



National SNMA Leaders Awarded UNCF-Merck Research Fellowships

Through the development of the Physician-Researcher Initiative, the Student National Medical Association (SNMA) has been at the forefront of encouraging minority medical students to pursue careers in research and academic medicine. With this, we are proud to announce that two of SNMA's national leaders are the recipients of 2009 UNCF-Merck Fellowships.

C. Rory Goodwin, Ph.D, SNMA Dines Fellow/B.A.S.E. Coordinator, and Past National President is the recipient of a UNCF-Merck Postdoctoral Science Research Fellowship for \$85,000. In 2007, Dr. Goodwin received a UNCF-Merck Graduate Science Research Dissertation Fellowship. Dr. Goodwin has been active in SNMA's National Leadership since 2003.

Dennis Spencer, SNMA Diversity Research Committee Co-Chair, and Dines Fellow/Physician-Researcher Initiative Co-Coordinator, was awarded with a \$52,000 UNCF-Merck Graduate Science Research Dissertation Fellowship. His award will fund his current research titled, "Understanding Tonsillitis: Studies to Determine Why *Streptococcus pyogenes* Targets the Tonsils," which aims to understand the unique binding dynamics that occur between this bacterium and human tonsils in order to identify novel vaccine targets to help prevent this incredibly common disease. The principle investigator working with Spencer is Vincent Fischetti, Ph.D., Professor and Chair of the Laboratory of Bacterial Pathogenesis at The Rockefeller University. His Merck mentor is Jon Heinrichs, Ph.D., Senior Research Fellow in Vaccine Basic Research at Merck Research Laboratories.

"I am grateful to have yet another perspective to be able to benefit from as I continue through my thesis work. I have already been privy to the use of incredibly expensive instruments and equipment at Merck that my graduate lab simply would not have at our disposal. The potential this technology offers when designing my next experiments is an awesome benefit of having a Merck mentor." Says Spencer.

The UNCF/Merck Science Initiative (UMSI) provides undergraduate, graduate and post-doctoral support to outstanding African-American students who are pursuing studies and research careers in biological and chemical sciences. Every year, scholarships and fellowships are awarded through a national competition. Each UNCF-Merck award recipient is mentored by a Merck scientist and is thoroughly guided by their mentor for the award's duration.

In 2007, SNMA established the Physician-Researcher Initiative (PRI) to encourage minority physicians to pursue careers in academic medicine and to increase the representation of medical school faculty from underrepresented communities. The initiative, funded by the National Institutes of Health and other external parties, has worked to provide research opportunities for minority pre-medical and medical students, increase awareness for career options and pathways as a physician-researcher, and to foster relationships between researchers and SNMA members.

Each year at the Annual Medical Education Conference (AMEC), the SNMA showcases the research accomplishments of its members during the Dr. Wilbert C. Jordan Research Forum. Applicants for the SNMA-David E. Satcher, MD Fellowship also exhibit their research work during the forum. A PRI educational track was developed several years ago as a component of the AMEC to give SNMA members insight on life as a physician-researcher, how to write and go about publishing research articles, and general study design.



SNMA

DIVERSIFYING THE FACE OF MEDICINE

Recipients of UNCF-Merck Fellowships from SNMA include:

2009 UNCF-Merck Graduate Science Research Dissertation Fellowship

- Isaac Kinde, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine
- Dennis Spencer, SNMA Dines Fellow/PRI Coordinator and Diversity Research Co-Chair, Weill Cornell Medical College
- Tanya Williams, Weill Cornell Medical College

2009 UNCF-Merck Postdoctoral Science Research Fellowship

- C. Rory Goodwin, SNMA Dines Fellow/PMI-B.A.S.E. Coordinator and Past National President, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

2008 UNCF-Merck Graduate Science Research Dissertation Fellowship

- Jacinta Cooper, University of Colorado School of Medicine
- C. Brandon Ogbunugafor, M.Phil, SNMA Strategic Planning Council Chairman and Immediate-Past Region VII Director, Yale University School of Medicine
- Ekama Onofiok, University of California, Davis

2008 UNCF-Merck Postdoctoral Science Research Fellowship

- Kafui Dzirasa, Ph.D, SNMA Strategic Planning Council and Past Internal Affairs Committee Chair, Duke University School of Medicine

2007 UNCF-Merck Graduate Science Research Dissertation Fellowship

- C. Rory Goodwin, SNMA Dines Fellow/PMI-B.A.S.E. Coordinator and Past National President, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

2006 UNCF-Merck Graduate Science Research Dissertation Fellowship

- Kafui Dzirasa, Ph.D, SNMA Strategic Planning Council and Past Internal Affairs Committee Chair, Duke University School of Medicine

2002 UNCF-Merck Undergraduate Science Research Scholarship Awards

- Maya Matheny, Past National Treasurer, University of Maryland School of Medicine