



2013 First-Year Scholars

In 2010, the Abramson Scholarship Foundation refined its mission by committing to award multi-year scholarships for all four years of college. Each Scholar will receive aid the first year of college, with the possibility of scholarship renewal, provided the Scholar fulfills the scholarship requirements. The scholarship award amounts increase over the four years.

Monet Blakey attended Benjamin Banneker High School, where she maintained a 3.8 GPA and was 6th in her class. Monet served as Treasurer for Mu Alpha Theta (Banneker's Math Honor Society), was a member of the National Honor Society, was awarded a first place in category at the school science fair, and was honored as Youth of the Year for the Boys and Girls Clubhouse for Greater Washington #14. She was able to balance all of this along with helping her mother – a single parent – care for her other siblings and working twenty hours per weekend as a waitress. Monet's personal experience led to her desire to become a cardiologist because she wants to use her "love of sciences to help people." During her interview with the Scholarship Committee, Monet explained that she wants to be "part of the solution" and teach young people about heart disease and how to establish healthy habits early in life. In her recommendation letter, Monet's Biology teacher, Mandi Jacobson, demonstrates how Monet is the quintessential Abramson Scholar "balancing so much on her shoulders yet never forgetting about the others around her," including her fellow classmates who she checks in with to make sure they are prepared for class and have food for lunch. In 2010, Monet was selected for the prestigious (MS)2, a summer enrichment program for minority students at the Phillips Academy in Andover, and she has received high honors in Math and English there for the past three summers. That program introduced her to Bates College, the school she will attend this fall.

Imhotepa Holder attended Woodrow Wilson Senior High School, where she maintained a 3.54 GPA, while serving on the National Honor Society and as a tutor at the Math Center and the Latin American Youth Center. For the past three years, Imhotepa has been employed by the DC Summer Youth Employment Program and has volunteered at Martha's Table, a center that feeds poor and homeless District residents. She currently volunteers at the Sitar Arts Center – and serves as the President of its Leaders program - where she has been involved in dance and piano since the age of 9, and now volunteers in ballet and art classes and during holiday celebrations. Imhotepa's Pre-Calculus teacher, Alex Jacoby, says she is "one of the top students in a very competitive class and demonstrated that she's both eager and capable of handling the challenges of college life." In her essay, Imhotepa described why she should be selected as an Abramson Scholar: "[m]any may be clouded by success and forget where they came from and all the people that helped them ... I cherish the bonds I have formed with the people who have had my best interest at heart and the community that helped raise me." Imhotepa credits her 8th grade math teacher for introducing her to a subject she finds fascinating and will pursue by majoring in Accounting at Temple University this fall.

Arnasha Jones is a graduate of McKinley Technology High School where she maintained a 4.18 GPA and was 1st in her class. One of five siblings in her household, Arnasha contributes financially by working a part-time job while balancing her challenging workload and extensive extracurricular activities, including serving as a Delta Youth Leader for the Mayor's Youth Leadership Institution, a senior mentor for the Pregnancy Prevention Mentoring Program, the secretary for her youth ministry, and an assistant at the National Humane Society. U.S. History Instructor Lashunda Reynolds sums it up with "Arnasha Jones is a student whose soft spoken demeanor and unwavering attitude in the classroom has left me believing in the future of this generation. Ranking number one amongst her peers, she [empathetically] and tenaciously leads. Her infectious delightful personality compels you at first encounter, and it continues to grab you as you witness her diligence and work ethic to remain on top." At her interview, it was apparent that Arnasha has an incredible drive to succeed and desire to set an example for her younger siblings as the first in her family to graduate from college. Arnasha will attend North Carolina State University in the fall, with a career interest in economics or engineering.

Yue Ou attended Woodrow Wilson High School. Despite immigrating to the United States just four years ago, Yue maintained a 4.18 GPA. Yue considers herself a "female challenge conqueror," attempting and succeeding where she once faced adversity. In her essay, she describes her school experience: "the confusing inflections of my classmates and the racial discrimination were the first memory about school...with help from my mom, and the ESL teacher, my communication skills were enhanced as a result, and I felt more secure reaching out to new people." Also in her essay, Yue cites the dramatic collapse of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge in Washington in 1940, just four months after it opened to traffic, underlining the need for competent engineers. She feels that "being a female civil engineer in a field that is dominated by males will help show that women...can succeed in a challenging career." Yue's counselor, Wanda Flowers, describes Yue as fair-minded and compassionate. At her interview, Yue discussed how important her work at the Chinatown Community Cultural Center is to her; at the CCCC, she straddles two worlds

and utilizes her bilingualism – both tutoring ESL to new immigrants and teaching Chinese to native English speakers. Yue will attend the University of Maryland in the fall, majoring in engineering.

