

TRUSTEES' SCHOLAR NEWSLETTER

University of Missouri–Kansas City | Spring 2021

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Trustees' Scholars have found ways to make a difference in the community, including masking up and volunteering at Harvesters Community Food Network!



Back row, left to right: Adam Larson, Emily Wesley, Maddy Bremer, Jessica Elam, Lanisha Stevens, Caroline Moriarty, Aubrey Brown, Gavin Ott and Karah Chappel.
Front row, left to right: Joe Constantino, Mouada Allan, Isabella Del Cid, Lily Dang, Whitney Schweiger and Ciera Ayala.

Media Committee

Karah Chappel | Lily Dang | Niki Joshi | Caroline Moriarty | Whitney Schweiger

A Scholars Alumna Shares Her Strategy for Success

By Lily Dang, first-year Scholar
Sponsor: UMKC Trustees



If **JoAnna Muenks** could tell her younger self one thing, it would be: “It’s okay to not have it all figured out.” She didn’t have it all figured out herself. Throughout college and her early career, she had numerous doubts and felt off-course. She started as a biology major but found her home at the Bloch School of Management. JoAnna graduated from UMKC in 2017 with a B.S. in accounting and a B.B.A. in marketing.

Upon graduation, JoAnna started her career as a CPA at Grant Thornton, a leading independent audit, tax and advisory firm in Kansas City. She worked there for three years and had a great experience engaging with businesses in various industries. However, she knew she wanted to transition into the field of entrepreneurship and start-ups. This interest was supported by her experiences at UMKC, during which she got involved with many business pitch competitions and organizations. In 2020, she landed a two-year entrepreneurship fellowship with Venture for America that connected her with her current position as a

“... take advantage of the resources and connections that come with being a student.”

Capital Markets Professional at Five Elms Capital, a global venture capital and growth equity

firm headquartered in Kansas City. Her role is centered around building relationships and cultivating deal flow through strategic partnerships with other investors, accelerators and investment banks. She described this role as one that “embodies a multitude of aspects that [she] was seeking in a career.”

When asked about the impacts of the Trustees’ Scholars Program, JoAnna greatly emphasized the networking aspect of this program. She got to connect with many Trustees’ mentors, with whom she still keeps in touch and relies on to navigate her career. It gave her the confidence to connect with Kansas City leaders and to start building her professional network. JoAnna’s advice to current Scholars stems from her years in the program. She encourages current Scholars to “take advantage of the resources and connections that come with being a student. Take people up on the offers to meet for coffee and be vocal about your interests and career goals. It’s also important to be vulnerable about the areas where you’re struggling and to seek out mentors who can help.”

Awards and Accolades

By Karah Chappel, third-year Scholar
Sponsor: UMKC Board of Trustees

Many of the Scholars were recognized this school year for various achievements and awards. Congratulations to these Scholars on their great accomplishments!



Emily Wesley presented at Undergraduate Research Day at the Capitol, which aims to inform state lawmakers about the unique opportunities undergraduate students have to participate in mentored research or creative scholarship within the UM System. She aided in research focused on the mechanisms behind the dysfunctional events that lead to infertility, miscarriage and genetic disorders.

Jacob Furry presented his work entitled “Comparisons of Support Among K-12 Teachers in Kansas and Missouri” at the National Association for Music Educators Conference. He also brought this project to Undergraduate Research Day at the Capitol. Jacob has been designated an Undergraduate Research Fellow by UMKC for his work and its dissemination.



Lanisha Stevens is currently the treasurer for Sister Circle and will become president in the fall. Sister Circle is a student organization that makes strides toward empowerment through opportunities for women of color on campus.



Tim Nguyen was just elected the Student Government Association president for the 2021-22 school year. He says of his new position: "I want to be someone FOR my community, not just someone in my community. I want to make UMKC a better tomorrow for the students and people who call it their home."

Taylor Hamilton is currently interning with Brightstar Care where she provides home health care to people across the Kansas City area and into parts of Kansas. She enjoys building relationships with clients and working with her mentor nurse, all while becoming the best nurse she can be.



Maddy Bremer was recently hired as a student ambassador for the UMKC College of Arts and Sciences Recruitment Office. She works with prospective students and organizes recruitment events. Maddy was also chosen as a resident assistant for the Honors Living/Learning Community in the coming school year.

Karah Chappel completed her senior honors thesis entitled "Exploration of the Referral Process of Social Workers within a Policing Structure." Karah is also currently the integrated social media and marketing intern with the UMKC Women's Council, interacting regularly with her mentor and Board of Trustees member Debbie Brooks.



