



MERIT
HEALTH LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

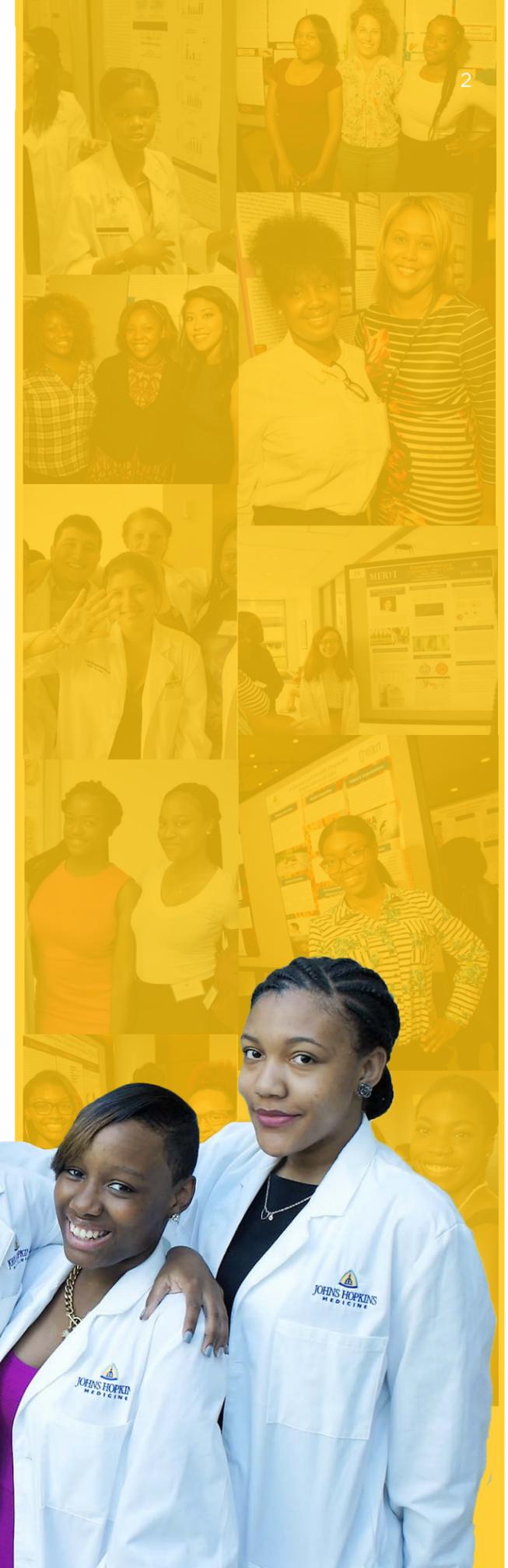
Annual Report 2015-2016





MERIT

MERIT is a nonprofit health career pipeline program dedicated to empowering the next generation of health care professionals. Our mission is to eliminate health care disparities by transforming Baltimore City high school students into health care leaders.



MERIT 2015-2016



A Letter from our Executive Director

SIX YEARS AGO, MERIT was dreamt up by three passionate medical students and educators - Tyler Mains, Shyam Gadwal, and Mark Wilcox. While some looked at the challenges facing education and health with pessimism, MERIT's founders recognized the great potential in our city. They began to ask themselves: what would it take to propel talented students in Baltimore to become the next generation of medical professionals?

Around the same time, I was asking myself that question as a high school chemistry teacher in South Central Los Angeles. I closely mentored one of my students, Jackie, who dreamt of becoming a health care professional after witnessing her dad's struggle with a debilitating chronic illness. Seeing the scant resources available to her, I provided Jackie with close support, connecting her to research opportunities and rigorous science programs. When she was accepted to her dream school, Johns Hopkins University, I committed my life's work to helping others do the same. In my search for solutions to the critical issue of diversity in medicine, I discovered MERIT and knew that I had found my calling.

As Executive Director, I am thrilled to help lead an exciting period in MERIT's growth. Last year, we grew to a full-time staff of five and welcomed a new cohort of 30 Scholars - our largest to date. Our program model is stronger than ever, marked by an increase in academic rigor and college-level science. MERIT has begun to receive recognition from the national press and prestigious medical journals as a leading model for medical diversity pipeline programs.

However, we know that our success now is only the beginning. We must continue to push our Scholars as they take on the tremendous challenges on the long road ahead. With your support, we can ensure that they will never have to walk that path alone.

