

# Cultivating Future Leaders in Healthcare



The Bluford Healthcare Leadership Institute

*2025 Annual Report*



BLUFORD  
HEALTHCARE  
LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE



## *A Message from the President*

A unique element of our 13th Institute was the positive inclusion of six (6) different BHLI Alumni Scholars who presented to the 2025 Cohort about their impactful roles in healthcare administration, in public policy as a legislative health advocate in the Office of Governor of Kansas, and in nursing in the fields of behavioral health, emergency, and pediatrics.

Many thanks to all the Kansas City institutions who hosted our scholars, including the Kansas City Police Crime Laboratory, for a tour of the facility followed by a conversation with Kansas City's Chief of Police, the Jackson County Prosecutor, and the Public Safety Director of a local level one trauma center.

*"Through a diverse range of presentations, site visits, and team-based projects during the Institute, I gained a clearer vision of the type of leader and healthcare professional I aspire to become." 2025 BHLI Scholar*

Our 2025 Institute had its typical high-profile slate of national presenters including the President and CEO of Virtua Health, the new Chief Transformation Officer at University of Florida Health, and an inspiring presentation from the President of Government and Senior Vice President of Sales and Retention at Delta Dental of Minnesota. As usual, there were numerous healthcare professionals and leaders from the Kansas City area that helped to make this year's Institute a memorable two-week event.

Special thanks to our internship site partners at health systems across the country that provided exceptional learning experiences for our interns.

Thank you to all who have invested in our work to eliminate disparities in healthcare as we mentor, coach, and sponsor a talented workforce for healthcare leadership.

*John W. Bluford, III, MBA, LFACHE*

*Pictured on cover:*

*Left: Qiana Thomason, President and CEO, Health Forward Foundation*

*Center: Dennis Pullin, President and CEO, Virtua Health and Aniyah Hodges, Claflin University*

*Right: Tom Bellamy, President of Government and Ancillary, Delta Dental of Minnesota*

## Executive Summary

The Bluford Healthcare Leadership Institute (BHLI) is an intense professional development program designed to mentor, coach, and sponsor talented undergraduate scholars for healthcare leadership who will serve to eliminate disparities in healthcare. The Institute incorporates the dynamic business and healthcare community of Kansas City, MO while leveraging the national reputation of its president and founder, John W. Bluford, III, to expose the participating scholars to mentors, experiences, and internship opportunities unique to this Institute. The BHLI enhances the scholars' knowledge, understanding, and practice of the key leadership traits increasingly required of leaders in the 21st century healthcare environment.

## Phase I:

- Phase I of the 2025 Bluford Healthcare Leadership Institute was held in Kansas City, MO from Wednesday, May 14 through Thursday, May 29.
- Students were recruited through a joint effort between BHLI staff and school officials from the leadership, scholarship, honors, and career placement programs of partnering universities. Interested students were required to possess a minimum GPA of 3.2 and possess demonstrated leadership skills. Each student was required to submit an official copy of his/her college transcript, two professional letters of recommendation, and an essay outlining career goals and interest in the BHLI.
- The 2025 Cohort of the BHLI was comprised of students recruited from the following universities and colleges: Claflin University, College of Charleston, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, Hampton University, Loyola University, Morehouse College, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Spelman College, and University of Missouri-Kansas City.

## 2025 Scholar Profile

### Majors and Minors:

Astronomy

Biology

Business Administration

Chemistry

Cybersecurity

Economics

Finance

Geology

Health Services Management

Health Sciences

Leadership

Marketing

Psychology

Public Health

*Collective Grade Point Average for 2025 Scholars: 3.6*

*Tyler Glymph, College of Charleston*

# Bluford Healthcare Leadership Institute (BHLI) Scholars

## *Participating Universities/Colleges*

### **CLAFLIN UNIVERSITY – Orangeburg, SC**

An historically black University founded in 1869, Claflin is committed to providing students with access to exemplary educational opportunities in its undergraduate, graduate and continuing education programs. Claflin provides a student-centered, liberal arts education grounded in cutting-edge research, experiential learning, state-of-the art technology, and community service.



#### **Aniyah Hodes**

**Major:** Biology **Minor:** Chemistry

**Expected Graduation Date:** May 2027

**Hometown:** Columbia, SC

**Future Aspirations:** Aniyah aspires to become a pediatric pharmacist with plans to establish a foundation for young women interested in pursuing careers within the medical field. Her foundation will provide young women with mentors, peer groups, and networking opportunities among current pharmacy students. Aniyah's passion for medicine and civic purpose align with her efforts to support prospective underrepresented women in medicine.

### **COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON – Charleston, SC**

Founded in 1770 and chartered in 1785, the College of Charleston is the oldest municipal college in the nation. Its founders include three signers of the Declaration of Independence. The college offers approximately 150 undergraduate majors and minors, 22 master's degree programs, nine (9) graduate-level certificate programs and robust interdisciplinary programs.



#### **Michael (Tyler) Glymph**

**Major:** Geology **Minor:** Astronomy

**Expected Graduation Date:** May 2026

**Hometown:** Columbia, SC

**Future Aspirations:** Upon completion of his undergraduate degree, Tyler will pursue a career at the intersection of space exploration, health, and law. He plans to launch a space-focused company that advances health and safety for space travelers while improving life on Earth.

## FLORIDA AGRICULTURAL and MECHANICAL UNIVERSITY - Tallahassee, FL

Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) began in 1887 with fifteen students and two instructors. Today, FAMU offers 54 bachelor's degrees, 29 master's degrees, three professional degrees, and 12 doctoral programs in a wide range of academic areas. The University enrolls nearly 10,000 students hailing from across the United States.



### I'myani Key

**Major:** Chemistry **Minor:** Pre-med

**Expected Graduation Date:** May 2027

**Hometown:** Bloomfield, NJ

**Future Aspirations:** After completing her bachelor's degree, I'myani plans to continue her studies and earn a medical degree. With a passion for serving her community and forming meaningful relationships with her patients, she aspires to specialize in pediatric dermatology. I'myani is determined to change lives the same way her NICU doctors positively impacted and changed hers.

## HAMPTON UNIVERSITY – Hampton, VA

Hampton University is a dynamic, progressive institution of higher education, providing a broad range of technical, liberal arts, and graduate degree programs. The historically black university's student body represents 49 states and 35 territories and nations. Since its founding in the 1860s, Hampton University has continued to stay true to its original promise of The Standard of Excellence, An Education for Life.



### Clarence Bostic

**Major:** Cybersecurity **Minor:** Business and Leadership

**Expected Graduation Date:** May 2027

**Hometown:** Fairfax, VA

**Future Aspirations:** Clarence plans to begin his professional journey as a software engineer which will allow him to work on multiple projects leveraging his diverse skill set in computer science and leadership. This work will build a solid foundation from which he can achieve his ultimate goal of becoming a Chief Information Security Officer, a role that will require continuous learning and growth in leadership skills.

