


High Expectations, High Standards, Excellence



Abolitionist,
Suffragist,
Labor Leader

**ANNUAL UPDATE
2020-2021**



OFFICE OF
MULTI-ETHNIC
STUDENT EDUCATION

A Message from the Director



HIGH EXPECTATIONS, HIGH STANDARDS, EXCELLENCE. That's our motto at the Office of Multi-ethnic Student Education (OMSE) and what we strive for every day to support the academic success of all undergraduate, multi-ethnic students at the University of Maryland.

Founded in 1972, OMSE has a long history of transforming the student experience through outreach, academic support, and a climate that encourages self-empowerment. We're proud of the work we do, which includes programs like the College Success Scholars (CSS) and services like tutoring and coaching.

Our initiatives have incredible outcomes. For example, more than 1,000 students access our tutoring services annually, and more than 90 percent of our students graduate within six years.

While these numbers are impressive, they're only part of our story.

In this annual update, we paint a more vivid picture of our impact and why our office and students have continued to thrive, even throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

You'll meet students like Joshua Cooksey, a junior and member of our CSS program, and Kyle Dineen, a senior and vice president of our Service Learning Certificate program. You'll hear from our supportive parents and faculty members, who both strengthen and broaden our outreach. And you'll learn about ways you can help us fulfill our mission – and make a difference for thousands of future leaders.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dr. Christopher A. Lester". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Dr. Christopher A. Lester
Director, Office of Multi-ethnic Student Education



ABOUT US

OMSE is an academic unit under the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at the University of Maryland. The office offers a variety of services and programs to enhance the learning experience and promote academic success of undergraduate students.

The majority of students served are American Indian, Asian American, African American, LatinX and multi-racial. OMSE recognizes the value of multiple histories, beliefs, and ethnic backgrounds of its students and works with faculty and staff to support ethnic diversity and inclusion at the university.

OMSE MISSION

To serve undergraduate multi-ethnic students to increase rates of matriculation, retention, graduation, and overall GPA.

OFFICE OF MULTI-ETHNIC STUDENT EDUCATION
1101 Hornbake Library | College Park, MD 20742
301.405.5615 | omse.umd.edu

COVER PHOTO BY JOHN T. CONSOLI, TOP PHOTO AND ALL UNACCREDITED PHOTOS ON FOLLOWING PAGES BY OMSE STAFF, BOTTOM PHOTO BY STEPHANIE S. CORDLE

Alumni Spotlight

JAZZ LEWIS '11, M.P.P. '14

Jazz Lewis is shaping the future of Maryland—and the entire nation.

Appointed to the Maryland House of Delegates in 2017, Lewis represents District 24 in Prince George's County. He's a member of the Appropriations Committee, where he reviews legislation related to state operating and capital budgets, and the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland. He's also a senior policy advisor for Rep. Steny Hoyer, majority leader for the U.S. House of Representatives.

Quite an impressive resume for someone who's only 32 years old.

Lewis's interest in activism and public policy began in 2007 while he was a member of OMSE's College Success Scholars (CSS) program.

"Dr. (Christopher) Lester would talk often in the summer series about people who had sacrificed so much for folks like myself and others to have the opportunity to study at University of Maryland," Lewis recalled. "So I became a student activist on campus, trying to improve the quality of life for students and others while I was there."

Lewis volunteered with several groups, including Community Roots, which unites the different ethnic communities on campus and stands as a collective voice for change. He also found a camaraderie in CSS that he still values to this day.

"We're our own little alumni network within the broader network of University of Maryland," he said. "We try to take care of each other."

In the future, Lewis said he'd like to see more programs like OMSE and CSS nationwide.

"The data shows minority males, both African-American and Latino, have the highest dropout rates in higher education. If we really are committed to making sure that everyone graduates and gets a quality education, then we need to build a community around them so they feel supported. That's what OMSE does."

—JAZZ LEWIS, MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES, DISTRICT 24



OMSE POINTS OF PRIDE

The impact of OMSE programs stretched far and wide during the 2020-21 school year.

ENROLLMENT

726

Students enrolled in OMSE programs

SPRING GRADUATES

2,621

Multi-ethnic seniors recognized at spring graduation reception

TUTORING

897

Hours of virtual tutoring provided by OMSE tutors

UNIVERSITY PARTNERS PROGRAM

240

Students who completed their University Partners Program (UPP) certificate requirements

UPP ATTENDEES

321

Students who attended UPP online mental health workshop facilitated by UMD Counseling Center psychologists

GIVING DAY DONORS

735

Number of OMSE donors on UMD Giving Day

GIVING DAY DONATIONS

\$64,629.27

Record amount raised on UMD Giving Day

A Successful Transition to Virtual Support

THIS PAST YEAR has been a year like no other for OMSE, the university and the entire nation.

