

HEALTH MATTERS

Medical Student Earns Prestigious Award

Honored for excellence, minority outreach

Omar Washington of northeast Portland, a second-year student at the UC Davis School of Medicine, has been honored with a prestigious 2010 Minority Scholars Award by the American Medical Association Foundation.

Washington is one of only 13 students nationwide to receive the award, which is accompanied by a \$10,000 scholarship.

The annual award recognizes academic excellence, a strong commitment to improving minority health and outstanding promise of a future career in medicine.

"Omar Washington is an exceptional student who has fostered efforts to increase diversity in the physician workforce at the local and national levels and to deliver preventive health care to the medically underserved in our community," said Claire Pomeroy, vice chancellor for human health sciences at UC Davis

and dean of the School of Medicine. "He exemplifies our school's commitment to diversity and social justice, and we are proud to have him as a member of our student body."

Washington received his undergraduate degree in microbiology at Portland State University in Portland, Ore., and entered the School of Medicine in 2008. He is an active member of the Student National Medical Association, the oldest and largest student organization for medical students of color in the country. He also serves as the regional liaison to the Minority Association of Pre-medical Students.

Washington mentors several undergraduates from disadvantaged backgrounds interested in pursuing careers in medicine. He also organizes seminars and events for students from throughout the region to help prepare them for medical school. Recognizing the importance of early



Omar Washington

outreach, he works extensively with elementary and high-school students, partnering with African-American churches and sports organizations to combine academic information with community activities.

"My goal is to excite students to the possibilities in health care and to support, encourage and assist them in their individual journeys," Washington wrote in his application for the award. "Upon completing my medical degree, I hope to work at an academic institution where I can continue to help guide young, eager medical students and host programs for disadvantaged youth, to encourage them to seek careers in medicine."

Washington also serves as co-director of the Imani Clinic, a free community clinic that offers preventive health services to a historically African-American neighborhood, and partners with leaders in the community to foster health. Through annual events like the Ulezi Family Health Faire, clinic staff offer blood-pressure screenings and health education, and help build relationships with community organizations dedicated to advancing education and health.

"Omar Washington is an out-

standing medical student with strong leadership and interpersonal skills," said Darin Latimore, director of Medical Student Diversity at UC Davis School of Medicine. "His calm, mature approach to addressing health-care concerns helps build consensus in the community and fosters our overall efforts to deliver compassionate, culturally sensitive care that meets the needs of diverse patient populations."

The UC Davis School of Medicine is among the nation's leading medical schools, recognized for its specialty- and primary-care programs. The school offers fully accredited master's degree programs in public health and in informatics, and its combined M.D.-Ph.D. program is training the next generation of physician-scientists to conduct high-impact research and translate discoveries into better clinical care. Along with being a recognized leader in medical research, the school is committed to serving underserved communities and advancing rural health.

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