

# UKmedicine

SUMMER 2023

██████████ SOLVING KENTUCKY'S GREATEST HEALTH CHALLENGES

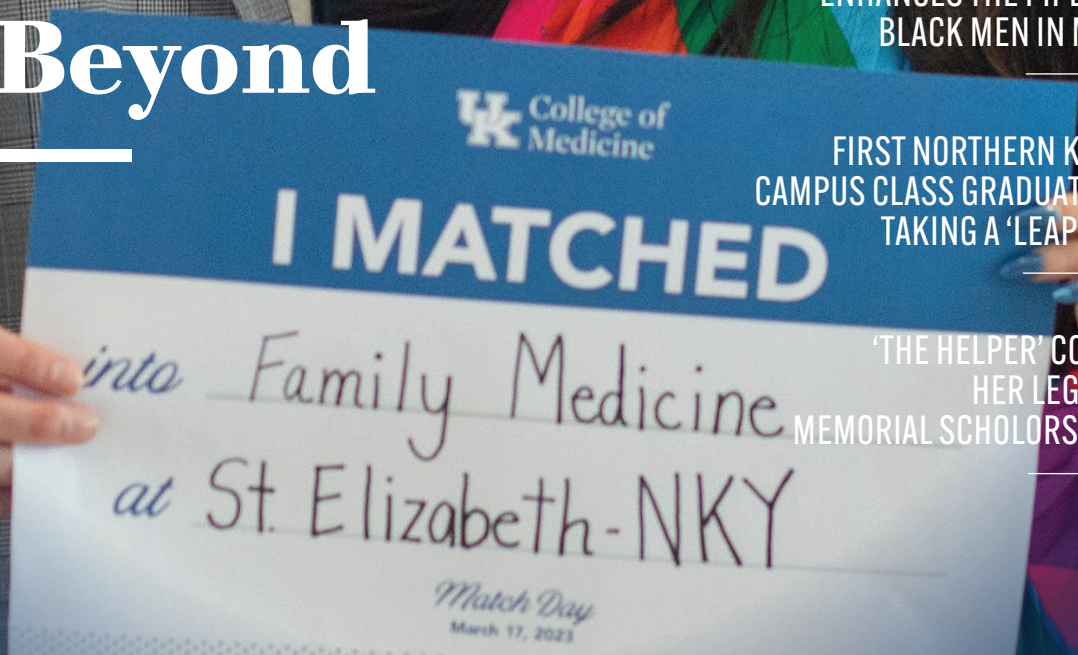
THE UK COLLEGE OF MEDICINE:

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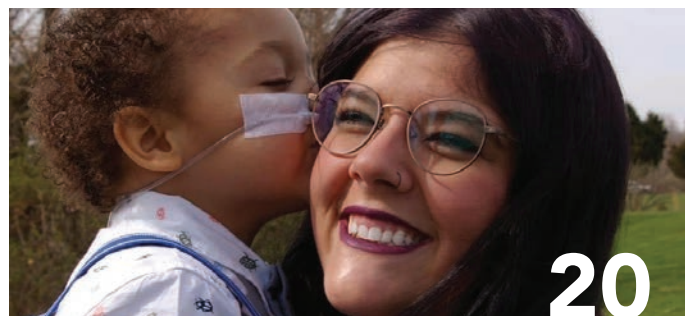
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## MEETING THE MOMENT for Kentuckians **AND BEYOND**



**Holly Danneman, MD**  
Associate Dean,  
Northern Kentucky Campus

Northern Kentucky has always been my home. I was born here, raised here, and have spent 20 years and counting practicing medicine here. I'm also a proud alumna of the UK College of Medicine and its regional health care partner, St. Elizabeth Healthcare.

This is why I am so honored to serve as the associate dean of the UK College of Medicine-Northern Kentucky Campus, and to take over at such an exciting time. After reaching a full complement of medical students, our campus celebrated its first Match Day this spring.

The College of Medicine as a whole has the potential to train up to 201 medical students per year, with the possible total enrollment of 804 medical students across four classes and four sites (Lexington, Morehead, Bowling Green, and Northern Kentucky). Our expanding footprint makes us the largest medical school in the state.

This could not have been achieved without collaboration among college leadership, local health care and educational partners, and of course, our Northern Kentucky Campus students who took a "leap of faith" with us to receive the exceptional medical education they deserved. I want to give a tremendous amount of credit to Steven Haist, MD, MS, the founding associate dean of our campus who taught me so much about providing exceptional education and practicing compassionate leadership.

With our first graduating class at the Northern Kentucky Campus, the College of Medicine is more equipped than ever to train exceptional physicians while addressing the burdening physician shortage in our state. In short, we are meeting the moment for Kentuckians and beyond.

In other news from across the college, we celebrated a successful session of the Black Boys and Men in Medicine program, which enhances the pipeline for underrepresented students. Our faculty continue to mentor exceptional biomedical trainees, including Samantha Ford who completed her master's in Lexington and will join us here in Northern Kentucky for medical school this fall. Meanwhile, the Office of Wellness and Well-Being has hit the ground running under direction of Associate Dean Lisa Williams, MSSA.

In these times of joy, we also want to acknowledge those we have lost recently who made an impact for the college. The family of Gabriella Smith, a medical student who died in 2021, is graciously continuing her legacy by establishing a scholarship fund. (In this issue, we share her story and introduce the first recipient of her scholarship.) Lastly, I would like to pay tribute to Susan Smyth, MD, PhD, an inspiring female leader who contributed so much to the College of Medicine before becoming dean of the College of Medicine at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. She passed away on Dec. 31, 2022. We will miss her greatly.

There are so many who have helped us build such a strong community at the UK College of Medicine. Seeing how far we have come, I am excited to see what we can accomplish, both at our regional campus and beyond.



## Three RPLP students train together from Early Assurance Program to graduation

Close friends Charles Price, MD, Kassidy Price, MD, and Katie Ward, MD, have leaned on one another throughout their medical training. This summer, when they embark on their next journey, residency, it will be the first time they live in different towns in more than eight years.

Charles and Kassidy, who are married now, grew up together in Lawrence County, Ky. While attending Morehead State University (MSU), they met Katie, who is from Pike County, Ky.

Seven years ago, during sophomore year at MSU, they all enrolled the Early Assurance Program (EAP), a new program at the time guaranteeing them acceptance into the UK College of Medicine Rural Physician Leadership Program (RPLP). EAP prepared them for medical school by hosting an exam preparatory course, mock interviews, and a boot camp. EAP also introduced them to current RPLP students who could explain the benefits of UK's rural medicine training.

This spring, they were among the first EAP students to graduate from the UK College of Medicine, joining Kathryn Bybee, Sydnie Jamison, Joseph McIntyre, Kristen Middleton, and Jenna Rowlett from the Bowling Green Campus.

Throughout medical school, Charles, Kassidy, and Katie studied together for exams, helped each other through clinical rotations, and talked through the exciting (and sometimes nerve-wracking) steps ahead in their careers, such as Match Day and graduation.

"We're family now," Kassidy said. "If I need anything, I know I can message any of the RPLP students, but especially Katie if I need someone to check in on my cats while I'm on vacation.

And if there's something personal going on in life, you have a family that knows exactly what you're going through every day."

