Meet Abigail Sellers...

After going to her first dental appointment at the age of five, Abigail knew she wanted to be dentist. A South Texas native, Abigail was born in Laredo, TX and later moved to San Antonio, TX. After graduating from the University of Houston, Abigail and her husband moved to College Station, where she witnessed the lack of quality dental care in the community firsthand. Upon enrolling in the Texas A&M University Baylor College of Dentistry (TAMBCD), Abigail participated in the TAMBCD Post-Baccalaureate program through the Title VII Centers of Excellence, which seeks to expand diversity of the workforce and improve access to dental care in rural and underserved communities. Throughout her time at TAMBCD, Abigail has consistently given back to the community. During spring break, Abigail and a group of students volunteered at various public health clinics across Colorado as part of the college’s preceptor program, designed to introduce up-and-coming graduates to the profession under the supervision of practicing dentists. Abigail, now in her 4th and final year of study, she plans to practice as a dentist in a rural community and improve access to quality dental care.

“This program and the dedicated staff behind it heralded my culturally diverse background as complimentary and approbated all that which I felt were disadvantages as a prospective dental student as commendatory and desirable for the type of character building experienced student desired by faculty at the college. Without this program I fear that too many devoted, steadfast, and competent dental school applicants will never have the opportunity to prove their highest worth. And that would be a weighty loss for all.”

About the Program

- The Centers of Excellence (COE) program is authorized under Title VII of the Public Health Service Act. Together with the Health Career Opportunity Program (HCOP), the programs function to increase the representation of minority and disadvantaged students in the health professions.

- The TAMBCD COE seeks to expand the diversity of enrollees and faculty by educating students in providing health care services to diverse patients and graduating dental professionals who are committed to improving oral health of urban and rural underserved communities in Texas and beyond. The program continues to tackle the nation’s dentist and dental faculty shortage by ensuring a pipeline of qualified health professionals and recruiting students to pursue their DDS and master’s degrees simultaneously.

- "If you look at the composition of the population in the U.S., and you look at the number of providers of dental care, there is such a disparity between the proportions of African-Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans in the general population and in the dental profession...It’s a Texas issue, but it’s also a national issue. It’s something every dental school is trying to address. We’re trying to bridge that gap because we know that the students we identify early on and engage in the dentistry pipeline will go back into their communities and provide superior care for decades. This is a win-win situation.” – Dr. Ernestine Lacy, Program Director

- Find more information about the program at: http://bcd.tamhsc.edu/coe/about.html

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