MERIT
HEALTH LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Annual Report 2017 - 2018

MERIT
HEALTH LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

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 2017-2018

A Letter from MERIT's Leadership Team

At MERIT, our work is guided by a belief that the solutions to complex health equity problems lie within the minds of Baltimore's young people. With unwavering faith in our scholars, we are working to provide them with the support and experiences that will propel them to become the next generation of doctors, nurses, and health professionals. To reach their dreams, we know that scholars need rigorous academic coursework, personal career guidance, and meaningful leadership opportunities. We aim to provide exactly that for students across the city.

Last year, we broadened our focus to include a wider array of health careers. While our communities certainly need more physicians from diverse backgrounds, we also need more nurses, occupational therapists, community health workers, and other talented professionals working towards health equity. In every aspect of our programming, we are working to expose scholars to a breadth of career options in health and helping them craft an individualized pathway that is right for them.

MERIT Scholars were pushed to their academic limits and consistently rose to the challenge. This summer, junior scholars spent an average of 4.5 hours on rigorous college-level homework assignments each night. Senior scholars worked diligently on their applications to college and countless scholarships. Their hard work paid off and, for the fifth year in a row, 100% of scholars were accepted to four-year universities. Collectively, they earned over $7 million in scholarships.

Even as they made great strides in achieving their future professional goals, many scholars took on additional leadership roles to make a difference in Baltimore today. From creating community gardens to organizing health screenings at churches to leading nutrition classes at senior centers, MERIT Scholars are proving that determination and empathy are more important than age when it comes to making an impact.

At a time of increasing uncertainty and division, our scholars give us hope in a healthier Baltimore and a better world. Given the right resources and opportunities, we know there is no limit to what they can achieve. We thank you for continuing to be a part of our MERIT family.

With Resolution and Optimism,

Jake Weinfeld,
Executive Director

Stephanie Landicho,
Program Director

Tyler Mains, MD
Co-Founder and Board Chair

MERIT
USC
Raising the Bar
Illuminating the Path
Empowering Leaders

Academic Success

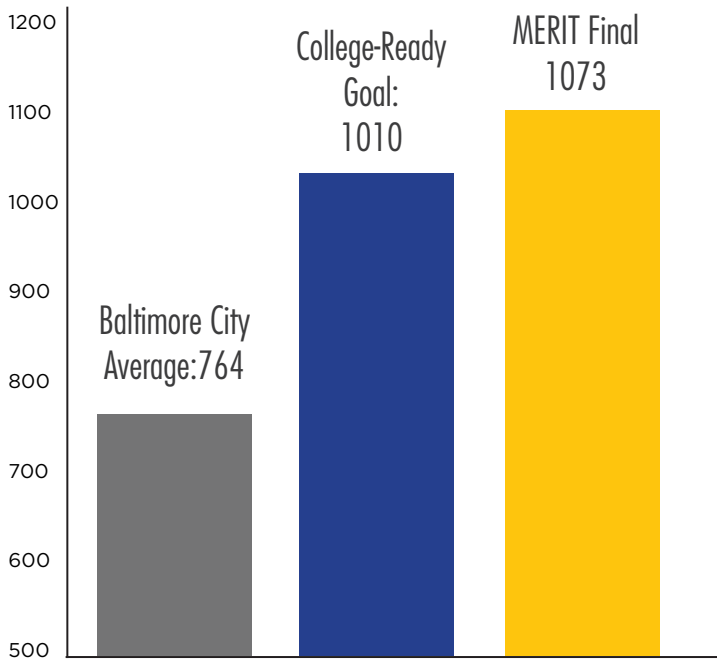
Rigorous Work Within MERIT

MERIT is continuing to increase the rigor of its work inside the classroom to prepare scholars for the high level of academic success required to become a health care professional. This year, scholars collaborated with peers to analyze case studies and completed rigorous medical school level clinical homework assignments. For example, scholars completed a complex case study on a patient who had type 2 diabetes, but presented symptoms of other chronic ailments. Additionally, scholars took home 4-5 hours of homework every night to develop the independent study skills necessary to be successful in higher levels of education.