Scholars' Summer Plans

Niki Joshi, second-year Scholar
Sponsor: Barbara Hall Marshall



Accounting student **Grace Yu** anticipates her first summer internship at Emerson & Co. in Westport. There, she will be handling matters related to payroll, merchant services and bookkeeping insurance. Aside from the technical experience, however, Grace also looks forward to expanding her professional network, interacting with clients and acclimating to the environment and culture of a small business. Overall, the internship will serve as a further introduction to the world of business and will help define her next immediate steps and larger career trajectory.

In March, **Niki Joshi** was awarded the Frederick Douglass Global Fellowship by Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs and the Frederick Douglass Family Initiatives for her commitment to leadership, social justice and intercultural communication. Of over 500 applicants from across the country, Niki was one of the 14 selected for a fully funded four-week residency program in Dublin, Ireland, taking place this summer. Her accomplishment was recognized by top officials and administrators in both the United States and Ireland, and she was personally congratulated by Vice President Kamala Harris, Taoiseach Micheál Martin and Ambassador Daniel Mulhall.



After a well-deserved retreat in Utah at the start of the summer, **Gavin Ott** looks forward to resuming his internship at NorthPoint Development. Based in Riverside, the company is regarded as one of the most active commercial real estate developers in the nation, and Gavin will be an integral member of their Capital Team. In his role, he will support and aid in numerous responsibilities, including the tracking of invested equity and loan covenants, as well as the performance of market labor analyses.

Building from her experience as an integrated social media and marketing intern for the UMKC Women's Council, **Karah Chappel** will be adding her talents to ACE Publishing as their social media manager this summer. Known for their signature guided journals, Karah looks forward to working at the boutique publishing company as well as the opportunity to collaborate with Annie Presley, the company's co-founder and a member of the Board of Trustees.

Looking Back on Freshman Year

Featuring First-year Scholar Maddy Bremer

Whitney Schweiger, first-year Scholar
Sponsor: Friends of Rachel Drabenstott

Maddy Bremer is a first-year Scholar from Clinton, Missouri. She is currently studying as a political science major with plans to pursue a law degree after graduating from UMKC. Looking back on her first year of college, Maddy has plenty of fun memories to share from her adventures.



One of Maddy's favorite memories from her freshman year is the time that she and a group of friends from the Honors College had a picnic on the lawn of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. "We went to the dining hall and got our food to go. Then, we walked to The Nelson and had our picnic," she said as she recalled the event. "It was a fun way to hang out with people in a more COVID-safe environment."

When asked if there was anything special that she had taken away from her classes this year, Maddy shared an experience from a social justice class she took in the fall. "We spent the semester working on an individual research project relating to a social issue we were interested in," said Maddy. "I researched an issue that was specific to my hometown, and I ended the semester with a greater understanding of my community and values."

As she looks forward to her second year of college, Maddy is excited for the new experiences that being a sophomore will bring. "I'm excited to move into the Honors Living/Learning Community (LLC) at Oak Street Hall. I'll be a resident assistant in the Honors LLC, and with everyone hopefully getting vaccinated this summer, the first- and second-year Scholars will ideally be able to get to know each other in person!"

Maddy has had a great first year at UMKC, and she is grateful to the Trustees for their support throughout this past year. "As a Trustees' Scholar, I have a lot of opportunities that many other students don't have," she acknowledged. "Special attention from the Trustees and the network of people the scholarship provides have helped me a lot this year." Maddy is looking forward to continuing her education and having great years at UMKC!

Service and Socials

Whitney Schweiger, first-year Scholar
Sponsor: Friends of Rachel Drabenstott

These Scholars volunteered in October to help pick up trash around the Martin Luther King Jr. Square Park in Kansas City.

Pictured, left to right: Gavin Ott, Jacob Furry, Karah Chappel, Caroline Moriarty, Adam Larson, Taylor Hamilton, Mouada Allan, Lanisha Stevens and Joe Constantino.

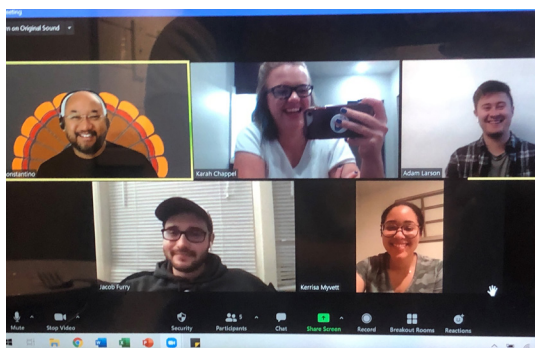


The Betty Rae's Ice Cream Social also took place in October, where Scholars gathered to catch up with each other during the Fall Semester.