Thank you for your commitment to our mission. Together, we can change the face of health care.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Landicho,
Executive Director

Reaching
More Scholars

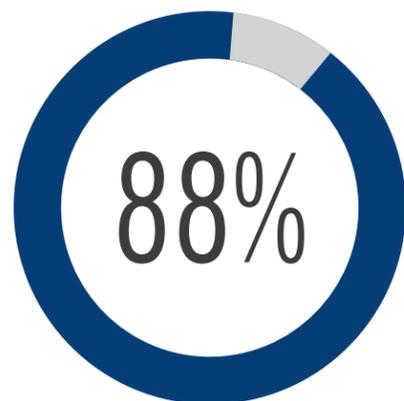
Demonstrating
Effectiveness

Strengthening
Our Team

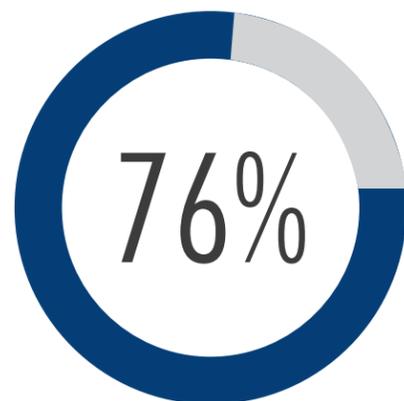


Our MERIT Scholars

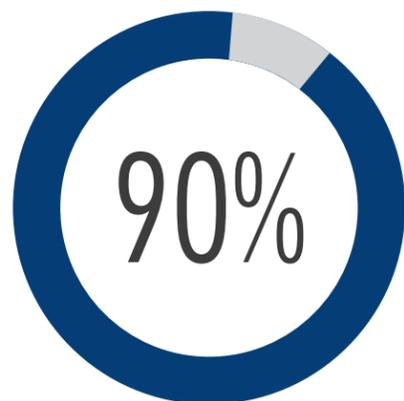
MERIT Scholars are a diverse group of determined and passionate young people, united by their goal to improve the health of others. To empower the new generation of doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals, MERIT targets promising students in Baltimore public schools who are passionate about careers in the health professions and have qualified for free or reduced-price meals at school and/or would be first-generation college students. Last year, MERIT supported its largest and most diverse class of Scholars ever.



From Low Income Backgrounds
(As indicated by prior eligibility for free or reduced-priced meals)



First-Generation College Students



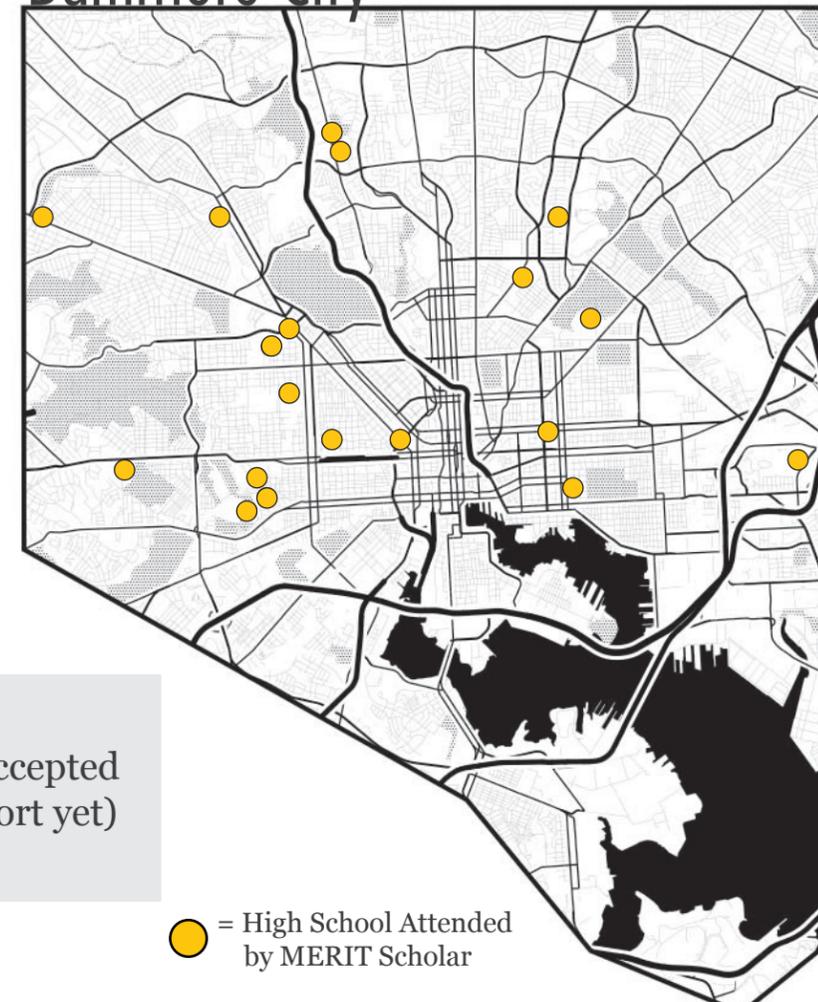
Under-Represented Minority Backgrounds
(African American, Latino, Native American)

19 High Schools Represented

60%
Overall Growth in Scholars and Alumni Served
(2014-15 to 2015-16 School Year)