MERIT provides each scholar a longitudinal mentor to provide another layer of support that ensures each scholar is completing their work successfully. The mentors help our scholars manage their work, and provide advice to navigating the barriers to becoming a health care professional.

MERIT Seniors Master the SAT

Our scholars are continually raising the bar and pushing their way to the top. Last year, we adapted our SAT curriculum to provide more individualized instruction and feedback. Our scholars responded with determination and diligence. Ultimately, senior scholars averaged 1073 on their final SAT scores, which is significantly higher than the average SAT score in Baltimore, 764. Their growth on the test moved the average score in the class from below the "college-ready" benchmark to well above it. Their impressive scores helped contribute to our seniors' continued success in the college application cycle.



Recent Alumni Spotlight: Jayme

In MERIT, Jayme was able to pursue her dreams as a young scientist. She conducted research on stem cells at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health and won a scholarship for her work. Jayme's confidence grew as she presented her research at multiple symposiums to several hundred medical leaders and community members. MERIT helped Jayme obtain a prestigious, highly paid internship at the National Institute of Health. Jayme is currently a first-year pre-med student at the University of Maryland, College Park, on a full scholarship to the Honors College.

Hands-On Science

Anatomy and Physiology Course

In the Anatomy and Physiology course, scholars learn about human body systems through a combination of advanced classroom-based instruction and engaging dissection and clinical simulation activities. At the end of each unit, scholars have the opportunity to go to the Simulation Center, where they participate in clinical training activities.

