Aspirations
Groups Scholars Program Community Newsletter

In this issue
Coming Home to Help
Researching for a Cure
No Limits to Success
Rise to the Occasion
Meet the Staff of the Groups Scholars Program

Coming Home to Help by DeJuan Foster
As an eager student in 1987, Samuel Young II was one of the first lined up in front of the Collins Living-Learning Center for the Groups Summer Experience Program at Indiana University. He was excited to begin his college journey by rooming with his best friend. While lined up for room assignments he stood in front of his friend with hopes that they would be chosen as roommates. The selection process however, had a different plan in store, as Young was selected to room with the student in front of him. Ultimately, with his best friend across the hall, they were assigned to rooms on the bottom floor of Collins, and “The Dungeon Masters” were born.

As a high school athlete, Young was optimistic that he would be recruited by a college or he could be a walk on for a team. His plans changed after his brother Larry Young, a Groups 84’ alum, encouraged him to come to IU through the Groups Program. The Groups Scholars Program welcomed him home 28 years later as he began his position as Associate Director on March 2, 2015.

He has remained connected with the university through the years following his graduation. Young has brought his family down to IU football games, various events, and is part of the Old School Reunion Committee. “I always wanted to maintain a connection and relationships with the university,” Young said.

Throughout his work experiences, Young mentioned how he learned how to interact with people from many different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds. He noted that he has learned how to help people recognize the systems they are a part of and how to get help within that system. “Whether it’s learning how to maneuver through the “Y” to get healthy, whether it’s school and understanding the system, or telling a parent what they need to do for their child,” Young said, “Even working with the city of Fort Wayne, showing them that you will have an opportunity to learn how to see other options within the city.”

He acknowledged his excitement to begin his position as Associate Director of the Groups Scholars Program. It allows him to do what he loves to do, which is help others. “I enjoy helping students reach their full potential,” Young said. “It’s going to be exciting that I will have an opportunity to help.”
From a high school advanced placement biology class during her senior year, a curiosity had been discovered inside of Oluwatomiwa Awobayiku (Tomiwa). While she hasn’t had any family or friends directly impacted by cancer, her influence came from her AP biology teacher’s teaching style. Her teacher, a cancer survivor, took her personal experience of what cancer did to her and incorporated it into her lessons. These lessons caught Tomiwa’s interest and inspired her to learn more about cancer and cancer research.

Originally born in Lagos, Nigeria, Tomiwa moved to Indianapolis at the age of two. She came to the Groups Scholars Program in the summer of 2013 while also being a part of the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) initiative. At this time, Tomiwa worked in the department of Microbiology & Immunology, which she attributes to fueling her desire to do research. “Before then, I never thought about research I was strictly medicine,” Tomiwa said. “But from that experience, I really liked my experiment and the idea of the research.”

In the summer of 2014, she worked in the Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of Chicago. Her project focused on mesothelioma, an aggressive cancer that affects the membrane lining of the lungs and abdomen. [http://www.mesothelioma.com/mesothelioma/] It accounts for nearly 3,000 deaths per year in the US. Few effective therapies exist to combat this type of cancer. Tomiwa’s project focused on identifying and creating novel therapeutics for mesothelioma.
She won an award in outstanding presentation in Cancer Biology, one of the few awards given out. In November 2014, she traveled to the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS). She presented her work at the Comprehensive Cancer Center under the division of Cancer Biology.

“It was a really humbling experience because I didn’t think I was going to win,” Tomiwa said. “They only gave about three sophomore awards from each category and discipline. All other awards were given to juniors and seniors so it was a really humbling experience.”

Currently, Tomiwa is doing cancer research in an ovarian cancer lab through the Medical Sciences program at IU. She recently changed her major to neuroscience and described the field as being “cutting edge”.

As for her career goals, Tomiwa is considering pursuing a career as a physician scientist. After graduation in 2017, she may take a year off before applying to a MD/PhD program. She noted that she would be most interested in programs that invest in their students and value diversity.