As RPLP students, Charles, Kassidy, and Katie enjoyed a unique, specialized training experience together. They completed their first two years of medical school in Lexington, Ky. Then they joined a small group of medical students for two years of clinical experiences with St. Claire HealthCare in Morehead, Ky.

With a program size of around 10-12 students each class, they had plentiful one-on-one time with attendings and a lot of early, hands-on practice. They also became close with RPLP's supportive staff, including student affairs officer Bodie Stevens, who assisted them from EAP to graduation and who Charles called "a staple" of RPLP.

On Match Day, Charles and Kassidy learned they matched as a couple at the Marshall University School of Medicine in West Virginia. Meanwhile, Katie will pursue a pediatrics residency at the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga.

"It's going to be weird not seeing each other so often," Katie said. "I'm sad, but it's a good kind of sad because it means you had a really good experience." ❖



▲ From left to right: Katie Ward, MD, Kassidy Price, MD, and Charles Price, MD





Dr. Kelsey saw that in a rural community,

**"EVERYBODY'S LOOKING OUT FOR EACH OTHER."**

## RPLP alum Dr. Rachael Kelsey returns to teach at UK's Morehead site

As the UK College of Medicine trains more physicians in Kentucky, its goal is to prepare many of them to practice in Kentucky and help alleviate the state's physician shortage.

Rachael Kelsey, MD, an obstetrician and gynecologist who grew up in Morehead, Ky., has answered this call. She is an alumna of the UK College of Medicine Rural Physician Leadership Program (RPLP) in Morehead. After finishing her residency at TriHealth in Cincinnati, she returned to serve on the UK faculty and practice medicine in the region in the summer of 2022.

Rebecca Todd, MD, associate dean for RPLP, was Dr. Kelsey's research mentor during medical school. "We kept in touch during her residency, and it is wonderful to have her back as a partner and friend," Dr. Todd said. "I love passing the teaching torch to such an amazing doctor, and I can't wait to watch her mentor the next link in our chain."

Morehead is special to Dr. Kelsey and her family. It is where she completed her third and fourth years of medical school through RPLP. It is also where she met her husband and where their families live. Her parents work with her at St. Claire HealthCare, her father a physician and her mother a nurse.

"It was always my plan to come back here to work," Dr. Kelsey said.

She was introduced to rural medicine at a young age when her father practiced family medicine in Menifee County, Ky. She grew up understanding that he was providing an essential service. She said that many times, he treated multiple people in the same family. He made home visits and was frequently pulled aside at church to provide medical advice.

Ultimately, Dr. Kelsey saw that in a rural community, "everybody's looking out for each other." When she decided to become a doctor, she wanted to fulfill a need, and now she does at UK Morehead Women's HealthCare and St. Claire HealthCare.

As a physician, Dr. Kelsey works with a team that provides full-service obstetrics and gynecological care including labor and delivery, gynecologic surgery, and preventative screenings. Meanwhile, she serves as clerkship director for her specialty and prepares future rural medicine physicians who train through RPLP.

"I was in their shoes six years ago," Dr. Kelsey said of her students. "Hopefully I can show them where they can be in the future." 🍷





# Supporting A Path TO A Health Care Career

*"The white coats were a bit big on the young boys.  
But with the help of BBAMM, they will have the  
chance to grow into them."*



# COLLEGE OF MEDICINE PROGRAM ENHANCES THE PIPELINE FOR **Black Men in Medicine**

*According to a study by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), Black men represent less than 3 percent of physicians in the United States, fewer than in the 1970s.*



The College of Medicine is addressing this scarcity directly by reaching out to young Black male students through Black Boys and Men in Medicine, a program created with the partnership of the Black Male Working Academy (BMWA) in Lexington. BMWA and BBAMM offer middle school and high school boys connections with Black mentors in UK's health colleges to support a path to careers in health care.

BBAMM was founded in 2019 by Anita Fernander, PhD, associate professor in behavioral science at the College of Medicine. Dr. Fernander's departure and the COVID-19 pandemic delayed the start of the program. But Stephanie White, MD, MS, senior associate dean for medical student education and former associate dean for diversity, equity, and inclusion, explained "we all felt passionate about continuing the project. And it's been exciting to see it come to fruition."

Executive Director of BMWA Rosz Akins describes BBAMM as "a pipeline to get these young men to medical school."

"We select a group from sixth grade every year," she explained, "and they'll go all the way through high school to UK, and then medical school."

In early 2022, BMWA and BBAMM began offering one Saturday session every month of the school year. A lively mix of hands-on projects, personal contact with mentors, and food preparation, the sessions encourage students' active learning and questioning. And they respond enthusiastically.

On May 20, faculty, staff, and 15 students gathered as BBAMM celebrated the last session of the academic year.

The College of Nursing offered a presentation as well as simulations that are a part of every nursing student's training. One simulation was a mock-up of a hospital room with a (dummy) patient in the bed, and a variety of unsafe and



▲ Jennifer Dent, DNP, MSN, RN, (top picture) and Darwin Conwell, MD, MSc, Jack M. Gill Endowed Chair in Internal Medicine, (bottom two pictures) lead workshops during the final session of the Black Boys and Men in Medicine program on May 20, 2023.



unprofessional features. The task: to identify and correct all the problems in the room.

The College of Nursing facilitator faced the group. "I'll need a volunteer," she said.

Immediately, every hand went up.

Excited by the challenge, the boys looked around and quickly began pointing out what was wrong. Cigarettes on the table. Trash on the floor. Medical records open where anyone could see them.

Darwin Conwell, MD, MSc, Jack M. Gill Endowed Chair of Internal Medicine, is closely involved with BBAMM and committed to its goal of encouraging Black boys to prepare for careers in the health professions. This year, he presented a session on the digestive system, a topic, he explained, that worked well with the food preparation activity that followed, sponsored by The Food Connection.

"Diseases can be exacerbated by food choices," Dr. Conwell pointed out. "Medicine and diet go together in health."

Under the guidance of chef Tanya Whitehouse of The Food Connection, the students prepared vegetable quesadillas, carefully cutting and sautéing the fresh onions, zucchini, and peppers and mixing them with a little bit of cheese. When the veggie-filled tortillas were cooked and ready, the boys enjoyed their healthy snack.



▲ Stephanie White, MD, MS, senior associate dean for medical student education, assists students during medical simulation training, part of the program's final session of the year on May 20, 2023.

Teamwork is essential to the success of BBAMM, Dr. White explained. "It was the College of Medicine's expansion of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion that allowed this to happen. We have full-time people with the right skill set and the talent for building relationships."

Dr. White especially noted that DEI Acting Director Charla Hamilton has played a key role in bringing together health

““ The best thing is the interaction they let us have, getting to work with the doctors as if you were a real student. ””



▲ At the end of the May 20 BBAMM session, participants gathered for a white coat ceremony to commemorate their introduction to the medical field.

professionals from many specialties and incorporating different learning activities for the Saturday events.

Jagger Wisley, a student at Carter G. Woodson Academy, was thoughtful when asked what he believes is most valuable about the BBAMM program. "I think the most important thing is that no matter where you are, you can work to meet your goals," he said.

Lux Leverette, who is home-schooled, said he believes that "the best thing is the interaction they let us have, getting to work with the doctors as if you were a real student. It's very educational in the right ways." Lux plans to be "a chiropractic and medical doctor" and has already chosen UK as his preferred college.

