

Meet Christelle M. Akati . . .

As a senior at Central High School in Omaha, Christelle had no idea what her life would be like after graduation. Enrolling in the Health Careers Opportunity Program (HCOP) at Creighton University the summer before college was the catalyst that encouraged this bright-eyed, intelligent young woman to pursue a profession in medicine. Her undergraduate work, active participation in HCOP, mentoring and research activities, involvement in the international and African students associations, and distinctive cum laude biology degree secured her a seat in the University of Nebraska’s medical school. Currently, Christelle is participating in an NIH-sponsored Predoctoral Interdisciplinary Clinical Research Training fellowship with pediatric infectious disease professor Dr. Alexis Elwards at Washington University in St. Louis, MO. Her dream is to become a pediatric infectious disease specialist and combat diseases with both public health and clinical care implications. The faculty and staff at the Creighton HCOP are certain that Christelle will achieve that success and more.



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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 Creighton University HCOP and COE operate a Saturday academy for high school students, a six-week summer academy for high school and college students, a post-Baccalaureate pre-dental and pre-medical program, and a pre-matriculation program for pharmacy, dental, and medical students.
- The program strives to educate parents, to promote academic competitiveness, to provide tutoring and mentoring activities, and to help students secure financial aid and scholarships to help achieve their dreams.

According to Christelle . . .

As a recent legal immigrant in the United States, I was not only faced with the challenges of a new culture and new language, but also with the challenge of finding guidance and mentorship for the career goals and ambitions I had. I wanted to pursue a career in the health field, and the HCOP program helped me identify what sector of the health field I wanted to go into, as well as identify the steps I needed to take in order to succeed in the field of medicine.

From summer classes to shadowing experiences and mentoring sessions, I had the opportunity to learn and explore various aspects of the health field and find mentors to help me pursue my goals. The HCOP program made me feel confident enough about my science classes and my writing skills that I did not feel discouraged to pursue my dreams. It was my first opportunity to really explore what I wanted to do with my life in a very practical and mentored way. Without the HCOP program and the foundations it gave me, I would certainly not be at the level I am today in my career. I am always thankful to have had such an opportunity.



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

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