30 New Scholars Accepted
(our largest cohort yet)

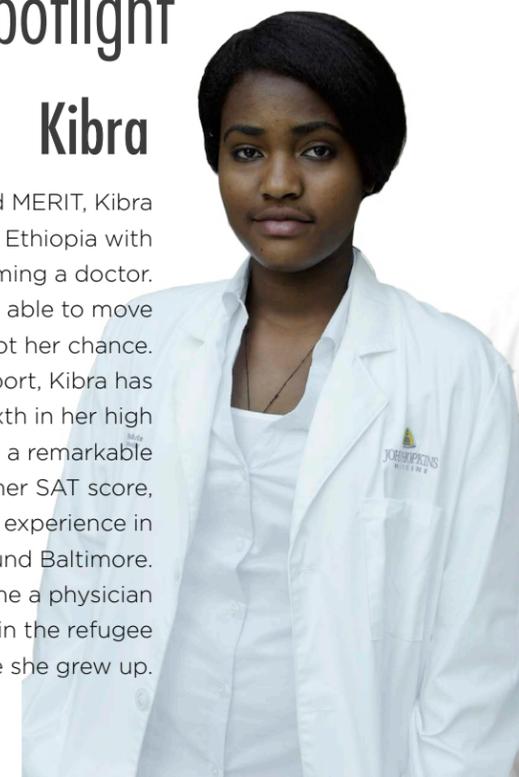
Baltimore City



Scholar Spotlight

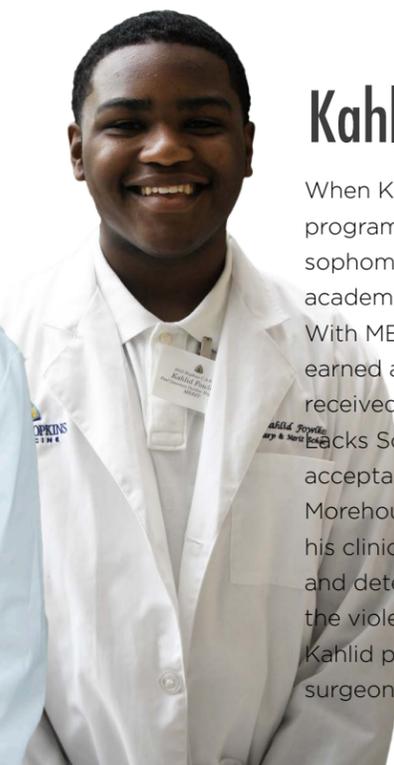
Kibra

Long before she joined MERIT, Kibra was a young refugee in Ethiopia with the dream of becoming a doctor. When her family was able to move to America, Kibra got her chance. With MERIT's support, Kibra has been able to rise to sixth in her high school class, achieve a remarkable 320-point increase in her SAT score, and gain valuable work experience in labs and hospitals around Baltimore. Kibra hopes to become a physician and return to work in the refugee camp where she grew up.



Kahlid

When Kahlid began the MERIT program as a high school sophomore, he was struggling academically with a 2.28 GPA. With MERIT's support, Kahlid earned a 3.75 GPA as a senior, received the \$40,000 Henrietta Ecks Scholarship, and gained acceptance to his dream school, Morehouse College. Inspired by his clinical internship in MERIT and determined to address the violence in his community, Kahlid plans to become a trauma surgeon.



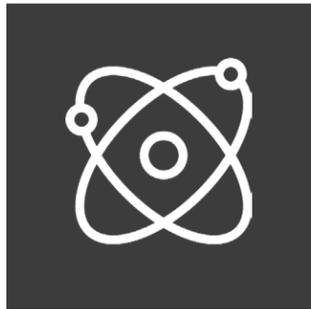


Academic Support



Health Disparities

In the Health, Race and Society course, Scholars delve into the root causes of health inequities and analyze policy solutions through readings, case studies, and personal experiences. As a culminating project, Scholars wrote and submitted policy memos addressing a social determinant of health.



Science Enrichment

Through hands-on activities, Scholars learn tangible skills to prepare them for their internships. Rigorous science instruction focuses on lab research skills and science literacy to prepare Scholars for college-level courses.



SAT Test Preparation

During junior year, Scholars receive 3 hours of SAT instruction each Saturday. By differentiating instruction to meet Scholars at their individual levels, we work to achieve dramatic growth for all learners.



College Application & Transition Support

Senior Scholars are guided through the college application and financial aid process. They learn tangible skills for college success and explore issues relevant to success as first-generation college students. Scholars receive extensive support while writing personal statements, completing the FAFSA, and applying for scholarships.



100%
Senior Scholars matriculating into a four-year university

78%
Senior Scholars entering college with a science major and/or pre-health concentration

92%
Scholar Retention

78%
Scholars committed to a career working in under-served communities

98% of Scholars agreed, "MERIT has helped me be more successful in school."

Spotlight: Text Hotline for LGBT Teens



As part of the Community Health Improvement Projects, a team of Scholars interested in mental health careers developed an innovative proposal for a text-message-based mental health service for LGBT teens. The Scholars presented research on the neurological effects of bullying and analyzed current data on the communication habits of teens. The Scholars proposed a youth-led text hotline service to provide LGBT teens a safe space to talk through their issues and connect them to important resources, including mental health professionals and mentors in the LGBT community. The team presented their proposals at three health research symposiums to over 1,000 combined attendees.