## Participating Universities/Colleges *continued...*



### Winfred (Trey) Harris

**Major:** Finance

**Expected Graduation Date:** May 2028

**Hometown:** Atlanta, GA

**Future Aspirations:** Dedicated to eliminating health disparities, Winfred is a finance student with a concentration in pre-medicine. Upon completion of his undergraduate degree, he will pursue a medical degree, specializing in emergency medicine. After working as an emergency medicine physician, Winfred plans to pursue health care administration, using his clinical experience to end systemic inefficiencies among underrepresented communities.



### Ayana Van Demark

**Major:** Health Sciences-Community Health Promotion

**Expected Graduation Date:** May 2027

**Hometown:** East Elmhurst, New York

**Future Aspirations:** Upon completing her undergraduate degree, Ayana will gain clinical experience before pursuing a career as a pediatric physician assistant. Passionate about addressing healthcare disparities, she looks forward to working in safety net hospitals and clinics, providing compassionate, culturally responsive care in underserved communities. Through patient-centered approaches, Ayana aims to empower families through health education and advocacy while making quality pediatric healthcare more accessible.

## LOYOLA UNIVERSITY – Chicago, IL

Founded in 1870, Loyola University is a private Jesuit research university. Its professional schools include programs in medicine, nursing, and health sciences anchored by Loyola University Medical Center and Loyola University Chicago School of Law. Comprising thirteen colleges and schools, Loyola offers more than 80 undergraduate and 140 graduate professional programs.



### Brooklyn Springfield

**Major:** Public Health

**Expected Graduation Date:** May 2027

**Hometown:** Merriam, KS

**Future Aspirations:** Upon completing her bachelor's in public health, Brooklyn plans to continue her studies to earn a master's in public health before also earning a Ph.D. in epidemiology. She looks forward to impacting human health by developing equitable policies and programs focused on improving the health of marginalized communities.

## MOREHOUSE COLLEGE – Atlanta, GA

The mission of Morehouse College is to develop men with disciplined minds who will lead lives of leadership and service. A private historically black liberal arts college for men founded in 1867, Morehouse offers instructional programs in three divisions - business and economics, humanities and social sciences, and science and mathematics - as well as extracurricular activities.



### **Jayden Rainey**

**Major:** Business Administration **Minor:** Entrepreneurship

**Expected Graduation Date:** May 2026

**Hometown:** Gaithersburg, MD

**Future Aspirations:** Jayden's goal is to grow as a leader in healthcare as he refines his business expertise. He desires a leadership role where he can work with a team to create strategic plans that drive innovation and efficiency. With continuous learning and leadership development, Jayden plans to create a lasting impact in the fields of healthcare and business.



### **Ashton Szarnicki**

**Major:** Chemistry **Minor:** Economics

**Expected Graduation Date:** May 2027

**Hometown:** San Francisco, CA

**Future Aspirations:** Upon completion of his undergraduate studies, Ashton will pursue a dual MD/MBA to prepare for a career in the business side of medicine. With a passion for both science and economics, he aims to merge clinical insight with strategic thinking to improve healthcare access and equity in underserved communities.



### **Chase Woodard**

**Major:** Finance

**Expected Graduation Date:** May 2026

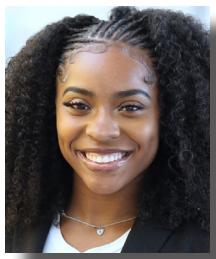
**Hometown:** Missouri City, TX

**Future Aspirations:** After earning his undergraduate degree, Chase plans to enter the field of healthcare finance, investment banking, or wealth management where he can serve others in the areas of personal and business finance. In the long term, he aspires to merge finance and entrepreneurship by building sustainable businesses that create jobs and generational wealth.

## Participating Universities/Colleges *continued...*

### NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL AND TECHNICAL STATE UNIVERSITY – Greensboro, NC

Founded in 1890, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University is a public, high research land-grant university committed to exemplary teaching and learning, scholarly and creative research, and effective engagement and public service. The University offers degrees at baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral levels and has a commitment to excellence in a comprehensive range of academic disciplines.



#### **Imani Barnes**

**Major:** Biology Pre-Med

**Expected Graduation Date:** May 2027

**Hometown:** Clinton, MD

**Future Aspirations:** After completing her undergraduate degree, Imani aspires to pursue a medical degree to become an anesthesiologist. She is committed to inspiring underrepresented youth to pursue healthcare careers while addressing disparities in healthcare. Imani aims to promote equity and serve underrepresented communities through compassionate care and mentorship.



#### **Nia Bright**

**Major:** Health Services Management **Minor:** Marketing

**Expected Graduation Date:** May 2026

**Hometown:** Antioch, TN

**Future Aspirations:** Upon completion of her undergraduate degree, Nia plans to pursue a Master's in Public Health to help improve healthcare access for underserved populations. She aspires to work in healthcare administration, creating policies and programs that advance access to quality healthcare for all.

### SPELMAN COLLEGE – Atlanta, GA

A four-year liberal arts women's college founded in 1881, Spelman College is a global leader in the education of women and is dedicated to academic excellence in the liberal arts and sciences. Spelman College is committed to the intellectual, creative, ethical, and leadership development of its students.



#### **Jada Gorgor**

**Major:** Psychology Pre-med **Minor:** Theater

**Expected Graduation Date:** May 2027

**Hometown:** Stone Mountain, GA

**Future Aspirations:** Upon completion of her undergraduate degree, Jada will pursue her MD in aspirations to become a dermatologist. She is dedicated to promoting cultural humility and specializing in treating skin of color to help reduce disparities in dermatologic care. Jada will use her background in psychology to dispute harmful mental narratives that her patients may hold about their skin.

## Participating Universities/Colleges *continued...*



### **Analiese Poe**

**Major:** Health Science

**Expected Graduation Date:** May 2028

**Hometown:** Clarksville, TN

**Future Aspirations:** Upon completion of her undergraduate degree, Analiese plans to pursue an MD-MPH to bridge medicine, health policy, and advocacy. She is committed to addressing healthcare disparities by integrating clinical care with policy and management. Through her work, she aims to improve healthcare access, equity, and community well-being, ensuring sustainable systemic change.

## UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI AT KANSAS CITY – Kansas City, MO

Chartered in 1929, the University of Missouri-Kansas City is a leading urban research university, committed to research that changes the world from discoveries at its School of Biological Sciences to educational innovations developed at the Institute for Urban Education. UMKC also operates the Schools of Medicine, Pharmacy, Dentistry, and Nursing while utilizing proximity to two major hospitals.



### **Mirka Gonzalez**

**Major:** Biology **Minor:** Chemistry

**Expected Graduation Date:** May 2027

**Hometown:** Moscow Mills, MO

**Future Aspirations:** After completing her undergraduate degree, Mirka will pursue a medical degree as a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine, dedicated to improving the lives of children. She aspires to bring new treatment plans and care to the medical field as a surgeon, consistently aiming to enhance medical procedure and practice.