"I'm going here," he said with a smile.

Dr. Conwell and Dr. White gathered the group for a white coat ceremony at the close of the event. UK medical students participate in this tradition at the close of their first week, after orientation, as a sign that they have joined the medical profession.

The white coats were a bit big on the young boys. But with the help of BBAMM, they will have the chance to grow into them. ▀





# ‘Having this experience with this lab has been LIFE-CHANGING’



## The biomedical graduate program that prepared Samantha Ford for medical school

Samantha Ford always wanted to go to medical school, but after training in a clinical laboratory setting at the University of Kentucky College of Medicine, she gained a new perspective on how research can play a role in her future career as a physician.

Ford will graduate this summer from the Master of Science in Medical Sciences (MSMS) program. Ford trained with Gregory Jicha, MD, PhD, a leading clinician-scientist at the UK Sanders-Brown Center on Aging. She was able to work with real patients and use the latest state-of-the-art science to propel forward the understanding of neurodegenerative diseases.

Her research focused on biomarkers of diseases such as Alzheimer’s that begin years before patients develop memory problems. Additionally, her project provided critical insights into why the brain malfunctions, hopefully one day leading to improved treatments and a cure for diseases like Alzheimer’s.

“Having this experience with this lab has been life-changing,” Ford said. “You can shadow a million different doctors, but you don’t normally get that real patient interaction. Whereas, I’m getting that here. And I know that medicine is something that I want to stick with already.”

Dr. Jicha said the MSMS program is an opportunity for students like Ford to begin to really “think like a scientist” from critical thinking to applications such as cost management and streamlining scientific progress.

The MSMS program is also a chance to pursue clinical research in-depth for the first time, or students can use the program as a platform for advanced understanding for their previous technical scientific work. The process starts with project development, proposal writing, and continues with hands-on engagement supporting students’ unique projects. Ultimately, they will produce a thesis or manuscript that helps them master the roles of a medical scientist.

“The program promotes future career growth that most pursue through advanced training in MD or PhD training programs,” Dr. Jicha said. “The MSMS program is a stepping stone to reach their ultimate goals. That has never failed for any of my MSMS students.”

While the MSMS can be used as a standalone degree for a variety of biomedical professions, Ford signed up because she wanted to enhance her application to medical school. Ford also had interest in research, not necessarily as a future MD/PhD, but as a

clinician with research capabilities. The program’s interdisciplinary approach to biomedical education combines expertise from the College of Medicine basic science departments.

The MSMS curriculum included six core classes with flexibility to pursue other interests. In Ford’s case, that was advanced neurology – and to her surprise, statistics.

“I would never have traditionally taken that class, but now I’m doing data analysis and using every single tool they gave me in class,” Ford said. “I love that about the program. Even though it’s not geared toward pushing you to research, it still pushes you to want to go into research and gives you the tools to be more successful in the future.”

Because of the MSMS program, Ford feels well equipped to go through medical school. This summer, she returns home to attend the UK College of Medicine-Northern Kentucky Campus.

Knowing the Northern Kentucky Campus celebrated its first Match Day this spring, she is even more excited to get started.

“Sam has integrated her training in all of these experiences and understands Alzheimer’s disease better now than most scientists or doctors,” Dr. Jicha said. “She will be starting medical school this summer, and I could not be more proud of her. Stand back world. Sam is coming and she is going to do great things!” 🍀





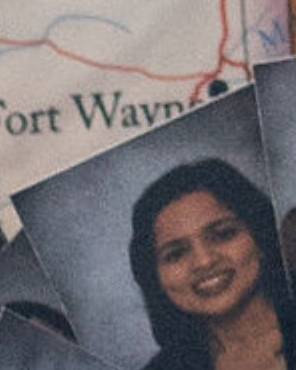
# ‘Leap of Faith’

The UK College of Medicine celebrated the first Match Day and graduation at its Northern Kentucky Campus. This remarkable milestone represents the leap of faith taken by the regional campus’ inaugural class – and the successful result they helped us achieve. Up to 35 additional medical students will now train in Northern Kentucky each year, and the UK College of Medicine will welcome up to 201 future doctors per year across all sites.

With a full complement of medical students in Lexington, Bowling Green, Morehead, and now Northern Kentucky, the UK College of Medicine is meeting the moment for patients in the Commonwealth and beyond.

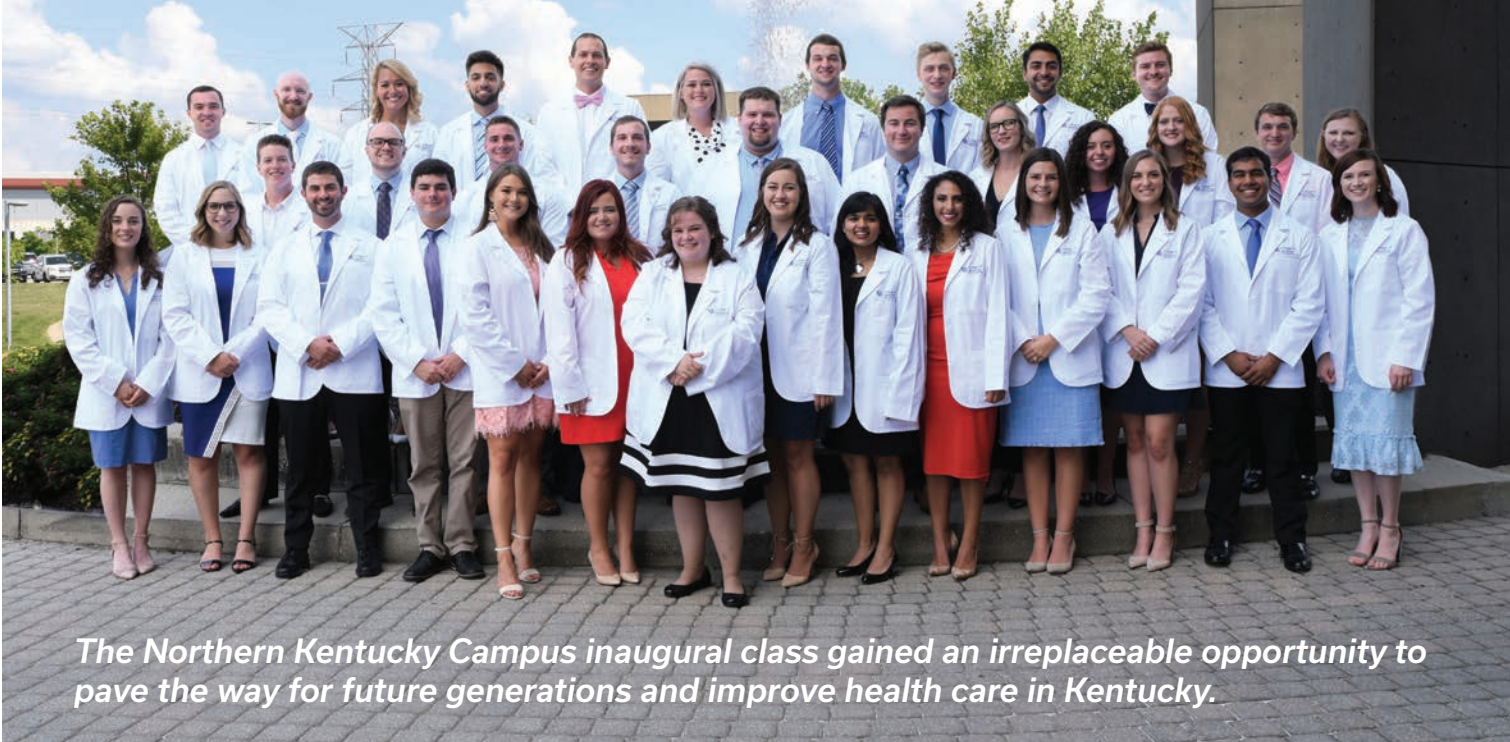








# NORTHERN KENTUCKY CAMPUS GRADUATES ITS FIRST CLASS



*The Northern Kentucky Campus inaugural class gained an irreplaceable opportunity to pave the way for future generations and improve health care in Kentucky.*