110

Health care professionals served as mentors

25

Medical Departments

86%

of Scholars "highly satisfied" with their clinical preceptors

98%

Scholar Attendance

Clinical Internships

Experiencing Health Care in the Real World

In the summer after their sophomore year, MERIT Scholars participate in clinical internships, called the Art of Medicine. Scholars shadow up to 20 different health care providers in a variety of settings including intensive care, pediatrics, outpatient clinics, surgery, and more. Scholars experience various career paths including medicine, nursing, social work, and pharmacy. These internships provide broad career exposure, allowing Scholars to observe medical procedures and interact with providers and patients in a wide variety of settings. By experiencing health care in the real world, Scholars challenge their perspectives, gain hands-on experience, and deepen their understanding of what it means to be a health care leader.



“When I heard the doctors talking about hemoglobin A1C, I knew from my homework exactly what was happening.”

- Monnyae Lucas

MERIT couples the Scholars' firsthand shadowing experiences with rigorous summer coursework. Scholars delve into common medical issues they are likely to see, giving them key background information and a solid foundation for their clinical experiences. For example, before shadowing in cardiology departments last year, Scholars studied the symptoms and pathophysiology of heart attacks. Through a series of hands-on lessons, these Scholars learned tangible professional skills and earned their CPR-BLS certification.

Spotlight: The Johns Hopkins Hospital Dermatology Team

Dr. Ginette Okoye, Director of the Ethnic Skin Program at Johns Hopkins Hospital, and a team of dermatology residents not only volunteered to take on a large number of MERIT interns, but also delivered engaging and informative lectures to Scholars each week all summer. Through engaging lessons, Scholars were able to learn hands-on medical procedures including proper suturing technique, which they practiced on grapes.





90%
Attendance

12
Research Departments

3 Scholars were awarded scholarships for their research

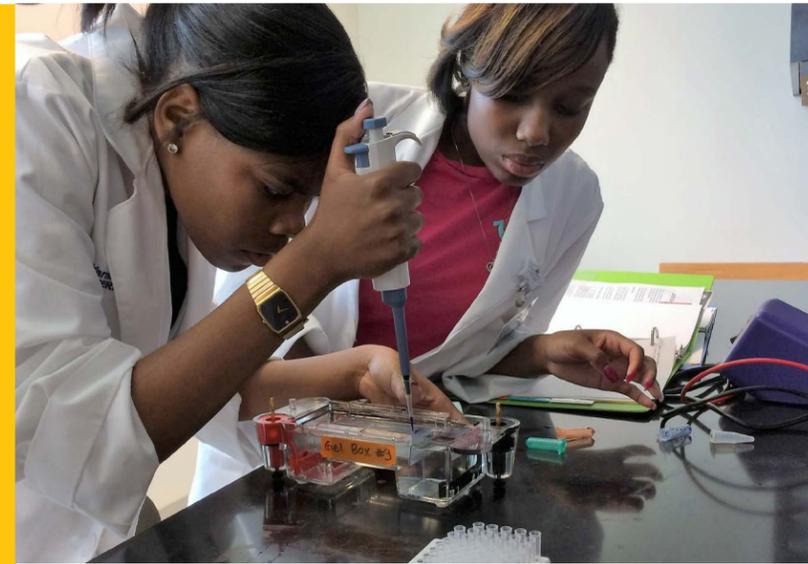
66 Supplemental lab-skills hours per Scholar

88 Hands-on lab research hours per Scholar

Research Internships

While internships in the first summer of MERIT focus on broad exposure to the world of clinical care, internships after junior year focus on research that drives scientific discovery and clinical advancement. As rising seniors, MERIT Scholars participate in the Science of Medicine Internship, conducting independent research based on their interests under a laboratory mentor at the Johns Hopkins Schools of Medicine, Nursing, or Public Health. In these laboratories, MERIT Scholars are directly involved in the research process, studying research questions on a variety of issues.

By providing early exposure to research, MERIT aims to prepare Scholars to become active participants in clinical and community-based research during college and throughout their health care careers. In MERIT's Science of Medicine Internship, scholars not only analyze critical issues in medicine but also build laboratory skills such as pipetting, gel electrophoresis, and stoichiometric calculations.



As a Result of Their Summer Internships:

- 94%** Strongly agreed they were **“more inspired to work as a health professional”**
- 89%** Strongly agreed they **“improved their professional skills”**
- 81%** Felt they had a **“role model in a science career”**

Scholar Research Topics

Amber Botts	Neuropeptide Expression in Drosophila
Aron Burston	The Gender Life Expectancy Gap
Coty Rock	Targeting Prostate Cancer with an Engineered Toxin Conjugate
Jessica Cooley	Assessment of Regulatory T Cell Infiltration in Lethal Prostate Cancer
Jessica Membrano	The Role of Phospholipase B on Cryptococcus Neoformans and Macrophages Interaction
Julius Gingles	Characterizing mTORRC1 Activity in a Novel Autism Model
Kayla McDaniel	Detection of Adenomatous Polyposis Coli (APC) Gene in Colorectal Cancer Epithelial Cells
Kibra Buluts	Understanding the Role IFN plays in HIV Inhibition
Lateshia Scott	The Role of Testosterone on Insulin Control in Women with Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome
Martin Orellana	Gateway Cloning the lncRNA, Linc-Shisa9
Maryallana Williams	The Role of Environmental Cues on Virulence in Mycobacterium Tuberculosis
Maya Keith	Sugar Free Kids: Fighting Type II Diabetes
Rachel Avidor	Genotyping Mice DNA to Detect the Presence of PD-1 and LAG-3
Yarnee Whitaker	Difficult Airways in Pediatric Population



