

## Microbiology and Immunology Department (MIDS) Scholars Program

The Microbiology and Immunology Department Scholars (MIDS) Program was launched in 2020 by predoctoral students in response to the global pandemic and challenges facing the next generation of potential scientists. The goal of the MIDS Program is to promote opportunities in STEM—science, technology, engineering and math—by providing research experience, professional development and mentorship opportunities to undergraduates who previously did not consider a career in or have had limited opportunities to engage in research in the 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 the MIDS Program Offers 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 from 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 graduate students, 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.

#### Faculty Talks

Faculty members in the School of Medicine host talks to discuss their professional journeys and the challenges they faced choosing a career in STEM fields.



From L-R: Pitt students 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 for the application process. To forge lasting relationships and strengthen the community, the graduate students stay in touch with scholars to provide career support, such as mock interviews and other continuing education guidance.

## 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 research fellow at the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, MD. As a research fellow, I engaged in cancer research and 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.

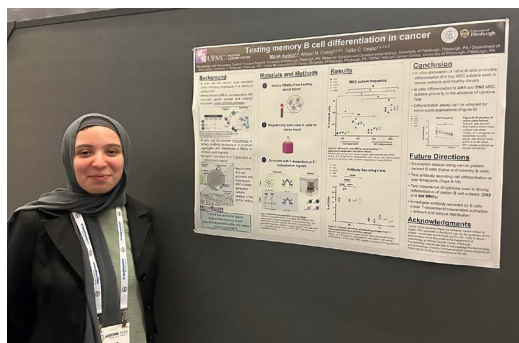
## SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT: Sandra Umana, Class of 2027



Sandra Umana

"MIDS has not only been a place where I've expanded my knowledge of biomedical research, but it has also opened doors to meaningful mentorship and invaluable connections. This program has truly given me the confidence to dive deeper into my research and to explore areas I once found intimidating. Over the past few months, I've had the privilege of learning from individuals who have already navigated the challenges of conducting research during their undergraduate studies. The mentors and peers I've met are not just colleagues but a network I can rely on for guidance and inspiration. I am incredibly grateful for this opportunity, as it has solidified my passion for research and shown me the value of mentorship and shared learning experiences."

- Sandra Umana



Malak Ayoub, an MID scholar from Dr. Tullia Bruno's lab, presents her research on the role of B cell memory in tumor immunity at the 2024 ABRCMS meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

## Make A Gift

For more information about the MIDS Program or to make a gift, please contact Anizia Karmazyn at [ank480@pitt.edu](mailto:ank480@pitt.edu).