### **Thuan Nguyen**

**Major:** Biology

**Expected Graduation Date:** May 2028

**Hometown:** Kansas City, MO

**Future Aspirations:** Upon completing his undergraduate degree, Thuan will pursue medical school where he looks forward to deepening his knowledge regarding human anatomy as he studies to become a cardiac surgeon. He will provide equitable access to care among disadvantaged communities and serve his patients with care and compassion.

## Typical Day at the Institute

The scholars were hosted at the following venues throughout the Institute where they learned leadership lessons from executive leaders from the fields of banking, business, education, finance, government, healthcare, and health law: Kauffman Foundation Conference Center, Polsinelli Law Firm, and University of Missouri-Kansas City.

The scholars participated in educational site visits to the following Kansas City venues:

Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City  
Kansas City Crime Laboratory  
Operation Breakthrough  
Quest Diagnostics Laboratory  
Swope Health  
University Health  
University Health's Behavioral Health at the Healing Canvas  
Walgreens Pharmacy at University Health

In addition, the BHLI scholars enjoyed themselves at the following outings:

Chicken N Pickle  
Kansas City Symphony at the Kauffman Center for Performing Arts  
Pinstripes Bowling  
St. James United Methodist Church  
Seasons 52 for Etiquette Dinner  
Topgolf

*Melesa Johnson, JD, Jackson County Prosecutor; Lenton Bailey, Senior Director Public Safety, University Health; and Stacey Graves, Chief of Police, Kansas City, MO*



*Sample Schedule*

7:30 – 8:30 am	Presentation: <i>Purpose and Service</i>	Jessica Melton, MHA Chief Transformation Officer University of Florida Health
9:00 – 10:00 am	Presentation: <i>Suited for Leadership</i>	Dennis Pullin President and CEO Virtua Health
10:30 – 11:30 am	Presentation: <i>Insights and Outcomes</i>	Thomas Bellamy President, Government and Ancillary Executive Vice President, Sales and Retention Delta Dental of Minnesota
11:30 – 12:15 pm	<b>Luncheon</b>	Stacey Graves Chief of Police, Kansas City MO
12:30 – 2:00 pm	Addressing Violence as Social Determinant of Health Panel moderated by <b>Lenton Bailey</b> Senior Director, Public Safety, University Health	Melesa Johnson, JD Jackson County Prosecutor
2:30 – 4:00 pm	Tour and Overview: <i>Quest Diagnostics</i>	Doug Hamilton, DBA, MBA Vice President, Laboratory Operations Quest Diagnostics Midwest Region
5:30 pm	<b>Etiquette Dinner</b> Seasons 52 on the Plaza	Mary Jean Billingsley, MEd Lasting Impressions, LLC
8:00 pm	<b>Kansas City Symphony</b> Helzberg Hall at Kauffman Performing Arts	

# Phase I Program Conclusion

During the 2025 Bluford Healthcare Leadership Institute (BHLI), scholars researched the contemporary issues listed below and collaborated with their team members to develop innovative solutions to the issues.

At the closing ceremony of the BHLI, the scholars delivered their case studies to an audience of BHLI board members, supporters, and community leaders.

## Weight Loss Drugs

What impact are Glucagon Like Peptide drugs (GLP-1) having on the cost of health care? What health conditions can be improved by the use of GLP-1 drugs?

- Tyler Glymph: College of Charleston
- Jada Gorgor: Spelman College
- Aniyah Hodges: Claflin University
- Thuan Nguyen: University of Missouri-Kansas City

## Healthcare in the United States Prison System

How timely, accessible, and costly is it? Is the care coordinated and comprehensive? Can the care be delivered more efficiently and effectively?

- Clarence Bostic: Hampton University
- Mirka Gonzalez: University of Missouri-Kansas City
- Jayden Rainey: Morehouse College
- Brooklyn Springfield: Loyola University

## Pharmaceutical Advertising

What are the steps involved in creating pharmaceutical advertising? What factors should consumers follow when viewing varying promotional methods?

- Nia Bright: North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University
- Winfred Harris: Hampton University
- I'myani Key: Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University
- Chase Woodard: Morehouse College

## Wearable Medical Technology

How can accessibility to wearable health technology improve health outcomes? What impact does wearable technology have on patient-physician relationships?

- Imani Barnes: North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University
- Analiese Poe: Spelman College
- Ashton Szarnicki: Morehouse College
- Ayana Van Demark: Hampton University

*“Participating in the BHLI was one of the most transformative professional and personal experiences I have had. Over the course of the rigorous, eye-opening program, I came to understand that in addition to clinical roles, roles in healthcare leadership and public policy also offer powerful and meaningful ways to serve communities. I am walking away from the BHLI with not only a broader vision for my career, but also a renewed commitment to grow as a leader, thinker, and advocate.”* Ashton Szarnicki

## 2025 BHLI Faculty/Presenters/Facilitators

- **Algren, D. Adam, MD:** Department of Emergency Medicine, University Health
- **Archer, Rex, MD, MPH:** Director, Population Health and Public Health, Professor of Public Health, Kansas City University
- **Bailey, Evan, MBA:** Director, Surgery, Henry Ford Health System, 2014 BHLI Cohort
- **Bailey, Lenton:** Senior Director, Public Safety, University Health
- **Beard, Nikki, PHR:** Senior Program Manager, Belonging and Inclusion, Saint Luke's Health System
- **Bellamy, Thomas J.:** President, Government and Ancillary, Executive Vice President, Sales and Retention, Delta Dental of Minnesota
- **Billingsley, Mary Jean, MEd:** President and Founder, Lasting Impressions, LLC
- **Bluford, III, John W., MBA, LFACHE:** President and Founder, Bluford Healthcare Leadership Institute
- **Brooks, Candice, MHA:** Community Relations Officer, University Health
- **Burns-Wallace, Angela, EdD:** President and CEO, Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation
- **Carolina, Marvin, Jr.:** Assistant Teaching Professor, University of Missouri, Kansas City
- **Cary, Ann, PhD, MPH, RN, FNAP, FAAN:** Associate Director for Community Partnerships and Professor, Florida Gulf Coast University
- **Chow, Valerie, MD:** Retired Chair of Anesthesiology, Truman Medical Center-Lakewood
- **Christian, Alauna, MSN, APRN:** Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, University Health, 2016 BHLI Cohort
- **Cole, Amy:** Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer, Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City
- **Davis, Erin:** Public Community Affairs Specialist, Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City
- **Esselman, Mary, EdD:** Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer, Operation Breakthrough
- **Evans, Joan, MBA:** Executive Coach and Consultant
- **Garcia, Raquel, BSN, RN:** Community Health Strategies and Innovation Nurse, University Health
- **Graves, Stacey:** Chief of Police, Kansas City, MO
- **Guzman, Jasmin, BSN, RN:** Neonatal ICU, Children's Mercy Hospital, 2014 BHLI Cohort
- **Hamilton, Doug, DBA, MBA:** Vice President, Laboratory Operations – Great Midwest Region, Quest Diagnostics
- **Hill, Wendy:** Chief People Officer, Netsmart Technologies, Inc.
- **Hobson, Julius W., Jr.:** Senior Policy Advisor, Polsinelli
- **Hughes, William:** Director, non-Automated Lab, Quest Diagnostics
- **Jamal, Naiomi, MD, MPH:** Chief Health Officer, Swope Health
- **Johnson, Melesa, JD:** Jackson County Prosecutor
- **Justus, Jolie, JD:** Chief Legal Officer and General Counsel, University Health
- **Krieger, Gage:** Financial Advisor, UBS Wealth Management
- **Krohn, Megan, DDS:** Executive Vice President Dental Services, Swope Health
- **Kueser, Kim:** Senior Consultant, Furst Group