Scholar Spotlight: Jessica

“This summer I was fortunate to get my first taste of research working at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health in the microbiology lab of Dr. Arturo Casadevall. We studied Cryptococcus neoformans (Cn), a fungus found across the world. When Cn is inhaled from the environment, macrophages, a type of white blood cell, engulf the Cn and damage the phagolysosomal membrane, which leads to the host cell’s inability to fight off infection. This issue is particularly serious in developing nations and among people who already have a compromised immune system, such as those who are HIV positive. Understanding the cellular processes is important in developing therapeutic interventions to control infection. From my experience, I have come to appreciate the role that researchers play in advancing clinical therapies. Participating in real-world lab research has helped me to see the role that I can play in moving the needle toward new discoveries.”

Scholars Present Their Research



100%
of Scholars presented
at two or more research
symposiums



100%
of Scholars produced
a research poster and
abstract

This year, Jessica Cooley addressed the Johns Hopkins Bayview community during grand rounds alongside U.S. Representative Elijah Cummings. In her moving remarks, Jessica described how the experience of witnessing a surgery for the first time during her MERIT clinical internship solidified her goal of becoming a pediatric surgeon.



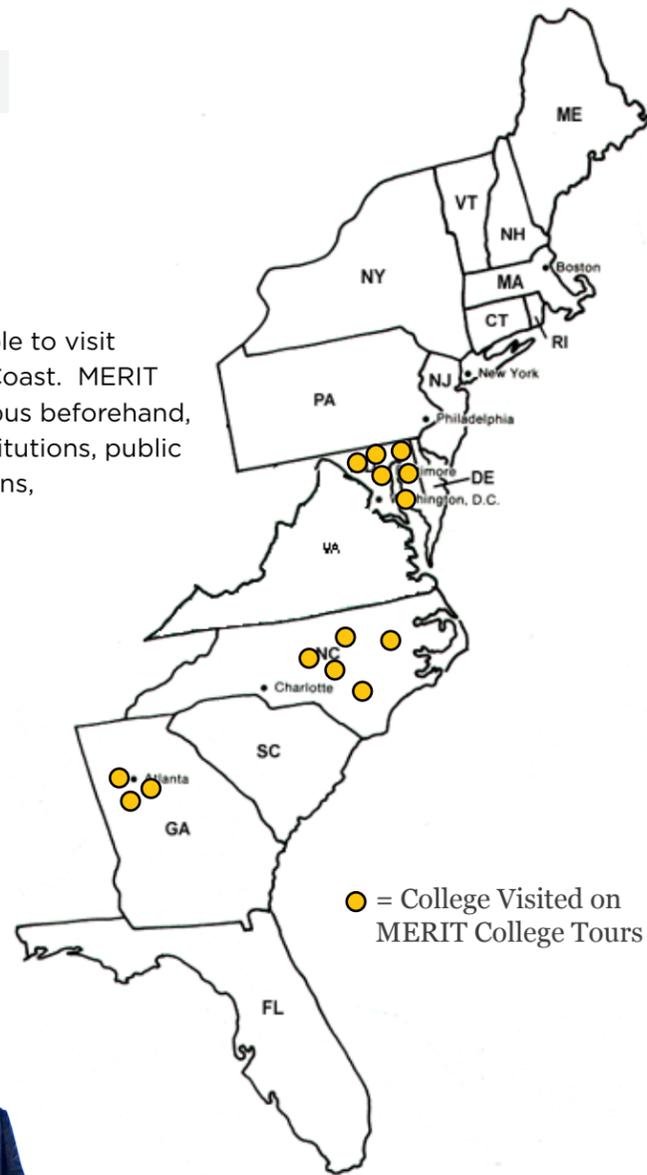
Scholars have many opportunities to present their research findings and speak at public events. Following their summer internships, Scholars present their work at MERIT's annual research symposium. Presenting in professional settings allows Scholars to gain self-confidence and to become a voice for change in their profession and in their communities.

Last year, Scholars spoke at three health research symposiums to over 1,000 combined attendees. At MERIT's 6th Annual Research Symposium, Scholars presented their summer research to a crowd of friends, family members, health professionals and community members.

College Tour

During their junior and senior years, MERIT Scholars are able to visit colleges and universities in Maryland and across the East Coast. MERIT Scholars, many of whom have never visited a college campus beforehand, experience a wide variety of schools, including private institutions, public state universities, liberal arts colleges, Ivy League institutions, and historically black colleges.

