

ODASIS NEWSLETTER

Volume 9, Issue 1—October 2013

Dr. Martha Haviland, Director, OUGI

Dr. Martha Haviland (RU '87) is the Director of the Office of Undergraduate Instruction (OUGI) in the Division of Life Sciences at Rutgers University. In this role, she provides visionary leadership for all of the Division's academic support ventures, including ODASIS. Dr. Haviland is the oldest of five children and comes from a family of proud Rutgers University supporters. Her father was a Dean at Mason Gross School of the Arts, and her mother was a Professor of Psychology. In fact, Dr. Haviland comes from a long legacy of educated women – her mother earned a Ph.D. and both of her grandmothers defied social norms to earn their bachelor's degrees. Given this background, education was always a priority for Dr. Haviland. In fact, some of her earliest childhood memories involve "playing school" with her family and friends – with her as the teacher, of course. While she was always interested in teaching, Dr. Haviland's interest in science began to develop in middle school. Her early scientific experiences were challenging and she found herself discouraged at times, but a high school science teacher saw promise in her and encouraged her to explore the sciences. She became an outstanding biology student with a keen interest in genetics.



Dr. Martha Haviland

Soon after Dr. Haviland arrived at Douglass College, she found a position in the lab of a geneticist, Dr. Francine Essien. Dr. Essien became her first true mentor and went above and beyond to support Dr. Haviland's pursuit of a scientific career. Dr. Haviland went on to earn a Ph.D. in Human Genetics

at the University of Michigan, and Francine Essien went on to become the founder of ODASIS.

After spending many years as a research scientist, Dr. Haviland came back to Rutgers: this time as a teacher and an administrator. She brought her love of hypothesis formation, experimentation, and analysis to those roles. Today, she leads an experimental restructuring of Rutgers' General Biology course with the aim of improving instructional methods to promote retention of course material and critical thinking skills among students.

Dr. Haviland supports ODASIS' efforts to be a model of success for undergraduate instruction. She believes in the importance of community and is most proud of the community of faculty, staff, and students that ODASIS has established. In the future, she hopes that ODASIS will continue to strengthen its pipeline, which serves students from high school through research and clinical graduate programs. She also hopes that ODASIS will continue to diversify the types of scientific careers that students are encouraged to pursue. Dr. Martha Haviland continues to be a model of successful leadership and the ODASIS program is grateful for her support.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

- Access Med Conference: Oct. 26, 8am
- Motivational Workshop: Nov 22, 11am
- Access Med Ceremony: Apr. 23, 6pm
- GRE's Spring 2014
- High Achievers Workshop Spring 2014
- MCATs Online Spring 2014

ODASIS Summer Prep for Chemistry program

The ODASIS Summer Prep for Chemistry program was conceived in the summer of 2006 and has seen numerous modifications and successes along the way. Recognizing how many students struggle with General Chemistry, ODASIS designed the Summer Prep program to meet this need. For five weeks during the summer before freshman term, students are exposed to a college level curriculum of Chemistry, Calculus and Expository Writing. In addition to attending these classes, students attend professional development workshops with various departments within the university. The students also visit numerous graduate programs, to help expose students to the myriad of careers that await them and

encourage them to work hard during their undergraduate careers. During the past three summer programs (2010-2012), there were 61 participants who were able to record a competitive cumulative freshmen GPA of

3.08! Moreover, those students currently average a cumulative GPA of 3.05 which is nearly 25% higher than the general Rutgers population. In particular, we have seen remarkable successes within the students' science coursework. An overwhelming 95% of the partici-



pants scored a C or higher in all of their science courses, with 48% of the students scoring a B or higher. When compared to the general Rutgers population, they excel academically. The most notable difference be-

tween Summer Prep students and the general Rutgers population has been in calculus: Summer Prep students have recorded a 96% passing rate of a C or better and amazingly 85% of those students received a B or better! These results of the program have been

so remarkable that nearly two-thirds of the participants go on to acceptance into medical school and other graduate programs. Setting up students for success early and introducing them to the ODASIS support programs before their freshman year has shown tremendous results, and continues to receive accolades from both the chemistry and mathematics departments. Due to this success, this year's summer program was suc-

cessfully funded by Dr. Kenneth Breslauer, Dean of the Division of Life Sciences, and was able to expand from 20 students to 25. We are eager to see how well these students perform during the upcoming academic year.