A countdown echoed through the speakers of Newport Aquarium's Riverside Room. Kenny Spear, MD, and his medical school classmates anxiously awaited the moment the clock struck noon. It was then they would open envelopes at their tables containing their coveted Match Day results, informing them where they would spend their first pivotal years as a doctor.

It was a big moment for Dr. Spear and his 29 classmates. They are the first class to graduate from the University of Kentucky College of Medicine-Northern Kentucky Campus, a new four-year regional campus in Highland Heights, Ky.

In fact, when this class applied to medical school, the campus space was not even finished yet.

But these students took a chance. They entrusted the UK College of Medicine's team of faculty and staff, the college's strong curriculum, and its community partners to develop them into the physicians they always dreamt of becoming.

"I didn't want to just feel like a number," Dr. Spear said. "I wanted to feel like somebody who was part of the community. I'd say my experience here has really exceeded all of my expectations."

When this class applied to medical school, the campus space **was not even finished yet.**





For Dr. Spear, that Match Day letter would be a reflection of the hard work he put in for four years, as well as a testament to the “leap of faith” he took to reach such success.

But what he did not know yet was that his match would represent much more – a shining example of the UK College of Medicine’s mission in motion.

## Four years of growth

Steven Haist, MD, MS, founding associate dean of the Northern Kentucky Campus, has witnessed the Class of 2023 grow up from admissions interviewees to credentialed doctors at graduation in May. Each student played an important role in setting the standard for what the Northern Kentucky Campus could achieve.

“I don’t know if our students realize what they mean for the college and the state of Kentucky,” Dr. Haist said. “This isn’t something that’s done every day, every week, or even every year.”

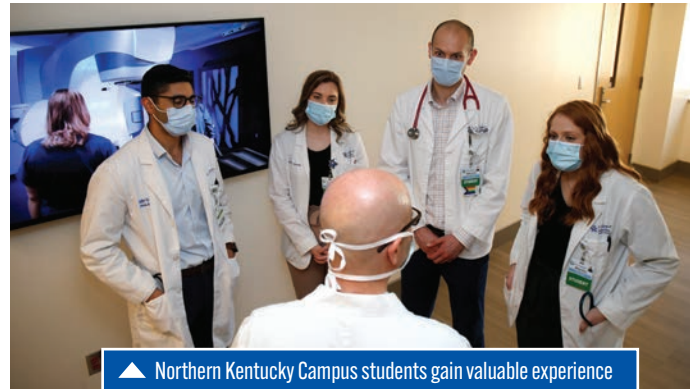
The process for establishing the Northern Kentucky Campus actually began eight

years ago. Dean Charles Griffith, MD, MSPH, and fellow college and University leadership wanted to expand the college’s footprint in the state to train more physicians in Kentucky and address the state’s physician shortage.

The UK College of Medicine forged key partnerships with St. Elizabeth Healthcare and Northern Kentucky University (NKU) to develop a training site that would utilize the strengths of each institution. The vision was to offer medical students exceptional education through UK’s integrated curriculum, St. Elizabeth’s outstanding network of physicians, and NKU’s cutting-edge facilities and resources. And through this partnership, the college intended to put a special focus on recruiting future physicians from Northern Kentucky and the surrounding regions.

The Northern Kentucky Campus celebrated its first white coat ceremony, “the initiation into medical school,” in the summer of 2019. Each student in the inaugural class received a four-year scholarship thanks to a generous \$2.5 million contribution from St. Elizabeth.

“I don’t know if our students realize what they mean for the college and the state of Kentucky.”



▲ Northern Kentucky Campus students gain valuable experience using state-of-the-art equipment and by learning from St. Elizabeth Healthcare attendings.

▼ Steven Haist, MD, MS, the Northern Kentucky Campus’ founding associate dean, speaks to students and their families during his campus’ inaugural Match Day celebration.



“Our partner organizations went above and beyond to show their faith in our students and commitment to our mission,” Dr. Griffith said. “We could not have achieved such success without them.”

The Northern Kentucky Campus currently encompasses approximately 20,000 square feet of the NKU Albright Health Center with two large classrooms, two conference rooms, five standardized patient rooms, a physical exam lab, and six group study rooms. Medical students can use NKU’s state-of-the-art simulation center,

located just a short walk away. Meanwhile, they work closely with St. Elizabeth Healthcare physicians and gain clinical experience across the community hospital system, primarily at the Edgewood, Ky., facility and the Dearborn, Florence, Ft. Thomas, and Grant facilities.

Students have benefited from the campus’ unique, supportive, and intimate training experience. (The campus admits 35 students per class.)



▼ Medical students at the Northern Kentucky Campus benefit from access to Northern Kentucky University's exceptional facilities and scenic spaces on its campus.



“It demonstrates the devotion of our students to not just get a great education but also help the community in the process.”

“When you’re in a small class size like this, you know your classmates, what they enjoy, what their passions are, what their kids’ names are,” said Christa Mattingly, MD, a Northern Kentucky Campus graduate from Shepherdsville, Ky. “The small class size was the best thing for my learning style. It allowed me to get to know the people I’m working with, like the professors and the preceptors.”

Ryan Yadav, MD, a Class of 2023 graduate, said he never imagined having such hands-on experience as early as his third year of medical school, but at the regional campus, he had plentiful one-on-one interactions with St. Elizabeth physicians, nurses, respiratory therapists, and other providers. He was able

to “scrub in” with a surgeon in the operating room and hold a camera on a case. He helped deliver babies – and even wrote his name on a birth certificate.

### A community, inside and out

Together, the close-knit team at the Northern Kentucky Campus has become embedded in the general Northern Kentucky community over the past four years. Holly Danneman, MD, the campus’ new associate dean, credits much of this to the mission-driven students. The inaugural class helped establish a free student-run clinic, Compassionate Care Reaching yoU (CCRU), at the local emergency shelter providing care for underserved populations.

“CCRU was not in existence until our students got here,” Dr. Danneman said. “It demonstrates the devotion of our students to not just get a great education but also help the community in the process.”

After four years of medical school, Dr. Yadav said there is a community within the campus, too. He felt a personal connection to leadership and staff. His deans know him on a first-name basis. He can pop in anytime to ask a question to Shannon Schumacher, student affairs officer, or Emily Scanlon, MEd, the college’s student success director. During the throes of COVID-19, Dr. Yadav and his classmates each received a personal call from Dr. Haist to make sure they were OK.

“Here I felt very cared for, very heard, and very supported,” said Dr. Yadav.

