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"I've learned a lot from the people I've worked with, as well as taught myself quite a few things. The internship experience allowed me this stimulating and invigorating experience, and it's one I won't soon forget."

**Mark Vater**  
Northern Kentucky University



"I enjoyed working at EPA and found it to be a wonderful working environment. The scientists were intelligent and dedicated, but they also enjoyed eating lunch outside and going on bike rides in the evenings. I can see myself working in this kind of setting after I'm finished with school."

**Jewel Lipps**  
Southern Methodist University

"As a young scientist with aspirations to positively affect the living conditions of other people and their quality of life, this experience

brought me great satisfaction. My resolve to use science for the protection of public health is all the more concrete now."

**Manelisi Nhliziyo**  
Tuskegee University

"I never anticipated that in the summer of 2014, I would become a scientist. I've been trained in economics and environmental studies at a private liberal arts college. Over the course of my internship, I got a crash course in water science, analytical chemistry and spatial data."

**Will Lutterman**  
St. Olaf College



"I have conducted research a couple times before and have been unsure whether or not I liked it enough to pursue as a career option. After this summer, I can acknowledge that I very much enjoy scientific research and while it may not be the focus of my whole adult life, I can see myself in the research world after I finish college."

**Tabea Zimmermann**  
Dickinson College



# GRO Forum

Greater Research Opportunities Undergraduate Student Fellowships

## Where are they now? Catching up with GRO Alumni

DECEMBER 2014

### Mia Robins

"The GRO Fellowship was the beginning of my journey in government service," 2003 Fellow Mia Robins says. "My experience as a Fellow was my introduction to government." Coming from a family of teachers, Mia says she always thought working for the government was unattainable. She was the first person in her family to seek out an opportunity through the government. She



credits the Fellowship for showing her another career path, saying "It gave me a different outlook."

Her Fellowship experience, particularly her summer internship at Region 4 in Atlanta, Ga., helped Mia realize how EPA and other agencies have an impact on a wide range of areas, from the environment to health care. "The Fellowship made me proud to know that I was working for the betterment of our country and allowed me to see how my interests in service could be utilized," Mia says.

Mia earned her bachelor's degree in biology from Xavier University, New Orleans, La. She chose Xavier because she wanted to attend a university that focused on working in the community while providing a strong foundation in the sciences. Xavier, a historically Black university, has a strong commitment to social justice. "The research I was able to do as a GRO Fellow showed me how my research at a small university could potentially have an impact on the country as a whole," she says.



Mia went on to attend the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University, Atlanta, Ga., which is ranked in the top ten public health schools by US News. The school has diverse student and faculty populations and promotes community involvement to reduce health disparities. Mia earned her master of public health degree through an accelerated program. She chose to focus on health policy and management, which she calls “the business side of public health.”

Her GRO internship introduced her not only to EPA, Mia says, but to other agencies located in the same building. After an internship at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Mia went on to work there. She has also worked for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. While working at CMS, one of Mia’s responsibilities was conducting outreach to rural communities about the Affordable Care Act as part of CMS’ responsibilities related to implementation of the Act. “What I love the most about doing outreach is talking to people and understanding their stories,” Mia says.

Mia has worked as a public health analyst at the Health Resources and Services Administration in Rockville, Md. HRSA is part of the Department of Health and Human Services. It facilitates grants and other programs to ensure that underserved and rural areas receive the proper health services. HRSA grants support efforts such as community-based health centers, the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program, and education of health professionals, including students from disadvantaged backgrounds. “I love that I am able to impact communities in a positive way through working with health policy issues that affect future generations,” she says.

Mia also seeks to have a positive impact on communities on her own time. “I participate in a community service opportunity each month,” she says. She’s participated in initiatives for the homeless, such as a resume writing seminar held at a shelter, and providing food to the elderly.