**No Limits to Success** by DeJuan Foster
Our skies have no limits.
This phrase was etched into the hearts and minds of Groups 43 of the then “Groups Special Services Program” in 1968. The name Groups 43 was a representation of the 43 members of the first Groups class. Groups Program founder, and then director, Rozelle Boyd, authored this rallying cry. Today, it still remains deep in the soul of the first graduate of the program, Delia M. McClam-Silas. It is this phrase that motivated McClam-Silas to earn multiple degrees, two of which came from IU. It led her to co-author Building Bridges Instead of Walls: The History of I.U. Dons, Inc. & Donnettes. She also provides monetary contribution to the program annually.

As a native Hoosier from Gary, Indiana, McClam-Silas faced many different types of barriers. These include: being a first-generation college student, financial challenges and physical limitations. It was these challenges that made her an ideal fit for the Groups Program, a program that actively sought out students facing these issues and concerns to make the possibility of a college education a reality.

With the assistance and support of First A.M.E. Church, McClam-Silas was able to succeed in her endeavors. She called the church’s support a “driving force” in helping her complete school, and 50 years later she acknowledged that the church still provides prayer and support for her.

When she graduated, her mission was to be a “dedicated alumni”. Still very grateful for the opportunity she had received, McClam-Silas noted that she has dedicated the rest of her life to thanking the Groups Program.

“Every paycheck I got throughout my teaching career, I’d say a prayer and ask God to bless the Groups Program,” McClam-Silas said. “Without the Groups Program, I wouldn’t have a job, I wouldn’t have graduated.” Not only did McClam-Silas graduate, but she went on to land her first position teaching at-risk students in Las Vegas, Nevada. She held numerous teaching positions after leaving Nevada. She was a special education teacher at the middle school level in the Indianapolis Public School System and was a special education instructor for grades 9–12, with emphasis on reading, language arts, and remediation at Wirt High School in her hometown of Gary.
In 2005, McClam-Silas was one of four Groups alumni to receive a Sassafras Award, an award that goes to distinguished alumni whose careers epitomize the core values of the Groups Program.

McClam-Silas is now retired and with retirement comes lifestyle changes. However, she has continued to make donations to the program every year on her birthday, December 17th. “It’s small, but I’ve dedicated part of my life to the Groups Program to be an example for other kids to follow,” McClam-Silas said.

Growing up as an African-American in Gary, McClam-Silas acknowledged that she had never went to school with white children or had a white teacher until she came to IU. But Boyd encouraged the Groups students to be well-rounded and to ensure this, students had to attend events that were out of their comfort zone such as the opera. McClam-Silas sees the benefit in having such experiences. “He gave us different experiences to develop our character,” McClam-Silas said.

She quoted Boyd in her encouragement to current and future Groups students to be limitless when trying to maximize their potential. “Our skies have no limits. You can be whatever you want to be or do whatever you want to do,” McClam-Silas said. “I don’t want you to be like me. Be like yourself. Be successful, reach your goals, share, and make your family proud.”

Rise to the Occasion by DeJuan Foster
As an academic chair for Chi Alpha Epsilon, Mary Estrada always held out hope that she would one day be able to join the organization in greater a capacity. Remaining grateful just to be a member she did everything she could to be involved. In a mix of timeliness and personal diligence the opportunity to run for president presented itself when other executive board members graduated and their positions were left open in need of someone qualified to step in.

She ran, was nominated then elected president, and with a new position comes new responsibility. “I have always been a busy student but XAE is a whole new ball game,” Estrada said. “I am not only in charge of myself, I am in charge of my organization, the people in it, and how we influence our community.”

To ensure that goals are being met and objectives are completed, Estrada noted that she takes the time out to make sure she is consulting with advisors, other executive board members, and other Chi Alpha Epsilon members.

She acknowledged that having a positive effect on others while in a leadership role has been the most fulfilling aspect of her presidency. “The influence you have on your members is the most rewarding. They look up to you as the person who is knowledgeable and trusting,” Estrada said. “Keeping to that standard and helping them when a need arises is a feeling that is irreplaceable.”

However on that same token, Estrada also noted that maintaining high member morale and dedication can be a challenging task.

“With the recent loss of many senior members, our overall numbers have dwindled and that leaves a lot of exec responsibility open,” Estrada said. “With small numbers and so much work, my members at times get discouraged but as president I have to find to ways to defeat those sentiments and keep their hopes alive.”