Dr. Haist has since joined the college’s central campus in Lexington, Ky. as associate dean for curriculum and assessment. He gets teary-eyed as he reflects on his four years leading the campus. To him, that success has always been rooted in the dedication of his students.

“I hope these students have a great sense of pride and accomplishment for what they have helped us do,” he said. “They have set the tone. They have got our compass pointed in the right direction. And I think they have set such a high bar for the classes behind them.”





◀ Left: Kenny Spear, MD, (center) celebrates a successful Match Day with his wife, his family, and fellow classmates.

Below: Drs. Caitlyn Blair, Morgan Bahnsen, and Amanda Schleper hold up their match signs during the Northern Kentucky Campus' inaugural Match Day.

## A powerful Match Day result

As Dr. Kenny Spear sat in anticipation of opening his Match Day letter, he yearned for a result telling him he was accepted into St. Elizabeth's family medicine residency program. He enjoyed working with their team during clinical rotations, and he wanted to stay in the Northern Kentucky region to serve Kentuckians in the early years of his career.

Seated between his mom and his wife, Dr. Spear opened his envelope, and the table erupted with happy tears. He matched into his top choice.

There was additional weight to the impact of Dr. Spear's match. He helped the UK College of Medicine break records, not only as part of the largest class in the UK College of Medicine's history but also as one of 78 students across all sites to match into an in-state residency program, a doubling since 2018.

In short, Dr. Spear's Match Day result exemplified what UK College of Medicine leadership strived to

achieve when they started the process for regional expansion – train physicians in Kentucky, for Kentucky.

"As much as this is a celebration of the end of medical school, I think it's even more of a celebration of the beginning of our careers as physicians and of everybody who chose to come to this campus," he said.

Thanks to hard-working faculty, community partners – and, most importantly, mission-driven students – the UK College of Medicine

celebrates the achievement of a dream. There are three campuses, each with four classes of medical students, and a full-fledged specialized training program focused on rural medicine. The UK College of Medicine is more equipped than ever to address the state's need for more accessible health care.

Dr. Spear and the Class of 2023 are more than doctors who took a leap of faith. They are trailblazers representing the possibility of a shared vision and the power of a community. 🎓

They are trailblazers representing the possibility of **a shared vision and the power of a community.**







# Student affairs team is integral to student success

**K**ent Lewis, MDiv, arrived to this year's Bowling Green Campus Match Day event with a megaphone. He learned his lesson during the campus' inaugural celebration – with all of the excitement, the event can get loud. He nearly lost his voice last year presenting the countdown to open envelopes.

"It's like nothing I have experienced in 19 years working in higher education," Lewis said. "The energy that Match Day brings is awesome. I find myself running around from student to student, asking where they matched, hugging students, family members, laughing with them, crying happy tears."

On days like Match Day, Lewis can be found on stage emceeing or talking with

students and families. However, behind the scenes as a student affairs officer, he joins colleagues across four campuses to ensure a supportive, holistic experience for medical students through all four years of medical school. This role includes planning events like Match Day, white coat ceremony, and graduation, but it encompasses much more.

Associate Dean Michelle Lineberry, EdD, leads the college's well-rounded student affairs team of faculty and staff: Lewis in Bowling Green; Ashlee Hamilton, EdD, in Lexington; Bodie Stevens in Morehead; and Shannon Schumacher in Northern Kentucky. These four are responsible for student affairs operations at their campuses. Jessica Chandler, administrative coordinator,

helps bring all campuses together for one mission.

Meanwhile, three assistant deans specialize in a component of student affairs for a focused approach to student wellness, learning communities, and career advising and development: Angela Dearinger, MD, Kimberly Jones, MD, and Berry Seelbach, MD, respectively.

Medical school can be challenging, but the student affairs team is with the students every step of the way. In addition to event planning, the team's responsibilities include promoting academic success, managing learning communities and student organizations, and connecting students to wellness and career planning resources. They also include student compliance and providing access to training sites, proper identification, scrubs, parking, and more.

A crucial part of the team's success is consistent communication, according to Dr. Hamilton, who has been in her student affairs role for 10 years at the Lexington Campus. "We have a standing weekly appointment to touch base on all things student services," she said. "Also, we have a biweekly student affairs meeting across departments and campuses to touch base."

Dr. Hamilton's favorite part of her job is getting to know the students and helping them however she can to ensure a successful medical school journey. Schumacher feels the same way at the Northern Kentucky Campus.

"Of course, receiving a top-notch education is of utmost importance," Schumacher said. "But I also hope the students feel the sense of community that we strive to create. I hope they feel



◀ Kent Lewis, MDiv, emcees the 2023 Bowling Green Campus Match Day celebration.

▼ Left: Shannon Schumacher poses with graduates Ariel Porter, MD, and Melissa Becker, MD, during the Northern Kentucky Campus' inaugural Match Day celebration.

Right: Ashlee Hamilton, EdD, talks with first-year students during orientation at the Gatton Student Center in Lexington.



supported and comfortable seeking assistance and that we care about them as both a person and a student."

Claire and Dylan Sanford, 2023 Bowling Green Campus graduates, said they owe a lot to the student affairs team for getting them to where they are today. The couple matched into Med Center Health in Bowling Green for residency. Particularly, Claire remembers studying for the Step 1 exam during the switch to online lectures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Amid a stressful time, Lewis helped her refocus and build a study plan.

"They're a big part of the reason that we wanted to come to this campus," Dylan said of the student affairs team. "We got to meet them before starting medical school and could establish a relationship before we even started, and then continued it for years."

To Lewis, students like Claire and Dylan are the "lifblood" of his campus and the college itself. They make his job worth it. "Without them, we would not have a campus," Lewis said. "When students arrive as M1s, they are excited, nervous, but driven. At some point in the clinical phase of their training, they begin to find their footing, and their passion for specific areas really begin to shine. The best part of my job is to watch the maturation take place."

After four years of medical school, everything comes together at that moment on Match Day: when students learn what their residency program will be. The student affairs team caps their hard work with a special send-off. The party includes food, time with

family, and a special moment for each student to pin a U.S. map showing their classmates where their next journey will take them.

"This group of graduates has been an absolute pleasure to work with," Stevens said of the RPLP Class of 2023. "They are all such amazing people and are going to serve their patients as outstanding doctors in the future." Watching them open their Match Day letters, he said, is similar to watching his own children in their successes over the years.

Schumacher held a quick debrief with the fourth-year student representatives following her Northern Kentucky Campus' first-ever Match Day ceremony this year. She said they were "smiling from ear-to-ear."

Now, the planning for next year's Match Day begins. ▾



▲ Bodie Stevens, student affairs officer in Morehead, talks with RPLP graduate Katie Ward, MD, and student Garrett Little.

## Amber Schifano

Class of 2026,  
Rural Physician Leadership Program



Being a part of the student organizations such as the Christian Medical Dental Association, Exercise in Medicine Interest Group, and the Pediatric Interest Group that are all supported by student affairs has been immensely helpful and integral in my medical education experience. Weekly Bible studies, group cycle classes, and pediatric volunteer experiences provided by these organizations have helped better my mental, emotional, and physical health while tackling the strenuous course load medical school provides. Student affairs has been an integral part of my first year of medical school, and I could not have accomplished this past year without the great opportunities that student affairs have provided.

