

Science Organization of Minority Students

S.O.M.S

Queens College

Spring 2006 Newsletter



S.O.M.S – The Science Organization of Minority Students – is a pre-professional club dedicated to supporting and helping those ethnic/racial minorities who are looking forward to careers in the health professions and science, and who are underrepresented in those occupations.

Our purpose is achieved by informing our members of the opportunities available and the requirements for admission into professional and graduate schools. Trips are made to these schools and members are able to attend the North Eastern meeting of the National Association of Minority Medical Educators.

Our purpose is achieved by providing academic and curriculum advice, tutoring, and emotional support to our members and by educating our members in the study skills and strategies which promote academic success in college, in professional schools, and in their future career as care givers and researchers.

Our purpose is achieved by having club meetings at which representatives from professional schools speak; alumni speak and members speak.

S.O.M.S. is indebted to Queens College, the Student Association, Student Life, the Vice President of Student Affairs and many faculty and staff for their encouragement, and their personal and other supports enabling us to become the successes we are.

A Special thanks to Ms. Pierce-Anyan, pre-professional Advisor, our champion for the last 13 years, and to Mrs. Jane Schade-Nevins, Administrative Assistant.

A FIRST: COME FALL SEMESTER 2006 FIVE ALUMNI OF THE SCIENCE ORGANIZATION OF MINORITY STUDENTS WILL BE ATTENDING COLUMBIA!

For the first time in its 34 year history S.O.M.S. will have 5 of its alumni (2 of whom were members of the leadership) attending some division of Columbia University at the same time. Richard Ansong will be entering his 3rd year in Columbia College of Dentistry; Nancy Okeke will be joining him there as a 1st year student; Sonia Toure will enter her 2nd year in Columbia's School of Public Health (General Public Health Track); Fatimah Bah (epidemiology track) and Dr. Tessie October (Health Policy & Management) will be joining Sonia there as 1st year students. All have received substantial scholarships to support their studies.

We are happy to see the increased diversity in the health professions our members are pursuing and bursting with pride that all of these alumni have shown in their actions that they have internalized the S.O.M.S. maxim that "all giving is giving back".

Bravo & Godspeed.

Maureen Pierce-Anyan
Director of Minority Affairs and Pre-Professional Adviser

Other Alumni News

Graduating May/June 2006

- Alexandra Lynch – Will begin a residency in Urology at New York Medical College
- Cecilia Jacques – from the State University of New York State College of Optometry.
- Cedric Walls – SUNY Downstate Medical Center
- Christine Noble – Finishing residency in Anesthesiology at Columbian Presbyterian Hospital
- Tanya Smalls – Albert Einstein Medical College
- Daline Derival – MPH Epidemiology at Emory University (Dec. '05)

Entering Medical/Dental School

- Erik Gilroy – NYU Dental School
- Sarah Anyangwe – Just entered Ross Medical College

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

Graduates June 2006

- Denesha Findley
- Dimitri Coupet
- Erik Gilroy
- Fatimah Bah
- Lauren Vendryes
- Nancy Okeke
- Steve Milord



Acceptance into Summer Programs...

- Paul Jones – Columbia University SMDEP
- Donaldson Conserve – Columbia University SMDEP
- Temitope Ademuwagun – University of Connecticut Medical Dental Prep. Program

Wait Listed

- Emilsie Leconte – SUNY Downstate, Exploring Health Careers
- Akinbayo Akinkunle – SUNY Downstate, Exploring Health Careers

S.O.M.S Thanksgiving 2005



Reflections on Thanksgiving Dinner

The 2005 S.O.M.S. thanksgiving dinner was the first gathering I attended outside of our weekly meetings. At the dinner I met many of the current members and several present and former SOMS affiliates. While time passes, my relationship with these acquaintances continues to flourish proportional to my appreciation for SOMS. The members of this unique organization have befriended me in addition to showing me genuine support during my academic pursuits. In hindsight, I truly realize how fortunate I am to be a member of SOMS.

