

Meet Charisse Y. Sparks, MD . . .

When Dr. Sparks began considering medical school, she was wary of the challenges ahead, especially those she faced as an African American woman. After gaining admission to the University of Kansas, School of Medicine, she was accepted into the Health Careers Pathway Program (HCPP) and met Iral Porter, who helped guide her through her medical training. With the aid and support of HCPP, she achieved an academic standard earning her election to the medical honor society Alpha Omega Alpha, while also becoming an active leader in student government. After her residency, she completed a fellowship in Germany as the recipient of a prestigious traveling scholarship from the Orthopaedic Education Foundation. Today, Dr. Sparks is Medical Director of the Department of Orthopaedic Trauma at Heartland Regional Medical Center in St. Joseph, a community on the Kansas-Missouri border. She attributes her success in part to the support she received through HCPP.



“There was a time that I was told that I had no chance of getting an orthopaedic residency – until I was introduced to the HCPP . . . I am presently one of only four black females in the nation in the subspecialty of orthopaedic trauma.”

About the Program

- The HCPP is a Health Careers Opportunity Program (HCOP), which 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 Kansas University, School of Medicine program is designed to prepare and support students’ pursuits toward a medical career, and to facilitate the entry of minority and/or disadvantaged students into medical school.
- Students participate in activities designed to strengthen their academic competitiveness, such as skill development in note-taking and time management, as well as course instruction in mathematics, biology, general chemistry, and English.

According to Dr. Sparks . . .

Health Careers provided resources that were key to my success. I still had to do all of my own work and make my way, but with the help of this program, I was able to navigate the way more efficiently and effectively. I truly believe I would not have had this kind of success without the aid and support of the HCPP. Their commitment to academic excellence and the overall well-being of those in their charge is astonishing. The goal of this program is to provide you with tools for success and they meet or exceed that goal with every student.

I am presently a practicing orthopaedic traumatologist; one of only four black females in the nation in the subspecialty of orthopaedic trauma. There was a time that I was told that I had no chance of getting an orthopaedic residency – until I was introduced to the HCPP. I completed my residency training at one of the top ortho programs in the nation, and followed that by completing my fellowship training at Harvard Medical School. Again, I owe it all to the solid foundation and support provided me by HCPP. Providing hope is a tough job, but this program does just that.

For more information, contact: **Erica Froyd** (efroyd@aamc.org) or **Tannaz Rasouli** (trasouli@aamc.org)

Association of American Medical Colleges, Office of Governmental 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/laborhhs/healthprof/profiles.htm>