## Mara Atherton

Class of 2024, Lexington Campus



When I was a first-year medical student, I wanted to put together a gesture to say thank you to the nurses at UK for everything they did during the COVID pandemic. I emailed Dr. Michelle Lineberry to ask for her advice about where to start and at her suggestion took the idea to my classmates in Haflinger House. We put together a donation of candy bags to about 150 nurses! Thanks to Drs. Kimberly Jones and Ashlee-Nicole Hamilton in student affairs, the project went smoothly without a hitch! The nurses loved it and we did it again the following year.





# CLASS OF 2023 MATCH DAY







# By the Numbers

## 190

medical students graduated from the **Class of 2023**, setting a new record.

## 60

students matched at the **University of Kentucky** for residency.

## 45

percent matched into primary care residency programs.

## 42

percent of matching students will stay in Kentucky to practice medicine as residents. With **78 students**, this is **twice the amount of in-state matches per year** prior to regional campus expansion.

## 14

students matched at our regional partner institutions: **The Medical Center in Bowling Green (8)**, **St. Elizabeth Healthcare (5)**, and **St. Claire HealthCare (1)**

## Top 5

specialties were internal medicine (**41**), surgery (**26**), family medicine (**17**), pediatrics (**16**), and obstetrics and gynecology (**13**).



**SCAN THE QR CODE** to watch the Class of 2023 celebrate their exciting and emotional **MATCH DAY.**





# GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION TRANSITIONAL YEAR PROGRAM BENEFITS RESIDENTS AND KENTUCKIANS

**A**fter medical school, some new doctors may start a preliminary year in medicine or surgery. Others choose a transitional year, combining medicine, surgery, and other rotations in medical training.

The UK College of Medicine (Bowling Green) offers a year-long transitional year program with medical education in many clinical disciplines to prepare learners for residencies in specific specialty programs. The Bowling Green Transitional Year program is the only one of its kind in Kentucky.

Approved by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) for 12 learners, the transitional year program began in 2019 as part of an expansion in UK's GME campuses. Since then, 45 residents have completed the program and gone on to advanced training in their specialties. Program Director Jacqueline Dawson Dowe, MD, said residents get to choose four elective rotations.

“It may have been the most important year of my training.”

Dr. Dawson has very specific goals for each learner, whether they already have a residency match or are still applying. “If they don't have a match yet, it's to take the care and attention to build the schedule and the research and the letters of recommendation to get that match,” she said. “If they have matched, the goal is to be the No. 1 resident in that program.”

Stacey Sims, former transitional year program coordinator and now GME administrative director, explained that very careful scheduling is required for all residents to acquire

the skills and experience they need for advanced programs. “A year is not a long time,” she pointed out, “and sometimes people can change their minds” about their specialties. “We create schedules to meet their needs and tailor it to their interests.”

Program graduate Elias Nassar, MD, now a resident in radiology at UK, emphasized the benefits of the different rotations he experienced.

“It may have been the most important year of my training,” especially for the critical insight he gained into other specialties. “I worked in the ICU, and I saw at what point and for what reason the clinicians would order chest x-rays. I understand better now what the clinician wants to know. I assisted with rotator cuff repair surgeries, and it helps me in looking at imaging. You learn about it in gross anatomy, but this is different.”

Olivia Thoroughman, DO, emphasized the personal attention the program provides. “The support I've received from my program director and coordinator has been constant. I've received a phenomenal education from the attendings here. They go out of their way to take time to teach residents.”

Many transitional year program residents come from different parts of the country and have no previous ties to Kentucky. Because their transitional year in Bowling Green is such a powerful experience, they make plans for a career here, increasing the number of highly trained physicians in the Commonwealth.

Ultimately, the success of the Bowling Green Transitional Year program benefits not only its residents, but all of us who make our home in Kentucky. ▀

2020



18 | UK medicine

2023







## New office builds comprehensive framework to address burnout, well-being needs

**B**urnout is a problem in any profession, but it is rampant in health care. This national problem has been evident recently as the COVID-19 pandemic pushed many learners, practitioners, faculty, and staff to the limit.

While individuals can work hard to keep themselves healthy, community also plays a crucial role in supporting the health and well-being for all.

In August 2022, the UK College of Medicine established the Office of Wellness and Well-Being to respond to the need for lasting solutions to burnout and lack of professional fulfillment. Under direction of Associate Dean Lisa Williams, MSSA, the office will help develop and execute structural improvements to the college’s overall culture of well-being. This includes enhanced support for faculty, advanced practice providers, staff, and trainees.

The Office of Wellness and Well-Being is the only one of its kind at the University of Kentucky designed with a full-time staff, and one of a handful nationwide.

Williams pointed out that the full-time team commitment is crucial for success. “We have aligned our team to address specific areas of expertise so that, when working together, we can create the in-depth culture change necessary to address burnout in a comprehensive way,” she said.

Rachel Wilson, PhD, director of organizational well-being, “supports individuals in order to create cultural change.” This includes change initiatives and projects that are part of the larger framework to improve the culture of organizational well-being, as well as her role working with individuals as a certified coach. As a coach for faculty, staff, and learners — both individually and in teams — Dr. Wilson has observed

patterns in wellness and well-being, especially in work-life integration, career transitions, and feeling respected and valued at work.

“We work with the whole person and the whole team,” Dr. Wilson explained, “to support emotional intelligence growth and to maximize our collective ability to relate and communicate with each other in support of the college’s mission.”

LeAnn Barber, MPA, joined the team to support well-being for physicians and advanced practice providers at the College of Medicine and UK HealthCare. Through data collection, focus groups, and engagement with advisory councils and committees, Barber said she will “explore and address the many drivers of burnout with a focus on retention, recognition, and leadership development.” She will allow the team to optimally integrate data with decision-making.

Administrative Operations Coordinator Renee Gallagher, MEd, a doctoral student in the College of Education, supports Williams, Wilson, and Barber in their work. She has also helped the office engage with the broader college community through a quarterly newsletter that highlights successful well-being initiatives and important resources.

Together, as a well-rounded team, the office will develop innovative, data-driven solutions to the wellness and well-being needs of the college.

So how do we define wellness and well-being? And what is the difference between the two?

Williams explained wellness as a quality in an individual—a condition in which physical, financial, social, spiritual, mental, emotional, and career needs are met. Well-being, in contrast, involves “the way in which an organization operates and its impact on those who work and learn here.” Well-being depends on “an innovative organizational culture, efficient systems and structures, a community of support and belonging, and equitable and accessible resources.”

Williams said that when wellness and well-being become an integral part of an organization’s culture, you will see an increase in professional fulfillment and a decrease in burnout. And that is what her team is here to accomplish.

“Everyone needs to feel seen, heard, and valued,” Williams said. “We are here to help people. And our door is open.”

### How is the office addressing wellness and well-being needs?

#### Individual Wellness

Offering timely, necessary resources that enhance personal wellness. In collaboration with UK Human Resources Health and Wellness and the College of Medicine community, we will assess resource needs and identify programs and offerings in six dimensions of wellness: physical, mental/emotional, social, financial, spiritual, and career.

#### Organizational Well-Being

Driving culture change that results in a culture of well-being that offers:

- ✓ An innovative organizational culture
- ✓ Efficient systems and structures
- ✓ A community of support and belonging
- ✓ Equitable and accessible resources.



