

## **BMI Teaching Trends Newsletter – February 2021**

### **Teaching Matters**

by Christine Huang and Dr. Matthew Jackson

BMI graduate students have limited opportunities to gain teaching experience at the medical school and with the shift to remote learning caused by the pandemic those few opportunities have been lost for the past year. Four students in the department are currently participating in a pilot that will provide them with formal teaching experience. Kaitlyn Martin, Kay Ekwuazi, Ashomathi Mollin, and Michael Muczynski will participate in a program led by Christine Huang, Associate Director of the Wayne State Tutor Training Academy and Peer Assisted Learning Program in the Academic Success Center. Beginning in January 2021, Christine provided an orientation and training for Kaitlyn and Kay who will offer academic support in two undergraduate biochemistry courses. Because they joined the BMI department in the fall 2020, Ashomathi and Michael will begin the program in summer of 2021 after completing their core coursework and joining a research lab.

Wayne State's Peer Assisted Learning program comprises undergraduate student tutors who qualify as a peer tutor after they have successfully completed that course and received formal training through the Tutor Training Academy. There exists a paucity of peer support for upper level courses because those students who are actively engaged in the tutoring program are taking those courses in their final year of degree completion. Therefore, Christine's idea was to enlist the assistance of BMI graduate students for those upper level courses with the necessary training for them to effectively support the students. We are grateful to have two faculty members who are highly receptive to this initiative. Kay is assigned to assist students who are enrolled in Dr. Jared Schrader's BIO 3100: Biochemistry course while Kaitlyn is providing academic support for students who are enrolled in Dr. Christine Chow's CHM 5600: Survey of Biochemistry course during the winter 2021 term. Both faculty members welcomed the BMI students and are prepared to mentor them for future teaching opportunities. BMI graduate students' time commitment for this program is no more than five hours per week with office and/or group hours that do not interfere with their progress to degree.

BMI students will find that this formal teaching experience in addition to their excellent research portfolios provides them a competitive advantage when seeking academic positions post-graduations. Their CVs will include participation in an academic support program that offers teaching experience that is based on evidenced based training. Depending on the success of the pilot, the program may be expanded to provide academic support to students in the Basic

Medical Sciences program and post-baccalaureate graduate students who are part of Dr. Akins' Bold Moves Proposal.

The students were provided an opportunity to explain why they chose to participate in the pilot program including their motivation and any past tutoring/teaching experience:

“I chose to volunteer for this for two main reasons. The first is that I find teaching others to be very intimidating and learning how to cope with that discomfort while also being effective with my sessions will help me in my future as a medical student and physician. The second is that when I was in undergrad, I couldn't afford the special tutoring services, but there was an upperclassman who would come after our class to help us with concepts. I thought this would be a nice way to pay it forward.” ~ Kaitlyn G. Martin

“I chose to participate in the tutoring program, because I felt it would be a great way to help students who may need additional help. I was motivated to help with the class because it was a subject that I enjoyed so much when I took it, I had a ton of questions when I took the class and know I would have really benefitted, had this opportunity been provided to my class. I have also had the opportunity to tutor my native language to many people from my country that may did not learn the language growing up and various others, and it has been so great to see others improve and see the joy it brings them to be able to grasp things they may have initially struggled with. And I hope to see the same with this class!” ~ Kay Ekwuazi

“I have always believed that through the act of teaching, the one who teaches is given the opportunity to further master and share their knowledge on the topic. Through my past experiences of tutoring fellow undergraduates and elementary school children, I have valued the importance of formulating strategies to tackle any challenges encountered through one's education.” ~ Ashomathi Mollin

“I am excited to spend time enriching the learning experiences of students at WSU. I have taught both science and non-science related material and enjoy the opportunity whenever it arises.” ~ Michael Muczynski