Introducing
THE CLASS OF 2011!

The University of Maryland Incentive Awards Program would like to welcome the Class of 2011. We expect wonderful things from you!

Dekebra Arrington, Northwestern High School (Prince George's County), is seeking a degree in African American Studies. As she transitions to this next stage in her life, her goal is to take action in her local community to make the world a better place.

Sharina Ashton, Central High School, has strived to provide positive alternatives for today's young people. While in college, she plans to study psychology and eventually become a Counseling Psychologist.

Brittany Atkinson, Baltimore Polytechnic Institute, is an academic superstar and was recognized as a Maryland Distinguished Scholar. This natural born leader will be committed to devoting the necessary time to her academics and community initiatives.

Romelle Bacon, Digital Harbor High School, would like to pursue her undergraduate degree in communications to support her dreams of becoming a role model and educator for young adults.

Jessica Blizzard, Paul L. Dunbar High School, intends to major in biology and attend graduate school to become a certified registered nurse practitioner. She knows there are many challenges that lie ahead, but is fearless as she forges ahead in pursuit of a college education.

Semarj Brown, Forest Park High School, has marveled many with his leadership and management skills by winning numerous business competitions, one of which was sponsored by the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship. He hopes to further develop his company, “Semarj's Towing” by studying general business.

London Faust, Edmondson-Westside High School, aspires to become a film director. He plans to major in communications and pursue a doctoral degree in the field of media.

Aaron Johnson, Mergenthaler Vocational Technical High School, was ranked in the top 5 percent of his senior class, making him one of the foremost academic leaders at Mervo. Aaron brings with him a winning attitude that places him in good stead to start a life at Maryland.

Ashley Lawrence, Suitland High School, received the prestigious International Baccalaureate diploma from her alma mater. Always a catalyst for change, she aspires to be a member of the Prince George's County Board of Education to impact the school system and increase resources for the county, particularly for Suitland High School.

Robyne Rivers, Western High School, has participated in numerous extracurricular activities that have taught her the importance of leadership and teamwork. She plans to apply these lessons to her campus involvement in clubs and organizations. Robyne plans to major in psychology and someday become a psychiatrist.

Habiba Wada, Fairmont Heights High School, is an aspiring doctor who would like to improve the health of people around the world. She intends to use the support of the Incentive Awards Program to pursue dreams that will not only benefit her but humanity as a whole.

Shadell Wiggins, Baltimore City College High School, is described as “a very mature and focused young woman who possesses natural talent for everything from acting to writing to critical thinking.” She intends to major in government and politics and use her many gifts to be a change agent.
A BRUSH WITH GREATNESS

When Brian Robinson Bowers ’09 started at Maryland, he never envisioned working for a United States Senator—let alone a presidential candidate. That’s just what happened when he received a call from a staffer in the office of Sen Barack Obama, D-Ill., to serve as an intern. Sure, he had dabbed in politics when he worked as a page for the Baltimore City Council while in high school, but he never expected this opportunity of a lifetime. Working in such a fast-paced, high profile office proved to be exciting, as it required him to be poised at all times and challenged him to think quickly on his feet as he managed both internal and external constituents. As if the thrill of meeting and working for Sen Obama was not enough, he had the chance to tour the Capitol and observe hearings on the Senate floor. A master at networking, he maximized his time in the senator’s office by building relationships with city and federal officials and other interns, which he hopes will pave the way to future opportunities. A fellow in the Howard Peters Rawlings Center for Public Leadership at Maryland, Brian plans to use this and other such opportunities to prepare for a career in public service.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: LIFE AFTER COLLEGE

When Christopher Brown ’06 returned to his alma mater, Baltimore City College, to promote the Incentive Awards Program to prospective high school students, he thought he was just fulfilling another program obligation. Little did he know, he was preparing for a position as an admission counselor in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions at the University of Maryland. A Government and Politics major, his job search was focused elsewhere, but when the opportunity came to represent the institution that had served him so well, he jumped at the chance. “This is not something I ever thought I would be doing, but I actually love it…It is very rewarding to be of service to individuals every single day,” says Christopher.

As an admission counselor, his primary responsibility is to recruit and admit students from high schools in Baltimore City, Northern Virginia, Denver, Albany and Long Island. Additionally, he conducts presentations to large groups of campus visitors and manages the admission process for Incentive Awards finalists and for talented high school students who wish to be concurrently enrolled in college courses. This is a significant responsibility for a young professional but he says, “Because I was expected to conduct presentations at my high school and balance the competing priorities of coursework and extracurricular activities, I felt very prepared for the demands of the admission counselor position.” Whenever he can, he seizes the opportunity to tout the Incentive Awards Program in his presentations. “It gave me the confidence and the necessary tools to succeed in any field of study and any career.”

In the future, Christopher would like to seek a career developing environmental policies and methods for implementation, but for now, he is quite satisfied with his current position. “My experience at the university has come full circle. To guide [parents and students] through a complex process that I went through myself is very fulfilling.”

Where are they now?
Here’s what some of the Incentive Awards alumni are doing!

Janiceia Adams ’07 is a 4th grade teacher at P.S. 62 in Bronx, N.Y. through Teach for America. She is also enrolled in graduate courses at Pace University.

