

IN★TOUCH

Suzanne G. and
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Baltimore Scholars

UNIVERSITY OF
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INCENTIVE
AWARDS
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Prince George's County
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MAKING HISTORY

Hamza Idris '15 Helped Build
National Museum of African
American History and Culture





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Ten years went into the creation of the National Museum of African American History and Culture. Hamza Idris '15 arrived on the prominent construction site on Washington's National Mall for perhaps the most important year—the one leading up to its September opening. As a project engineer for Clark Construction Group, Idris managed seven subcontractors for landscaping, external masonry, perimeter security and the exterior fountains, among many other things. We caught up with Idris to find out how he landed this opportunity and to discuss his role in bringing the museum to fruition.

When did you learn that you would be working on this historic site?

After I got hired, I had no idea what project I'd be assigned to—there are over 60 projects in the Washington metro area—but my boss said he had a stack of resumes from which to select team members and mine stood out.

I knew I'd have a steep learning curve because I hadn't done anything remotely close to what I was being asked to do. I had no experience building hotels, apartments, anything, let alone a museum. I was completely green.

I started as a project engineer but because staff was constantly pulled for other jobs, due to the rapid expansion of Clark projects, I quickly assumed a supervisory role as well.

How did your UMD experience prepare you?

My campus jobs prepared me to work with different people and to keep a level head when tensions are running high. My summer research programs taught me how to process

complex information. And through my co-op experiences at Kiewit Infrastructure South and Walsh Group, I learned how to take the lead and assert myself to keep people on task. I learned that I didn't get respect until I delivered.

What was your biggest hurdle?

My hybrid role was atypical and therefore the most challenging. There were early mornings, late nights and competing priorities, but I just had to perform. I had tremendous pride in my work so I couldn't let anything slip.

What were the highlights?

It was a thrill to be part of a high-profile project. It was also cool to guess when the next VIP would come in. One day it was President and First Lady Obama, then Vice President and Mrs. Biden, then Oprah and several foreign dignitaries. I coordinated with the Secret Service to assist them in gaining access to the building prior to the arrival of distinguished guests. The whole process was otherworldly. On the one hand, I was just doing my job, but on the other hand I was working with the Secret Service!

What is your current project?

I am working on a Marriott hotel near Nationals Park in

Washington, D.C. I'm responsible for managing the subcontracts—painting, flooring, bathroom fixtures and tiling, everything—for each of the 17 units on floors 8 to 12. I have to take the project from absolutely nothing to being completely furnished.

How did the Incentive Awards Program impact your success?

IAP opened a bunch of doors for me through its coaching, professional development and networking opportunities. I was also fortunate to be in a cohort of high-achieving and talented individuals. Having the backing of people who were supportive of my goals was a gift. I always say, "Talent is universal. Opportunities are hard to find." When you get them, you have to use them to the fullest.

Do you have any closing thoughts?

It's mind-blowing that my first job was working on a national landmark that has historical and personal significance to so many people, including me. I saw tears on the faces of visitors and heard them point out people (in the exhibits) they knew or make references to family members like, "My grandfather was there." It was amazing that I was where I was, doing what I was doing, with a company like Clark. The more seasoned members of our 15-person team advised us to enjoy the moment, as we'd never see another job quite like this in our career.

TEACH FOR AMERICA ALUMNI: Promoting the values of service and education

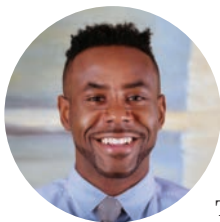
Teach for America consistently ranks the University of Maryland among its biggest providers of corps members (34 in 2016 alone), who travel across the nation to work in low-income area schools for two years. Incentive Awards Program graduates play a role in UMD's success in the program. Below, meet a handful of former IAP scholars who served in Teach for America.



JANICEIA ADAMS '07

Major: Criminology and Criminal Justice
Occupation: Second-grade teacher,
East Harlem Scholars Academy, New York City

The Incentive Awards Program and Teach for America (TFA) provided me opportunities to explore issues of inequality in education, which inspired my career interests. Most importantly, the public speaking skills that I cultivated throughout my undergraduate and TFA experiences allowed me to become an advocate for my students, some of whom have challenges at school and home. I was a part of TFA for several years as a summer intern/operations coordinator throughout college, a New York City corps member and a staff member for three years. Thanks to my IAP and TFA experiences, I will always be connected to a career in education, with a focus on changing our criminal justice system, which disenfranchises many, especially communities of color.