-Paul Jones

Finally, it was time for me to see and hear for myself. I must admit that the SOMIES' speech moved me deeply in the beginning of the dinner. After listening to all of the

SOMIES I had a chance to look around the room and I noticed that there were a few faces that I didn't recognize. That's when it dawned on me that half of these new faces were alumni of Queens College and the rest were former faculty members. I was glad to see the alumni there because I wanted to hear what they had to share with the prospective medical students. Just as Ms Pierce Anyan had told me, the alumni shared several experiences which I found to be very motivating. For example, an alumni by the name of Richard Ansong, who is currently completing his second year in dental school at Columbia University, explained how the summer dental program that he had attended during his sophomore year at Columbia University was decisive for him : he said "At first I was contemplating about if becoming a dentist was what I really wanted, but after attending the summer dental program at Columbia University I was one hundred percent sure that dentistry was the right career for me." He went on to say that he had not applied for the program during his freshman year because he had to work and decided that he would apply for the program the coming summer and he did. I was so shock to hear the excuse that he gave Ms Pierce Anyan for not applying for the program because I recalled telling Ms PA the exact same thing. My mouth was wide open because I felt that this guy was telling my story. All in all, my attendance at the dinner opened up my eyes to various factors that I have already experienced and will continue to experience except this time I will be aware of exactly what is going all because I was fortunate enough to listen to Richard's story. I look forward to the next Thanksgiving dinner and the many more to come.

-Donaldson Conserve

Reflections on the S.O.M.S meeting with Dr. Tessie October, Fellow in Critical Care Pediatrics, at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital; QC alumnus 1996

March 22, 2006

Dr. Tessie October gave a very inspirational talk about her road to medical school and beyond. She proved to all that were present that with determination, perseverance, and hard work, we can accomplish all of our goals. What I liked most about Miss October is that she not only spoke about the advantages/benefits of becoming a doctor, but she also spoke about the sacrifices. She shared with us some of her personal

struggles and sacrifices she made to get where she is today, and she affirmed that despite those struggles, her love for the field of medicine continues to grow. Miss Tessie October, a highly intelligent and vibrant young woman, gave us all encouragement and hope that we can do anything we put our mind to, and that we should always think big. She informed us of the numerous scholarships that are available, especially for students of color, and advised us to apply to as many as possible. Listening to Miss October's honest account was extremely valuable to me. I appreciated her first hand knowledge and experience in the medical field, and she painted a clearer picture of what I am to expect as I continue on this journey to becoming a medical doctor.
-Temitope Ademuwagun

Other Members Responses:

"Hey, I really liked Tessie's talk. She has a lot of experience and wisdom to share. She gave great tips for MCAT studying. She was really approachable and she made you feel like you could ask her anything. It is also inspiring to see such a smart and successful minority woman. It gives you hope that you can do it too."
-Karen Fernandez

"Dr. October's presentation was informative and inspirational. From speaking to her I reconfirmed my goals, and my plan to attain them. She was the first person that really broke down the duration of medical training, and the different paths that can be taken. Her presentation also validated my love for the medical field!"

-Fatimatou Bah

"Dr. October's talk was inspirational. Knowing she finished from Queens College and is currently doing her residency strongly affirmed the fact that I can make it too. She also gave the low down about the duration of medical training emphasizing the fact that you have to be a life-long learner to be in the field."

- Omotola Oyesile

S.O.M.S Field Trip to The BODIES Exhibition

The BODIES exhibition is an experience that has lifelong lessons for all individuals, irrespective of their desire to go into the health profession or join the biomedical research community.

Touring the BODIES exhibition definitely confirmed and renewed my desire to join the medical profession. The journey into the mysterious world of the human body was well organized, intriguing and informative. It was

like an introductory biology course without your inner voice asking you 'What is the point of all this?' The learning environment at the exhibition stimulated me to learn more and to view this exciting and ever-evolving topic with new eyes. It was not uncommon to see medical students college students, elementary students and grandparents engage together in a conversation about the beauty of the CNS (central nervous system) framework.

To become a physician is not just about memorizing the parts of the human body and their specific functions. It is about giving your patients the necessary information needed to maintain the homeostasis of their body. In other words, to become a physician is to have the privilege to compassionately guide your patient's body from dis-ease to a position of ease. This is even clearer when one observes and compares at the exhibition normal lungs to tobacco-induced cancerous lungs.

Seeing the importance of balance and oneness in the internal functioning of the human body, those who know me acknowledge that I like to look for a philosophical or faith based explanation for an experience.

