

Meet DeMarkus Wilson . . .

At an age when most kids can't wait to get rid of braces, 16-year-old DeMarkus Wilson dreams about them: his goal is to attend dental school and pursue a career in oral maxillofacial surgery or orthodontics. A rising junior at Paul Laurence Dunbar High School in Lexington, Kentucky (Fayette County), DeMarkus participated in the University of Kentucky's Health Careers Opportunity Program (HCOP). As part of the six-week summer enrichment camp, DeMarkus and other students from urban and rural communities had the opportunity to observe a surgery, perform dissections, and shadow health professionals. The participants also attended classes, including one in which they received their CPR certification. With the help of HCOP, DeMarkus now has a head start on his dreams.



DeMarkus (left) observes UK anatomy and neurobiology professor Dr. Jennifer Brueckner.

*“This has been a great six-week long program in which I have gained tremendous insight and knowledge. In a nutshell, I’d say it’s an educational thrill . . . We see new things in the health care field, and **six weeks of taking college courses will definitely prepare you for years to come.**”*

About the HCOP 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 UK HCOP features a Summer Enrichment Camp and a Health Researchers Academy, and has had great success in with the quality and quantity of students from underserved and disadvantaged urban and rural communities.
- Students participate in labs and classes in chemistry, biology, and other areas. Students also take specialized classes, including classes in communication, medical math, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- In only two short years, over 5000 students in Kentucky have benefited from the UK HCOP.
- The Summer Enrichment Camp exposes high school students from Lexington, Covington, and several rural counties to practicing physicians at UK, as well as UK dentists, other nurses and professionals in the colleges of Pharmacy and Health Sciences.
- The Health Researchers Academy allows rising high school juniors and seniors to shadow UK health researchers in the colleges of Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Nursing and Health Sciences.
- More information on the program activities, such as coursework, lab work, and shadowing activities, is available on the program website: <http://www.uky.edu/ukymain/spots/welcome-10071.html>

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