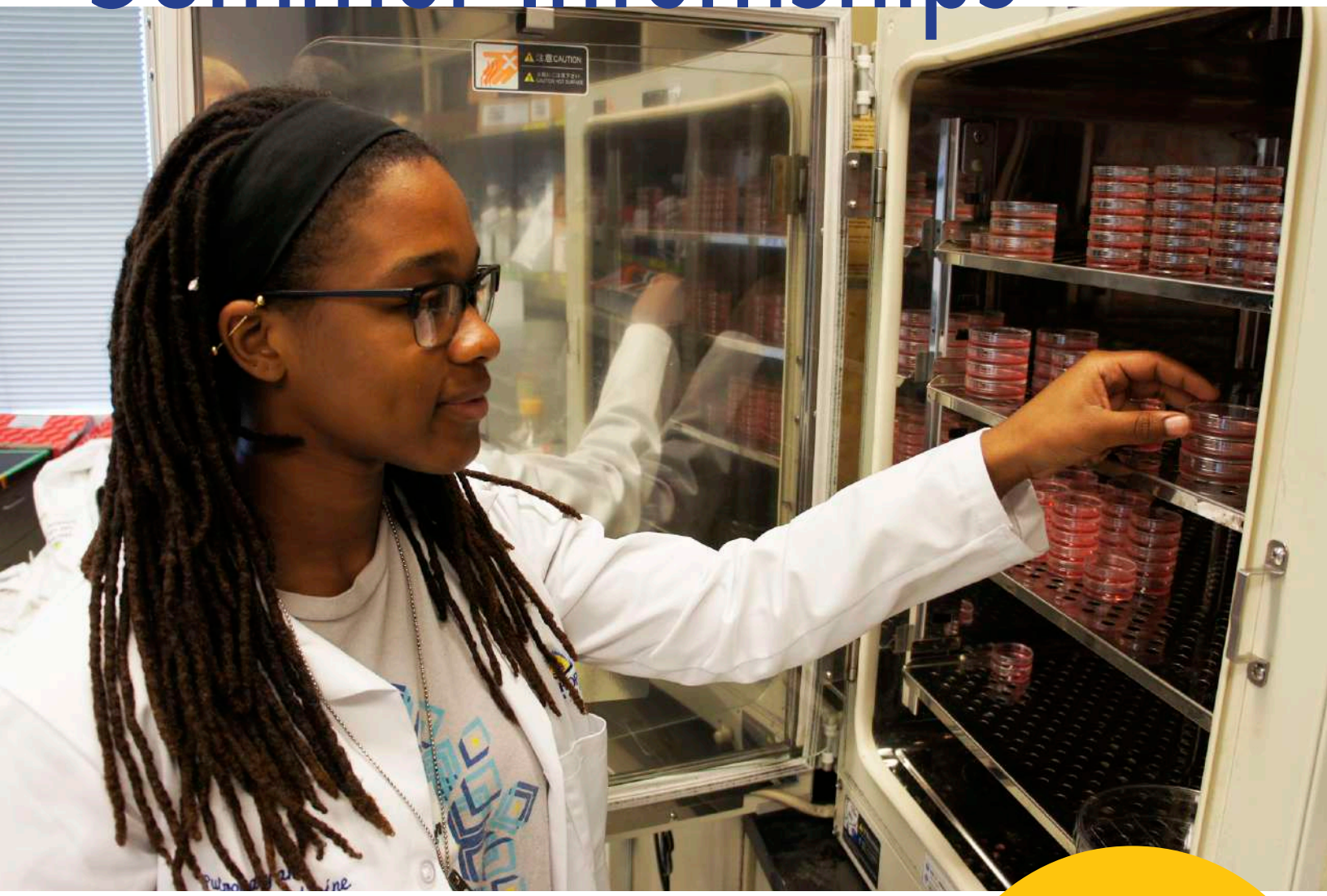
Medical Technology Course

In the Medical Technology course, taught through a partnership with Code in the Schools, scholars enjoy hands-on activities to learn about innovative topics in STEM and biotechnology, including robotics, circuitry, and data analytics. In one memorable project, juniors designed and 3D-printed prosthetic arms for stuffed animals. Scholars also constructed robotic hands and used them to operate remote controlled cars.

Research Skills Course

In the Research Skills course, scholars prepare for their upcoming research internship where they will work in university labs across the city. Rigorous preparation begins in the school year and continues into the summer with the intent of providing our scholars the tools to be successful in their internships. Scholars learn key lab skills, such as Polymerase chain reaction (PCR), gel electrophoresis, and stoichiometric calculations. These skills will also be valuable as tangible job skills for their resume and be useful during college science courses.

Summer Internships



AMI:
Art of Medicine Internship

Rising Junior Scholars

Goal: Diverse career exposure

Clinical Internship: Observe health professionals treating patients in the real world

Role Models: Shadow up to 20 different health care professionals in a variety of fields

SMI:
Science of Medicine Internship

Rising Senior Scholars

Goal: Improve STEM & research skills

Research Internship: Participate in lab or public health research

Mentoring: Work closely with 1 research mentor, who supports scholar through their project

99%

Overall Attendance in the Summer Program

After this summer in MERIT...

96%

"I am confident interacting with adults in a professional setting."

65 HOURS

average time each scholar spent interning or working in a healthcare setting.

92%

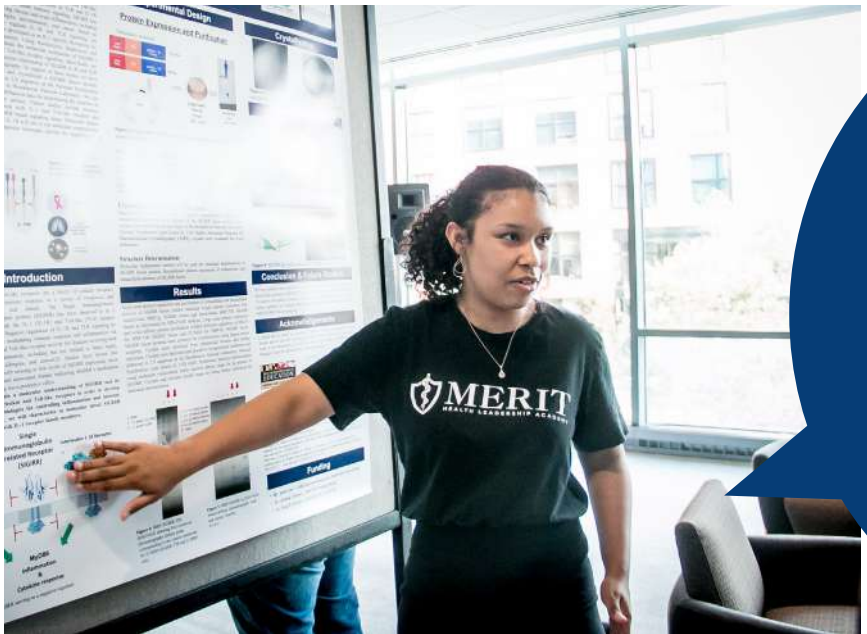
"I am more committed to working in a career that helps eliminate health disparities."