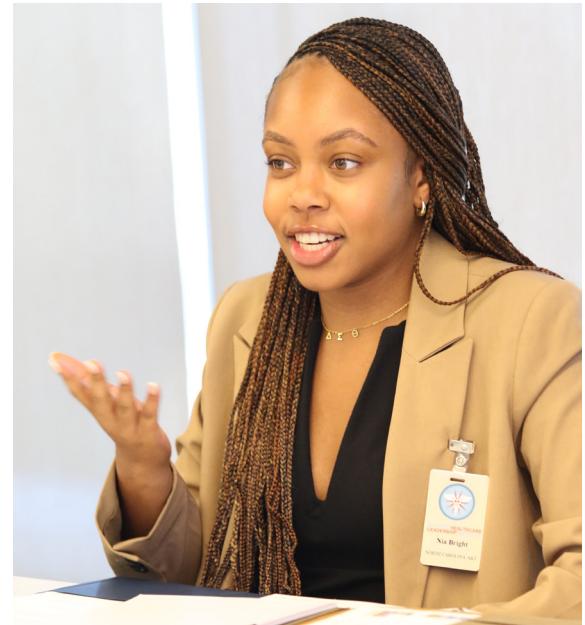
## 2025 BHLI Faculty/Presenters/Facilitators *continued*

- **Lozano, Sergio:** Scientist-Principal, Quest Diagnostics
- **Lucas, Chris:** Cash Services Manager
- **Meaney, Kamera:** Chief Health Policy and Governmental Relations Officer, University Health
- **Melton, Jessica, MHA:** Executive Vice President and Chief Transformation Officer, UF Health
- **McCurry, Donna, APRN:** Sickle Cell Comprehensive Clinic, University Health
- **Melling, Steven, PhD, MA:** Associate Teaching Professor, University of Missouri-Kansas City
- **Mitchell, Josette, MSW:** Executive Vice President Behavioral Health, Swope Health
- **Molina (Carrillo), Brenda, BSN, RN:** Emergency Department, University Health, 2015 BHLI Cohort
- **Monroe, Rob:** Engagement Team Manager, Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City
- **Muse, Tiara D., MPH:** Managing Director, Nonprofit and Social Impact. DSG | Koya
- **Pullin, Dennis:** President and CEO, Virtua Health
- **Ravin, Jeron, JD:** President and Chief Executive Officer, Swope Health
- **Rhone, Janet:** Manager, Healthy Harvest Mobile Market, University Health
- **Risinger, Jeff, PhD, MBA:** Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer, The University of Kansas Health System
- **Sainte, Vladimer, LCSW:** Senior Project Coordinator – Behavioral Health Employee Wellness, University Health
- **Sanchez, Dominique:** Director of Health and Human Services Policy, Office of Governor of Kansas, 2018 BHLI Cohort
- **Steele, Mark T., MD:** Executive Chief Clinical Officer, University Health
- **Theiss, Matt:** Director, Laboratory and Automation, Quest Diagnostics
- **Thomason, Qiana, MSW:** President and Chief Executive Officer, Health Forward Foundation
- **VanWinkle, Carolyn:** Senior Human Resources Business Partner, Quest Diagnostics
- **Watson, Ryan:** Retired Senior Vice President and Branch Manager, Chubb and Son
- **Williams, Roger C., Jr., EdD:** Educator and Community Leader
- **Wilson, Jacqueline, RN:** Corporate Patient Experience Officer, University Health
- **Zuchowski, Linda:** Microbiology Manager, Quest Diagnostics
- **Zweerink, Scott, PharmD:** Corporate Director, Pharmacy Services, University Health

*“Participating in the BHLI changed the trajectory of my life. I am more confident in my goals, more prepared for the path ahead, and more determined than ever to lead with integrity, compassion, and purpose. The lessons I learned about leadership, service, professionalism, and self-awareness will stay with me throughout my career.” Ayana Van Demark*



BHLI Alumni Nursing Panel: Jazmin Guzman, BSN, Children's Mercy Hospital; Brenda (Carrillo) Molina, BSN, University Health; and Alauna Christian, MSN, University Health



Scholar Nia Bright



Author and historian Tim Todd, Federal Reserve Bank of KC, gifted each scholar a book



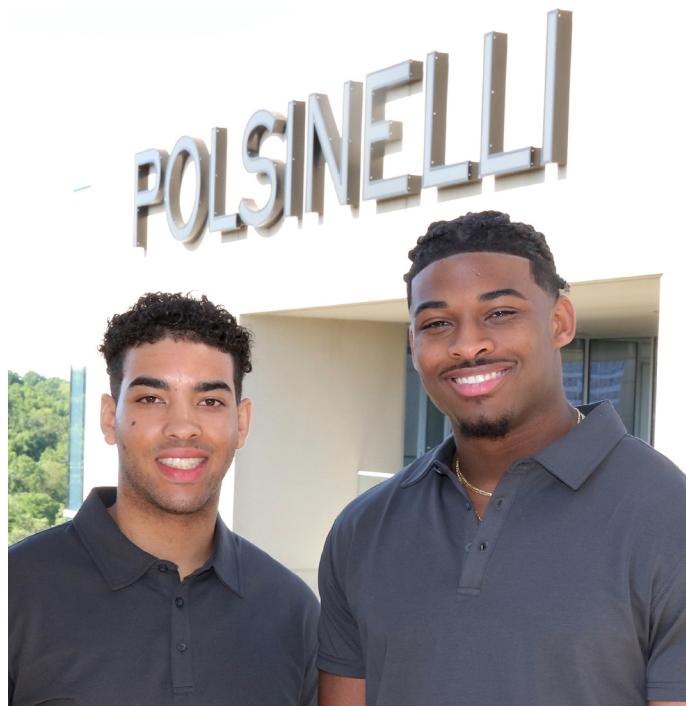
DeAngela Burns-Wallace, EdD, President and CEO, Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation with University of Missouri-KC Scholars and local Loyola University scholar



*Tom Bellamy, President of Government, Delta Dental of Minnesota and scholar Analiese Poe*



*Jessica Melton, MHA, Chief Transformation Officer, University of Florida Health with scholars*



