



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND INCENTIVE AWARDS PROGRAM

INTOUCH
THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE INCENTIVE AWARDS PROGRAM*

*The University of Maryland Incentive Awards Program comprises the Suzanne G. and Murray A. Valenstein Baltimore Incentive Awards Program and the Prince George's County Incentive Awards Program.



NOT EASILY BROKEN: A Cord Made of Three Strands

It's been five years since we featured **Kareem Shakoor '10, Amara Sillah '10 and Antonio Tyson '10** in *InTouch*. Back then, they described their friendship and its impact on their academic experiences and professional goals. Their shared values forged a strong bond that continues to this day. We caught up with them—Antonio, on campus, and Kareem and Amara, in New York City—to get an update.



Back in 2009, you were all interested in psychology and had varied, but related, professional goals. What are you up to now?

Antonio: I am the manager for the Behavioral Lab in the Robert H. Smith School of Business at Maryland. The lab provides Smith School faculty and doctoral students with resources to conduct experimental research on human behavior. I haven't veered too far from my original interests because I've always been interested in research.

Kareem: I am doing the type of work that I wanted, though in a different manner than I'd planned. After a three-year teaching stint through Teach for America, I started looking to expand my work beyond the classroom and assume a bigger role. I now work for Democracy Prep Public Schools in New York City as the academic collaboration team (ACT) manager of compliance. My job is to support the principals and teachers throughout the nine-school network, manage the efficiency of operations and ensure that students are receiving the services they need in a timely and thorough manner. My day-to-day functions parallel the industrial/organizational psychology work that I've always wanted to do.

Amara: I am deeply committed to recruiting talented faculty for Democracy Prep Public Schools. The thing I love the most is that I get to bring people into our (CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

PARTNER SCHOOLS
Baltimore City Public Schools:
Baltimore City College
Baltimore Polytechnic Institute

Baltimore School for the Arts
Digital Harbor High School
Heritage High School
Mergenthaler Vocational-Technical High School

National Academy Foundation High School
New Era Academy
Northwestern High School
Patterson High School

Paul Laurence Dunbar High School
Renaissance Academy
W.E.B. DuBois High School
Western High School

Prince George's County Public Schools:
Central High School
Fairmont Heights High School
High Point High School
Northwestern High School

Oxon Hill High School
Parkdale High School
Potomac High School
Suitland High School
KIPP Public Charter Schools

“As IAP students, we learned that networking is critical. You need people around you who can help you stay on track.” *Kareem Shakoor '10*

(NOT EASILY BROKEN, CONTINUED)

schools who actually care about our scholars and will work diligently to help kids who face similar obstacles that I once had. We're currently focusing on opening our first school in D.C. (Shameless plug!)

How has your friendship continued to work after graduation?

Kareem: Amara was the first to work at Democracy Prep. Since he works in recruiting, he knew about the available manager position and encouraged me to apply. I never would have known about the opportunity if he hadn't told me about it.

Antonio: Just the other day, Kareem texted me a link to a website that connected me to an entire network of opportunities in higher education. We continue to talk about our professional lives and trade resources.

Amara: When I meet people or come across opportunities, I'm constantly thinking about how they line up with Antonio and Kareem's goals. It would be great to get Antonio on board at Democracy Prep one day.

Your work keeps you pretty busy. How do you stay connected?

Kareem: Fortunately, we've all remained committed to our friendship so we meet up regularly either in Maryland or in New York. In fact, we just hooked up to celebrate my birthday.

Amara: Kareem and I are both in New York but our jobs take us in different directions. Sometimes, we catch up for lunch and talk about what's going on. Texting and social media keep us in touch with Antonio.

What can you tell IAP students about the importance of making good connections and establishing lasting friendships while in college?

Kareem: As IAP students, we learned that networking is critical. Connect with people who can help you stay positive and also challenge you and offer constructive criticism. You need

people around you who can help you stay on track.

Antonio: Find at least two to three friends who can be supportive. Surround yourself with people who share your aspiration to be successful—your major and professional goals don't matter. It's more important to have similar values. To this day, knowing that I have friends who are doing well makes me want to do the same.

What's next?

Kareem: Eventually, I want to earn a Ph.D. and become a professor, but for now, I am enjoying my work.

