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## Medical student named National Health Service Corps scholar

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In exchange for a full-ride through medical school, first-year student Sheena Chege has promised to practice primary care in a medically underserved community for four years after residency.

Chege, who was born in Kenya and later moved to South Carolina and Fort Myers, came to medical school in May already knowing she'd want to practice in an underserved community.

"I'm very excited, I've always wanted to work wherever I would be most needed and wherever I would fill the greatest need in the community," she said. "My father is also a primary-care physician. He does family medicine, so I was inspired by him to pursue primary care."



*Sheena Chege is a first-year medical student at Florida State University.*

Chege is the College of Medicine's 11th National Health Service Corps scholar.

The NHSC is a program sponsored by the federal Health Resources and Services Administration. Students pursuing a career in primary health care are eligible to receive funding for their education in exchange for practicing in rural, urban and tribal communities with limited access to care, upon graduation and licensure.

Roughly 10% of those who apply receive scholarships.

"I felt like the scholarship was perfect for me, but I also knew it was a national program and very competitive," she said. "I didn't really have any expectations, but I figured it was worth a shot. When I found out, I texted my parents and my sister and got them on a group phone call to tell them the news and they were all excited."

Chege is a graduate of Florida State's undergraduate Interdisciplinary Medical Sciences program. While in undergrad, she was also a volunteer for the College of Medicine's outreach program, SSTRIDE, which delivers STEM education and resources to middle- and high-school students.

"I taught STEM classes in Quincy and Havana, and it was really interesting being able to work in a rural environment and get to know the people there and the community," Chege said. "It made me think it would be the type of place that I'd want to work in."

In addition to her interest in rural and underserved communities, Chege has a passion for children's outreach and plans to pursue pediatrics.

"[Sheena] had a special way of relating to the students and they often preferred her to other teachers assigned through the SSTRIDE program," Miranda Mack-Delavallade (M.D., '17), academic program specialist at the College of Medicine, wrote in a letter of recommendation. "She displayed a level of patience and maturity when interacting with the students that was very impressive. Our students lack educational and health-care resources. Most of them live in food deserts and many struggle with food insecurity. Having supportive mentors like [Sheena] truly makes the difference."

Involvement with the SSTRIDE program was just the beginning of Chege's experience in rural communities. While seeking a certification as a clinical medical assistant, she did an externship in Crawfordville.

"With that also being a rural community, it was a lot of fun. The clinic we were working at was one of the only clinics or urgent cares in the area, so we really got to do a lot and see a lot of patients," she said. "I liked that you would start to see the same patients. You'd get to know them, and they'd get to know you, which reinforced my decision that it was something I'd want to do in the future."

Chege has volunteered at a child-care center as a teacher's assistant and also worked with the Gladiolus Learning and Development Center, a nonprofit child-care agency in Fort Myers that provides free and discounted daycare and voluntary prekindergarten services.

She had even more service experience as a member of Honors Medical Scholars. HMS is a program designed to welcome aspiring med students to the College of Medicine community and engage them in service and outreach. Chege was elected service chair and, later, co-president.

She says the experiences further solidified her desire to serve children in underserved communities.

"Sheena's tireless work serving children in disadvantaged areas of Florida reflects her selflessness, resourcefulness, and compassion," said Elizabeth Foster, HMS adviser and assistant dean of the Interdisciplinary Medical Sciences program. "Her experiences and core values represent a truly outstanding scholar and clinician dedicated to helping those who may be forgotten by society. She will tell you she feels privileged to work with people in need."

#### **These are the College of Medicine's previous NHSC scholars:**

Class of 2010 – Tanya Anim, Brittany (Foulkes) Crenshaw.

Class of 2011 – Komal D'Souza.

Class of 2014 – Alyson (Lewis) Sanchious, Brett Thomas.

Class of 2017 – Paulin Gotrace.

Class of 2019 – Acton Pifer, Tiffany Smith-Sutton.

Class of 2020 – Eric Walker.

Class of 2023 – Cylena Stewart.