*Scholars enjoying day at Polsinelli*



*BHLI Alumni Scholar Dominique Sanchez, Director of Health and Human Services Policy, Office of Governor of Kansas*



*Kim Kueser, Furst Group; Roger C. Williams, Jr, EdD, BHLI Board; and Wendy Hill, Chief People Officer, Netsmart Technologies served as mock interviewers*



Members of 2025 BHLI Cohort



Scholars touring Swope Health with Naomi Jamal, MD, MPH:  
Chief Health Officer



2025 BHLI Cohort at Bloch Executive Hall at University of Missouri-Kansas City



Melesa Johnson, JD, Jackson County Prosecutor and  
Stacey Graves, Chief of Police, Kansas City, MO



Scholars with Doug Hamilton, DBA, MBA, Vice President Laboratory Operations, Quest Diagnostics - Midwest Region



Scholars Nia Bright, Jada Gorgor, I'myani Key and Mirka Gonzalez



Scholars Tyler Glymph, Trey Harris, and Clarence Bostic



Scholars enjoying Topgolf



*Scholars enjoying Topgolf*



*Scholars touring Quest Diagnostics*



*BHLI Alumni scholars Gabriela Diaz Leguilli, Advent Health; Evan Bailey, MBA, Henry Ford Health; and Lauren Winston, BHLI with second from left Marcella Facey, MD, Diana Health and BHLI Board*



*Scholars at Polsinelli Law*



*Mark Steele, MD, Executive Chief Clinical Officer, University Health*



*Dennis Pullin, CEO and President, Virtua Health and scholar Trey Harris*



*Scholars during engaging learning activity*



*Scholars touring University Health*



*Tiara Muse, MPH, Managing Director, Nonprofit and Social Impact, DSG with scholars*



BHLI Board member Ann Cary, PhD, MPH, RN and scholars



Scholars at University Health



Scholars enjoying time at Chicken N Pickle



Scholars touring Operation Breakthrough

## *The Bluford Healthcare Leadership Institute - Internships*

### **Phase II**

Based upon their successful completion of the BHLI's Phase I leadership program, scholars were placed in paid summer internships at the following premier organizations:

- Advocate Health: Charlotte, NC (2)
- Atlantic Health System: Morristown, NJ
- Carilion Clinic: Roanoke, VA
- Duke University Hospital: Durham, North Carolina (2)
- Indiana University Health: Bloomington, IN
- Johns Hopkins Health System: Baltimore, MD
- Netsmart Technologies, Inc.: Overland Park, KS
- Saint Luke's Hospital of Kansas City: Kansas City, MO
- Stowers Institute for Medical Research: Kansas City, MO
- University Hospitals: Cleveland, OH



*Chase Woodard and Percival Kane, Jr.: COO, University Hospitals Ahuja Medical Center*



*Brian Gragnolati: Retired CEO, Atlantic Health System and Davon Michael*

## Summer 2025 Internship Placements, continued



Shilpa Shelton: Vice President Women's Service Line, Duke University Hospital and Zoe Shepard



Nicolas Aponte and Michael Valentine: CEO, Netsmart Technologies, Inc.



Chandler Warden and Michael Brennan, DDS, MHS: Atrium Health Oral Medicine and Maxillofacial Surgery



Olivia Hadley and Matthew Rougeux: Vice President, Children's Services, Duke University Hospital

## Summer 2025 Internship Placements, continued



*Katina Williams: Vice President Corporate Finance, The Johns Hopkins Health System and Taylor Leslie*



*Nancy Agee: CEO Emeritus, Carilion Clinic and Nia Bright*



*Alexis Reed and Sarah Zanders, PhD: Ass. Investigator, Stowers Institute for Medical Research*



*Denzil Ross: President, Indiana University Health South Central Region and Zach Kelly*

## Summer 2025 Internship Placements, continued



Connor Flanigin, PharmD: Director of Pharmacy, Madison Pickeral, and Jani Johnson: President, Saint Luke's Central Region



Alyssa Mack interned with the Women's Line at Atrium Health

*"My mentors at Atrium not only taught me about their work, but they also modeled vision, strategy, and compassion in action. They showed me that true healthcare leadership means balancing operational excellence with humanity."*

*"My internship experience not only sharpened my skills but also affirmed that I can pursue both clinical and administrative passions without limitation when led by the right people with the right mission."*

Alyssa Mack

# Summer 2025 Internship Placements and Project Descriptions for BHLI Scholars



## Nicolas Aponte

**University:** University of Missouri-Kansas City   **Hometown:** Olathe, KS

**Internship Organization:** Netsmart Technologies, Inc. - Overland Park, KS

**Projects/Experiences:** Nicolas worked as a consultant alongside his senior consulting manager, gaining valuable experience in client data management. His main project involved creating an initiation plan to reduce client strain by streamlining data export which provided Nicolas with a deep understanding of project development and implementation. A secondary project included researching common post-acute functions and definitions which expanded Nicolas's knowledge of their operations. He also shadowed team members from various departments, including engineering, which offered a comprehensive view of Netsmart's operations. This experience highlighted the importance of cross-departmental collaboration and effective communication. Throughout his internship, Nicolas was provided guidance on traversing complex client relationships and crafting a strong sense of leadership.



## Nia Bright

**University:** North Carolina A&T State University   **Hometown:** Antioch, TN

**Internship Organization:** Carilion Clinic - Roanoke, VA

**Project/Experiences:** Nia's internship experience under the leadership of Carilion Clinic's Senior Director of Human Resources broadened her understanding of healthcare systems, strengthened her interest in health administration, and reinforced her understanding of the value of relationship-building and adaptability while serving in a leadership role. Her role included reviewing and organizing I-9 employment eligibility forms to ensure compliance and audit readiness, giving Nia an appreciation for regulatory accuracy. She shadowed team members in varying departments including Quality CAPS, Mother-Baby, and Labor and Delivery. Nia learned about rural healthcare management while spending time at Carilion's Franklin Memorial Hospital. As she met with Carilion Clinic's C-suite executives, she gained leadership and strategy insights.



## Olivia Hadley

**University:** North Carolina A&T State University   **Hometown:** New Baltimore, MI

**Internship Organization:** Duke University Hospital - Durham, NC

**Projects/Experiences:** Olivia interned with the Children's Services Department at Duke University Hospital under the mentorship of the Vice President of Children's Services. Her primary project focused on designing an ideal model for scheduling surgeries after pediatric clinic visits, which involved mapping current workflows, engaging with stakeholders, and creating a standardized approach to improve efficiency and patient follow-up. Beyond her project, Olivia shadowed leaders during a Joint Commission visit, participated in Tier huddles, rounded on pediatric units, and attended performance review meetings. Throughout the experience, Olivia gained valuable lessons in communication, adaptability, and aligning operational solutions with staff and patient needs, skills she will carry forward in her future healthcare leadership career.