Estrada hopes to utilize the components that she learned during XAE’s recent trip to Florida to apply to their chapter. She acknowledged that by having the opportunity to meet the founder and see things up close she gained a greater appreciation for the organization. “It was a great experience. I learned new effective ways to interact a board meeting and I gained new ideas regarding events that XAE could host on campus,” Estrada said.

She also noted that because of the experience and being able to see the dedication and passion behind XAE she has a better understanding of what keeps the organization going.
Meet the Staff of the Groups Scholars Program!

Mary Tourner
Director

Mary was appointed as the 5th director of IU’s Groups Scholars program in September 2013. She is a graduate of Purdue University with a bachelors and masters degrees in Management. Mary began working for IU 14 years ago, coming to the Groups Scholars program from Admissions. Originally from Gary, Indiana, Mary is a first generation college graduate like many of the students she serves. With a motto of “Students First,” she is working to expand the Groups Scholars Program, and make inroads in assisting more Scholars to graduate in four years. Mary is the mother of three children, two of whom are currently students at Indiana University, with her youngest attending Bloomington High School South.
Sam Young II  
Associate Director

I was a group student in 1987. After a lot of support and trials I received my Bachelor of Science degree in Continuing Studies. I recently obtained my Master of Science in Organizational Leadership at Indiana Institute of Technology. As a former student, I enjoy the opportunity to help others become successful in obtaining their goal of a bachelor degree. My family and I are from Fort Wayne, Indiana where I have a beautiful wife (Lisa), a daughter (Naomi), and son (Sam III). I enjoy coaching and participating with my children’s activities, being active with my church, and going on occasional family trips.

Jana Cox  
Academic Advisor/Tutor/Events Planner

Jana began working for the Groups Scholars Program in 1998. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in Public Finance and a Master’s degree in Public Management both from Indiana University. Jana is originally from Bedford, IN but spent a good portion of her childhood in St. Louis, Mo. She lives in
Ellettsville, Indiana with her husband of 25 years, her two boys who are 15 and 18, a cat, and two dogs. In addition to her work at IU she is also an adjunct instructor in the Devoe School of Business at Indiana Wesleyan University. Her hobbies include camping, swimming, hiking, and anything that involves being outdoors. She has served on committees for the Edgewood High School Band Boosters, Boy Scout Troop 119, Zion Community Church of the Nazarene, and Indiana TRIO.

Burhan Elturan
Academic Advisor/Reading & Writing Specialist

I have been working with the Groups Scholars Program since 1987, initially as a tutor but now, I advise and tutor also. In terms of fundamental academic skills, I help with any reading and comprehension problems, writing and researching needs. I proofread graduate school applications and personal bios. In addition, I tutor for courses in CJUS, POLS, HIST, ANTH, INTL, REL. I like reading (mostly non-fiction) and writing (short stories and essays). I have travelled widely in Europe and have travelled in Ghana and Rwanda. Learning foreign languages is another hobby for me and I collect dictionaries in most languages. I also like gardening and growing fruit trees, collecting wild foods and mushrooms. I like biking, so, I am mostly in nature around Bloomington and intimately know every terrain (within 15 miles of Bloomington) and what wild foods grow where. I love helping students to solve their academic problems, plan for projects and papers. See me if and when you need help. The earlier you contact me, the better. Thanks.
Kathy Essex  
Academic Advisor/Math Specialist  

This is my first year working with the Groups Program. Before that, I taught at Indiana University – Purdue University Columbus for five years. In addition, I have worked on research projects here at IU Bloomington, in both the Math Department and the School of Education. I have worked with students, prospective teachers, and experienced teachers in mathematics and science, and I have been working with and teaching college students since 1997. My Ph. D. is in Mathematics Education, and I have a BS in Elementary Education. I grew up in Columbus, Indiana, and I began my teaching career in the District of Columbia Public Schools in Washington, DC. I am married and have two sons, one of whom is a student here at IUB. I love reading, playing games, traveling, and relaxing outside.

