Health promotion has long been integral to my adult life. As a 16-year-old tennis instructor, I saw firsthand the importance and benefits of sport for children and youth development. This role provided me a strong foundation in principles of physical activity and fitness. Over four years, I designed and implemented sports-related instructional programs for individuals ranging from 3 years old to adulthood, accommodating all fitness levels. In addition to leading group lessons and one-on-one instruction, I worked with athletes and their families to set and review goals, ensuring safe and effective fitness programming.

While pursuing my undergraduate and master’s degrees at the University of Western Ontario, in Canada, I worked at the student recreation center where I aided in the creation and implementation of content that was responsive to the needs of students and stakeholders. My efforts included advocating for programs such as women-only gym hours and revising policies to promote greater gender inclusivity. Additionally, I facilitated the recruitment, training, and supervision of additional staff to support the creation of a healthier and more inclusive campus environment.

During this time, I also had the privilege of volunteering and working with individuals from diverse backgrounds through roles with organizations such as Rotholme Women’s and Family Shelter, Special Olympics, and as a personal support worker for a child with an anoxic brain injury. In these settings, I integrated health education into learning daily life skills for children and youth by covering topics like healthy eating, hygiene, and wellness. These experiences deepened my understanding of the value of inclusivity in health promotion and anti-ableism. During this time, it was highlighted for me that health education is essential for everyone, regardless of their background or circumstances.

After completing my master’s degree, I became a Strength and Conditioning Coach at Bill Crothers Secondary School in York Region, an inclusive, character-focused school that links excellence in education and athletics. I had the privilege of working with high school students, student-athletes and educational staff who shared a fundamental belief in healthy living. My responsibilities included first aid response, injury management, concussion screening, and physical activity program development. This experience, combined with my master’s research, motivated me to pursue further studies in health education and promotion, focusing on social determinants of health affecting individuals of African descent and their influence on concussion symptoms.

Currently, I am in my second year of the Health Education and Promotion PhD program at the University of Alabama, and at the time of writing this have completed 27 hours in the program. During this time, I am proud to have maintained a 4.0 GPA. Currently I have two first author publications, one with faculty at the University of Alabama on health promotion in college settings, and another with faculty from the University of Western Ontario on the under-representation of Black/African Americans in Concussion literature. I have presented other preliminary findings at multiple national and international conferences. My current work focuses on the importance of concussion education for youth athletes and the maintenance of health-related quality of life post injury. Additionally, I teach a course on personal health, where I engage students in examining how individual, social, environmental, and political factors shape personal health and well-being. By incorporating real-world examples and interactive discussions, I encourage students to develop a critical understanding of how these things impact individual health choices, community health and access to resources. Through this role, I aim to inspire the next generation of health professionals to consider these broader determinants in their future work, aligning with my commitment to promoting comprehensive, equity-centered health education.

During my time at the University of Alabama, I have worked in the MATCHED (Merging Athletic Training, Community, Health Equity & Diversity) lab under the supervision of Dr. Jessica Wallace. The MATCHED lab is dedicated to community-engaged research within historically underserviced communities with high rates of childhood poverty. As of 2024, the MATCHED lab has established partnerships with ten high schools in predominantly Black/African American communities, fostering collaborative environments that work to expand research representation. These partnerships have led to advancements in culturally responsive and patient-centered approaches. Within the lab, I have gained hands-on experience in research and community outreach, particularly through our work with high school football programs and athletic departments that often lack access to acute healthcare services.

As a lab liaison for Paul W. Bryant High School and Bessemer City High School, I support vital brain health initiatives by delivering concussion education and promoting nutritional awareness among youth athletes. During the athletic season, I provide nutritious snacks and engage students in understanding how proper nutrition supports peak performance, and recovery. I facilitate ongoing dialogue with students and coaches on how to recognize concussion symptoms, emphasizing the importance of timely reporting and proper recovery. These efforts equip young athletes with essential knowledge to protect their long-term brain health.

In the off-season, I work with school partners to maintain engagement. I have helped lead and organize *Lunch and Learn* sessions - events held at local high schools, where University of Alabama varsity athletes and high school students discuss strategies to support social, physical, and mental health. I have participated in *Brain Day*, where over 300 high school athletes and coaches gather at the University of Alabama to deepen their understanding of brain health. Brain Day participants learned about topics ranging from concussion care and nutrition to the interconnectedness of physical and mental health, fostering a holistic perspective on well-being. I helped lead a six-week nutrition intervention, which included weekly, one-hour sessions focused on key learning objectives such as creating balanced meals, understanding macro- and micronutrient intake, reading food labels, and emphasizing the importance of hydration. Each session consisted of a short lecture followed by an interactive, relevant and meaningful activity tailored to the session objectives. Participants demonstrated active and enthusiastic learning in the sessions. They were provided with a snack or food samples that they could then prepare themselves to reinforce their learning. Through these initiatives, I have made a meaningful impact on youth health by providing sustained, preventive education that equips athletes with skills that extend beyond sport. They learn to think critically about health information, understand the importance of ongoing health maintenance, and, ultimately, make empowered, informed choices about their well-being.

My work moves beyond individual health, promoting equity in health care education by reaching students who often lack access to sports medicine resources or acute healthcare services. Identifying and addressing critical gaps in health education for these students directly impacts their personal health. It also positively contributes to community health and the broader goals of health equity, inclusive research and culturally responsive care - foundational principles to achieve lasting improvement in youth health outcomes and well-being.

The mentorship, research training, and community engagement opportunities in the MATCHED lab equip me with essential tools to address health disparities and inspire me to advocate for inclusive, accessible health education and drive meaningful change. In the future, I aspire to lead a research lab, teach, and collaborate with organizations such as the National Black Leadership Commission on Health to develop interventions targeting youth health promotion. I am dedicated to advocating for policies that promote inclusivity and ensure equitable health practices for all communities.

I believe that health education must move toward a more inclusive model emphasizing critical judgment, justice, and empowerment—principles that enable individuals to make informed health choices and become active community members. Community-engaged research, with its foundation in mutual trust and benefits, is a promising approach. This model aligns with the FAHE vision and mission, and has proven successful in advancing health equity, influencing policy, and promoting bi-directional learning. By prioritizing diverse perspectives and inclusive practices, we can build a field where Health Education Specialists dismantle inequities, promote social justice and contribute to improved health outcomes for all.

My current research agenda focusses on advancing equitable healthcare for concussions, by including underrepresented and historically excluded groups. I approach my research using a positive, growth-oriented mindset, which contrasts the traditional deficit-based perspectives often seen within the fields of concussion and anti-Black racism. By reframing concussions from a frighting issue to something that can be managed and prevented, I aim to shift perceptions. Additionally, I focus on highlighting the positive contributions of minority communities to society, empowering youth in the process. This research is essential for enhancing health outcomes by translating knowledge from marginalized communities into broader health improvements.

Looking ahead, I intend to continue in academia, promoting health education and working with communities to enhance youth health. Through community engagement, I hope to drive systemic changes, such as curriculum enhancements that emphasize both health and inclusivity, and training programs that prepare health educators to work effectively with diverse youth populations. My work has the potential to significantly influence the field of health, race, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism, particularly in combatting anti-Black racism, across the realms of sport, education, and research*.*