To protect students, faculty, and staff, the campus closed in spring 2020 at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Soon after, the shift to virtual learning began.

Recognizing many students lacked access to computers and WiFi, OMSE quickly distributed a survey to assess students' technology needs. The office then purchased hotspots and laptops for students who needed extra support.

OMSE also leveraged existing resources to ease the transition for students. The office set up a "Passbook" through UMD ELMS, which is an online course management tool for students. Within one semester, all OMSE services and office hours shifted to a virtual format to ensure multi-ethnic students could connect with their peers, find resources, attend workshops, and access OMSE staff.

"In the past, our students could just walk into OMSE until 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday and until 5 p.m. on Friday and have easy access to all of us," said Dr. Christopher Lester, OMSE director. "We wanted to make sure that connection and high level of communication continued, so we immediately moved into an email, videoconference, and phone system,



which allowed our students to communicate their various needs."

Those needs included mental health support, as revealed during staff outreach.

"Our students were dealing with the isolation and pressures around COVID-19, the disruption in their college journey and the challenges of virtual classes, so we partnered with

the university's counseling center to offer mental health workshops," Dr. Lester said. "We wanted to make sure students had the resources to be whole and healthy as they navigated the transition from in-person to virtual learning."

While many students plan to return to the classroom this year, OMSE will continue to offer several virtual options to accommodate students' needs.

"When students come into my tutoring sessions, I can tell they are overwhelmed, struggling and don't know how to ask for help. I tell them, 'We're not only going to deal with the material, but I'm also going to help you as a person learn good study skills and how to be confident in yourself.'" —KYLE DINEEN '22, TUTOR AND SLC VICE PRESIDENT



DID YOU KNOW?

7,646

College Success Scholars visited their virtual meeting room 7,646 times during the 2020-21 school year.

SEIZING THE POWER OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

In fall 2020, OMSE launched the Service Learning Certificate (SLC) program to teach students the value of service learning—experiential learning that occurs beyond the classroom and incorporates civic knowledge and skills.

"Experience-based learning can be one of the most useful ways for students to relate, understand how things impact them," said Harita Patel, OMSE coordinator.

SLC students participate in workshops, activities, and training centered around five principles:

- Peer tutoring
- Social justice development, awareness and competency
- Personal and professional development
- Social and civic responsibility
- Intellectual development

For more than a decade, OMSE has offered tutoring services. But when funding was temporarily cut in fall 2020, the office added it to the SLC program to ensure students could still receive help with everything from English and anthropology to anatomy and physiology classes.

Peer tutors held free, virtual sessions weekly, as well as special review sessions before student exams. While tutoring their peers, tutors earn hours they can put toward National Tutoring Association certification.



Alumni Spotlight

DR. KWABENA YAMOAH '13

Fresh out of high school, Dr. Kwabena Yamoah arrived at University of Maryland sight unseen.



He had toured other state university campuses but never College Park, where he would spend the next four years studying biological sciences.

“I was actually shocked,” he said. “It was a big place, and some of the classes I was taking had 200 to 300 people in them. It’s easy to be lost in such an environment.”

Dr. Yamoah joined CSS to ensure his academic success. Early on, he benefited from the program’s tutoring services for classes like calculus and physics. But he quickly learned the program was about more than just educational support.

“College Success Scholars was my community, a place I could fit in,” he said. “A place I could go to meet friends and talk about daily stressors, a place to develop my leadership skills, and a place I could find the resources I needed.”

Now an interventional radiologist, Dr. Yamoah credits the program with laying the foundation for his research and medical career at the University of Maryland Medical Center.

“My entire college experience is so intricately linked to CSS,” he said. “It was a little circle in a bigger circle, like a Venn diagram, where I could just thrive.”

Building a Community of Scholars and a Brotherhood for Life

THE COLLEGE SUCCESS SCHOLARS (CSS) program continued to flourish this year, providing structured personal, academic, and professional support to Black and Latino males and encouraging their full engagement in all aspects of university life.