Ima Bassey ’05 is a second-year student at William & Mary School of Law.

James Brockington ’06 is a marketing representative for Black and Decker in Tampa, Fla.

JaNee Jackson ’06 is a Research Analyst at Optimal Solutions Group, LLC. in Baltimore.

Essence Jordan ’06 is a special agent for the Pentagon Security Agency.

Jennifer Lewis ’06 is a marketing representative for Kraft Foods and is preparing for graduate school next year.

Yavona Pirali ’06 is a master’s degree candidate in science education at Towson University.

Misba Qureshi ‘06 is pursuing a master’s degree in Marriage and Family Therapy at Drexel University.

Kelly Smith ’06 is an associate/federal consultant at PriceWaterhouseCoopers.

Taneeka Staples ’07 is a field sales representative for TTI Floor Care Company.

Tiana Wynn ’05 is an external auditor for Ernst & Young.
Making an Investment

Michael '72 and Theresa Ward have always believed that the best gift one can give is the gift of an education. With their multi-year pledge to the Incentive Awards Program, that is just what they have given to graduates of Mergenthaler Vocational-Technical High School or “Mervo,” as it is affectionately called. “Education lasts for a lifetime and can be life-changing,” says Mr. Ward. “We’re giving students the chance to change their lives and inspire others in the process.” Three students, Earl Schaffer, ’09, Michael Smoot, ’10, Aaron Johnson, ’11, all Mervo alumni, are the recipients of their gift, which will provide full scholarship support for four years. A fourth student, who will be identified through the spring selection process, will complete the complement of students being supported by the Wards.

Raised in Brooklyn, Maryland, Mr. Ward was one of eight children and was the first in his family to graduate from college. In his blue collar community, people did not attend college. “They didn’t even think about it,” he recalled, as it was simply not part of the neighborhood culture. His father, however, understood the transformative effect of education and impressed upon him the importance of attending college—but he needed to find a way to pay for it. He did just that and then earned a Master’s degree in Business Administration from Harvard Business School after graduating from the University of Maryland. Ward has achieved a great deal in his professional career and now serves as chairman and CEO of CSX Corporation.

For the Wards, their gift removes the financial barrier for motivated students who want to broaden their horizons through a college education. Using his own life as an example, Mr. Ward knows their opportunities will improve exponentially if they are armed with a bachelor’s degree. The Wards will be following the progress of their students and look forward to regular communication with them.”

STUDY ABROAD:
EXPERIENCING ANOTHER PART OF OUR WORLD

“My personal view is that international experience should be a high priority for all of our students… One cannot be fully educated without an understanding of the values and circumstances of other cultures that can only be acquired through first hand experience.” —President C.D. Mote, Jr., State of the University, 2004

Tiana Wynn ’05 understood this when she decided to study at the University of North London during the spring semester in 2004. Since then, more and more IAP students have opted to take their studies global. To date, nine students have traveled to twelve different countries including Hong Kong, Vietnam, China, Italy, Lesotho, South Africa, Brazil, Jamaica, Spain, France and Mexico—and there are still more students in the pipeline to follow their lead. They return from their travels forever transformed by the sights, sounds and experiences of another country. “Being an international student was a dream of a lifetime. The people of Lesotho and South Africa have humbled my spirit, and I hope to be able to use my career to assist those who reside in impoverished countries like those in Africa,” said Latoya Felder ’07.

Perhaps no one knows more about the international experience than John Sanders ’08 who traveled to eight of the aforementioned countries since his freshman year at Maryland. He did not set out to become the exemplar for international travel, but after his first trip to Kingston, Jamaica, to work alongside Dr. Tony Whitehead, Department of Anthropology, his curiosity about other countries grew. “One thing I’ve gained has been the exposure to culture and diversity. My perception of life as I knew it changed completely,” says John. With each trip, he dispelled myths, released firmly held stereotypes and perhaps most importantly, realized the universality of the human experience despite cultural differences. “When I encounter [different] people now, it’s easier for me to relate to them because I understand that we all have the same emotions, joys and struggles,” says John. “Rather than judging someone based on race or culture, I look at each person as an individual.”

When asked about his favorite experience while abroad, he smiled and said, “That’s easy. In Vietnam, I took some time to explore on my own. I had a more authentic experience with members in the community. It removed the tourist aspect from the experience, and I actually felt like I became a part of the culture even if for a short time.”
We are pleased to introduce Charlene Cooper as the assistant director of the University of Maryland Incentive Awards Program. A graduate of Baltimore City College, Cooper received her Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology from the University of Maryland and brings her experience in Financial Aid, Resident Life and the Office of the Registrar to her new position. Among many duties, she will assume responsibility for academic advising, publications, the mentoring component and the recruitment and selection process in our participating Baltimore City public schools.

Thank you for your interest in the University of Maryland Incentive Awards Program.

We hope you enjoyed this issue of In Touch. As a friend of the program, new issues will be sent to you from time to time to keep you informed about recent developments and topics of interest. For the latest news, please visit our web site at www.umincentiveawards.umd.edu and sign up to receive the e-newsbrief. We also welcome your comments and invite you to send your email to umincentiveawards@umd.edu.