

## Meet Kiila Tollerson . . .

Growing up, Kiila Tollerson always wanted to be a physician. She had a passion for learning, and a strong desire to help others, and she knew that the ever changing field of health care would provide her the opportunity to do good for others, while always having the chance to further her education. During a summer break from her studies at The College of William and Mary, Kiila attended the Health Careers Opportunity Program (HCOP) at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). This six-week program included a Biochemistry and Human Anatomy Course, the opportunity to shadow physicians in the community, MCAT preparation, and advising on applying to medical school. It also provided Kiila the opportunity to network with faculty and physicians in the community, and at VCU, where she is now in her second year of medical school. Kiila credits her experience at the VCU HCOP with the strong foundation in anatomy and excellent preparation that has helped her to excel in medical school.



*“Aside from the academic opportunities I received from HCOP, I also made some life-long friends. HCOP provided just one more opportunity to surround myself with other highly driven individuals.”*

### About the Program

- HCOP is authorized under Title VII of the Public Health Service Act. Together with the Centers of Excellence (COE), HCOPs function to increase the representation of minority and disadvantaged students in the health professions.
- The VCU HCOP offers assistance and resources to help students become competitive applicants for medical, dental, pharmacy, physical therapy, and other health/allied health professional schools and graduate programs.
- The HCOP is a six-week program, which includes a biochemistry and human anatomy course, shadowing health professionals in the community, MCAT preparation, ethics small group discussions, and graduate school advising. Students also receive a stipend for their participation.

### The Effect of Funding Cuts . . .

- In FY 2006, when Congress cut funding for many of the Title VII programs, funding for the HCOP program at VCU was among those eliminated.
- Because of the loss of funding, VCU School of Medicine has suffered greatly. Their biggest loss is in the number of minority students attending the school, which has dropped dramatically.
- Students who took part in the HCOP program at VCU were given the opportunity not only to advance their undergraduate pre-medical studies and to have instruction in preparation for the MCAT exam, but they were given the chance to forge a connection with the staff, faculty, and health professionals associated with the VCU School of Medicine.
- Without the HCOP program, minority students are not given the opportunity to establish a connection with the school, and therefore, less minority students are attending the VCU School of Medicine.



For more information, contact: **Tannaz Rasouli** ([trasouli@aamc.org](mailto:trasouli@aamc.org)) or **Abby Schopick** ([aschopick@aamc.org](mailto:aschopick@aamc.org))  
Association of American Medical Colleges, Government Relations  
2450 N Street NW • Washington, DC 20037 • Ph: 202.828.0525 • Fax: 202.862.6218

See more Profiles of Success at: <http://www.aamc.org/advocacy/hpniec/profiles.htm>