The program begins each summer with a six-week seminar for incoming freshmen. This seminar exposes students to academic fields, personal and professional real-world issues, a support network, and fellow scholars. Mentors are then assigned to freshmen to provide guidance and support over the course of their college careers.

Scholars of all ages participate in tutoring services, professional development opportunities, and diversity and leadership workshops. At least once a year, they also take part in an off-site, community-building retreat.

CSS students have retention and graduation rates that continue to support the university’s goal of closing the achievement gap. For example, 51.5 percent of Black and Latino students nationwide earn a college degree after six years, compared with nearly 70 percent of White students, according to The Education Trust. CSS cohorts consistently achieve retention and six-year graduation rates of over 90 percent.

Along with the OMSE staff, parents and guardians play a key role in the program’s success.

The Parents’ Involvement Working Group, which includes parents of current scholars, supports the program through advocacy and fundraising initiatives.

While CSS is beneficial during the college years, its impact doesn’t end at graduation. Scholars say the brotherhood created through CSS lasts a lifetime.

DID YOU KNOW?

487 CSS scholar count for all cohorts since the inception of CSS (2007-2021).

CSS Hispanic students are **6.5** percent more likely to graduate than the rest of the UMD Hispanic male student population.

CSS graduation rates are **3.6** percent higher than that of the entire UMD student population.

CSS African American students are **16.9** percent more likely to graduate than the rest of the UMD Black male student population.

“My son always did well in school, but he was a bit on the shy side. The growth I have seen from freshman year to now is amazing. The CSS program really helps these young men with their leadership skills, builds their confidence and lets them know that they have what it takes to succeed.” —**ALKIA JONES, PARENT OF ANTHONY JONES '21 AND HEAD OF THE CSS EXECUTIVE BOARD**



Transforming the Student Experience

FROM PEER MENTORING to collaborative partnerships, OMSE is at the forefront of multi-ethnic students' academic success. Here's why.

LA FAMILIA

A peer mentoring program, La Familia supports the college transition and retention of first-year Latino students. Qualified sophomores, juniors, and seniors are paired with mentees to help facilitate their academic and personal growth through workshops, social gatherings, and community service events.

"Last year, we created a series called Café Con Pan, which means bread with coffee. The whole idea was to create a safe space for everyone to talk about LatinX issues we face at UMD or in the community. The discussions were super engaging and helped people realize they aren't alone on their journey." —**TANIA MARTINEZ-EQUIZABAL '21**,



M.A. '23, GRADUATE ASSISTANT AND FORMER PRESIDENT OF LA FAMILIA

SISTER TO SISTER

Sister to Sister was created in 2009 to advocate, educate, and connect academically and successful multi-ethnic, undergraduate women. Members serve as mentors and tutors to first-year women, providing them with academic guidance, leadership opportunities, and personal support.

"When I first started at UMD, I was cramped up in my room all the time, trying to figure out how to get all my work done. Then I joined Sister to Sister, and I felt more at home. At a predominantly white institution, where you may not always be around people who look like you or have similar interests, it's nice to connect and lean on people when you need to—or be someone that someone else can lean on." —**CELINA OWENS '22**,



PRESIDENT OF SISTER TO SISTER

OMSE ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE SOCIETY (OAES)

Founded in 2008, OAES is an honor society for undergraduate multi-ethnic students that recognizes, fosters, and rewards academic excellence. Students accumulate points in professional development, social justice leadership, diversity awareness, community service, and service to society. They must have 30 or more credit hours and at least a 3.5 cumulative grade point average.

"OAES helps you meet more people and experience things like service learning and professional development. We don't just spend our time studying and working. We volunteer in the community and have fun social events. It's a great way to connect with others." —**NHAYA VAIDYA '22**, PRESIDENT OF OAES



UNIVERSITY PARTNERS PROGRAM (UPP)

Under UPP, a range of UMD departments and programs work with OMSE to help students gain new perspectives on culture and education, increase participation in national and international scholarship opportunities, and engage in career development.

"Last fall, we created an opportunity for about 80 College Success Scholars and a cohort of Maori students in New Zealand to connect over Zoom, right after the Black Lives Matter movement. It was an engaging dialogue among students from socially-marginalized communities in their respective countries, addressing issues that were front and center in their lives." —**DR. LEEANNE DUNSMORE**, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION ABROAD AT UMD

"We show how a student can access over 3,500 internship and job opportunities daily in the UMD career database, and we encourage use of other resources including career fairs, industry panels, and networking events. Most importantly, we support empowerment and help lessen challenges for their career readiness as students of color. We contribute to their successful graduation." —**PAMELA ALLEN**, ASSISTANT

DIRECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY CAREER CENTER AND THE PRESIDENT'S PROMISE AT UMD

Celebrating Student Achievements

EVERY DAY, OMSE students demonstrate outstanding service, leadership, and academic achievement. Congratulations to these students and graduates, who continually strive for excellence and make the entire university community proud.