DID YOU KNOW?

RUTGERS

was ranked the 8th school in the nation graduating the most underserved medical school graduates by the AMA

18 out of 23

students enrolled in ODASIS New Brunswick Saturday Scholars program in 2012-2013 were accepted to Rutgers University. All students were accepted to colleges or universities.

ODASIS offers MCAT preparation classes both in person and online. For the 2012-2013 academic year, ODASIS students' average composite score was a 28.08. Of students that took the exam, 40% scored above a 30.

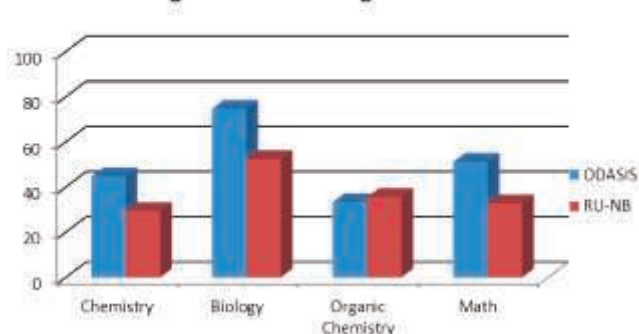
162 EOF

students enrolled in ODASIS programs for Fall 2013

75 ODASIS

students participated in summer research programs in 2013, compared to 72 in 2012.

2012-2013 Academic Year: Students with a grade of "B" or higher



ODASIS Supplemental Instruction program consistently shows academic strength above the general Rutgers Student population.
(Source: Office of the Registrar).

Summer Research Program Participants

This summer, 75 ODASIS students participated in various research programs throughout the country. These programs enabled the students to gain exposure to career opportunities in scientific research, while also making them more competitive candidates for graduate and health professions schools. Here are some examples of the interesting projects our students worked on in their summer research programs.

Kwame Phillips

Class of 2015

PULSE – Cooper Medical School of Rowan University

The research I did this summer with Dr. Andrea Bottaro, Ph D of Cooper Medical School was titled, "An In Vitro Method to Test Effects of Pro-inflammatory Cytokines on B Cells." The ultimate goal of the research is to find the specific signal molecule that causes the inflammation of joints in Rheumatoid Arthritis. In our preliminary experiments, macrophages were stimulated to secrete cytokines. These cytokines were treated to B cells growing in vitro. The morphological and phenotypic changes in these B cells were recorded.



Aileen Baffo

Class of 2014

University of Southern California – KECK School of Medicine

In the United States, especially in Los Angeles, CA, childhood obesity is a very pressing issue. At the same time, we live in a unique technological age where many people, young and old, use mobile technology to guide and monitor their health. My research at the Keck School of Medicine focuses on tactics to target and reduce the obesity rates in these children with the use of mobile technology. Virtual Sprouts, the future name of the game, will be a tablet based application used to influence adolescent children of the benefits of gardening and healthy eating through interactive gameplay.



Oumou Keita

Class of 2015

Climb Up—University of Buffalo

My research was conducted in the Pharmacology and Toxicology Department and focused on using loss-of-function genetic screens as a tool to improve the diagnosis and treatment of cancer. A retroviral insertion was made into cells of the chronic myeloid leukemia (KBM7) cell line and procedures were carried out to help identify genes in which the loss of their function leads to cell survival after exposure to Velcade, a cancer-treating drug.



Tatiana Fech

Class of 2014

NERA—Rutgers New Jersey Medical School

I worked with Dr. Cheryl Kennedy conducting research on physician-assisted suicide (PAS) and the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of future physicians and medical professionals. PAS is progressing rapidly and will be an issue that an increasing number of physicians will encounter in their future careers as health professionals. We hypothesize that as the years of education and clinical exposure increase, medical students and residents will be more willing to participate in PAS. By conducting an original, anonymous survey, we hope to ascertain how PAS is viewed. Specifically, we are focusing on obtaining the current knowledge our subjects possess, their attitudes towards it, and how they would behave if confronted with it in the future. We also hope to raise awareness to our future physicians, and provide information that can ultimately affect how they practice medicine.