94%

"I am more confident in my ability to complete challenging work independently."

"I liked how MERIT got us out our comfort zone. They gave us homework that was extremely challenging doing deep research about diseases and conditions. That challenge is what I appreciated the most."
- Serigne, Class of 2020

Research Spotlight: Mercedes



This summer, Mercedes Ferandes conducted immunology research at the Institute of Human Virology in the lab of Greg Snyder, PhD. Based on findings from her project studying the protein SIGIRR, Mercedes and Dr. Snyder hypothesized that they could create therapeutics for chronic inflammatory diseases. In the future, Mercedes hopes to leverage her experiences conducting research and her work in the community by becoming a physician combatting health disparities.

College Access Support

100%

of MERIT Seniors accepted to 4-year universities.

$7.2 MILLION

total academic scholarships earned.

83%

of MERIT Seniors entering college as a science major or on health track.

College Admissions Success

Our scholars' success in the admissions process continued this year, as scholars were accepted to a variety of top-tier institutions, specialized programs, and best-fit colleges, including the following:

- **Baylor University**
- **Drexel University**
- **Duke University**
- **Grinnell College**
- **Hampton University**
- **Howard University**
- **Emory University**
- **Johns Hopkins University**
- **Notre Dame of Maryland University, Direct Nursing Program**
- **Stanford University**
- **Temple University, Direct Masters in Public Health Program**
- **University of California, Davis**
- **University of Florida**
- **University of Maryland, Baltimore County**
- **University of Maryland, Honors College**

Kahlid, pictured in white, hosting our scholars at Morehouse College.

Scholar Spotlight: Kahlid

Kahlid joined MERIT in 2013 with only a 2.3 GPA, but went on to excel in school and earned the prestigious Henrietta Lacks Memorial Scholarship. He is now a junior at Morehouse on the pre-med track. During the summers, Kahlid has completed several internships, including a prestigious position with the Department of Urology at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. He is also a licensed phlebotomist, which allows him to utilize the lab skills he learned through MERIT and his undergraduate program. Kahlid continues to inspire MERIT Scholars as a guest speaker at events and by giving tours for MERIT college visits.

Scholar Leaders

Scholars presented their summer research to a crowd of friends, family members, community members, and health professionals. The event featured inspiring speeches from scholars, including Zion, who outlined her work to build urban gardens and improve food access in Baltimore, and Taylor, who described how MERIT gave her a platform to fight for equal access to health care in her brother's memory. Guest speakers included Dr. Sherita Golden, Director of Inpatient Diabetes Management Service, and City Councilmember Zeke Cohen, a former teacher and advocate for education.

Brancati Community Health Fellowship

This year, with support from the Johns Hopkins Brancati Center for Community Care, MERIT created a fellowship program allowing scholars to partner with community organizations and health initiatives in the city. Scholars' projects included building a community garden, teaching nutrition classes, and creating a diabetes awareness campaign.