## Summer 2025 Internship Placements and Project Descriptions, continued



### Zachary Kelly

**University:** Morehouse College **Hometown:** Washington, DC

**Internship Organization:** Indiana University Health - Bloomington, IN

**Projects/Experiences:** During his internship, Zach worked directly with the President of Indiana University Health's South Region, gaining exposure to both executive leadership and frontline care. He engaged in diverse experiences ranging from observing total knee replacements and robotic surgeries to shadowing physicians in the emergency department and outpatient clinics. Zach contributed to performance improvement initiatives including analyzing metrics within the Performance Hub and developing strategies to address survey fatigue across the region. These experiences demonstrated to Zach the importance of a healthcare system fostering adaptability, collaboration, and patient-centered care through strong teamwork across clinical and administrative settings. Zach's internship deepened his understanding of healthcare administration and strengthened his commitment to a career in medicine.



### Indiana University Health



### Taylor Leslie

**University:** Spelman College **Hometown:** Chicago, IL

**Internship Organization:** Johns Hopkins Health System - Baltimore, MD

**Projects/Experiences:** Taylor was immersed in the world of healthcare finance during her internship with Johns Hopkins Vice President of Corporate Finance and the finance department's leadership team. Her understanding of hospital finance was deepened as she investigated the rising costs associated with organ transplants, created a comprehensive grant database, and supported a data reconciliation initiative. A highlight of her internship was going behind-the-scenes of hospital operations as she toured and learned from leaders across varying departments. She learned from the Quality Improvement team about ongoing initiatives to improve processes and patient care across the system. The exposure and mentorship she received provided a strong foundation as Taylor pursues a career in healthcare administration and policy.



### Alyssa Mack

**University:** Florida A&M University **Hometown:** Tuscaloosa, AL

**Internship Organization:** Advocate Health - Charlotte, NC

**Projects/Experiences:** Alyssa's passion for women's health was strengthened during her internship under the mentorship of Advocate Health's Assistant Vice President of Women's Service Line and the Regional Director of One Health OB/GYN, Advocate's network of OB/GYN practices in the Greater Charlotte region. Her administrative and clinical experience included shadowing medical leadership and clinicians where she observed procedures, surgeries, deliveries, and specialties such as maternal-fetal medicine, urogynecology, pelvic therapy, and the opioid pregnancy clinic. Alyssa attended C-suite meetings which focused on health policy adjustments, physician compensation, and expansion plans for OB/GYN offices. Her project analyzed procedure data to evaluate the cost-benefit of introducing nitrous oxide in offices. For One Health OB/GYN, she assessed barriers to the Agilix virtual nutrition program for pregnant women.



## Summer 2025 Internship Placements and Project Descriptions, continued



### Davon Michael

**University:** North Carolina A&T State University   **Hometown:** High Point, NC

**Internship Organization:** Atlantic Health Systems - Morristown, NJ



**Projects/Experiences:** Davon completed a healthcare administration internship under the mentorship of Atlantic Health's Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer. He contributed to initiatives aimed at integrating holistic, patient-centered approaches to healthcare delivery, while also supporting efforts related to acquisitions, gaining insight into the strategic and operational aspects of health system growth. During his internship, he had valuable opportunities to network with senior leadership, learning firsthand about executive decision making and leadership. Davon's experience broadened his understanding of healthcare administration, strengthened his professional skills, and deepened his appreciation of the intersection of compassionate care and organizational strategy.



### Madison Pickeral

**University:** Florida A&M University   **Hometown:** Loganville, GA

**Internship Organization:** Saint Luke's Hospital of Kansas City - Kansas City, MO



**Projects/Experiences:** Madison worked with the hospital's inpatient pharmacy, directly shadowing the administration and management team to learn how pharmaceutical operations are conducted in an academic hospital. She assisted in managing the day-to-day operations of the inpatient pharmacy, which included ordering compounding drugs in bulk, ensuring doses were distributed effectively and efficiently, and managing inventory. On the clinical side, Madison worked with various healthcare professionals, providing insight into the role each plays in patient care. She worked closely with the Medication Safety committee to compile and present a presentation focused on the hospital's compliance with its Look-Alike, Sound-Alike Policy.



### Alexis Reed

**University:** University of Missouri-Kansas City   **Hometown:** Grandview, MO

**Internship Organization:** Stowers Institute for Medical Research - Kansas City, MO



**Projects/Experiences:** Over the course of her internship, Alexis assisted in furthering projects under the direction of a postdoctoral researcher in the Zanders Lab. Her main project focused on the concept of DNA repeat sequences in the human genome. She had the opportunity to assist Dr. Sarah Zanders herself with her work on selfish genes. Alexis learned new lab techniques and benefitted from learning about the work being performed at Stowers Institute and other research facilities across the country.

## Summer 2025 Internship Placements and Project Descriptions, continued



### Zoe Shepard

**University:** Spelman College **Hometown:** Atlanta, GA

**Internship Organization:** Duke University Hospital - Durham, NC

**Projects/Experiences:** During her second internship with the Duke University Hospital, Zoe worked with the Vice President of the Women's Service Line. She gained in-depth knowledge of the unique opportunities and challenges in delivering healthcare to women and participated in high-level meetings with hospital leadership on strategic initiatives and operational goals. Zoe made meaningful contributions to the service line by analyzing length of stay data and offering recommendations to reduce length of stay while ensuring quality care for the upcoming fiscal year. She also collaborated with a physician on a project to standardize operating room trays and supported efforts to initiate the implementation of a new Obstetrics/Emergency Department unit. Additionally, Zoe gained valuable shadowing experience at Duke's Birthing Center, further broadening her exposure to patient care in Obstetrics and Women's Health.



**Duke University Hospital**



### Chandler Warden

**University:** Spelman College **Hometown:** Atlanta, GA

**Internship Organization:** Advocate Health - Charlotte, NC

**Projects/Experiences:** Chandler served as a research and clinical intern at Advocate Health's Department of Oral Medicine and Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery in Charlotte, NC. Under the mentorship of the Chairman of Department of Oral Medicine, she led a project titled "Delay in Radiation Treatment Due to Dental Extractions and Contributory Factors," investigating how dental clearance protocols impact timely radiation therapy for head and neck cancer patients. She completed CITI Certification to ensure ethical research practices and presented her findings at a department-wide symposium. As a clinical intern, Chandler shadowed General Practice Residency residents, gaining hands-on experience in comprehensive patient care.



### Chase Woodard

**University:** Morehouse College **Hometown:** Houston, TX

**Internship Organization:** University Hospitals - Cleveland, OH

**Projects/Experiences:** Chase interned with the Finance Department at University Hospitals' Ahuja Medical Center. He supported the organization's Chief Operating Officer and finance leaders on projects related to hospital operations and financial strategy. His work involved analyzing financial reports, observing how resource allocation impacts patient care, and gaining insight into the budgeting process of a major healthcare system. He shadowed leaders across varying departments, which gave him a broader perspective on how finance supports decision-making at every level. From his mentor, Chase learned valuable lessons about leadership, adaptability, and the importance of aligning financial goals with an organization's mission to improve community health outcomes.