# 'THE HELPER'

## continues her legacy with Memorial Scholarship Fund

Gabriella Smith was the second oldest of six, and according to her family, “the helper child” of the bunch. She lived up to this nickname at home in Alexandria, Ky., caring for her three youngest siblings who have special needs. She demonstrated it through church, traveling with teams across Central America to make health care more accessible.

Gabriella hoped to continue helping others as a doctor. She pursued her education at the University of Kentucky College of Medicine’s main campus in Lexington, Ky. In spring 2023, she was expected to graduate with her Doctor of Medicine, which would help her fulfill her dream.

But tragedy struck in 2021. While on a springtime hike at Red River Gorge, Gabriella suffered a 150-foot fall. She died at 24 years old, just halfway through her medical training. This unexpected loss was devastating to her family, the College of Medicine community, and everyone impacted by Gabriella’s compassionate nature.

However, this is far from the end of Gabriella’s legacy of helping others.

Her parents, Kerensa and Randy Smith, her sister Alexis Fannin, and the UK College of Medicine have come together to honor Gabriella by supporting future medical students who share a similar dream of serving others through medicine.

“Gabriella had this firm belief that everyone should have access to quality health care,” Kerensa said. “We want to do everything we can to keep her dream going.”

### 'The ideal pediatrician'

To UK College of Medicine faculty, students, and leadership, Gabriella’s



presence lit up a room. Classmate Emily Blanford said she was a social butterfly who said what she felt, and because of that, they became “fast friends.” The same was true for Gabby Armstrong, who connected with Gabriella on the first day of school over their shared name. They were roommates by second year.

But beyond Gabriella’s charming, and sometimes goofy, personality was a hard-working medical student who was loyal to her friends and dedicated to her family.

“She adored her siblings and wrote letters to them in the mail all the time,” Armstrong said.

“And if her family needed anything, she would make that hour-and-a-half drive,” Blanford added, even if it was just to watch Disney movies with her brothers.

Gabriella’s dedication to family immediately stood out to Christopher Simmons, MD, PhD. He was her faculty advisor for the Friesian House, one of 10 learning communities that gather students in smaller groups to foster connection and community. When Dr.



# As a pediatrician **Gabriella hoped** to make a **worldwide** **impact.**

Simmons held introductory one-on-one meetings with his students, many were visibly nervous, but Gabriella instantly sat down and smiled, showing she was genuinely happy to be there.

It was during that one-on-one that they connected over their shared interest in pediatrics. Gabriella revealed that neonatology was the specialty she wanted to pursue. She also discussed her family and how she loved caring for her siblings. Dr. Simmons grew up with a family member who had spina bifida, so he was inspired by Gabriella's compassion for children with disabilities.

"That set her up in my mind to be this ideal pediatrician," Dr. Simmons said.

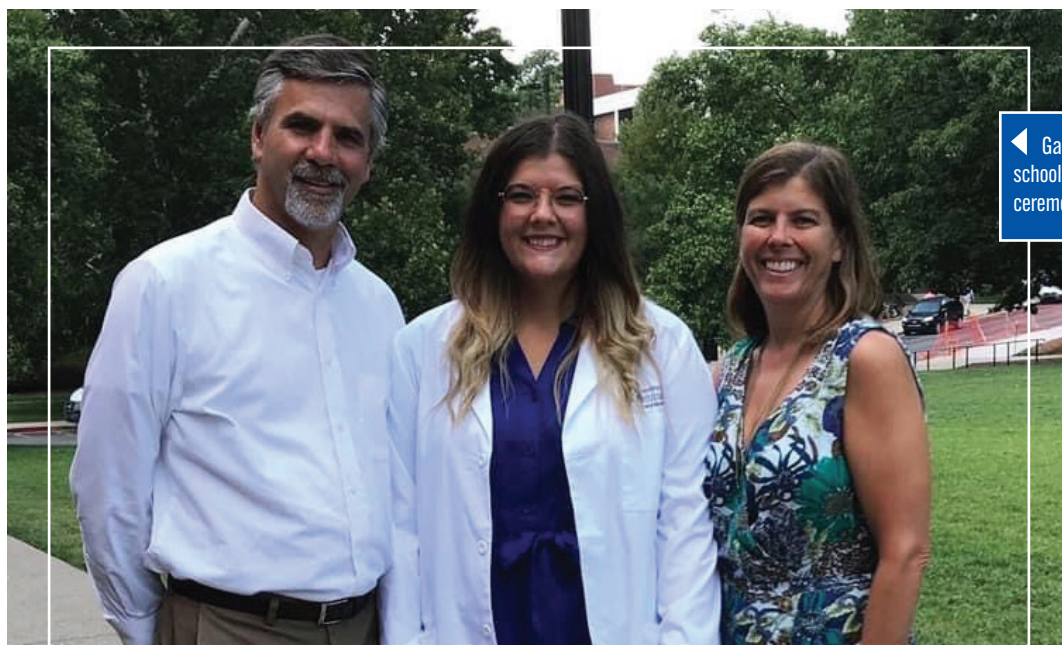


▲ Family was most important to Gabriella, according to her peers. "She adored her siblings and wrote letters to them in the mail all the time," said classmate Gabby Armstrong.

As a pediatrician Gabriella hoped to make a worldwide impact. She bonded with fourth-year UK medical student Sam Fugate, not only because of their shared northern Kentucky roots (and love for Skyline Chili) but also a passion for global health. They were both in the global health concentration, and Gabriella founded the global health student organization in which he was involved.

"Gabriella just loved really hard and deeply, and global health was her way of expanding that love across the world," Fugate said.

Gabriella's sister Alexis said global health "was what was most near and dear to her heart with medical school" and the topic of many of their late-night chats. Gabriella had already traveled to Guatemala and the Dominican Republic providing health care for those in underserved areas. During undergraduate training at Bellarmine University, Gabriella was a member of Alpha Phi Omega National Service Fraternity and heavily involved in the school's chapter of Timmy Global Health, serving one year as president and trip leader. In 2018, she received the Knight of Honor Award, an annual award given to two seniors who represent the university's values of academic excellence, intrinsic dignity, social responsibility, integrity, hospitality, and stewardship.



◀ Gabriella celebrated her initiation to medical school during the Lexington Campus' white coat ceremony on Friday, Aug. 2, 2019.





Fittingly, the first one was presented this spring—when Gabriella was set to graduate.

“Every time I put on my white coat, I wanted to make sure I had a piece of Gabby with me, knowing that I get to do the things that she didn’t get to end up accomplishing here,” Dr. Landorf said. “So she’s got to work on it from heaven. And this scholarship will be a way for that to happen.”

## Leaving her legacy

The weekend before Gabriella passed away, her group of medical school friends invited her to a cabin getaway. But she didn’t go because she had just received an opportunity to shadow in a neonatal intensive care unit, and she couldn’t pass it up. Her friends say that demonstrates just how committed Gabriella was to her future career of helping others – and why the scholarship in her name is so special.

“She had so much love to give for her family, her friends, and anyone in need,” said her classmate and close friend Jonathan Greene. “It’s important that with this scholarship, she will still be a part of the College of Medicine.”

At the funeral, the Smith family was flooded with support, including community members from her church, Bellarmine, and the UK College of Medicine. In his testimony to her, house advisor Dr. Simmons said that even though Gabriella hadn’t received her medical degree yet, it already felt like she was a doctor.