As a Christian, the exhibition reiterated for me the precious gift of life that God has given me to use for the greater good of all mankind. He has given me a multi-cellular, complex and unique body which functions in harmony so that I may be able to focus and accomplish the specific purposes He has designed for me to bring about change in this complex and rapidly evolving world. For those who do not share my faith, there is still a philosophical message that one can extrapolate from the BODIES exhibition. By reading about and observing live human specimens, you will agree with me when I say that we have a responsibility to each invest in our own self-discovery so that we may discover our own unique niche and purposes for the betterment of society. Strive to become like the naïve stem cell that makes a commitment somewhere along the journey to be the best differentiated cell it can be in order to maintain the homeostasis of a human being. Finally, through the interactions of the various cells, tissues and organs of our body one can conclude that we should be proud of our individuality because utilizing our differences can be our strength and like the beauty of the human body, we too can show the universe the beauty and resilience of mankind.

-Sylvia Onyewuanyi

S.O.M.S Field Trip April 20th, 2006

The Darwin Exhibit: A Showcase of the Human Mind

The experience of moving through the Darwin exhibit at the Museum of Natural History was a little

unusual because of the exhibit's focus. When one hears the words Darwin and Evolution, one immediately conjures up the imagery of the Galapagos Islands and the hundreds of variations of finches that no one knew existed before the sometimes controversial but yet logical theory of evolution brought them to our attention. As neither one of these characteristics was the focus of the exhibit, it was difficult at first to put the details of this exhibit into an appropriate context.

As most know, and for those who don't-a ten minute mini-film explained it- evolution is the theory that connects all the individual organisms in nature and ultimately establishes biology as a methodical science and not merely a collection of random observations and notes on the natural world. Evolution gives meaning, structure, and logic to biology, and by systematizing its content, permits it to be positioned alongside its scientific brethren, chemistry and physics.

The background of Darwin's thoughts that lead up to the theory was emphasized. From notes on similarities between species of finches, and tortoises, and functions of appendages, to variations in the characteristics and size of offspring, specific pollination structures in orchids, and differences between fossils and current species, the extremely vast and varied array of Darwin's observations was on display. Particularly enlightening were Darwin's notes which displayed the questions he posed to himself at every turn.

Upon noticing over and over again this theme of observation and question, I finally understood that this exhibit, more than emphasizing the theory's importance, celebrated it as one of the greatest triumphs of the scientific method, and paid tribute to the power, ability and, most importantly, the attainable vision of the human mind when it's open to the many possibilities of the world and is unburdened by devotion to establish modes of thoughts or loyalty to institutions.

In comparison to the tools that are at the disposal of today scientists and which strengthen the credibility of evolution, e.g. DNA sequencing, Darwin's tools, e.g. a plain magnifying lens, were technologically inferior. The right mindset and the right questions, observations and methods of contextualizing the facts, render an elaborate tool-kit unnecessary. Instruments can never replace the invaluable qualities that come from staying true to its essence of the scientific method.

This exhibit is a journey in the coming age of an inquisitive mind. There were many references to how Darwin spent much of his youth fascinated by his observations of the natural world and his interest in the curiously vast forms life took on. Curiosity and an

obsession with wanting to understand the mysterious and unknown is the foundation of every great thinker, and attention to detail in all that he did was intrinsic to all Darwin's observations, especially those at the Galapagos Islands where there were such minor differences in the many species of plants and birds. Finally, the exhibit underscored the scientist's ability to contextualize information and to connect them so as to see trends-the bigger picture.

And it is here that Darwin's mind triumphed over the many others that came before him. His notes contain the first biological family tree ever constructed, and of course, his now famous paper outlining the logistics behind his new and radical vision of the origins of life. Rather than give up in frustration like his predecessors or resort to illogical assumptions posed by the scientific institutions and religious establishments of the time, he continued to look for an answer that took all his observations into account and that answered all his questions with no exceptions. This is his legacy to modern science and it more than deserves this exhibit. On display is the power of our intellect and the understanding of what we are capable of as a species, and most importantly, as individuals.

-Edward Ramos

QC Graduate 2005 Biochemistry major

'05-'06 S.O.M.S STEERING COMMITTEE

- Zalika Martin
- Sylvia Onyewuenyi
- Omotola Oyesile
- Osariemen H. Edegbe
- Paul Edwards
- Chantel Scott

'06-'07 S.O.M.S STEERING COMMITTEE

- Osariemen H. Edegbe
- Donaldson Conserve
- Paul Jones
- Temitope Ademuwagun
- Emilsie Leconte
- Sylvia Onyewuenyi

SOMS WORKS!!!

Editor/Designer:

Osariemen Hope Edegbe, Ms. Maureen Pierce-Anyan