmacy (Pharm D)	17 (1.4%)	Master of Science (MS)	1 (0.1%)
Osteopathy / Biomedical Sciences (DO / MBS)	7 (0.6%)	Veterinary (DVM)	2 (0.2%)
Public Health (MPH)	6 (0.5%)	Other (e.g., business, education)	412 (33.7%)
Physical Therapy (PT)	16 (1.3%)		

#### Cooper Medical School

Jefferson Benites  
Ernest Egu  
Sandra Pena

#### University of Pennsylvania

Cesar Alfaro  
Kevin Bonilla  
Kelsey Robinson

#### Rowan School of Osteopathic Medicine

Raleke Adibe  
Naznin Ahmed  
Abisola Luther  
Kiran Patel

#### Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine

Jennifer Anyanwu  
Juliana Boateng  
Willy Gonzalez  
Crystal Kucuk\*

#### Rowan Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences

Massah Bassie  
Courtney McPherson  
Karon Millar  
Musunga Mulenga  
Tim Oyeniran  
Aslihan Sahil

#### Rutgers–Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

Lessley Chiriboga  
Roland Howard  
Randy Jackson\*  
Somair Malik  
Afua Takyi

#### Rutgers–New Jersey Medical School

Adebukola Ajagunna  
Chifaa Bouzidi  
Martha Castro  
Devin Clark  
Kenny Disbrow\*  
Omar Elfanagely  
Felipe Guzman  
Marcus Hughes  
Asha Martin  
Tochi Nworu  
Susan Rasul  
Katherine Sharp\*  
Christina Vo\*  
Brianna Wapples

#### Drexel University College of Medicine

Chintan Oza  
Timur Suhail-Sindhu

#### Rutgers–Robert Wood Johnson Medical School (Access-Med Phase II)

Darnell Alexandre  
Cindy Amilcar  
Lauren Evans  
Linda Ezidiegwu  
Onyi Nwobi  
Chukwudi Okafor

#### Other Graduate Programs

NYU School of Medicine – Richard Carmona  
George Washington University Medical School – Ismanie Guillaume  
AUC– School of Medicine – Javier Padrino\*  
NYU College of Dentistry – Amarpreet Suri  
New York College of Podiatric Medicine – Zakkiah Waters  
University of Louisville School of Medicine – Stephen Wortman



## A Jersey Partnership for Health



Rutgers-NJMS



Rutgers-RWJMS



Rutgers School of Dental Medicine



Rutgers-NJMS

Rutgers-New Jersey Medical School, Rutgers-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, and Rutgers School of Dental Medicine are all working to produce some of the top health care providers in the nation. ODASIS is privileged to be a part of this process, with several of our alumni attending these schools and going on to achieve excellence in the medical and dental fields. All of the ODASIS students pictured here were accepted to these schools in 2016-2017. We are incredibly proud of all they have accomplished and all they will go on to accomplish.

# RUTGERS

School of Arts and Sciences

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Division of Life Sciences  
Rutgers University–New Brunswick  
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Nelson Labs Room A201  
Piscataway, NJ 08854-8000



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ARTS & SCIENCES