“Medical students learn the ins and outs of medications and procedures and physiology and pathology, but at the end of the day, you’re going to take care of people,” Dr. Simmons said. “Gabriella was the kind of person who has grown up taking care of people. Medical school was just another step.”

Her mother, Kerensa, felt that, too, during a recent visit to the hospital with one of her sons. She sat in the waiting room and observed the physicians and patients who walked by. She found peace knowing that her daughter would have fit right into the health care setting.

“She would not have been a doctor who ran out the door because the pump went off or because of the IV pole beeping,” Kerensa said. “She would have jumped right in.”

Though Gabriella’s life was tragically cut short, her impact has already been felt through her work in global health care, her compassion for her family, and her hard work as a medical student. With the scholarship fund, she will advance health care in Kentucky and beyond by passing along the opportunity to future doctors.

The “helper child” of the Smith family will continue her legacy. ✦

If you would like to donate to the Gabriella Smith Memorial Scholarship Fund, please reach out to [COMPhilanthropy@uky.edu](mailto:COMPhilanthropy@uky.edu).

Early on, Meredith Landorf, MD, assistant dean for the UK College of Medicine-Northern Kentucky Campus, recognized Gabriella’s potential to become a great doctor. She knew the Smith family because they were embedded in the northern Kentucky community. Gabriella’s sister Alexis was her daughter’s gymnastics coach and even inspired the middle name of her youngest. Dr. Landorf’s two sons participated in gymnastics with Gabriella’s brother.

After the accident, Dr. Landorf brainstormed ways to continue Gabriella’s legacy. She inquired with UK Philanthropy about creating a scholarship in Gabriella’s honor to support students “who are walking the journey that she was walking.”

An endowed scholarship fund came to fruition in 2021. Now named the Gabriella Smith Memorial Scholarship, it will support one or more annual scholarships for incoming medical students at any UK College of Medicine campus who share Gabriella’s passion for global health, particularly for students with financial need. Dr. Landorf and her husband, Michael Geiger, vow to support the scholarship until it reaches endowment so the fund can provide at least one scholarship per year.

**Gabriella** was the kind of person who has grown up **taking care of people.**  
**MEDICAL SCHOOL** was just another step.



▲ Top: Gabriella was passionate about global health and had gone on several medical mission trips.

Bottom: Gabriella (second from right) attends a formal event with classmates and peers. From left to right: Ethan Dunn, Anne Elizabeth Mason, Alexandra “Sasha” Vaynerman, Sam Fugate, Emily Blanford, Jonathan Greene, Gabriella Smith, and Gabby Armstrong.





## Makeba Phillip of Bowling Green Campus named first recipient of Gabriella Smith Memorial Scholarship

The UK College of Medicine is excited to share that Makeba Phillip, a rising second-year student at its regional campus in Bowling Green, Ky., has been named the first recipient of the Gabriella Smith Memorial Scholarship.

Phillip expressed his heartfelt gratitude for the scholarship, noting that the “generous financial support is truly appreciated and will make a significant impact” as he trains to become a doctor.

The Gabriella Smith Memorial Scholarship Fund supports medical students, particularly those who are involved in global health initiatives. Phillip said his interest in learning about other cultures and working with underserved populations stems from being a first-generation U.S. citizen. His parents are from St. Lucia.

During medical school he hopes to learn how he can advance care for communities and reduce health inequities. As a member of the global health scholarly concentration at the UK College of Medicine, he is learning about global health issues and the various social, economic, and organizational factors that affect care in these regions.

“Global health is important to me because there are so many communities throughout the world that have limited access

to health care resources, coupled with a lack of physicians that are trained to be culturally sensitive and interact with multicultural populations,” Phillip said.

Phillip knew he wanted to pursue medicine at a young age due to his interests in science, physiology, and caring for others. Originally from Clearwater, Fla., he received his bachelor’s degree in biomedical sciences with a minor in Spanish from the University of South Florida (USF). He was honored with the Global Citizens Award after completing a program designed to enhance cultural awareness and promote global competencies related to the United Nations’ sustainable development goals.

Phillip said that global health “is something I cannot wait to become more involved in throughout my medical career.”

“I would like to extend my gratitude to the Smith family, Dr. Landorf from the Northern Kentucky Campus, and the UK College of Medicine for this award,” Phillip said. “Gabriella recognized the importance of global health and how essential it is to have passionate, capable physicians enter the field. Global health requires collaboration, innovation, and a holistic approach to improve health and well-being for all people of the world.” ▀



## UK START alum accepted into competitive aerospace fellowship program

Freshman Lordina Mensah recently became the University's first student to be accepted into the Patti Grace Smith Fellowship, a nationally competitive aerospace fellowship program.

The fellowship, established in 2020, is a competitive program that partners prospective Black undergraduate students with an aerospace laboratory. As a part of the program, Mensah and 30 other fellows will complete a summer internship, receive a scholarship, and be paired with a mentor.

Mensah is a dual major in the College of Communication and Information's information communication technology (ICT) program and the College of Engineering Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering. She is also a member of the Lewis Honors College and does undergraduate research with Luke Bradley, PhD, professor and acting chair of neuroscience in the College of Medicine and faculty member in the Lewis Honors College and in the cross-college neuroscience undergraduate major program in the College of Arts and Sciences.

In the Bradley Lab, Mensah studies how data sonification can turn amino acid sequences into music as a teaching tool for introductory STEM students. She was introduced to the lab through the STEM Through Authentic Research Training (START) program in her junior year of high school.

Dr. Bradley has served as a mentor to Mensah, and he encouraged her to apply for the Patti Grace Smith Fellowship. "I wouldn't have this fellowship if it wasn't for my team, especially Dr. Bradley, who helped me so much," Mensah said. "He is a big part of my team, and he inspires me every day." ❖

*\*Adapted from UKNow*

Learn more about the fellowship here:



## Dr. Sibü Saha honored for commitment to education

The UK College of Medicine is excited to officially name Sibü Saha, MD, the director of medical student cardiothoracic research and advising. This honor represents Dr. Saha's unwavering commitment to advancing cardiovascular care and research through exceptional medical and biomedical education.

Dr. Saha has been a part of the UK College of Medicine faculty for more than 20 years and a Lexingtonian for nearly four decades. During this time, he and his wife, Becky, have been generous donors helping the college train extraordinary physician-scientists through the establishment and continued support of the Saha Cardiovascular Research Center fund. Their name dons the Saha Cardiovascular Research Center and Saha Aortic Center as a testament to their significant contributions.

As a faculty member, Dr. Saha has mentored many medical students, biomedical trainees, and early-career faculty, providing numerous opportunities for involvement in groundbreaking research. He is a strong supporter of learner advancement across multiple domains and College of Medicine campuses. He mentors many students interested in cardiothoracic surgery, teaching them how to boost their residency applications by enhancing research skills and credentials.

Each year, the University presents Saha awards to exceptional medical students, nursing students, and residents.

"We are grateful to have Dr. Saha as a member of our faculty. We hope this new title reflects his incredible achievements at UK for the benefit of our trainees," said Dean Charles Griffith, MD, MSPH. "We thank Dr. Saha and his wife Becky for everything they do to help us improve health care in the Commonwealth." ❖





# CREDITS

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