Antonio: Down the road, I'll likely pursue a master's in business administration or health administration so I can manage research in a higher education setting.

Amara: I'm still finding myself in the professional world, but I would love to start my own nonprofit recruitment firm.

What final words of wisdom can you share?

Kareem: Be ambitious and work hard. It's always important to put your best foot forward. There are many opportunities out there but you need to demonstrate that you deserve them.

Antonio: Strive to be excellent. The real world can be rough because lots of people are searching for the same, limited opportunities. You need to be able to stand out in the crowd.

Amara: Know your strengths and your weaknesses and constantly work to improve on both of them. Never be afraid to ask for an opportunity if you believe you deserve it and pursue it relentlessly.



(Top to bottom, right) Kareem Shakoor '10, Antonio Tyson '10 and Amara Sillah '10

FOSTERING FRESHMEN SUCCESS THROUGH PEER MENTORING

For the past two years, each Incentive Awards Program freshman has been assigned an IAP peer mentor to enhance and ease his or her transition to college life and the program. Peer mentors provide friendship and informal advice about classes, professors and campus resources, among many other things.

“It’s one thing to have adults encouraging me but it means more to me when it comes from someone that’s not that much older,” says freshman **Jasmine Thomas** of her mentor, **Veronica Richards ‘16**. “I look up to her as an older sister, as she has left a great impact on me as a student and as a person.”

On any given day, you can find mentor **Charmaine Wilson-Jones ‘15** and freshman **Amirah Grady** in the Stamp Student Union’s coffee shop not only discussing assignments and study strategies, but also the campus social scene and IAP.

“I am looking forward to becoming a peer mentor next year so I can take my experience as a protégé and pass it forward,” Grady says.

The peer mentoring experience is mutually beneficial. For example, **Afia Yeboah ‘15** cites the personal gratification she derives from her relationship with her protégé, **Davette Vice ‘17**.

“I really enjoy sharing my insight, personal experience and growth,” she says. “It makes me feel like I have a purpose and that I have a positive influence on her academic success.”

Charmaine Wilson-Jones ‘15, a peer mentor, spends quality time with her protégé, Amirah Grady ‘17, between classes.



Persistence and IAP Opportunities— A Recipe for Student Success

IN THE SUMMER of 2010, a shy **Ervin Bishop ‘14** entered the University of Maryland as one of the top students from Megenthaler Vocational-Technical High School (MERO). His mission: to challenge the narrative that young adult, African-American males are more likely to be incarcerated than they are to receive a higher education. Having a father who used drugs and abandoned him and his siblings, Bishop was determined to stay drug-free and become an example of African-American male success.



Ervin Bishop ‘14

But Bishop soon faced an academic culture shock and realized that the study skills he employed while at MERO were not going to cut it at Maryland. Like many college freshmen, he struggled with time management and used trial and error to determine a major. As a result, his grades suffered significantly.

While these challenges could have broken Bishop’s will to succeed, he pressed forward. With the guidance of the Incentive Awards Program and support from the university’s Academic Achievement Program, Bishop eventually overcame not only his shyness, but also his

struggles with study skills and time management.

“Over the last few semesters, I have seen such a significant improvement in my academic abilities because of IAP and its vision of promoting personal and academic growth among scholars in the program,” Bishop says.

Bishop, a criminology and criminal justice major with a minor in public leadership, is now enjoying the fruits of his

persistence. He’s a fellow in the School of Public Policy’s Rawlings Undergraduate Leadership Fellows Program, studied issues of terrorism in Sydney, Australia, during the winter term and is interning with the Department of Corporate Citizenship and Social Responsibility at Pepco Holdings Inc., in Washington, D.C.

This summer, Bishop will be one of 20 undergraduates from across the country to attend the University of Pittsburgh’s iSchool Inclusion Institute, which aims to prepare underrepresented students for graduate studies and careers in the information sciences.

After graduation, Bishop hopes to pursue a master’s degree in information systems and public policy while concentrating on cybersecurity practices.

“Over the last few semesters, I have seen such a significant improvement in my academic abilities because of IAP.” *Ervin Bishop ‘14*



A TEST OF WILL



Kareem Branch

When **Kareem Branch** started at Maryland in 2002, his goal was to graduate in four years with a college degree. He never guessed it would actually take 11.