- Duke University
- North Carolina Central University (NCCU)
- North Carolina A&T (NC A&T)
- University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill (UNC Chapel Hill)
- University of North Carolina - Greensboro (UNCG)
- Davidson College
- Spelman College
- Clark Atlanta University
- Morehouse College
- Georgetown University
- University of Maryland - Baltimore County
- University of Maryland, College Park
- Bowie State University
- Johns Hopkins University
- Morgan State University



38%
of Scholars had never taken a college tour previously, not even to local college and universities

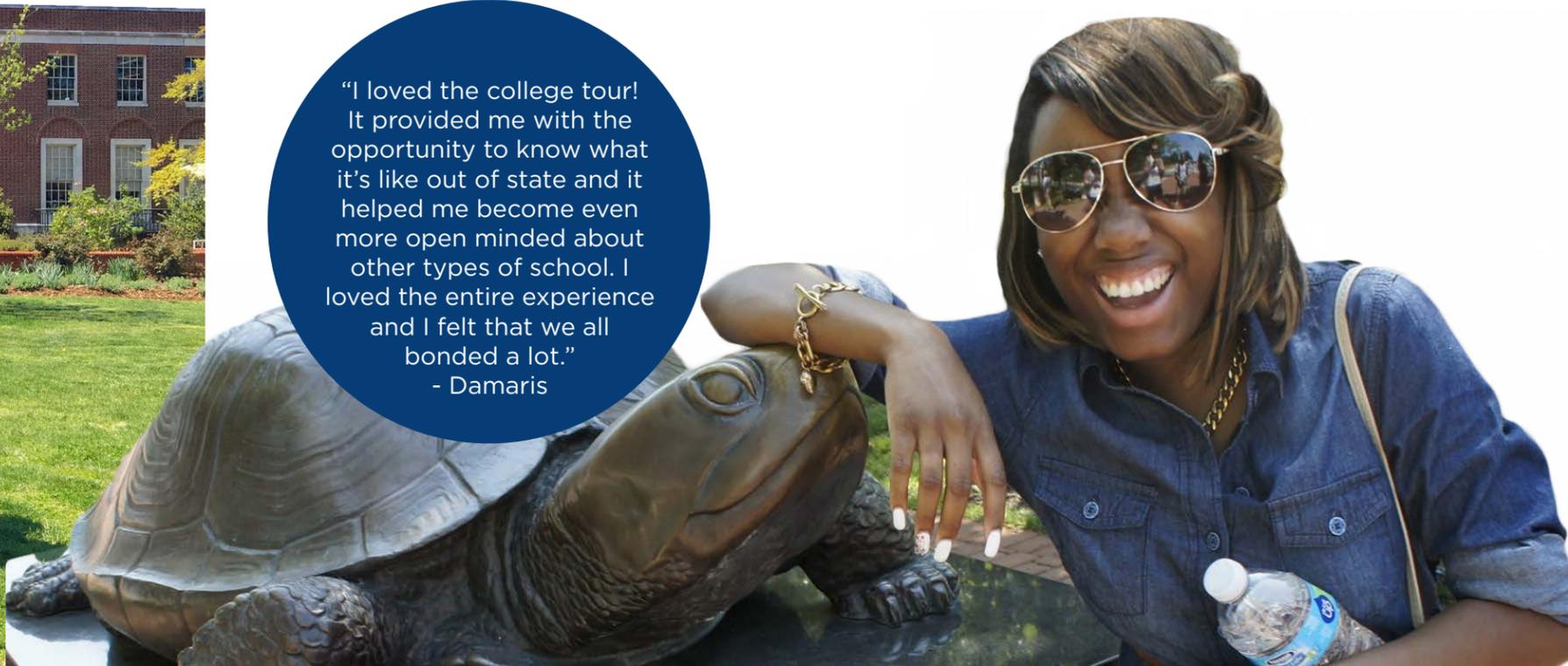
92%
of Scholars reported increased confidence in choosing a school that was right for them (measured between pre- and post-surveys).

79%
reported being much more motivated to prepare for the SAT after attending the college tour

77%
reported being “very interested” in applying to out-of-state colleges after the tour

MERIT aims to empower Scholars to make more informed college and career choices based on their own interests, academic strengths, and support networks. During the tours, MERIT Scholars gain exposure to a wide variety of college settings, which allows students to determine their ideal learning environment. Students learn to focus on the factors most important to them, including student diversity, class sizes, geographical location, student organizations and cultural groups, and other variables. Informed by these experiences and their research on colleges and universities, Scholars have tangible goals as they begin the challenging process of applying to college.

“I loved the college tour! It provided me with the opportunity to know what it’s like out of state and it helped me become even more open minded about other types of school. I loved the entire experience and I felt that we all bonded a lot.”
- Damaris





3
times as many mentor applications as we had spots available

65%
of new mentors identify as underrepresented minorities

85%
complete a 3-Year Commitment

Mentors are a key component of MERIT’s holistic support model. They play the role of college counselor, career mentor, academic tutor, and lifelong supporter. Each Scholar is paired with a mentor for three years during high school and a second college support coach for four years of college. These mentors provide personal and academic support through weekly meetings and conversations. Each month, MERIT holds a “Mentor Day,” which includes professional development for mentors, academic support for Scholars, and structured activities such as community service projects. Last year, our mentors became increasingly invested in recruiting their colleagues, allowing MERIT to strengthen our work with the medical community to support our Scholars.