Precious Tabansi

Class of 2014

Access Med Phase II

Biomedical Careers Program III

Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and the Cancer Institute of New Jersey

As part of this program, I was able to research and create a non-radioactive assay for reverse transcriptase enzyme with Dr. Monica Roth at the research towers. Due to my research, Dr. Roth's lab will be converting to the use of a non-radioactive assay instead of the current more dangerous radioactive techniques. It was truly an extraordinary and rewarding experience to leave an impact in the lab. I was also able to participate in a Journal Club with Dr. Banerjee from CINJ. In addition to the amazing research experience I participated in an introductory biochemistry course. This course gave me the core information I need to know for the course that I will be taking in the fall.



Gabrielle Abissi

Class of 2014

Access Med Phase II

Biomedical Careers Program III

Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and the Cancer Institute of New Jersey.

I worked with Dr. Janice Thomas during BCP III and did drug screening for the MCF-7 breast cancer cell line. We discovered potential drugs that can be used in combination with rapamycin, which is the current drug treatment for breast cancer.



Congratulations to Our Alumni!

ODASIS Alumni in 2013 entering Graduate, Doctoral or Professional Programs

Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Darnell Alexandre* | 6. Gabriela Magdaleno* |
| 2. Cindy Amilcar* | 7. Onyi Nwobi* |
| 3. Lauren Evans* | 8. Chukwudi Okafor* |
| 4. Linda Ezidiegwu* | 9. Joel Okech* |
| 5. Angela Gitau* | * Access Med Phase II Program |



Onyi Nwobi



Joel Okech

Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences

10. Theresa Adekoya
11. Mark Adrian Bell
12. Dominique Dompore
13. Amaryllis Ortiz
14. Tarin Shaw

School of Health Related Professions

15. Chelsea Vindici (DPT)

Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy

16. Juan Rodriguez

New Jersey Medical School

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 17. Adebukola Ajagunna | 21. Marcus Hughes |
| 18. Chifa Bouzidi | 22. Tochi Nworu |
| 19. Martha Castro | 23. Katherine Sharp |
| 20. Kenneth Disbrow | 24. Cristina Vo (EOF) |



Marcus Hughes



Tochi Nworu

New York University

25. Grace Adegbola* (Steinhardt—DPT)
26. George Schlitzer* (Steinhardt—DPT)
27. Amarpreet Suri (College of Dentistry)
28. Tarandeep Singh (College of Dentistry)

Yale School of Medicine

29. Chris Marfo
30. Eunice Martins



Eunice Martins

Rowan University

Cooper Medical School

31. Jefferson Benites
32. Christopher Perez

School of Osteopathic Medicine

33. Abisola Luther
34. Kiran Patel



Christopher Perez



Abisola Luther

UPENN Perelman School of Medicine

35. Cesar Alfaro



Harvard Medical School

36. Elorm Avakame



Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine

37. Jennifer Anyanwu
38. Juliana Boateng
39. Crystal Kucuk (EOF)
40. Allanda Williams (EOF)
41. Willy Gonzalez (EOF)



Crystal Kucuk and Juliana Boateng

Morristown Medical Center -

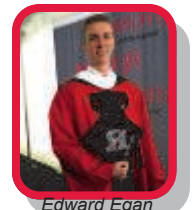
Medical Technologist

42. Margaret Zhang (EOF)



Applying to Medical School

43. Musunga Mulenga
44. Edward Egan



Edward Egan

- | | | | |
|----------------------|---|---------------------------|---|
| 45. Farid Abohard | NIH Postbac IRTA | 51. Chintan Oza | Drexel University College of Medicine |
| 46. Janet Alvarez | Research at Memorial Sloan-Kettering | 52. Javier Padrino | AUC School of Medicine |
| 47. Priscilla Baez | Drexel University—BMS | 53. Luisa Rodriguez (EOF) | St. George's University School of Medicine |
| 48. Emmanuel Ekeh | Wal-Mart Pharmacy | 54. Benjamin Schindel | SUNY Downstate College of Medicine |
| 49. Ismanie Guillame | George Washington University Medical School | 55. Timur Suhail-Sindhu | Drexel University College of Medicine |
| 50. Ashley Lytle | Research Engineer at Johnson & Johnson | 56. Stephen Wortman | University of Louisville School of Medicine |

SAS Scholarship Awards Dinner



ODASIS students recognized for receiving scholarships at the SAS Scholarship Dinner

Eight ODASIS students received scholarships during the 2012-2013, and were recognized for their hard work at the School of Arts and Sciences Scholarship Dinner on April 17, 2013. From left to right, the students recognized were:

1. Precious Tabansi - Novartis Pharmaceuticals Scholarship for Undergraduate Biological Sciences
2. Nataki Duncan - John S. Felicetti Scholarship
3. Diana Torres - Lawrence P. English Endowed Odasis Scholarship
4. Tanieya Canty- Jules and Jane Plangere Endowed Scholarship
5. Monisola Adesanya - Jules and Jane Plangere Endowed Scholarship
6. Patricia Guerrero- Novartis Pharmaceuticals Scholarship for Undergraduate Biological Sciences
7. Gerardo Lopez- Dr. Richard and Barbara Berkowitz Scholarship
8. Mervina George - Faber Scholarship

Access Med Ceremony

The 2013 Access Med Ceremony, held on April 24, 2013, recognized the achievements of students completing the program. The program celebrated the 51 students who have been accepted into medical, dental, and other allied health professional schools, 8 of whom received scholarships, as well as recognized another 41 ODASIS graduates who earned advanced degrees.

A welcome message was delivered by Dr. Kenneth Breslauer, the Dean of Life Sciences and Vice President for Health Science Partnerships. Dr. Millicent King Channell, Associate Professor and Department Chair of Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine at UMDNJ-School of Osteopathic Medicine delivered a keynote speech to attendees. Hundreds of students, parents, faculty, staff, and Access Med alumni were in attendance, as well as deans and admissions staff of the schools to which many of our graduates have and are currently attending, including Rutgers-New Jersey Medical School, Rutgers-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Rowan University School of Osteopathic Medicine, and Rowan University Cooper Medical School.



Access Med Ceremony

Elorm Avakame

Elorm Avakame is a 2012 graduate of Rutgers University's School of Arts and Sciences and was a four-year ODASIS student. He came to Rutgers from Bensalem, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Philadelphia. Like many freshmen, he arrived on the banks of the Old Raritan with dreams of a career in the health professions. However, like many freshman, he grossly underestimated the rigors of an undergraduate education. "I was unprepared for the degree of freedom that I was suddenly experiencing," Elorm says. "There was no one to tell me what I did and didn't have to do. Of course, since I had done well in high school, I figured I didn't need much help anyway."

Without well-developed academic skills, Elorm approached his college coursework the same way he had approached high school. "Studying" meant reading over notes or assigned textbook chapters a day or two before the exam. Predictably, Elorm experienced a rude awakening. He earned a 2.355 grade point average for his first semester and found himself at risk of having his scholarship revoked. More importantly, his dream of becoming a physician was in jeopardy. "All of a sudden, I found myself at rock bottom," Elorm remembers. "I was forced to admit to myself that I didn't know it all. I needed help." Aside from the obvious academic obstacles that he had now created for himself, Elorm also struggled to cope with feelings of failure. "I didn't recognize that I was struggling because I

lacked skills. I mistakenly interpreted my struggles as a reflection of my intrinsic worth. In many ways, I felt like a failure as a person and an embarrassment to my family."

Desperate for direction, Elorm found the Office for Diversity and Success in the Sciences (ODASIS), an academic support unit in Rutgers University's Division of Life Sciences dedicated to supporting underrepresented and/or economically disadvantaged students in their pursuit of careers in the health sciences. ODASIS provided a support system that helped Elorm develop his academic skills. Through weekly academic support sessions and mandatory study hall, he slowly began to learn how to study properly. His ODASIS academic advisors worked with him to develop skills such as time management and learning when and how to ask for help. Equally important, Elorm's advisors helped connect him with extracurricular enrichment opportunities that helped solidify his vision.

One such experience was the Summer Medical and Dental Education Program (SMDEP),

offered by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation through Rutgers University—New Jersey Medical School. At SMDEP, Elorm shadowed a physician for the very first time. It was a powerfully transformative experience. As he recalls, "that was the moment that I knew I was born to be a physician. I remember sitting in that doctor's office, watching his interactions with his patients, and feeling deep down inside that there was nothing I would rather do." Energized by this experience, Elorm returned to Rutgers and approached his studies with newfound intensity. To this day, Elorm identifies his time spent at SMDEP as the period that changed his life. "My number one piece of advice to any struggling student is to get an experience in the field that you plan to enter. Take part in an enrichment program, shadow a professional, or simply work as a volunteer."

