

**The Microbiology and Immunology Diversity Scholars (MIDS) Program** launched in 2020—during an unprecedented and devastating global pandemic and a sweeping national social justice movement. The goal of the MIDS Program is to promote diversity in STEM—science, technology, engineering and math—by providing research experience, professional development and mentorship opportunities to undergraduates from groups historically underrepresented in biomedical sciences.

For two years, scholars engage in clinical and translational research projects under the guidance of experienced University researchers and principal investigators in the fields of microbiology and immunology. In addition to research experience, scholars develop scientific skills, build relationships with mentors, attend career development seminars and present their independent research at both in-house and national scientific conferences. By engaging in research, career development and mentorship opportunities, scholars develop into competitive applicants for graduate programs, specifically PhD or MD/PhD programs, immediately upon bachelor's degree completion.

## What Pitt's Program Offers

Scholars in our program have access to:

- Two-year placement with a faculty member in a University of Pittsburgh or UPMC lab
- Funding to support independent research projects
- Professional and academic development opportunities
- Financial support to attend regional and national conferences
- *Support and guidance provided by the vast Pitt Medicine alumni family*

## Career Development Opportunities

Professional development events include:

### Journal Club

In a small group setting moderated by microbiology and immunology faculty members, scholars come together to discuss recent peer-reviewed scientific papers and engage in discussions about relevant findings, study techniques, topics for further study and more to expand their working knowledge of the state of science.

### Virtual Faculty Talks

Faculty members in the School of Medicine host virtual talks to discuss their professional journeys and the obstacles they overcame as underrepresented minorities in STEM.



From L-R: Kwaku Frempong-Manso, Ekeoma Uzoukwu, Carlos Rodriguez, Noor Nader, and Abigail Berrios

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## Career Seminars

To help prepare and connect with undergraduate scholars, current University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine graduate students host seminars on applying to both graduate and medical school where they share tips and tricks on the application process. To forge lasting relationships and strengthen this underserved community, the graduate students keep in touch with the scholars to answer any questions or provide future career support such as help writing statements of purpose, mock interview, ideal applications and other aspects of continuing education.

## SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT: Ekeoma Uzoukwu (A&S '22)

The MIDS program was truly a transformative experience. In my role as a scholar in this program, I became aware of my potential as a future physician-scientist and had the opportunity to develop my scientific knowledge outside of the classroom, which is personally how I learn best. As a MID scholar, I improved my interprofessional networking skills through various workshops, lab meetings, conference presentations and so much more, granting me the necessary tools for success.

After I graduated from the University of Pittsburgh, I spent my gap year as a postbaccalaureate Intramural Continuing Umbrella of Research Experiences (iCURE) research fellow at the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, MD. As a research

fellow, I engaged in cancer research under the supervision of Jay Berzofsky, MD, PhD, senior investigator of the Vaccine Branch. That experience further expanded my interest in cancer immunotherapies, which was something that was first ignited in the MIDS program under the tutelage of Olivera Finn, PhD, distinguished professor in the Department of Immunology at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. My research fellowship was soon cut short by my acceptance into the University of Illinois College of Medicine Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP) in Chicago. **As I begin this new and exciting chapter, I look back often and recognize the profound effect the MIDS Program had on my journey, and I am equally excited to see what the program has in store for the future generation of students.**



*Ekeoma Uzoukwu*

## Make A Gift

For more information about the MIDS Program or to make a gift, please give online at [givetopitt.edu/supportMIDS](https://givetopitt.edu/supportMIDS) or contact our School of Medicine development team at [ank480@pitt.edu](mailto:ank480@pitt.edu).

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