“What I love the most about MERIT is the positive environment and how the staff, mentors, and other scholars push you to do better and go beyond what you thought you were capable of.”
- Shakaiya

“My mentor and I have a great connection. She is studying women’s health and I want to be an OB/GYN. She shows me that women can make a difference in our community.”
- Mariama



Mentor Spotlight

“I came to school to learn how to be a nurse, but I felt disconnected from the community. So, I became a MERIT Mentor to foster that connection. I set out to be a role model, but I discovered from my mentee that mentorship is a partnership. MERIT will give him the extra push necessary to rise above the many challenges he’ll face through high school and beyond. I can’t wait to see where he goes from here.”
- Ben Roberts, MSN Candidate, Johns Hopkins School of Nursing

Our Partners & Volunteers

MERIT's unique program model combines the skills of seasoned educators, the expertise of a world-renowned medical community, and the support of dedicated community partners.



Medical Community



Educators



Baltimore



MERIT

Institutional Partners

- Baltimore City Public Schools
- Baltimore City Public Schools - Office of College and Career Readiness
- Baltimore Ravens
- Baltimore Underground Science Space (BUGSS)
- Chase Brexton
- Institute of Marine and Environmental Technology (IMET)
- Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center
- Johns Hopkins Center for Social Concern
- Johns Hopkins Community Physicians
- Johns Hopkins Hospital
- Johns Hopkins School of Medicine
- Johns Hopkins School of Nursing
- Johns Hopkins School of Public Health
- Johns Hopkins Student Outreach Resource Center (SOURCE)
- Johns Hopkins University
- Maryland Out Of School Time Network
- Maryland State Department of Education
- MarylandCAN
- Mayor's Office of Employment Development - City of Baltimore
- Public Allies Maryland
- Teach for America
- The Brancati Center for Community Care
- University of Maryland Incentive Awards Program
- University of Maryland Medical Center



Our Team

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Stephanie Landicho
Executive Director

Jake Weinfeld
Director of Operations and Partnerships

Damien Myers
Program Director

Alex Batson
Manager of Data, Grants, and
Communications

Erika Sulecki
Program Coordinator

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair
Dr. Tyler Mains
MERIT Co-Founder
Resident, UCSF

MERIT Faculty Advisor
Dr. Scott Wright
Director of the Division of General Internal
Medicine, Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center

Stephanie Cooper Greenberg
Co-Director of the Erwin & Stephanie Greenberg
Foundation

Chitamawe Daka Mulwanda
Managing Director of Pipelines,
Teach for America Baltimore

Shyam Gadwal
MERIT Co-Founder,
Chief of Staff, Teach for America

Geoffrey Genth (Joined in 2017)
Principal Attorney, Kramon and Graham

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Special Advisor to the President of Johns Hopkins
Bayview Medical Center

Dr. David Hellmann
Director of the Department of Medicine at the
Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center

Amy Kleine
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Health at The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg
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Dr. John Kontor
Executive Vice President of Clinovations

Jacqueline Lee
Director of the Maryland Incentive Awards
Program at the University of Maryland,
College Park

Dr. Krista Ratliff
Vice President of Business Development and
Operations, ZOT Inc.

PROGRAM STAFF

Eileen Kim
Research Internship Lead Instructor

Molly Bloom
Clinical Internship Lead Instructor
"Health and Wellness" Course Instructor

Tia Bossiwa
Clinical Internship Instructor

Marianne Gibson
"Health and Wellness" Course Instructor

Tamara Jolly
"Medical Leadership Course" Instructor

Tania Hagg
Johns Hopkins School of Medicine -
Student Group President
"Medical Leadership Course" Instructor

Amar Deshwar
Johns Hopkins School of Medicine -
Student Group Vice President

Afkera Daniel
"Medical Leadership Course" Instructor

Blossom Tewelde
"Medical Leadership Course" Instructor

Julie Hess
Financial Aid Instructor

Cameron Okeke
"Health, Race, and Society" Course Instructor

Anna Le
"Health, Race, and Society" Course Instructor

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Clinical Internship Curriculum Developer

