

UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND
INCENTIVE
AWARDS
PROGRAM

IN TOUCH

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.



Incentive Awards Program Extends Its Reach



This fall, the Incentive Awards Program expanded to include three additional high schools in Prince George's County: High Point, Oxon Hill and Parkdale, bringing the total number of participating schools to eight. Since 2006, when the first five Prince George's high schools were included, individuals at every level of county government and school leadership have been remarkably supportive and enthusiastic. Most impressive is the Prince George's County Council's show of financial support to the tune of \$1 million to support students coming from each of the participating high schools. With every additional school, the Incentive Awards Program is one step closer to becoming the statewide program that President C. D. Mote, Jr. envisioned when he implemented the program in 2000.

The Incentive Awards staff is looking forward to working with the guidance community to identify outstanding students in all of our participating schools this fall!

TRAILBLAZER COMES FULL CIRCLE



Baltimore City College recently celebrated the return of one of its own. This fall, Yavona Williams Pirali '06 started as a teacher of International Baccalaureate biology and health at her alma mater—a tall order for most recent college graduates, but just another manageable challenge for Yavona.

The first Incentive Award winner from Baltimore City College in 2001 and the first in her family to attend college, Yavona came to the University of Maryland to chart unfamiliar territory. A biological sciences major with a concentration in physiology and neurobiology, Yavona rarely found classmates from her socio-economic or ethnic background but says, "I managed to find commonality in the midst of diversity. Additionally, the Incentive Awards Program assigned me mentors that helped me adjust to the world of academia and advance my peers." Through her stellar work in the classroom, she set the bar for academic success and earned

the added distinction of being named a Suzanne G. and Murray A. Valenstein Incentive Award Scholar. Most importantly, she became living proof that other students from humble beginnings could achieve similarly.

After graduating from Maryland, Yavona taught seventh-grade science at Nicholas Orem Middle School in Hyattsville and received the Prince George's County Educator Award for services in the community. She gave birth to her first child in April 2007 and immediately started work on a master's degree in secondary science education at Towson University. In May 2008, she earned her degree with a 4.0 GPA while balancing a hectic life as wife and mother.

Yavona hopes that current IAP students will take advantage of the countless opportunities to succeed at Maryland and beyond. "It is one of the few times in life where you can discover yourself." She encourages every student to "not be afraid of failing, and get out there and do it, for a path has already been made."

FORGING A NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH BALTIMORE



President C. D. Mote, Jr. and Baltimore City Council President Stephanie Rawlings-Blake

An afternoon reception at Baltimore City Hall was the perfect setting to announce a new partnership between the City of Baltimore and the University of Maryland. Under the leadership of City Council President Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, the Baltimore City Board of Estimates approved its first contribution to the Incentive Awards Program. "These young individuals represent the future of Baltimore and our city will continue to find ways to make smart investments in our youth, despite tough economic times," said Rawlings-Blake. Such a show of support reflects a deeply rooted belief in the potential of Baltimore City's young people and confidence in the program's transformative effect on its students. "This partnership with the City of Baltimore marks a significant milestone for the Baltimore Incentive Awards Program," said President C. D. Mote, Jr. "More important, though, it underscores Baltimore's ongoing commitment to provide opportunities for its students to take charge of their lives and achieve their dreams."

Getting Hands on Experience



La'Von Wilkins '09, took a break from campus in the spring to intern at Atlantic Records, part of Warner Music Group, in New York

City. Atlantic is home to popular recording artists including Yolanda Adams, Bjork, Phil Collins, Kid Rock, Lil' Kim, Missy Elliott, Fabolous, and many more. As part of the internship, he accompanied record executives to scout talent, reviewed demos, and even made a cameo appearance in a music video for *American Boy*, a popular song by Estelle featuring Kanye West. "This experience gave me a chance to see artistic concepts come to life," says La'Von. La'Von aspires to become an art director and entertainment manager, so this internship was just what he needed to get a foothold in the industry.



De'Angela Boone '10 had never heard of Inroads when she attended a program-sponsored presentation, but by the end of the

seminar she was on her way to a summer internship with the U.S. Department of State. Inroads' mission is to develop and place talented minority youth in business and prepare them for corporate and community leadership. During her three-month stint, she had a number of responsibilities including drafting and processing agreements between the State Department and 14 government agencies, such as the FBI and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. One of her summer highlights was hearing Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice share her experience and views on foreign affairs. At the conclusion of her internship, De'Angela was invited to continue as a paid Stay-in-School Intern, so she returned at the end of September.



Dekebra Arrington '11 has always wanted to be a doctor, but recently developed a strong interest in health policy.

To explore her interest more fully, she landed a summer internship with the Office of the Attorney General in Baltimore as a health advocacy specialist. The experience was eye-opening, as she learned more about health policies in Maryland and gained experience helping consumers with their cases.

From our photo album: **The NorthBay Retreat**

For a second year, Incentive Awards students headed north for a weekend of team building at NorthBay, a 97-acre waterfront facility on the upper Chesapeake Bay, to kick off the semester. In their down time, students could take advantage of any number of activities including a high ropes course, climbing wall, kayaking and basketball. New bonds were created and old friendships were renewed, but most of all, it prepared students to start the semester refreshed and ready for the challenges of another academic year.



IN MEMORIAM

Jennifer F. Lewis '06



In the midst of a busy semester, we pause to reflect on the remarkable but brief life of one of our scholars, Jennifer Franklynn Lewis '06. In the four years she was a student at the University of Maryland, she made an indelible mark on the campus and in our small community of scholars.