Earica Parrish was the valedictorian of her senior class at Thurgood Marshall Academy, where she maintained a 4.25 GPA. Like all of our Scholars, Earica has faced and overcome significant personal challenges. Earica is manager of both the flag football and track and field teams. She was also the lead reporter of the school's newspaper club and was chosen to participate in the Washington Post Press Pass program, honing her skills as a future journalist. Sanjay Mitchell, Head of College & Alumni Programs at Thurgood Marshall, writes that in Earica, "[w]e really have a future Peabody or Murrow award winner in our midst." At her interview, Earica spoke of her interest in both exploring the digital world of journalism and preserving and returning to the print newspaper. She also spoke glowingly of the Press Pass Program and her mentor there. The Program exposed her to interesting cultural events, and her mentor's exciting and ever-changing schedule really appealed to her. Earica's social studies teacher Brian Ronal further illustrates her diligence and passion to succeed when describing how she writes a paper: "she works through three or four drafts, incorporating comments and revising with an eye toward improving papers that she already knows will receive an A." Furthermore, Ronal states, "Earica is truly a one-of-a-kind student. I have never taught a student I can more highly recommend to college. I do not expect to ever have a student like her again in my teaching career." Earica will attend Syracuse University this fall to pursue her dream of becoming a journalist. **Earica is our 2013 Quadrangle Named Scholar.**

Roger Sanchez maintained a 3.93 GPA at the Bell Multicultural High School/Columbia Heights Educational Campus, where he served as Vice President of the National Honor Society and the captain of the varsity baseball team. Roger is described by his history teacher, Taylor Lebovich, as "a natural leader in the classroom - a student that other students often look to when they need guidance, clarification, or just an encouraging word." At his interview, Roger spoke of the personal importance of the Global Kids Club, which he helped found, which raises awareness among peers about environmental and societal issues across the globe. His work with the club enabled him to travel to Mexico and Indonesia as a cultural ambassador. Of Dominican descent, Roger writes about his experience delving into his own race and culture when presenting at the National Council of La Raza's Youth Leadership Program in 2011. In dissecting the question of whether he is black or Latino, he discovered that 85% of Dominicans are of African descent, but tend to deny that heritage. From that day on, Roger embraced being Afro-Latino, and in his words, "[t]his realization of my identity impacted my life tremendously because it has allowed me to bridge...the African American and Latino communities on my campus and abroad, in order to dispel ethnic misconceptions and to work toward building coalitions." Roger will continue to nurture his passion for healing and uniting different people and cultures by majoring in International Relations at American University this fall.

The Abramson Scholarship Foundation will recognize the following two students with recognition awards. These students easily meet the demanding criteria for an Abramson Scholarship, but both received substantial financial assistance from his or her college and/or other organizations. In recognition of their accomplishments and remaining financial need, the Foundation is pleased to offer them a modest monetary award and to include them in the Foundation's mentoring and professional development programs.

Charleene Smith maintained a 3.98 GPA at McKinley Technology High School, where she was 4th in her class and involved in several extracurricular activities, including Future Business Leaders of America, Mathletes, and the Science Club. Charleene also served as President of the National Honor Society for two years, and was honored as Student of the Month and Most Outstanding Student. Her AP Chemistry teacher, Travis Hartberger, writes that "[t]eaching students like Charleene makes science education invaluable and indescribably rewarding" and that her "critical thinking skills in science were apparent outside of class as well; Charleene [played] a key role in McKinley's second place finish at the Washington DC Regional Science Bowl in February 2012." Charleene's Calculus II teacher writes, "even though Charleene is one of the top 1% of students in terms of intellect and academic achievement and ability that I have ever taught, what makes her truly unique is her combination of mental agility, leadership, and social acumen rare for students her age." During her interview with the Scholarship Committee, Charleene described her pride and excitement when the George Washington University mascot came to her high school and announced her full scholarship award to GW, where she will begin the journey toward her goal of becoming an attorney.

Rodrigo Umanzor is a graduate of Bell Multicultural High School/Columbia Heights Educational Campus, where he had a 4.05 GPA and was 3rd in his class, and was involved in Future Business Leaders of America, National Honor Society, NJROTC, and First Robotics. In his essay, he describes the dramatic move from his small and rural hometown in El Salvador to Washington, DC at the age of 5: "I have often felt like an underdog, somehow different than the majority, and quite frankly, I relish this role. It is almost as if not much is expected from a Salvadorian in D.C." In his essay and his interview with the Scholarship Committee, Rodrigo discussed his participation in Boston University's Summer Challenge Program where he took two college classes and lived on campus. As the only Hispanic student from D.C., Rodrigo was initially intimidated by his colleagues from wealthy New York and California suburbs, but he quickly saw that his "rigorous AP courses in high school, extracurricular leadership, college classes, and academic achievements" leveled the playing field. According to Rodrigo, he realized that "just like the other students around me – I was also college ready." That readiness is underscored by Rodrigo's prestigious POSSE scholarship award, which covers his full tuition at University of Wisconsin – Madison, where he will pursue engineering.