AMARA SILLAH '10

Major: Psychology
Occupation: Search analyst,
On-Ramps, New York City

Through my experiences, I learned that education is something I should not take for granted. When I was in high school, I was very close to dropping out due to a difficult class and some troubles at home. My American government teacher at the time talked me out of making the biggest mistake of my life. When I was teaching with TFA, I shared this personal story with my students. After school, one of my students admitted he was in a similar situation. I talked him out of dropping out. Eventually, I wrote his college recommendation letter. Coincidentally, I was his American government teacher, so life came full circle for me in that moment. I was given so much, and I want to inspire others to know that anything is possible.



VARYSA WILLIAMS '13

Major: Hearing and Speech Sciences
Occupation: Second-grade special education
teacher, Brooke Grove Elementary School,
Montgomery County, Md.

My community service experiences in IAP taught me to be a humble servant. Once I started working as a teacher in Baltimore City through TFA, my philosophy was, "How can I be of service?" TFA further taught me that teaching is less about what you know and do, and more about serving. I served my students, their families, my community and my colleagues every day. I have big plans, and my professional life has just begun, and I thank IAP and TFA for that!



DAVIAN MORGAN '14

Majors: Criminology and Criminal
Justice, Sociology
Occupation: Second-grade lead literacy
teacher, Ingenuity Prep Public Charter School,
Washington, D.C.

My most memorable TFA moment was when I received the Edith Tatel Excellence in Teaching Award, which is given to one elementary school teacher upon graduating from the program, in recognition of academic rigor, student achievement and leadership throughout their two-year commitment. My TFA experience shaped my passion for education and teaching. Consequently, my career aspiration is to pursue a graduate degree in school leadership where I can continue to serve. I am grateful that TFA and IAP provided me with the skills, resources, community and safe space to do this work!

Terps

FROM UNLIKELY SCHOLAR TO ADMINISTRATOR

Jennifer Covahey '08 is living a life that she could not have imagined while growing up in South Baltimore, where issues with drugs, poverty and under-resourced schools are pervasive. Now the associate director of scholarships for the CollegeBound Foundation, Covahey is responsible for overseeing a scholarship portfolio, soliciting new donors, coordinating scholarship application reviews and managing all 70 scholarship funds, one of which she received while at the University of Maryland.

"I've come full circle," she says.

During Covahey's freshman year at now-defunct Southern High School, plans for Digital Harbor High were in full swing.

"We were in a construction zone," she says. "Teachers knew they were losing their jobs, so they checked out and stopped teaching. At the time, it was easy and fun since there were no real standards and students were given freedom."

As a result, only 100 of her original 400 classmates graduated with her.

The night before she learned she was selected for the Incentive Awards Program, she recalls, "People said, 'You're not going to make it. You'll be home just like the rest of us. These kinds of things never happen here.' I'm so glad I didn't listen to them."

With such uneven encouragement, college was "a huge leap of faith," Covahey says. Initially at UMD, she struggled with fitting in with peers who had more money, navigating the academics, study groups and classroom environments, and interacting with professors.

"It was so discouraging being in classes with students who knew so much more than I did," she says. "I wanted to be involved in campus activities, but I had to spend all of my time studying just to keep pace with others. IAP helped me to know where the resources were so I could get the guidance I needed."

In time, Covahey hit her stride and graduated with a degree in criminology and criminal justice. Today, she holds a Master of Science degree in counseling from Johns Hopkins University, where she earned a 3.94 GPA. Her work at CollegeBound is personally fulfilling as it allows her to serve kids just like herself. Her long-range goal is to become a certified mental health and drug addiction counselor, but for now, her focus is on being an example of stability for her nieces and nephews.

"I am a very proud Baltimorean, but we are only as good as our children," she says. "It is incumbent upon us to give the best advice and guidance to help them to succeed. I am committed to doing that in both my personal and professional lives."



 COLLEGEBOUND FOUNDATION
To College. Through College.

IAP partnered with Education Abroad for a Maryland in Buenos Aires program in winter term in January—the first time IAP students have traveled abroad together.

They were joined by an IAP staff member as well as three other UMD students: Pictured (from left) are Elise Petrocci '17, Shelvia English (coordinator), Nabreyia Scott '17*, Nellie Gold-Pastor '19, Tierra Coates '17, Jasmine Drummond '17*, Sabrina Christian '18*, Juan Herrera '18*, Brittany Eshun '19* and Corey Hart '19* (bottom).