Justyn Alexander '21

Analytics analyst, Accenture Federal Services

Eliezer Ayala '24

Dean's List, A. James Clark School of Engineering Center for Minorities in Science and Engineering recognition (GPA 3.0 and above)

Stacey Cabrera '20

OAES Vice President of Academic Support, Senior Marshal

Madeleine Chen '21

OAES Vice President of Academic Support Administrative Affairs, Senior Marshal

Liliana Diaz '20

OAES Vice President of Public Service, Senior Marshal

Isaiah Duncan '21

Software engineer, Microsoft

Kevin Flores '20

Clinical research data manager, The U.S. Oncology Network

Saul Flores '22

College of Computer, Mathematical and Natural Sciences Parmar Family Endowed Scholarship, American Chemical Society Scholars Scholarship, McNair Scholars Program, Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation Fellow

Wilson Lazo-Salmeron '22

Department of Psychology undergraduate scholarship, National Institute on Drug Abuse internship, FIRE Summer Scholar, Distinguished Dean's List, Maryland Psychotherapy Clinic and Research Lab research assistant, undergraduate teaching assistant

Benjamin Lin '21

OAES President, Amazon software development/engineering internship, Google software engineering internship

Silvia Serrano '23

Dean's List, College of Behavioral and Social Sciences Summer Research Initiative, Academy of Academic Excellence Award

Mufaro Shumba '21

Software engineer, Microsoft

Nhaya Vaidya '22

OAES President, American Spa magazine internship

Student Spotlight

JOSHUA COOKSEY '23

Biochemistry major Joshua Cooksey has a knack for growing and studying plants.

The recipient of the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry's prestigious Nathan Drake Award started a garden during the pandemic that produced ample tomatoes, cucumbers, and sunflowers. His apartment is home to an aloe plant, date plants, and a Bonsai tree. And his innovative research in Dr. Kwaku Dayie's campus lab focuses on extracting and characterizing RNA from plants like sorghum—a process that could someday lead to important new medical therapies.

Yet when it came to preparing his resume and searching for internships, Cooksey needed help.

"I've always been very focused on my academics and being a good student, but now in my third year, I know I also need to get my career going," he said. "OMSE and the College Success Scholars program keeps me on my toes for career development."

OMSE staff and students recently helped Cooksey revise and format his resume. Staff also provided access to internship listings and research opportunities on campus.

"Their support really helped me with networking and to feel more confident talking to people in professional settings," he said. "They do a good job of helping you make a name for yourself."

Cooksey plans to pursue a Ph.D. in chemistry or pharmacology after graduation.





PHOTO BY STEPHANIE S. CORDLE

Fostering a Partnership and Pipeline for Success

IN 2020, renowned global technology provider Parsons wanted to expand its programs that support minority college students—especially students interested in cybersecurity and engineering.



So Parsons Vice President Darnell Wagstaffe '04, M.B.A. '12, began exploring universities around Washington, D.C., including his alma mater, to see if he could find the perfect fit.



“University of Maryland already had a huge cybersecurity and computer engineering program, as well as other core engineering programs we focus on like aerospace and mechanical,” Wagstaffe said. “Then I started looking into OMSE and the success Dr. (Christopher) Lester had with OMSE programs and students.”

Wagstaffe said he and fellow Parsons leaders were impressed with OMSE’s academic support and its efforts to help students become more well-rounded. That’s why in spring 2021, the company donated \$10,000 to OMSE’s College Success Scholars program. Soon after, the company also shared several internships opportunities with OMSE and agreed to provide special consideration to any OMSE student who applied.

In the future, Wagstaffe said he’d like the company’s partnership with OMSE to grow. One option: Early career professionals at Parsons serving as OMSE mentors.

“Getting that pipeline established and bringing more success to a diverse group of students is something we really want to do,” he said.



HOW YOU CAN HELP
From volunteering and in-kind donations to fundraising and sponsorships, there are several ways to support OMSE programs and students. Visit omse.umd.edu to learn more.