Immediately after enrolling, Branch delved into campus life, assuming increasingly important positions in the Residence Hall Association (RHA) and, ultimately, being elected RHA president.

"I loved my newfound freedom in college and there was lots to explore," he says.

Branch enjoyed the growing scope of responsibility and exercised his leadership muscle, but he also overextended himself and had trouble keeping commitments. He became overwhelmed at the thought of disappointing people like Linda Clement, vice president of student affairs, Patricia Mielke, former director of the Department of Resident Life, and those in IAP.

"I lost focus and began to feel isolated as I dealt with these and other deeply personal issues," he says. "Despite the second family I had in IAP and the campus community at large, I felt alone."

After four years, Branch had to leave Maryland without a degree in hand.

Following a series of information technology jobs, Branch registered in 2009 for his first online classes through University of Maryland University College. He made the dean's list four times and graduated in May 2013 with a bachelor of science in cybersecurity and a 3.69 GPA.

"I realized I had an obligation to fulfill to myself and the mission of IAP," he says. "The IAP staff, donors and my mentors were expecting great things from me and I had to deliver."

Branch is now the IT database systems manager for the Maryland Energy Administration and is responsible for all agency information systems. Way to go, Kareem!



Capturing the Moment

In front of their peers, family members and the staff at Oxon Hill High School, seniors **Dafonso Davage, Jr.**, **Chukwuma Odigwe** and **David Egbufoama** (above, from left) learned they were accepted into IAP. The packed assembly erupted in thunderous applause and cheers.



(Above, from left) **David Egbufoama**, **Chukwuma Odigwe** and **Dafonso Davage, Jr.** are all smiles with IAP Director Jacqueline Wheeler Lee.



STUDENTS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Sophomores **Chijiaku Maduka**, **Gerard Dailey** and **Veronica Richards** are taking a stand as advocates for social change. Each serves on the executive board of Community Roots, a student-run and multi-cultural activist organization that focuses on issues of social justice on campus and around the world.

In addition to providing education,

Community Roots organizes service projects to address these issues, especially those involving race, in their own communities and works to protect individual rights.

Community Roots, much like IAP, emphasizes the importance of both empowering students and service to the community, two aspects that inspire the trio.

(From left) Gerard Dailey '16, Veronica Richards '16 and Chijiaku Maduka '16 at a Community Roots conference.



Students Help Fund Meals for People in Need

by Lenaya Stewart '15

Serving at So Others Might Eat (S.O.M.E.), an interfaith, community-based organization helping those in need in Washington, D.C., has become an IAP tradition. IAP students typically volunteer at either breakfast or lunch shifts to prepare and serve food and drinks, collect and wash dishes, and clean and set the dining area for hundreds of hungry men, women and children who visit each day.

While volunteering in December, **Melva Coles '16** wondered if IAP could sponsor a meal at S.O.M.E., a simple question that became a mission for Coles and co-volunteer **Ganiyat Lawal '16**.

"A large part of why I am in college is due to the many efforts of strangers who believed in my ability to succeed and provided me with the opportunity to attend college tuition-free," Coles says. "I wanted to do the same and give back to someone else."

Lawal's efforts had a personal motivation, too.

"When I left Nigeria and came to the United States, I thought poverty and hunger were something I had left behind me," she says.

With the help of their fellow IAP scholars and other friends, Coles and Lawal led an ambitious fundraising effort to garner the \$800 necessary to sponsor the food for an entire lunch shift. Funding the meal and serving it to more than 400 guests left the pair feeling a sense of accomplishment and the desire to do more in the years to come.



Wearing aprons, students Ganiyat Lawal '16 and Melva Coles '16 stand with Floratina (Flo) Coles, the dining room program manager for S.O.M.E.

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DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Donors **Carol '80** and **Martin Segal '80** (below) have been longtime friends of IAP because its premise resonates with them.

"This program is of particular importance to our family because without financial aid, we would have had a very difficult time attending college," Segal says.

Recently, he was tapped to serve on the selection committee at Northwestern High School in Prince George's County and had a rewarding experience interviewing its candidates.

