

PRESS RELEASE

May 15, 2010

First Bridge Students Receive Master's Degree

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TALLAHASSEE, FL - Ten members of the incoming Class of 2014 will arrive with something that no one has ever had until now: a master's degree from the College of Medicine. They're the 10 members of the 2009-2010 Bridge Program. At the May 15 commencement program, they will each receive a diploma signifying that they have earned a brand-new degree: Master of Science in Biomedical Sciences, Bridge to Clinical Medicine Major. The 10 students are Mohammed Al-Humiari; Alrick Drummond; Geden Franck; Angela Green; Lorenzo Hernandez; Miranda Mack; Melissa McDole; Stephanie Morales; Colin Swigler; and Brett Thomas. "The success of the program," said Assistant Dean Helen Livingston, who supervises it, "comes from the ability and character of the students we select." The Bridge Program helps the College of Medicine achieve its mission, which includes "service to elder, rural, minority, and underserved populations." The program provides a bridge into medical school for hand-picked students; their characteristics make them good candidates for practicing primary care with underserved or minority patients in rural or inner-city communities. Often the students come from such communities themselves and had not considered medical school as an option. Those who successfully complete the rigorous three-semester Bridge Program are invited to join the next year's class of first-year medical students. And because they already have experienced in Bridge some of the class work they'll do as first-year med students, they have a head start on excelling in medical school. "You guys will be leaders of this class," Jacob VanLandingham, Ph.D., assistant professor in biomedical sciences, told these Bridge students at a celebratory luncheon three days before graduation. Lynn Romrell, Ph.D., who teaches the anatomy class to first-year students – and who taught it to these Bridge students last summer – gave them a new way to think about taking anatomy a second time. "You're like another set of teaching assistants," he told them. "I really look upon you as kind of colleagues now." The Bridge students wrapped up their master's program by doing research projects, which they discussed briefly at the luncheon. It was clear that the experience had been eye-opening. For example:

- Some disadvantaged patients are longing for someone just to listen to them, said Al-Humiari, who also said that working with human subjects is much less orderly than working with chemicals or lab animals.
- Language and literacy barriers can complicate surveys that are part of research projects, Drummond learned.
- Science teachers don't do as much as they could to make science interesting in a hands-on way, said Mack, a former science teacher.
- "I love the interaction with the people," McDole said.
- One patient told Stephanie Morales that medical students made her uncomfortable at first – until she realized that she was helping the students to learn.
- "I have a newfound respect for qualitative research. It is very rigorous!" confessed Brett Thomas.

Dean John Fogarty congratulated the students for taking what Tony Dungy has called the uncommon path. He praised their dedication, motivation and aspiration for success, and he said he looked forward to seeing them blossom over the next four years.

RESEARCH PROJECT TITLES

1. Mohammed Al-Humiari, "Major Barriers to a Healthier Lifestyle of Economically Disadvantaged Overweight and Obese Patients." (Dr. Jose Rodriguez, advisor)
2. Alrick Drummond, "A Study of Obesity-Related Disease Health Education in a Medically Underserved Population." (Rodriguez)
3. Geden Franck, "The Effect of Socio-Economic Status and Race on Patient-Physician Trust Levels in Neighboring Gadsden and Leon County." (Dr. Eron Manusov, advisor)
4. Angela Green, "The Role of Motivation and Health Education on Obese Patients of Lower Socioeconomic Status." (Rodriguez)
5. Lorenzo Hernandez, "Which Injection Technique Is Best for Rotator Cuff Tendinitis?" (Manusov)
6. Miranda Mack, "Science Opinion Survey: Exploring Minority Students' Attitudes Toward Science in Middle School." (Dr. Maggie Blackburn, advisor)
7. Melissa McDole, "Formative Evaluation of an Accountability Tool to Monitor Health Behaviors in Mid-life and Older African Americans." (Dr. Penny Ralston, advisor)
8. Stephanie Morales, "Healthier Lifestyle Barriers for Disadvantaged Populations." (Rodriguez)
9. Colin Swigler, "Low-Contrast Sensitivity and Gait Analysis in Idiopathic Parkinson's Disease." (Dr. Gerry Maitland, advisor)
10. Brett Thomas, "Contributors of Success: Black/African-American Males in Medicine." (Manusov)