Gordon Hershey  
Academic Advisor/Writing Specialist  

Always jokes that he is the rankest member of the Groups Staff. He started working for the Groups Special Services Program when most the current
students' grandparents were children. The other standing joke is that he has had as his office every room in Maxwell Hall 200 except the Director's office (as well as some spaces that aren't offices any more). Born in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, educated at a big ten school in Michigan (not the one that thinks it's better than Harvard). He came to Bloomington to study for a Ph.D. in English. After working for the Groups Program as a tutor and counselor, he pitched the PhD in favor of the best people at IU (i.e., Groups Students). He always tells students that the thing that matters is a willingness to do the hard work of succeeding. Nothing you value comes for free. Another favorite saw: you are not the smartest person in your class, but you also are not the dumbest. It doesn't hurt to have some skills, but a work-ethic will take you further and last longer than any skills you may pick up along the way.

Kim Jenkins
Academic Advisor/ STEM

My name is Kim Jenkins. My undergraduate college experience started in the Groups Student Support Services Program in 1993. I graduated in December 1999, earning Bachelor of Science degree in Education with a major in Secondary Education, General Science. I have been fortunate enough to be a part of the Groups program staff since October 1999 as an academic advisor and science tutor. For the past two years, I have been involved in the Groups STEM Initiative and am super excited to now be the STEM coordinator. It has been an amazing experience to witness students take advantage of opportunities beyond what they imagined and to see them achieve major accomplishments in STEM fields. I know that someday we'll be reading about these future Ph.D. scholars who will be recognized for new scientific discoveries or innovations. These are exciting times! Outside of Groups, I am a
wife, a mother, a daughter, a sister, a friend, and most importantly a child of God and a Christian. I've lived in the Bloomington Community for over 20 years and it is the place that I consider home. I would like to welcome you all back for a new academic year! While, for most of you, IU will be a temporary home, please make yourselves comfortable. Reach out and get to know the Groups staff and others in the IU and Bloomington community. You are a part of the family!

Katrina Jones
Office Manager for the Groups Scholars Program.

She began working at Indiana University’s Groups Program in February of 2005 as the Administrative Assistant and in 2008 she stepped into her current position. She is a graduate of Indiana Wesleyan University; graduating summa cum laude with an Associate of Science degree in Business Administration and a Bachelors of Science degree in Accounting.

She enjoys getting to know the beautiful array of students she does comes in contact with; feeling privileged that she has the opportunity to assist students in their academic as well as personal success. In getting to know students she believes that her own life experiences have allowed for her to make connections with the students. If you are ever in need of assistance or would just like someone to talk to; you should stop by and see Katrina, for you are sure to meet an extremely warm and caring spirit.
Maqubé Reese
Coordinator for Upperclassmen Initiatives

Maqubé Reese is a native from Fort Wayne, IN. Maqubé has completed her Bachelor of Science Degree from the School of Public Health, and a certificate in Nonprofit Management from the School of Public and Environmental Affairs class of 2014. Maqubé is a proud Alumnus of the Groups Scholars Program (2010), and 21st Century scholar. During Maqubé’s undergraduate studies she established herself in Bloomington, Indiana by being active in her church home City Church for All Nations, 1Life, Impact, Groups Scholars Program, 21st Century Scholar, and she is a member of the Nonprofit Leadership Alliance through The School of Public and Environmental Affairs. She has a mission in life, and that is to love people, meet them where they are. In her spare time she enjoys reading books, and spending time with family and friends.

Scott Salak
Math Specialist

Scott Salak is the Math Specialist for the Groups Scholars Program at Indiana University Bloomington. Originally from Chicago, he moved to Bloomington, and began working for the Groups Scholars Program in 1997. He has degrees in electronics and math. Scott occasionally teaches evening courses in electronics or algebra at Ivy Tech in Bloomington. He enjoys working with math students, helping them to understand challenging math topics the initially seem
impossible for a student to grasp. He states that if you stop by his office, you shouldn’t be surprised to see him smiling! Closer to home, Scott enjoys spending time with his family, and working on projects around the house. He has “two daughters, three dogs, oh and yes... one cat.”

Jami Scholl
Communications Specialist

Jami Scholl is the Communications Specialist of the Groups Scholars Program. Through her work in gardens and urban agriculture she is a writer, and has been published in the North American Permaculture magazine, GoodVeg and Green Living Ideas. Jami has taught garden classes, given presentations locally and around the state, and is an illustrator and childhood educator in her time.

