Education at URMC – Student Perspectives

Name: Marissa Dixon

Hometown: Fort Washington, MD

Undergraduate Degree: B.S. in Biology from University of Maryland, Eastern Shore

Areas of Interest: community-based research that benefits the health of vulnerable children and those who care for them, the development of public health programs for disadvantaged populations, measurement and elimination of health disparities.

Background Information

I grew up in Fort Washington, Maryland; a suburb located about fifteen minutes from both Washington D.C. and Northern Virginia. I am the only child of two wonderful parents: my mother worked for NIH and my father is a retired schoolteacher and administrator. They encouraged my early interest in science and aided me in enrolling in programs to add to my knowledge and skills. They also recognized my love for people and supported my volunteering activities with the Native American youth and early childhood education programs in my area. I attended Gwynn Park High School, a science and technology magnet school, in Brandywine Maryland. Next, I attended the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore, where I graduated with a B.S. in Honors Biology. I moved to Rochester in 2005 to begin a Ph.D. program in Neuroscience. I took a detour and decided to work as a research coordinator on clinical trials for those with Cystic Fibrosis. It was during that time that I found the MPH program at the University of Rochester and knew it was the perfect way to combine my love for people and health sciences.

Why did you choose The University of Rochester Medical Center?

The University of Rochester Medical Center is a health epicenter in the Rochester community. It is respected and well received because of its exceptional care of patients and its outreach efforts in the community. I wanted to be a part of an entity that was working diligently to improve the life of all those in the area and possessed updated and cutting edge research opportunities.

Tell us about your program

The Department of Community and Preventive Medicine at the University of Rochester Medical Center houses the MPH program. The MPH program is comprised of a set of faculty that works tirelessly to train students to become leaders in the public health arena. They focus on instruction to develop knowledge and skills to serve populations experiencing a plethora of health concerns. Students in the program benefit from strong and supportive leadership complete with exemplary coordination. Students can chose to specialize their program of study in three tracks: social and behavioral, epidemiology, health services research, or remain a generalist.

What are your career aspirations?

After a number of years of over-planning my future I have realized that sometimes the best and most satisfying opportunities are those that you cannot foresee years ahead. However, I believe continuing my education through a completion of a Ph.D. would strengthen my ability to conduct community research. I also would like to use my newly acquired skills in the field, perhaps working for a local non-for-profit or a health department.

What are some of the things you have learned since you came to Rochester?

I am proud to say that the MPH program at the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry has taught me more than just information, but has also given me perspective about the future of public health and where I could fit in. I cannot express how supported and equipped I feel. This is truly a comprehensive program that goes beyond arming you with knowledge and skills - the MPH program helps you identify and enhance your abilities!

Any advice for prospective students?

START CONNECTING and VOLUNTEERING with the Department of Community and Preventive Medicine! We have a vast selection of opportunities that will give you experience and benefit the department and those it serves. Candidates wanting to learn more can contact Marissa at Marissa_dixon@urmc.rochester.edu.