During his junior year, Elorm began to hit his academic stride. At ODASIS, he found a network of like-minded peers through whom he was able to seek encouragement and accountability. He attributes much of his success to that peer network, saying, "I would not be where I

"My number one piece of advice to any struggling student is to get an experience in the field that you plan to enter."

-EA

am today without the friends who were there to support me when I was weak and to push me when I was growing complacent." Indeed, this peer network proved to be the single most impactful benefit of Elorm's membership in ODASIS. At several points during his junior and senior years, Elorm found himself feeling discouraged and lacking motivation. Even though he held dearly to his abstract goal of becoming a physician, he was often easily distracted from completing the day-to-day tasks that would allow him to meet that goal. It was at these moments that his ODASIS peer network provided the reinforcement that pushed him forward.

Today, Elorm is an M.D. Candidate at Harvard Medical School, Class of 2017. He is currently undecided as to which specialty to pursue, but he is passionate about serving disadvantaged inner-city communities. He is especially interested in addressing the pervasive urban violence culture. A Ghanaian by birth, he also plans to improve access to quality health care in Ghana. Elorm's story is proof that no matter how dim the situation or how tall the odds, success is always possible. With invaluable support from ODASIS staff and his peers, Elorm was able to resuscitate his dream.



Elorm Avakame

Congratulations to Our Alumni!

ODASIS Alumni 2013 Graduates from Graduate, Doctoral or Professional Programs



Kelvin Adjei-Twum, MD
Residency in Emergency Medicine—
University of Chicago Medical Center



Ajala Osagie, MD
Residency in Emergency Medicine—
SUNY Downstate Medical Center



Jonathan Hinds, MD
Residency in Emergency Medicine—
Baystate Medical Center



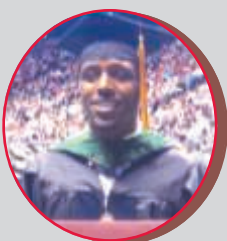
Nicole Streeks, MD
Residency in Pediatrics—INOVA
Fairfax Hospital



Michael Itidiare, DO
Residency in Internal Medicine—
Rutgers Biomedical and Health
Sciences



Cassandra Dorvil, DO
Residency in Family Medicine—
UMass Memorial Medical Center



Yonathan Yohannes, MD
Residency in Emergency Medicine—
SUNY Health Science Center



Kristine Goins, MD
Residency in Psychiatry—Emory
University School of Medicine



Charlton Olayemi, MD
Residency in Internal Medicine—
Cooper University Hospital



Donyell Doram, MD
Residency in Internal Medicine—
Lehigh Valley Hospital

ODASIS High School Programs: *Expanding our Reach*



11th Grade Saturday Scholars Program

The New Brunswick Saturday Scholars Program gives 11th grade students from New Brunswick High School and New Brunswick Health Sciences and Technology High School the opportunity to increase their reading, writing, and math skills through year-long SAT Prep classes. Students participate in science labs at Rutgers University and are exposed to careers in the sciences from various guest speakers, while receiving individualized academic support in SAT Prep.

Outstanding Achievements: This 2012-2013 academic year, 34 11th grade students successfully completed the program and their average SAT score upon completion of the program was 1570 (approximately 100 points higher than last year). 9 students scored between 1300 and 1600 and 14 students scored above 1600. These impressive results reflect the quality of instruction and the dedication of the students.

Exciting Developments: Due to the growing reputation of our 11th grade program, this upcoming year had a record number of applicants. We had approximately 40 students apply to the program and many of them reported that the successes of siblings and peers previously enrolled in the program is what made them apply for admission. We are proud of the reputation which this Johnson and Johnson program has in the community and we are looking forward to kicking off another thriving year on September 7th!

12th Grade English Program

As part of our goal to increase the academic success of underrepresented students, our 12th Grade Program enables motivated students to take college level English courses taught by Rutgers professors. Students take Basic Composition in the fall semester and Expository Writing in the spring semester, while also receiving assistance with the college application process. By allowing students to fulfill these requirements while in 12th grade, they are able to expedite their entrance into college coursework directly related to their professions.

Outstanding Achievements: For the 2012-2013 academic year, 22 students successfully completed RU course English 100 (Basic Composition) and 15 of them received a 3.0 or above for their final grade. 17 students successfully completed RU course English 101 (Expository Writing) and 13 of them received a 3.0 or above for their final grade.