Two years ago, Mia and her sister made a mission trip to Morocco, where they taught English in a women’s shelter. Spending just one week there -- and not speaking Arabic -- posed some challenges. “We had to be innovative in teaching,” she says. “We developed activities like songs and arts and crafts



ALEX MOIX, DYRIAN WANDICK, MANELISI NHLIZIYO

to teach English in a unique way.” She hopes to make a mission trip to another African country in the future to do health outreach or language education. “A part of my life is that I want to give back in the community outside of work,” Mia says.

## Internship Reflections

Between May and September 2014, GRO Fellows completed 10- to 12-week internships at EPA labs and offices around the nation. We asked the Fellows for their impressions about the internship program. Here are a few of their thoughts.

ROBY VENTRES-PAKE



“This internship has allowed me to explore a different pathway within my field of study. I had never worked in a laboratory setting as much as I did this summer and it really opened my eyes. I was able to work alongside EPA employees to reach the common goal and mission of EPA to protect the environment and human health.”

Adeline Dutton  
Lake Superior State University

“EPA has impressed me with the wealth of knowledge of its employees, their concern for the safety of both people and the environment and their patience with passing on their expertise and skills to an undergraduate student who is so new to the field. This internship far exceeded my expectations of the typical routine work of an undergraduate internship by providing me with an opportunity to work on innovative projects with great potential.”

Alex Moix  
University of Arkansas at Fayetteville

“This internship gave me experience with working directly with overburdened and disadvantaged communities, the same populations that I would like to focus on as a physician. My projects and experience at EPA have strengthened my desire to enter into public health in order to tackle the problems surrounding overburdened and disadvantaged populations.”

Nelson Malone  
Howard University



BRITTANY BEEBE

“This summer has allowed me to view EPA from the inside out. I continue to believe in the necessity and importance of the Agency and its mission. I believe the Agency is vital for maintaining the beauty of our country, as well as public health.”

Brittany Beebe  
University of Nevada, Reno

“I obtained numerous skills from my internship that are not only applicable in my academic career but daily life as well. These skills are invaluable and can be used at any point in my life and applied to any situation. The internship has also deepened my passion for research and global health. It has also given me the opportunity to witness applied research firsthand.”

Dyrian Wandick  
Tuskegee University

“My hosts made me an integral part of the team during my time there and freely gave their knowledge and experience. As part of the team I have been exposed to different disciplines and given the opportunity to be involved in activities related to the areas of expertise of each of the other members. Through those activities I have developed many new skills and an interest in new subject areas.”

Erin Smith  
Virginia Wesleyan College



ERIN SMITH

“This internship experience has confirmed my interest in pursuing a career with an organization that is committed to protecting the environment. Interning with EPA has helped me adapt to a dynamic workplace, interact with professionals from different backgrounds, and network with other motivated individuals, all of which will help me in my future career as an environmental engineer.”

Jairo Luqué Villanueva  
Humboldt State University

“I wanted a real inside look at how environmental policy was formed. I also wanted to work as independently as possible. As it turned out, I got more than I had ever expected and even a bit more than I had hoped. The people I was able to meet and the overall freedom I was able to have was irreplaceable and something I could have never experienced in the university setting.”

Jared Lobbestael  
Eastern Michigan University

“The employees were zealous about their work, but were also passionate about the research of their coworkers. They truly believe in the work they do, and the ability of it to help preserve the environment. They have offered valuable insight into how to be environmentally conscious and have served as role models of how people can couple science with environmental preservation.”

John Gurak  
University of Texas at Arlington

“The internship experience overall introduced me to many of the important areas of science in the environmental field in a professional setting. I was really able to appreciate the big picture importance of the project I was working on.”

John Haugland  
Marquette University

“Instead of the official title of my project, I think a more appropriate title would be: ‘Integrated approach for an extremely rewarding and exciting GRO internship involving gaining skills in biochemical and computational techniques, along with a few laughs and great EPA co-workers.’”

Serina Robinson  
St. Olaf College

“This experience has introduced me to new skills and resources, but the most beneficial part of the experience is learning how scientific research and new applications for technology can be applied to have measurable positive impacts on the environmental issues confronting the world today.”

Tia Scarpelli  
Michigan Technological University