Back row, left to right: Tia Kahwaji, Maddy Bremer, Gavin Ott, Carlos Silva and Tim Nguyen. Front row, left to right: Isabella Del Cid, Ciera Ayala (and dog Oakley!), Grace Yu, Whitney Schweiger and Izzy Daab.

A few of the Scholars met over Zoom in November to share a virtual Thanksgiving dinner together.

**Top row, left to right: Joe Constantino, Karah Chappel and Adam Larson.
Bottom row: Jacob Furry and Kerrisa Myvett.**





A large group of Scholars (cover) volunteered in February at the Harvesters Community Food Network, where the team boxed six pallets of food in two hours! Aubrey Brown (above) prepared cardboard boxes to be sent down the conveyor belt behind her. A team of Scholars packed them with nonperishables that would be delivered to those in need.

These Scholars volunteered at Habitat for Humanity, which is a nonprofit organization that builds affordable housing for families in the community. The volunteers helped with organizing merchandise at the Habitat for Humanity store.

Back row, left to right: Camille Covington, Adam Larson, Kerrisa Myvett and Bayley Brooks. Front: Karah Chappel



Graduating Scholar Spotlights

By Caroline Moriarty, fourth-year Scholar
Sponsor: Ken and Ann Baum



Camila Aponte will be matriculating at the KU School of Medicine in July. The advice she would give her freshman-year self is to find a balance between studies and fun: “At the end of the day, an A is an A.” She thanks the Trustees’ Scholars Program for putting her in settings to build her personal and professional skills.



Ciera Ayala will begin her job at Children’s Mercy in the cardiology unit. She would tell her freshman self to enjoy the first two years in the real college setting (pre-nursing program) and attend social and sporting events. Accordingly, her favorite memory of the program was the Thanksgiving dinners, where she could wind down and hang out with other Scholars.



Bayley Brooks will begin her full-time role as a water resources engineer at HNTB, where her mentor, Scott Smith, worked before recently retiring. Her favorite memory from the program is attending the UMKC Crescendo concerts (tickets provided by the Trustees) at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts because she was able to see the performances of fellow Scholars.



Camille Covington will be moving to Austin, Texas, with her husband while working remotely as a marketing coordinator for OneDigital Investment Advisors. Her favorite memory from the program is going to the escape room at Union Station and grabbing pizza with the Scholars afterwards. She is thankful for the connections she made in the program, including with her mentor, Scott Boswell.



Jacob Furry has accepted a teaching position with Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools. He will be the K-5 elementary music teacher at Welborn Elementary School. Jacob credits the Trustees' Scholars Program for molding him into a more aware and curious individual by exposing him to the diversity of disciplines, communities and perspectives within the program.



Caroline Moriarty will be matriculating at the University of Minnesota Law School, located in Minneapolis, Minnesota, this fall. She is most grateful to the Trustees' Scholars Program for allowing her to explore her interests academically and professionally. She thanks her mentor, Joel Voran, for his advice regarding the legal profession and Trustee program staff for supporting her development.



Orlando Quintana will be working as a mechanical engineer for Innovative Materials and Processes, a company that specializes in government-contracted research and development of explosive materials, devices and manufacturing processes. His advice for his freshman-year self would be to make the most of the four years as a Scholar by taking advantage of every opportunity to grow.



Ruby Rios will be starting as a solutions engineer with VMware remotely. She highlights her connection with her mentor, Debby Ballard, as one that has been incredibly meaningful and instrumental to her success. Ruby looks forward to staying involved in the Kansas City community and fostering the lifelong professional connections and friends she made while in the program.



Emily Wesley will be applying to medical school with a planned start term of Fall 2022. Her favorite memory of the program is helping with Trustees' Scholar Days because she was reminded of how many connections, skills and opportunities she received while in the program.

ABOUT UMKC TRUSTEES' SCHOLARS

Scholars receive a full-ride (tuition, housing, book allowance) scholarship provided by the UMKC Board of Trustees and its community partners. Since the program's inception in 2002, over 100 Scholars have completed their undergraduate degrees at UMKC, and more than half of the program's alumni have made their home in the Kansas City area.

For information about the Trustees' Scholars Program, contact Joe Constantino at constantinoj@umkc.edu