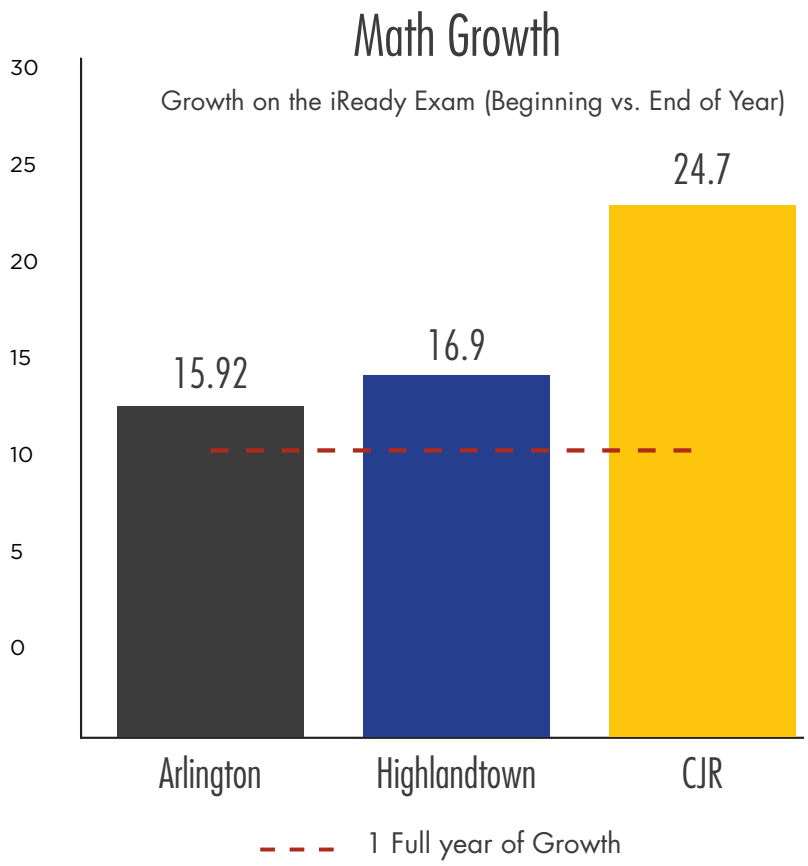
Community Health Fellow Spotlight: Shatera

Shatera (Class of 2018) has always been interested in health care on a large scale. In the Brancati Community Health Fellowship, Shatera partnered with Strong Schools Maryland and Medicine for the Greater Good to lead an advocacy and awareness campaign, aiming to reduce health disparities related to diabetes. She created an education pamphlet and distributed it to different outlets. She now attends University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill on the prestigious Pogue Scholarship. She intends to create her own interdisciplinary major that combines her interests in public policy and public health, while completing the pre-med track.

Extending the Pipeline

Middle School

This year, MERIT piloted a new program to reach students earlier in their academic careers. We partnered with three middle schools to serve 90 7th and 8th graders after school. Scholars took science enrichment courses and received intensive math support. We saw immediate success with our program, as our scholars made more than a year's worth of growth on the iReady assessment, a math standardized test used in Baltimore schools.



9th Grade Bioengineering and Math

This summer, MERIT ran its Bioengineering and Math Internship (BMI) program to build the bridge for rising 9th grade students to ensure they are set up for success as potential MERIT high school scholars. These scholars spent half of each day at the Baltimore Underground Science Space laboratory to focus on their science skills, and the other half at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine to receive intense math instruction.

92% I am more confident in my ability to succeed in 10th grade, because of my experience in BMI.

88% I am motivated to work harder in school, because of my experience in BMI.

Scholar Spotlight: The MERIT Pipeline Comes Full Circle

This summer, 7 of our MERIT alumni returned and served as teaching assistants in our summer programming, including 5 who supported the 9th graders growth and learning in the Bioengineering and Math Internship. Our alumni work to inspire the future generation, while instilling high expectations and a commitment to excellence.

Key Institutional Partners

- Baltimore City Health Department
- Baltimore City Office of Sustainability
- Baltimore City Public Schools
- Baltimore City Public Schools - Office of College and Career Readiness
- Baltimore Underground Science Space (BUGSS)
- Code in the Schools
- FutureMakers
- Institute of Marine and Environmental Technology (IMET)
- Johns Hopkins School of Medicine
- Johns Hopkins Lifeline
- Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center
- Johns Hopkins Brancati Center for Community Care
- Johns Hopkins Center for Social Concern
- Johns Hopkins Community Physicians
- Johns Hopkins Department of Surgery
- Johns Hopkins Health Systems Community Relations
- Johns Hopkins Hospital
- Johns Hopkins Hospital Sickle Cell Infusion Center
- Johns Hopkins School of Nursing
- Johns Hopkins School of Public Health
- Johns Hopkins Student Outreach Resource Center (SOURCE)
- Johns Hopkins University MedHacks
- KIPP Rales Health Center
- Maryland Out of School Time Network
- Maryland State Department of Education
- MarylandCAN
- Mayor's Office of Employment Development - City of Baltimore
- Medicine for the Greater Good
- National Association of Health Service Executives (NAHSE)
- Northside Baptist Church
- Parks and People Foundation
- Strong Schools Maryland
- Teach for America
- The Be. Org
- University of Maryland Incentive Awards Program
- University of Maryland Institute of Human Virology
- University of Maryland Medical Center