Even as a middle-schooler, she was identified in her Randallstown neighborhood as its "youngest community leader." She volunteered to organize math and reading programs for young people and mobilized them to produce activities for the area's senior citizens. It's not surprising that Jennifer built on her innate talent in program planning by digging into the vast array of involvement opportunities at Maryland. Among her many activities, she was a leader of the Black Student Union, the NAACP and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

"I just don't understand how you can be on a campus like this and not be involved," Jennifer once said. "I look around my community and clearly see that everything isn't perfect. The only way

to expect improvement is to become involved in effecting change. And change won't come unless people are standing behind something or working for something."

Throughout her brief life, however, there were several times when Jennifer's plans were put on hold. In 1999, just before the start of her sophomore year at Baltimore Polytechnic Institute, she was diagnosed with an aggressive form of ovarian cancer. She determined that she would battle the cancer by taking hold of the mental and spiritual fortitude that had become her trademark. Despite her illness, Jennifer graduated Poly in 2002 at the top of her class.

Jennifer's cancer was in remission for many years before it returned, interrupting a promising career as a sales representative for Kraft Foods, Inc. and plans to attend law school.

Jennifer loved and appreciated life and was committed to making the most of every opportunity presented to her. As her obituary aptly stated, "She taught us all to live life to the fullest, remain true to ourselves and to be strong in the midst of adversity."

Jennifer is survived by her parents, stepfather, sisters, brother and a host of relatives and friends.

A Cut Above the Rest

The best of the best—that is the definition of an Incentive Awards Fellow. Starting this fall, the program has identified a select group of students to bear this title. Each one has consistently demonstrated a commitment to the program's values and to its success. They have been exemplary students since they joined our group, displaying positive attitudes when carrying out program requirements and showing strong character, while encouraging others to follow their lead. Most importantly, they have performed well academically, sought ways to augment their classroom experience with experiential learning and international travel and pursued meaningful ways to impact the campus through extracurricular involvement. Equally important, they take their role as ambassadors seriously,

understanding that their success impacts the lives of others within their reach.

In keeping with the spirit of the program, this honor comes with privileges and responsibilities—responsibilities which require them to maintain model deportment and a high level of performance, both academically and socially. Additionally, they are expected to support the IAP leadership by staffing nightly study tables, serving on the student advisory board, participating in the annual selection process and coordinating social activities for the entire student group.

Congratulations to the first group of Fellows!



*Front Row: Randal Brewer '10, Dominic Smith '09, Dekebra Arrington '11, Brian Robinson Bowers '09
Back Row: London Faust '11, Kareem Shakoor '10, Brittany Atkinson '11, Amara Sillah '10*



MAKING THE GRADE

The University of Maryland Distinguished Dean's List acknowledges students who earn a semester GPA of 4.0. Congratulations to **Brian Robinson Bowers '09** for achieving this high honor for the Spring 2008 semester.

Congratulations to everyone who earned a semester GPA of 3.0 or higher!

(Students with Semester Academic Honors are noted in red.)

Brittany Atkinson '11
Dekebra Arrington '11
Randal Brewer '10
Olivia Coates '08
London Faust '11
Jamece Hackett '10
Anna Kalmaykov '08

Thomas Palmerino '10
Darian Scott-Carter '08
Kareem Shakoor '10
Amara Sillah '10
Dominic Smith '09
La'Von Wilkins '09



WELCOME TO THE CLASS OF 2012



Back Row: Octavia Sykes (Baltimore Polytechnic), Andrea Brackett (Northwestern, Baltimore City), Jomarie Tablang (Northwestern, Prince George's County), Kiosha Murphy (Central), Lauren Robinson (Western), Camille Neysmith (Forest Park), Amy Hume (Digital Harbor), Kimberly Jordan (Mergenthaler), Chemia Hughes (Western)

Front Row: Lamara Johnson (Suitland), Rachel Jackson (Baltimore Polytechnic), Charmaine Slade (Edmondson-Westside), Djuan Short (Potomac), Jeanjuilet Alam (Fairmont Heights)

Class Notes

Class of 2005

In May, **Tiana Wynn** became a certified public accountant in Maryland. She is working as a senior accountant at Ernst & Young, LLP.

Ima Bassey will graduate early from the College of William & Mary School of Law in December.

Class of 2006

Inga Ferguson married James Williams '06 at Huber Memorial Church on June 28 in Baltimore. Fellow alumni **James Brockington**, **Christopher Brown** and **Latoya Felder '07** were in attendance. They reside in Nottingham, Md. Inga also recently completed a public health certification assisting her in obtaining a position as an outreach worker with the Baltimore County Health Department.

Ja-Nee Jackson gave birth to Jacara Marie Spencer on May 3 and is engaged to be married in spring 2009.

Kelly Smith was recently promoted to a senior associate position at PricewaterhouseCoopers, overseeing program management activities for several military hospitals and clinics in the United States.

Class of 2007

Tameka Brooks is a job coach for Project Search, a program based at the University of Maryland at Baltimore designed for high school students with disabilities.

Class of 2008

Darian Scott-Carter accepted a position as a college access program specialist with the College Bound Foundation. He has been assigned to work at Doris M. Johnson High School (formerly Lake Clifton High School).

Anna Kalmykov spent four weeks at the Danish Institute of Study Abroad in Copenhagen. While there she traveled to Amsterdam, the Netherlands, where she studied public health issues surrounding HIV/AIDS.



UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND

University of Maryland Incentive Awards Program
1103 Cole Student Activities Building
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742

www.umincentiveawards.umd.edu

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
College Park, MD
PERMIT NO. 10