

November 8, 2021

Dear Scholarship Committee,

I write to strongly support Jala Lockhart for the Dr. Mary K. Beyrer Graduate Student Scholarship from the Foundation for the Advancement of Health Education (FAHE). Jala is a second-year doctoral student in the Health Education and Promotion program at The University of Alabama (UA). She has earned a Master of Public Health in 2019 and a Bachelor of Science in Food & Nutrition in 2017. Currently, Jala has a 4.0 GPA and has received multiple accolades and awards including being selected as a graduate research assistant, with teaching responsibilities for the department. I am an assistant professor in the Department of Health Science at UA and I currently serve as Jala's faculty advisor. I support Jala's application for funding due to her commitment to advancing health equity and her scholarly contributions to research, teaching, and service.

Jala has an impressive amount of research experience for someone at this point in their doctoral career. Jala is proficient in both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. In her master's program, she worked with nutrition faculty on the MOXIE study, a randomized control trial that examined the bioactive compounds in watermelons that modulate oxidative stress and inflammation in elders. Jala's responsibilities included assisting with participant recruitment and retention, sensory lab trainings, and creating the placebo. She has also been vital in collecting qualitative data through individual interviews for the Communivax project. It focuses on the equitable rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination in underserved communities. Jala is currently working on four manuscripts that she will author or co-author. She has presented at multiple national and regional conferences. Recently, she co-presented at the Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) Student Health Edu-Thon and won first place for their Protect Pickens project. It focused on increasing health education in an under-resourced, racially diverse, rural area. She has also presented at the International Cancer Education Conference, and the Southeastern Universities Graduate Research Symposium.

Jala's principal research interest is focused on survivorship programs that seek to improve the quality of life for cancer survivors. Her dissertation will entail a mixed-methods study of the importance of culturally tailoring cancer survivorship programs to increase usage among racially diverse survivors. Jala is currently completing two publications that will enhance her expertise in this area. She has also presented "Investigating communication self-efficacy among localized prostate cancer survivors" at Xavier University of Louisiana 14th Annual Health Disparities Conference. This novel field of culturally tailoring survivorship programs will benefit from Jala's interdisciplinary perspective and research skill.

Jala is currently teaching an undergraduate course, stress management, in the BSPH program. Her additional teaching experience includes guest lecturing for a communication campaign strategies course and as the dietetic internship preceptor. Jala is also involved in important community service that addresses health disparities. She serves as the Nutrition Program Manager for the Good Samaritan Clinic, a nonprofit agency that provides free healthcare services for low-income and uninsured individuals in West Alabama. In addition to her community service, Jala seeks out opportunities to grow her professional service. Jala served as an abstract reviewer for the UA's Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity Conference. She also holds a leadership role in Eta Sigma Gamma, the honor society for health educators.

The FAHE funding will allow Jala to continue to delve into important health disparities as she completes the requirements for her doctoral degree. Her background in health education and promotion, nutrition, and cancer research provide her with the depth and breadth that will contribute to the advancement of health equity for under-resourced and racially diverse communities. As a scholar, Jala is skilled, dependable, and hard-working. I wholeheartedly support her application for funding and am happy to provide additional information, should you require. Thank you for your consideration of Jala Lockhart for the Dr. Mary K. Beyrer Graduate Student Scholarship.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Wanda Martin Burton". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Wanda Martin Burton, PhD, CHES®
Assistant Professor / Department of Health Science
Director of Diversity & Inclusivity / College of Human Environmental Sciences
Phone: 205-348-2486
Email: wmburton@ua.edu