(IAP scholars are identified with a *)





MEDICAL SCHOOL DREAMS COME TRUE

When Tochi Ukwu '15 was first featured by *InTouch* five years ago, she was an ambitious freshman who had secured a research internship at the National Eye Institute (part of the National Institutes of Health) in Bethesda, Md. Her interest in the field came naturally: She has uveitis, an incurable disease that causes recurrent swelling of the eye and potential blindness. Today, she is a first-year student at Howard University's School of Medicine. Here's Ukwu's take on medical school so far:



Biggest surprise

"We were told over and over that if high school was drinking from a water bottle and college was drinking from a sprinkler, then medical school is like drinking from a fire hydrant. Although I tried to mentally prepare, it still took me by surprise when I realized that the information from lectures had to be neatly organized and packed in my mind, not just for brute memorization, but to apply to my future patients."

The Highs

"There are so many! Even though there is sooo much information, I have not once been bored and we haven't even gotten to the main clinical application yet. I love living in D.C., and exploring different coffee shops and art galleries. The community and support at Howard is unbelievable. Our class is like a family, rooting for each other and offering our strengths when someone expresses a weakness. I have felt no judgment and no competition. Additionally, my dean is so accommodating to my medical challenges. For a medical school, that is rare."



The Lows

"Balancing life, school, family, friends and hobbies is difficult. I deactivated my Facebook, only check email once daily, turn my phone off, etc., so that I can make time for things that are more important to me, like rest, my guitar, exploring D.C., and yoga. I have implemented a level of time management and efficiency that would have almost seemed militant in college."

Words of Wisdom

"If medical school is what you want, do not let your fears bully you. Your performance will be drastically different when you have the mindset that you can do something. Focus on what you want, and give your all to get there. I remember visiting the pre-med adviser when I was at Maryland and I asked if he could assist me in coming up with a back-up plan to medical school. He said, 'Do you really want to be a doctor?' To which I responded, 'Of course!' 'Well then,' he said, 'medical school is your backup plan. It is your plan A and your plan B.' That stuck with me. Now I live every day like giving my best is my only option."





“Without a doubt, Josue is one of the most intelligent, humble, self-motivated and self-sufficient students with whom I have ever had the honor to work. Josue’s solid work ethic, steely-eyed vision for his future path, disciplined approach to pursuing every opportunity and resiliency, which allow him to juggle several obligations while maintaining very good grades, all come together in the young man that I have come to admire and respect so much. Without IAP, it would have been very difficult for him to get the type of first-class education he has earned from Maryland. I predict that he will be one of the IAP glowing success stories.”



—*Kim Nickerson, Ph.D.*



DETERMINED TO SERVE

Community is an important value and source of motivation for criminology and criminal justice major Josue Mendoza '17, who shows a remarkable determination to become a Prince George's County police officer.

“A community is defined by those who surround us,” he says. “We can choose how we interact with others. Having a positive and accepting outlook will enable us to work together to meet our common goals. Most importantly, cooperation will help us assist each other in finding solutions when struggles overwhelm our capabilities.”

While juggling school and family commitments, Mendoza interns with the Prince George's County Police Department and the U.S. Marshals Service, serves as a volunteer emergency medical technician, and works on campus in Conferences and Visitor Services and off-campus at Jimmy John's and Uber Eats.

“The Incentive Awards Program has enabled me to focus on my academics and pursue other opportunities such as volunteer work and unpaid internships,” Mendoza says. “These opportunities allowed me to gain insight into the criminal justice field and provide me with invaluable experiences. IAP has given me resources to help me succeed and help me stay motivated.”

One of the IAP resources Josue values is his connection and relationship with his mentor, Kim Nickerson, Ph.D., assistant dean, equity administrator and diversity officer in the College of Behavioral Sciences. “Dr. Nickerson has become one of my biggest fans,” Mendoza says. “Thanks to him, I have been able to expand my horizons at the university and network within my own college. We have worked together to create a friendship that will last a lifetime.”

CLASS NOTES

Myron Goldstein '05 is a service coordinator with Johns Hopkins Health Systems.

Keiyonna Brooks '10 earned a Master of Science in cybersecurity from University of Maryland University College with a concentration in digital investigation.

Thomas Palmerino '10 and **Brittany Atkinson '11** are engaged and purchased their first home in Glen Burnie, Md. Thomas is lead technician for PourMyBeer, a supplier of mobile self-serve beer systems, and Brittany is a graphic designer and production coordinator at NASA Federal Credit Union.