"I realized there are so many talented and gifted young people in need of an opportunity to pursue a college education," he says. "I just wish we were able to fund every candidate."

The gift from the Segals will be directly applied to tuition, fees, room, and board for Incentive Awards students.



Incentive Awards Program

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To learn more about or to support the Incentive Awards Program, please contact Jacqueline Wheeler Lee, director, at jwl@umd.edu or 301.405.9024.

▶ **WELCOME THE CLASS OF 2018!**

Front row (from left): Juan Herrera (Parkdale), Chukwuma Odigwe (Oxon Hill), Jordan Dantzler (Baltimore Polytechnic Institute), Allexus Farley-Thomas (Baltimore School for the Arts), Maria Dasilva (Suitland), Sabrina Christian (Western), Cynthia Kearns (Western), Dorothy Bui (Northwestern) **Middle row:** Yonas Woldeab (High Point), Dafonso Davage, Jr. (Oxon Hill), Maria Cedillo (Baltimore Polytechnic Institute), Christina Kearns (Western), Zalandria Spann (Dunbar), Praise Carson (Frederick Douglass) **Back row:** David Egbufoama (Oxon Hill), Djelza Ramadan (Parkdale), Dimitrios Christou (W.E.B. DuBois)
Not pictured: Amoni Griffin (Fairmont Heights)



CLASS NOTES

CLASS OF 2005

Ima Bassey Ibadapo says, "David Oluwatoni Ibadapo was born on March 9 at 3:04 a.m., weighing in at 6 pounds, 9.5 ounces and measuring 19 inches. He is doing wonderful and so are his daddy and mommy!"

CLASS OF 2006

Misbha Qureshi co-authored "The Intersection of Facebook and Structural Family Therapy Volume 1," which is featured in *The American Journal of Family Therapy*. She is in the final stages of completing a Ph.D. in marriage and family therapy at Drexel University.

Inga Ferguson Williams and James Williams III '06 welcomed James Alexander Williams IV into the world on Nov. 14, at 1:08 a.m. Little James weighed in at 7 pounds, 13 ounces and measured 21.5 inches. Inga gushed, "James III and IV are my world."

CLASS OF 2008

Bridget Blount is the associate program manager for a youth program with St. Francis Neighborhood Center in Baltimore.

Last year, **Anna Kalmykov** moved from Baltimore to Boston and says, "I am currently enrolled in an engineering program at Boston University called LEAP (Late Entry Accelerated Program). The program is designed to assist working professionals, who have bachelor's degrees in non-engineering majors, in their transition to a master's degree program in engineering. I should be set for admission to graduate school to pursue a degree in biomedical engineering here at BU in the fall."

Sharon Lindsay is a new homeowner in the Reservoir Hill neighborhood of Baltimore City. She is also a lecturer at Baltimore City Community College and Goucher College, where she teaches calculus.

CLASS OF 2009

Brian Robinson Bowers is leaving Lewisdale Elementary School (Prince George's County), where he taught for five years, to start a master's degree program in education policy and leadership at American University.

CLASS OF 2011

Dekebra Arrington is teaching fourth grade at Templeton Elementary School in Prince George's County.

Ashley Lawrence earned a master's degree in public health from Johns Hopkins University in May 2013. She is a research program coordinator and leads recruitment efforts for a study at Johns Hopkins University called "Community Aging in Place—Advancing Better Living for Elders."

CLASS OF 2012

Chemia Hughes teaches preschool at the Easter Seals Intergenerational Center in Silver Spring, Md.

CLASS OF 2013

Jose Arevalo is an associate at KPMG, a tax, audit and advisory services firm.

Nancy Canales is completing her first year teaching creative writing at Homestead High School near Miami, Fla. This summer, she will return to UMD to begin her master's certification program in secondary English.

Kori Hill says, "I am currently studying for and taking my CPA (certified public accountant) exams. When I start at Ernst & Young in the fall, I will be an assurance (audit) associate and will assist in performing audits, review procedures and the preparation of financial statements."

Rafael Lovo is preparing for the CPA exam and in the fall will start working for PricewaterhouseCoopers, where he will be a tax associate in the Baltimore office. He will focus on the corporate taxation of local and national clients.