Exciting Developments: This upcoming academic year, students accepted into the 12th grade program will be able to receive Dual Credit for their college-level English classes. This means that the rigorous Rutgers course that they take will count for both high school credit and college credit, which reduces their workload and enables them to jumpstart their college program of study.

Bridge To Employment (BTE)

In 1992, Johnson & Johnson launched its Bridge to Employment (BTE) initiative to inspire young people (14-18 year olds) from disadvantaged communities to stay in school, excel academically, and elevate their career aspirations. Over the past two decades, BTE has grown to be an international program which succeeds in helping young people build solid futures by increasing the number of students who enroll in higher education, particularly in health related areas. Through academic enrichment activities, career readiness and exploration opportunities, and higher education preparation, our students were exposed to various careers in the health industry and motivated to pursue higher levels of academic progress while taking the steps necessary to build a better future and achieve their full potential.

Outstanding Achievements: We are proud of the 11 students in our New Brunswick cohort who completed their fifth year of the BTE program while enrolled as freshman at Rutgers for the 2012-2013 school year.

Exciting Developments: This upcoming 2013-2014 year will be marked by extensive recruitment activities as we eagerly anticipate the forming of a new cohort of students to take advantage of our expanding Bridge to Employment Program.



6th—12th Grade AVID Supplemental Instruction Program

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) prepares the youth of New Brunswick School Districts for entry into a four-year undergraduate institution. Our Program increases the level of performance in the sciences and other academic concentrations with the help of undergraduate RU students serving as supplemental instructors.

Outstanding Achievements: In 2013, at the NBHS AVID site, students whose GPAs' fell within the 3.0 – 4.0 range increased from 39% to 47%.

Exciting Developments: When ODASIS first started implementing AVID in the New Brunswick District, it was limited to only three grades in the New Brunswick High School. Our program has had such success that we have now expanded to encompass FOUR schools, New Brunswick HS, New Brunswick MS, Woodrow Wilson Elementary and our most recent addition, McKinley Community School. This means that we are reaching students at earlier ages and supporting a greater population of youth overall.

Pictured on this page: 5th year BTE students attend an educational workshop & 12th grade students work on essays in the Heldrich Science Bldg.

Student Testimonials

Emmanuel Ekeh

Perhaps what people most often fail to realize is the full potential of ODASIS and what it can really do to influence the life of a student in the



Emmanuel Ekeh

sciences. The program is perfectly structured to help students get into medical and dental schools so that they can now become the leaders in their respective fields. However, my path in the program was slightly different from most students. I was accepted into the Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy for the Fall 2007 class. ODASIS helped me in mastering Organic Chemistry, a class infamously known as the killer of medical--and pharmacy--school dreams. Although my involvement with the program was brief, I still recognize

the effects of the teachers and staff on my academic career and profusely thank them for it.

Currently, I am now a pharmacist, having just graduated in May 2013. I am employed by Wal-Mart Pharmacy and now studying to take my board-exam in early August so that I can get a license. My future goals involve becoming a Pharmacy Manager for the company and I currently do not have any plans to leave the company, as I am very satisfied with my job. The influence of ODASIS in my life cannot be underscored enough. They did not have to accept me into the program, but opened up their arms and resources to me. Dr. Khan and the staff continue to hold high regards in my heart. I greatly recommend the program to all students who have ambitions of acquiring doctorates in the sciences.

"The ODASIS staff is comprised of some phenomenal and dedicated individuals that are truly the backbone of the program. I encourage every Rutgers student I meet, that is interested in the sciences, to join ODASIS because I am a true believer in its mission." -MR

Willy Gonzalez, EOF

The collaborative work of EOF and ODASIS allowed me to find direction during my first years of college. I knew I wanted to be involved in medicine, but I had no idea how to go about it or what steps to take. EOF gave me the opportunity to even get to college and showed me that I was destined to be more. They guided me in terms of who to talk to and where they were located. My EOF counselor, Ms. Petal Gadsden, was also there to listen when I became overwhelmed with work and managed to keep me on the right path. EOF was the door, ODASIS was the key. It opened the door to two very important aspects in my path; the first door exposed me to the world of



Willy Gonzalez

the employees. With their workshops and conferences I was allowed to mingle and express all my enthusiasm with doctors, nurses and admissions representatives from medical schools all around the country. The second door was more of a wall I had

Monique Rice:

I am a non-traditional ODASIS student. Unlike many of my ODASIS peers, I entered the program a little late in my college career- my senior year at Rutgers. I did not always have plans of going into the medical field but when I finally realized that I wanted to become a Physician's Assistant, ODASIS was right there, in my email inbox, encouraging me to join the program. I am forever grateful that I did.