London Faust '11 is finishing course work toward a Master of Science in human services administration at the University of Baltimore. He is a teacher assistant for Board of Childcare and runs its afterschool program.

Robyne Rivers '11 wrote, "I am completing an externship at University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and I am conducting individual therapy as well as co-facilitating a skills group for group therapy. My clinical research project topic is 'Post-Secondary Transition Issues in Students with Dyslexia.'"

Jose Arevalo '13 says, "I'm a consultant for Deloitte. I proposed to my college sweetheart, Christina Francisco '14, on our six-year anniversary, and we are planning a Terp wedding at the Riggs Alumni Center."

Nancy Canales '13 is an English success coach at the International High School at Langley Park. She is also the professional development lead teacher, drama club sponsor, girl's soccer assistant coach and indoor track assistant coach.


Katherine Coleman Alba '13 and her spouse are new homeowners in Severn, Md.

Dulce Hernandez '13 is chairperson of the ESOL Department at Oxon Hill Middle School. She previously taught Spanish and was instrumental in bringing **Jose Granados '15** to fill the vacancy left by her taking on a new role. She says, "He is doing amazing things at our school!"

Victoria Gold '14 is pursuing a dual master's degree program in health care administration and business administration at University of Maryland University College.

Rhonda Roach Idris '14 and **Hamza Idris '15** welcomed Yusuf Hamza, 5 lbs. 11 oz., 18.5 inches, on Nov. 19, 2016, after 38 hours of labor. Rhonda Idris is a fourth-grade math and science teacher at William Hall Academy in Prince George's County and earning a Master of Science in education at Johns Hopkins University. Read about Hamza Idris's career on page 2 of *InTouch*.

Ervin Bishop '15 says, "I am a staff assistant in U.S. Rep. Elijah Cummings' Washington, D.C., office. My responsibilities include processing constituent tour requests and incoming correspondence, among other administrative operations. Further, legislative issues involving animal rights constitute roughly a quarter of my role. I hold meetings with lobbyists and national advocacy groups and advise the Congressman on federal bills and 'Dear Colleague' letters seeking bipartisan co-sponsorship."



Kendra Browne '15 is working on a Master of Science in speech language pathology at Howard University. She received the Pipeline Program Fellowship from the Department of Education, which covers the cost of tuition and provides a professional development travel stipend. She is a licensed speech language pathology assistant.

Jade Johnson '15 recently returned to the United States after teaching English to kindergarteners in Beijing, China, for a year. She writes, "I'm settling back in and catching up with friends and family. I'm applying to jobs in the international affairs and

education sector and hope to get a job either as an ESOL teacher or as a program assistant for an international nonprofit. I'm also considering going abroad again and continuing to teach English in another country."

Christopher Lane '15 wrapped up a Kennedy Center performance of "Where Words Once Were" in the fall and is preparing for a remount of the Kennedy Center's "Darius & Twig" in Wisconsin this spring. He is managing events for the Smithsonian Associates and his graphic design and music production company, Laneguage Design. Check out his new website at www.Laneguage.com.

Lenaya Stewart '15 is the new program coordinator for the Office of Extended Studies Pre-College Programs at the University of Maryland.

Afia Yeboah '15 is a consultant for Under Armour Global Headquarters in Baltimore. She is also an international English teacher, currently teaching in Barranquilla, Colombia.

Alecia Frye '16 is a pre-law policy analyst in the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts. She represents her civil rights office at out-of-state agency consortiums. She is awaiting admission decisions from law schools.

Kalani Johnson '16 is seeking a Master of Arts in criminology and criminal justice at the University of Maryland. Her research focus is victimology, specifically relationship violence.

Taneisha Carter '16 is a clinical research assistant at the University of Maryland School of Medicine in Baltimore.

Gerard Dailey '16 works as a recruitment and diversity administrator for Miles & Stockbridge, a Baltimore law firm. He is awaiting law school admissions decisions and is a big brother with Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Greater Chesapeake.

Ganiyat Lawal '16 is an account specialist in the Global Supply Chain Development Program at Pratt & Whitney in Hartford, Conn.

Joshua Trowell '16 is a research coordinator at Mercy Medical Center in Baltimore. He writes, "I work with primary care physicians to facilitate the screening process for their patients with hepatitis C. It's very community-oriented, and I'm grateful for this position while preparing for graduate school."



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