Maya Oaks
SAT Instructor

Ben Oaks
SAT Instructor

Julie Milam
SAT Instructor

Chris Vazquez
SAT Instructor

Jamie Sterlacci
SAT Instructor

Ava Spindt
SAT Instructor

Francisco Villa
Teaching Assistant

Ciara Barkley
Scholar Support Coordinator

INTERNS

Sashini Godage
Intern

Bryan Larin
Intern

Alejandro Contreras
Intern

Jacqueline Hernandez
Intern

Chloe Pacyna
Intern

Ashley Yoo
Intern

Samantha Crawley
Intern

Chiamaka Ekwunazu
Intern

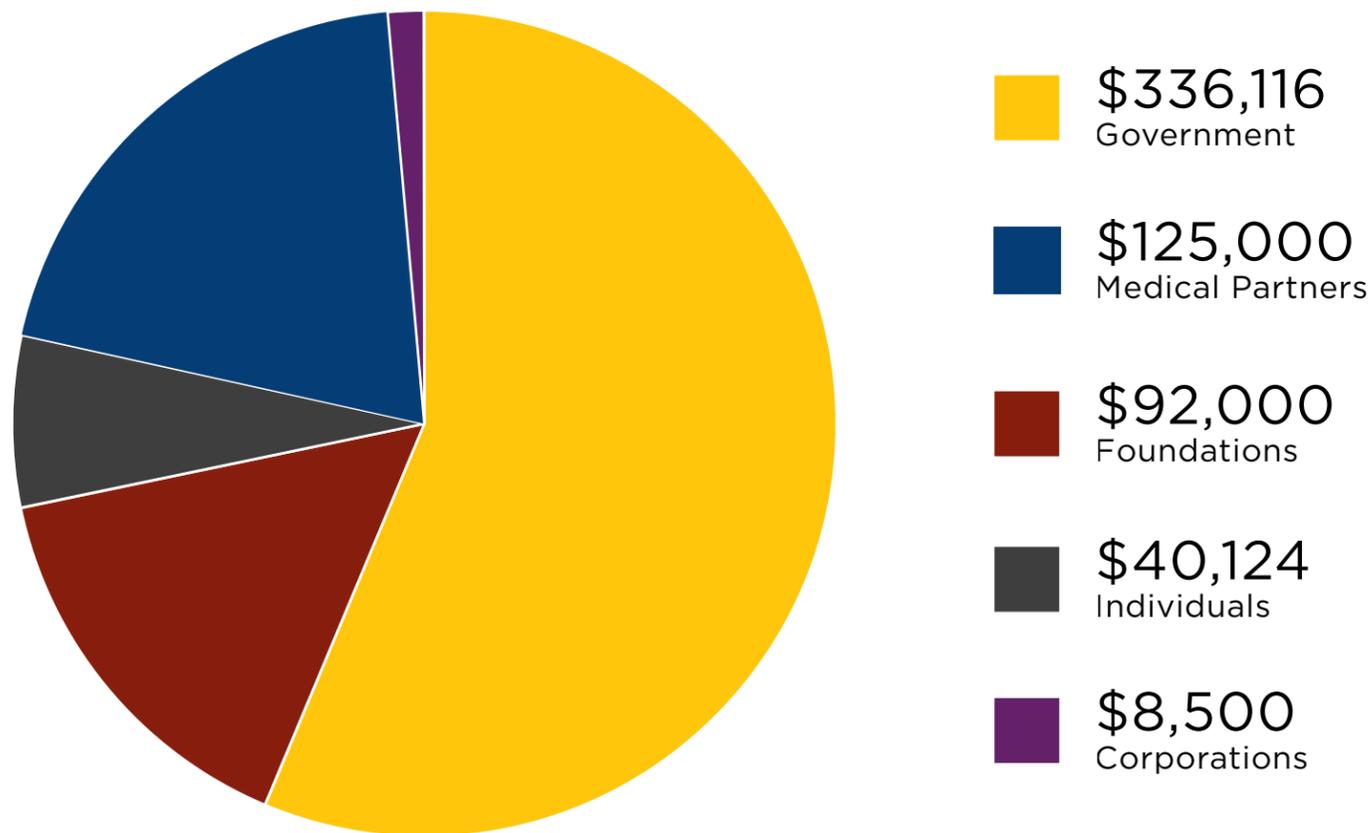
Tina Kanonuhwa
Clinical Internship Intern

Justin Lee
JHU Community Impact Intern
Research Internship Lab Manager

Financials

MERIT's growth over the past six years would not be possible without the generosity of our passionate and dedicated donor community. Last year, MERIT was awarded its largest grant to date, from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). This grant ensured that MERIT had the resources and staff capacity to take on the largest number of Scholars ever served by our organization. MERIT is also indebted to the generous support of the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions and the rest of the Baltimore medical community. Finally, we would like to thank the individual and organizational supporters who are helping to ensure that MERIT will continue to support aspiring health leaders for years to come.

2015-2016 Revenue: \$601,740



FY16 Expenses: \$449,517

FY17 Budget: \$521,570

*Note that due to the timing of some grants across two fiscal years, our fundraising total varies slightly from the total reported in our audited financial statements and 990 for FY16.

Acknowledgments

DONORS

\$100,000 and Above

Maryland State Department of Education -
21st Century Community Learning Centers

\$25,000 - \$99,999

The Aaron and Lillie Straus Foundation
Family League of Baltimore
Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center
Johns Hopkins School of Medicine
Robert Meyerhoff and Rheda Becker

\$10,000 - \$24,999

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BALTIMORE CITY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

JOHNS HOPKINS
MEDICINE





Thank you to all those who dedicated their time, energy, and resources to support our MERIT Scholars.

Together, we are changing the face of health care.



WELCOME
to the
Johns Hopkins
C.A.R.E.
Summer
Symposium

Career
Academic
Research
Experience
Students