ODASIS has taught me some invaluable lessons that I believe will not only help me in my future academic career and later as a Physician's Assistant, but in life. I have learned that no goal is too big if I am willing to put the work in to achieve it. With this mentality, I have persevered, successfully, through some of the hardest science courses at Rutgers. The ODASIS staff is comprised of some phenomenal and dedicated individuals that are truly the backbone of the program.

I encourage every Rutgers student I meet, that is interested in the sciences, to join ODASIS because I am a true believer in its mission.

This upcoming fall, I will be completing my prerequisites for Physician's Assistant graduate programs, starting an EMT course, and participating in research at Rutgers. Before joining the ODASIS program, this may have seemed like a daunting task, but thanks to ODASIS, I know I am well prepared to conquer anything.



Monique Rice

subconsciously built around myself that stopped me from realizing my full potential. With Dr. Khan's direct and not always polite tough love messages, with Jon's method of leveling with the students, and with Jesenia's "do what I say" attitude, the wall was broken down and I was able to surpass these mental blocks and reach amazing levels in my studying and in my determination to succeed. My grades skyrocketed and my hesitation to confront people with the ability to help my future, disappeared. I will always be grateful for ODASIS and EOF, and for what the two programs did for me.

Student Testimonials, Continued

Victor Mensah:

I was introduced to ODASIS as a young, stubborn 14 year-old who had an estranged relationship with hard work. It took a few months for me to realize that I had been content with being average my whole life. Underachieving did not bother me. The trail was set to run cold after I had fulfilled my four years in high school. Lucky for me, the future was set to change for the better and I owe it all to ODASIS. ODASIS has a system that works. They bring you in, introduce you to all the people who went through

"ODASIS has a system that works. Regardless of how hard it gets, and I expect the challenge level to increase every year, there is no quitting. Doing something great means taking on new challenges and getting over the hurdles, for the strife makes the success that much sweeter."-VM

their program and are now successful professions in their respective fields, and let you choose for yourself whether you want that or not. Making the decision was fairly simple for me. Understanding how much work it would actually take to become the best physician I can be was the hard part. The endeavor is almost too daunting to take on by yourself so ODASIS puts you in an environment where you are surrounded by hundreds of other students who want the same thing as you. The competition alone does nothing but bring out the best in each student to push further, work harder and aim higher.

The biggest thanks will have to go to Dr. Bzdak and my Johnson and Johnson mentors. If it wasn't for them and the Saturday program showing me how far hard work and determination could take me, I would never have aspired to go to college. I know that with hard work, there is a different future ahead of me now. It's a better one and I owe it all to the Bridge to Employment program and my mentors for being such great examples for me.

The biggest challenge I have endured so far would have to be taking chemistry over the summer. It was one of those situations where I went in knowing that this was going to be the most difficult thing I would ever do and was still overwhelmed by the work load. There were a lot of difficult moments where I didn't

want to do it anymore but there was always someone to talk to. The program coordinator is always available to talk and help navigate the stress which is a vital part of surviving the rigorous course work. Regardless of how hard it gets, and I expect the challenge level to increase every year, there is no quitting. If it was easy to do, I am sure everyone would be a doctor. Doing something great means taking on new challenges and getting over the hurdles, for the strife makes the success that much sweeter.



Victor Mensah

OFFICE FOR DIVERSITY AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN THE SCIENCES

The programs and services offered through the Office for Diversity and Academic Success in the Sciences are made possible through grants and support from:

**Division of Life Sciences (DLS)
Educational Opportunity Fund
Central Office (EOF)
Johnson & Johnson
New Brunswick Tomorrow
New Brunswick Public Schools
The African American Fund
The Merck Co. Foundation
New Jersey Medical School
Robert Wood Johnson Medical
School
School of Osteopathic Medicine
PCOM**



Dr. Kamal Khan
Director

Ms. Taruna Chugeria
Assistant Director

Mr. Jonathan Langowski
Developmental Specialist

Ms. Jessica Escorcía
Developmental Specialist

Mr. Francis Brifu
Developmental Specialist

Ms. Tiffany Nesbey
Developmental Specialist

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