**University Hospitals**

# Impacting Results: Placement of Alumni Scholars

SCHOLAR	COHORT	GRADUATE SCHOOL /EMPLOYMENT 2025
Bates (Hawks), Alexis, MPH	2013	Northside Hospital: Atlanta, GA
Higueros, Rebeca	2013	Clinica Medica: Kansas City, KS
Jones, Candace, MPH	2013	American Heart Association: Nashville, TN
Jones, Miriah, RN	2013	Texas Children's Hospital: Houston, TX
Quinn, Gabrielle	2013	Meharry Medical College: Nashville, TN
Redmond, Cameron, PA-C	2013	New Health: Lake Spokane, WA
Richardson, Jazmin, MSN, RN	2013	Grady Health System: Atlanta, GA
Ross, Taylor, PA, MBA	2013	Premise Health: Charlotte, NC
Anyaechie, Vivian, MD	2014	Emory University Department of Urology: Atlanta, GA
Bailey, Evan, MBA	2014	Henry Ford Health System: Detroit, MI
Billings, Jacorey	2014	Meharry Medical College: Nashville, TN
Butler, Diamond, MS	2014	Wellstar MCG Health: Augusta, GA
Clifton, Thomas	2014	Meharry Medical College School of Dentistry: Nashville, TN
Everhart, LaShaundra, MPH	2014	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Atlanta, GA
Granger-Koonce, Paulnisha, MS	2014	Georgia Institute of Technology: Atlanta, GA
Guzman, Jasmin, RN	2014	Children's Mercy Hospital: Kansas City, MO
Jones, Gregory	2014	Oracle Health: Raleigh, NC
Odiase, Peace	2014	Meharry Medical College: Nashville, TN
Okoro, Sandra, MD	2014	Cleveland Clinic: Cleveland, OH
Ware, Raynard, MHSA	2014	Sutter Health: Sacramento, CA
Molina (Carrillo), Brenda, RN	2015	University Health: Kansas City, MO
Deering, Nahshon, MPH	2015	Advocate Health: Charlotte, NC
Gambari, Aishat, MPH	2015	Emory University PhD Candidate in Nutrition and Health Sciences: Atlanta, GA
Hindsman, Matias, MHSA	2015	Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Services: Kansas City, KS
Hutchings, Wendell, PharmD	2015	Walmart Pharmacy: Port St. Lucie, FL
Johnson (Jones), Carla, DDS	2015	Children's Dental Care: Dearborn, MI
Lovince, Judith, PharmD	2015	Emory University Hospital: Atlanta, GA
Mayes, Kayla, MD	2015	Yale School of Medicine and Yale-New Haven Hospital: New Haven, CT
Showers, Brian, MSN-FNP	2015	Baylor, Scott, & White: Austin, TX
Taylor, Imani	2015	EarthOptics: Houston, TX
Allen, Harvey, MD	2016	Cedars Sinai Medical Center: Los Angeles, CA
Beans, Brittany, MArts	2016	Great Oaks Charter School: Bridgeport, CT
Christian, Alauna, MSN, APRN	2016	University Health: Kansas City, MO
Clark, Juan, MHA	2016	Freed Associates: Los Angeles, CA
Davis, Charles, PharmD	2016	Optum: Winter Haven, FL
DeLeon, Maximilien	2016	Rice University, PhD Candidate in Bioengineering: Houston, TX
Fisher, Demetri, MSN	2016	Rosalind Franklin University, CRNA Candidate: Chicago, IL
Fisher Miller, Kameron, PA-C	2016	OU Health: Oklahoma City, OK
Moore, (Franklin), Mariah, PharmD	2016	InClinic-Rx: Spartanburg, SC
Hairston, Tori, MArts	2016	Chicago Healing Connection: Chicago, IL

# Impacting Results: Placement of Alumni Scholars, continued

SCHOLAR	COHORT	GRADUATE SCHOOL /EMPLOYMENT 2025
Manson, Kimberly, MHA	2016	American Red Cross: Saint Louis, MO
Blagrove, Madison, PharmD	2017	Sanofi: Washington, DC
Dixon, Jordan, DDS	2017	Lakecrest Dental: Tulsa, OK
Jones, Jeliah, DDS	2017	Aspen Dental: Charlotte, NC
Long, Marque, MPH	2017	RTI International: Washington D.C.
Lyons, Faith, MAcc	2017	PwC: Atlanta, GA
Mendoza, Vanessa	2017	Premier: Charlotte, NC (based in Kansas City, MO)
Milton, Gabrielle, DMD	2017	Aspen Dental: Owings Mills, MD
Price, Kailyn	2017	George Washington University PhD Candidate in Neuroscience: Washington, DC
Ross, Myles	2017	Howard University College of Medicine: Washington, DC
Wiggins, Teeghan	2017	Phreesia: Charlotte, NC
Aponte, Camila, MD	2018	Mission Hospital: Ashville, NC
Bryant, Chase, PharmD	2018	Renown Health: Reno, NV
Evans, Elijah	2018	Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina: Charlotte, NC
Holden, Nassir	2018	Georgetown University Master's Public Policy Candidate: Washington, DC
Liggins, Kyle, MD	2018	Swedish Health Services: Seattle, WA
Merritt, Miranda	2018	Digdoc Inc.: Wahington, DC
Milner, Joy	2018	Advocate Health: Charlotte, NC
Sanchez, Dominique	2018	University of Michigan School of Public Health: Ann Arbor, MI
Stanton, Alexandria, PA	2018	OrthoCarolina: Charlotte, NC
Thomas, Jasmine, PharmD	2018	Walmart Pharmacy: Sanford, FL
Thomas, Jehnae, PharmD	2018	Amgen: Thousand Oaks, CA
Baker, Tyler	2019	Apiche Community Health Center: New York, NY
Brown, Aaliyah	2019	Duke University Masters in Business Administration Candidate: Durham, NC
Large, Jada	2019	John Snow, Inc. (JSI): Atlanta, GA
Lomax, Evallynn	2019	Case Western Reserve School of Medicine: Cleveland, OH
McGregor, Lakean	2019	Bethune-Cookman University Integrated Environmental Science Masters Program: Daytona Beach, FL
Nguyen, Timothy	2019	University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Dentistry: Kansas City, MO
Pardue, Avery, MD	2019	St. Joseph Hospital: Denver, CO
Peterson, Alexis	2019	AON Risk Services Central, Inc.: Atlanta, GA
Richardson, Antiana	2019	Vanderbilt University PhD Candidate in Biological Sciences: Nashville, TN
Riley, Cole, JD	2019	Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan, LLP: New York, New York
Willis, Kameron	2019	Mayo Clinic Neuro-Informatics Laboratory: Rochester, MN
Dones, Lauren	2020	Oakland University School of Medicine: Rochester, MN
Paris, Briana	2020	Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University: Greenville, NC
Searcy, Daniel	2020	Netsmart Technologies Inc.: Overland Park, KS
Searcy, Martin, MS	2020	Howard University College of Medicine: Washington, DC
Silva, Carlos	2020	University of Kansas School of Medicine: Kansas City, KS
Smith, Mariah	2020	Yale Law School: New Haven, CT
Williams, Miniya	2020	Columbia University Narrative Medicine Masters Program: New York, New York
Burnett, III Douglas, MPA	2021	George Washington University School of Law JD Candidate: Washington, DC