MERIT Family

Mentorship Spotlight: Jawara and Jerimiah

Jerimiah Kouka entered MERIT to expand his scientific and health care knowledge. This past summer, Jerimiah was able to delve deep into his research interests. With the support of Jawara Allen, an MD/PhD student at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, who has been a research mentor for MERIT for the past three years, Jerimiah conducted a project that examined the effect of toxic bacteria on colon epithelial cells. Jerimiah hopes to eventually become a Nurse Practitioner in an underserved area.

Our Team

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Jake Weinfeld
Executive Director

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Manager of Data, Grants, and Communication

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Scholar Support Manager

Megan Planchard
Curriculum Manager

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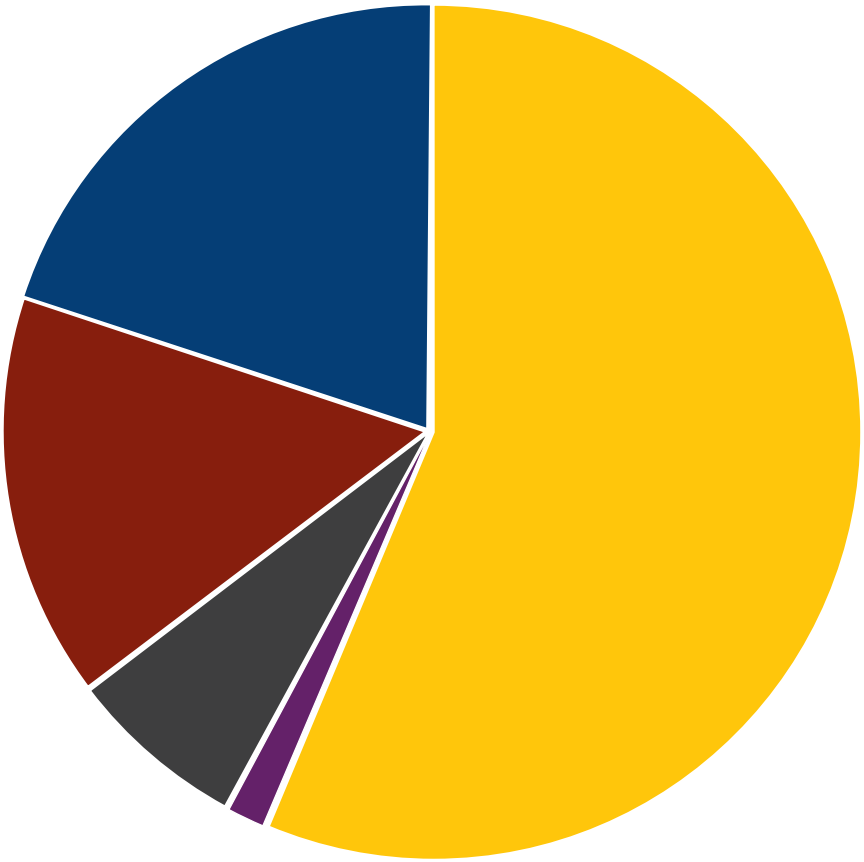
Financials

MERIT's growth over the past eight years would not be possible without the generosity of our passionate and dedicated donor community. Most notably, the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions have been a pioneering partner and supporter since MERIT's founding in 2010. MERIT's growth in recent years has been possible in large part to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) support through several different grant programs. To all of our supporters, thank you for believing in our scholars' dreams and their potential to change the face of health care.

2017-2018 Revenue: $932,165



$645,024
Government

$121,500
Foundation

$100,000
Partner

$62,141
Individuals

$3,500
Corporations

FY18 Expenses: $742,517.58 **FY19 Budget: $889,690.58**

*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 Form 990 for FY18.

Donors

$100,000 and Above
MSDE - 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant
MSDE - Next Generation Scholars Grant
MSDE - Public Schools Opportunity Enhancement Grant

$25,000 - $99,999
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