Her accomplishments include modification of the Chicken Ordinance, and creation and adoption of the Urban Agriculture Ordinance for the City of Bloomington. She was awarded the Civilian Service Medal of Honor from the Army Health Services Command while working as a Public Relations Specialist. Jami is a certified Life Coach, has studied Cultural Anthropology and Creative Writing, and has a degree in Communication Design. She completed training in Wellness Coaching, and is an alumna of Leadership Bloomington - Monroe County. Jami is a mother of three children, a border-collie, two cats, is an avid hiker, lover of the arts, dance, travel and work in social justice and environmental issues.
Meet the Student Staff of the Groups Scholars Program!

Bria Bush
Student Worker

Bria is a student worker for the Groups Scholars Program. She is from Indianapolis, Indiana. When she isn’t working, Bria enjoys shopping, eating and watching movies. She chose IU because she fell in love with the campus. Next for Bria is senior year followed by a job or graduate school.

Jaila Bush
Student Worker

Jaila is a student worker for the Groups Scholars Program. She is from Indianapolis, Indiana. She chose IU because of the close proximity to home and for academics. After she graduates she plans to attend graduate school.
Sarah Cadieux
Science Community Instructor

Sarah is the Science Community Instructor for the Groups Scholars Program. Originating from Concord New Hampshire, she enjoys kayaking, learning how to garden, hiking with her dogs, farmers markets, live indie music, knitting and baking. She chose IU for her PhD in the Biogeochemistry group of the Department of Geological Sciences, and because of her love for the city of Bloomington. Sarah is completing her dissertation this semester, and is actively searching for a postdoctoral research position or faculty position in Earth and Environmental Sciences.

Juan Cano
Juan Cano
Special Assistant

Juan is from East Chicago, Indiana and is the special assistant for the Groups Scholars Program. He is from East Chicago, Indiana. He completed his undergraduate degree in journalism from IU and he plans to stay at IU for graduate school in either higher education, student affairs or journalism. When Juan isn’t in the office he enjoys DJing on the weekend, spending time with friends and watching movies. He chose IU because of his connection with Groups Scholars Program Director, Mary Tourner when she was in Admissions. Juan is a member of the Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity. After he completes his degree he would like to remain at IU or somewhere in Indiana working in the area of diversity.

Katina Cotton
Student Worker

Katina is a junior at Indiana University Bloomington majoring in Community Health. She is from Indianapolis, Indiana where she attended Pike High School. She is a student worker in the Groups Scholars Program office. It was the familiarity from visiting IU every summer since 6th grade thorough the Office of Community and School Partnerships that led Katina back to IU. l. The campus, school spirit and public health program aided her decision to attend IU in which she turned down two full-ride scholarships to opposing schools in favor of becoming a Hoosier. When she isn’t in the office she enjoys hanging out with friends, and helping others. After Katina finishes her undergraduate studies she plans to stay at IU and enter the Public Health Master’s Program.
Jessica is a graduate assistant for the Groups Scholars Program. She originates from Richmond, Virginia. She completed her Bachelor’s Degree from Duke University. She is currently working on her PhD in Counseling Psychology through the School of Education. In addition to working for the Groups Scholars Program she also has a part-time job as well as seeing clients as a part of her program of study. In the few free moments she has, Jessica enjoys relaxing and catching up on sleep. She chose IU after meeting with a sports psychologist in Indianapolis who referred her to a professor at IU who conducts research with student-athletes.
DeJuan Foster
Graduate Assistant

DeJuan is a graduate assistant for the Groups Scholars Program. He is from Indianapolis, Indiana and he is married with a one-year old son. He is studying in the journalism department of the Media School. When not in the office he enjoys watching sports, spending time with his family and going to church. Because of its academic excellence, strong sports teams and close proximity to home, DeJuan chose IU. After completion of his Master's Degree, DeJuan plans to work as a Sports Information Director.

Francesca White
Graduate Assistant

Francesca is a graduate assistant to the Groups Scholar Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Initiative. She is from Spokane, Washington. Francesca loves all things STEM, but when she's not in the office she enjoys nature, research, and the arts (writing, music, painting, etc.) Other hobbies include exercising, spending time with her family, trying/cooking new foods, watching Netflix, and reading. She chose IU because of the balanced blend of academic rigor and aesthetic pleasure of the university. Her dream job includes an abundance of research, STEM for social justice, and working to improve college STEM teaching and learning.