# Impacting Results: Placement of Alumni Scholars, continued

SCHOLAR	COHORT	GRADUATE SCHOOL /EMPLOYMENT 2025
Dean, Bryant	2021	Deloitte: McLean, VA
Ervin, Arrington	2021	University of Arkansas Little Rock School of Law: Little Rock, AR
Johnson, Timothy	2021	Stanford University's Goldberg Laboratory at Byers Eye Institute: Palo Alto, CA
Newsome, Sydni, PharmD	2021	Bayer/Howard University Medical Affairs Communications Fellowship; Florham Park, NJ
Simmons, Jessica	2021	Office of U.S. Senator Christopher Coons of Delaware: Washington DC
Spight, Willie	2021	Kansas City University Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine Candidate: Kansas City, MO
Williams, Whitney	2021	EY-Parthenon: Atlanta, GA
Connor, Amaya	2022	University of Virginia School of Law JD Candidate: Richmond, VA
Daniel, Nia, PharmD	2022	Novartis Pharmaceutical Industry Fellowship: Florham Park, NJ
Dorsett-Wilson, Khelsei	2022	Georgetown School of Law and Johns Hopkins School of Public Health: Washington DC and Baltimore, MD
Green, Tyler	2022	Brigham and Women's Hospital: Boston, MA
Greene, Nina	2022	Deloitte: Alexandria, VA
Nuru, Munira	2022	University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Medicine: Kansas City, MO
Sitti, Michael, MS	2022	Netsmart Technologies Inc.: Overland Park, KS
Smith, Abria	2022	University of Illinois Masters of Education Candidate Special Education: Champaign, IL
Wilson, Jalen	2022	Barry University Masters of Biomedical Sciences Candidate: Miami, FL
Anderson, Tyrik	2023	Atlantic Health System: Morristown, NJ
Belayneh, Yeabsira	2023	University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Medicine: Kansas City, MO
Burgess, Michael	2023	National Institutes of Health Intramural Research Training Award: Bethesda, MD
Cooper, Donovin	2023	Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation: Atlanta, GA
Diaz Leguillu, Gabriela	2023	AdventHealth: Overland Park, KS
Drummer, Amanda	2023	University of Buffalo Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences: Buffalo, NY
Hill, Alisa	2023	Mississippi Center for Justice: Jackson, MS
Marks, Curtis	2023	Rutgers School of Graduate Studies Masters of Biomedical Sciences Candidate: New Brunswick, NJ
Onyeberechi, Peyton	2023	Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University: Greenville, NC



Daniel Searcy, Netsmart Technologies, Inc.



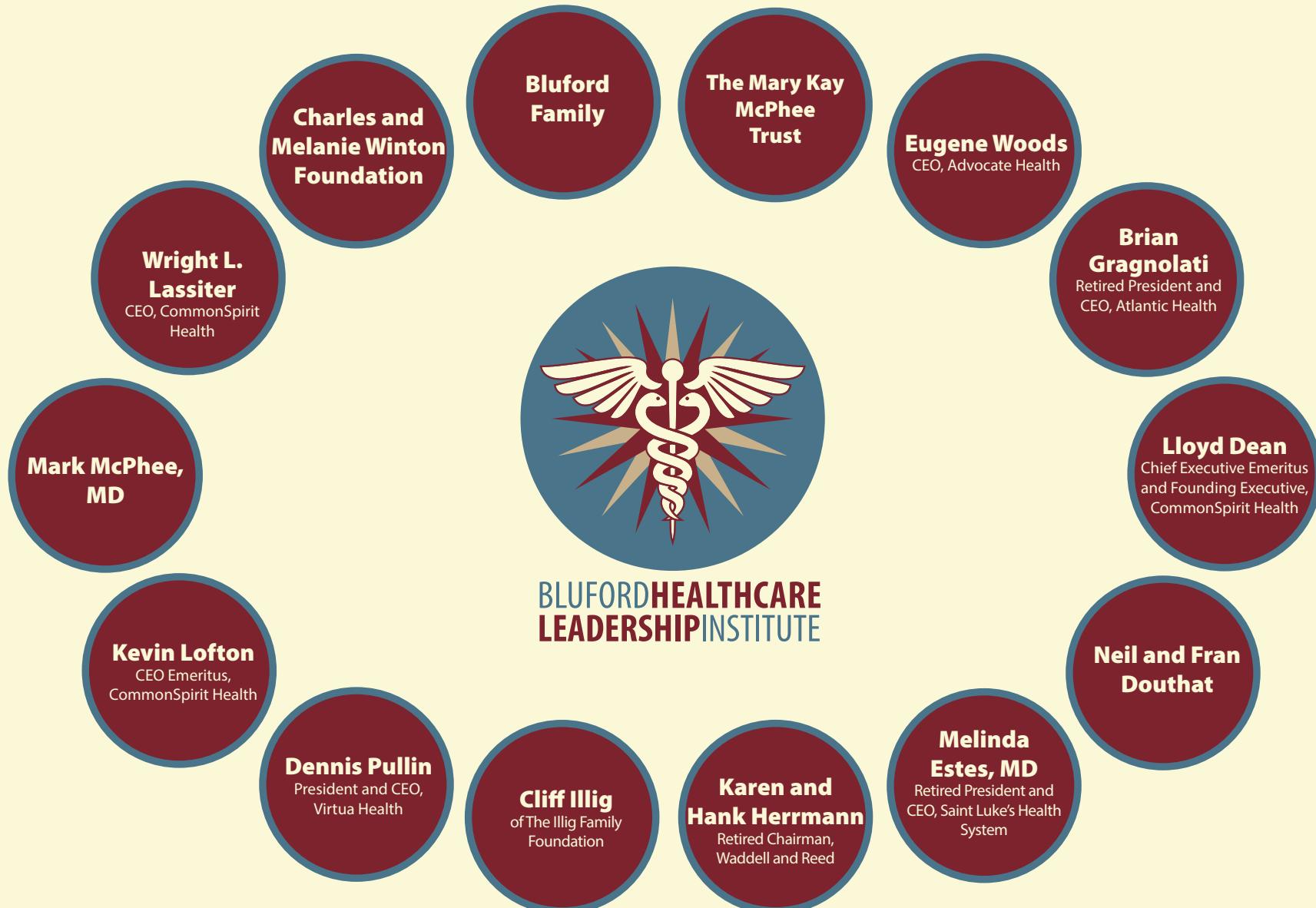
Kayla Mayes, MD, Yale-New Haven Hospital



Nahshon Deering, Atrium Health

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