

The Dr. Becky J. Smith Scholarship

A desire to extend my knowledge and enthusiasm for solving health issues amongst numerous populations motivated me to pursue an education in Public Health with a concentration in Health Education and Promotion at The University of Alabama. Throughout my two years at this university, I have taken classes that enriched my education surrounding needs assessments, program planning, health behavior theory, and so forth. This has allowed me to truly evaluate communities' needs based on an intrapersonal and interpersonal level. My interest in health education peaked during this previous semester while finally diving into my concentration. During this semester I had the opportunity to take HHE 470, which focused on choosing a local community, establishing a community need, and creating a rationale. For this health promotion project, my group and I chose Greene County, Alabama, and the issues of child food insecurity in this county. As we evaluated Greene County, it was evident to us, that to solve this issue, we would have to work with Greene County School District. Therefore, the plan established focused on implementing care closets and school gardens for schools throughout Greene County. Creating care closets would allow children to have access to canned goods, toiletries, and what else a teacher or administrator chooses to see fit for their student population. As for gardens, this would allow for a school-to-table curriculum teaching students about the importance of healthy eating and how to properly care for a garden. Our Garden and Go project not only opened my eyes to what this field would consist of but to the issues of chronic diseases.

Within our research, we gathered that chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes are the leading cause of death in the United States of America. However, many of these are preventable diseases with the ultimate cause for many being tobacco and/or alcohol use, poor nutrition, physical inactivity, or weight management. Each of these causes stems from a lack of

education, poor funding, poor policies, and so many more issues revolving around healthcare. As a Patient Education volunteer for Druid City Hospital in Tuscaloosa, AL, I was able to see the results of these causes firsthand. In this position, I volunteered for the Lewis and Faye Manderson Cancer Center, often serving as a liaison for the patient, their family, and the doctor. Due to this experience, upon graduating from The University of Alabama, I plan to pursue a Master of Public Health degree in Health Education and Promotion. An MPH in Health Education and Promotion will prepare me to plan, implement, and evaluate programs to promote individual and population-based health, preparing me for a career as a health educator or health promotions specialist.

Furthermore, at The University of Alabama, there are many organizations in which I have been involved that foster the goal of health education. As a Senator of the College of Human Environmental Sciences for our UA Student Government Association, I evaluate our community's needs and present legislation through the forms of acts, bills, and resolutions to faculty members and 49 other senators biweekly. As a member of Hands in Health, I volunteer semesterly for our Candy and Condoms event which enhances sexual health awareness for our student population. Lastly, as a Resident Advisor, I have held programs about consent, and mental health, where I have given campus resources.

Although I am an actively involved student, financial strain remains at the forefront of my worries. The Dr. Becky J. Smith scholarship will help finance my final year of undergraduate education and lift the financial burden of out-of-state tuition at The University of Alabama. With less stress on how I will fund my last semesters, I will be able to put more focus on my studies, volunteering, and continuing to be involved on campus.