

F.A. DAVIS ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF SPRING 2025 NURSING & HEALTH SCIENCE SCHOLARSHIPS

Philadelphia, PA, May 2025: F.A. Davis is delighted to announce the winners of its Spring 2025 nursing and health science scholarships for undergraduate and graduate students. Awards of \$1,000.00 will be made to **DeVon Jackson**, a nursing student pursuing a master's degree at Herzing University, **Melanie Zufall**, a student pursuing an associate's degree to become an Occupational Therapy Assistant at Rowan-Cabarrus Community College, and **Christiana N Ukwuegbu**, a nursing student working toward her associate's degree at Seattle Central College. During these unprecedented and challenging times, they exemplify the commitment of today's students to improving the quality of healthcare for all of us and to giving back to the communities that have supported them on their journeys.



DeVon Jackson is a 26-year-old student pursuing a Master of Science in Nursing at Herzing University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. His journey into healthcare was shaped by his family's history of chronic illness and his father's battle with cancer. These experiences along with his own identity led to a shift in perspective toward a holistic, biopsychosocial approach to health. DeVon's work as a mental health technician exposed him to systemic shortcomings in mental health care and continues to fuel his passion for nursing. He will use this scholarship to support his vision to improve mental health outcomes through integrative care, research, and advocacy, striving to be a compassionate leader and social change agent.

"With a family history of high blood pressure, diabetes, and cancer, I have personal experience to support the view that disease etiology and progression are influenced by the lived experience of African Americans and the structural racism in healthcare and education. During my first year of college, my dad was diagnosed with stage 4 prostate cancer. I knew then that my perspective on health had to evolve so that we could become more proactive. Changing my beliefs and behavior was especially important when I considered the intersectionality of my identities as an African American and gay person. This personal experience helped me realize the importance of approaching health

from a biopsychosocial model instead of one rooted in pathology. My journey into the healthcare field as a mental health technician began at one of Virginia's most prominent university health systems serving those needing psychological, behavioral, and emotional support. I am very grateful for this job because it allows me to experience the diverse perspectives of medicine—ICU, ER, & pediatrics, at the intersection of mental health and nursing. This experience revealed to me how registered nurses can be present, adapt, and approach any situation that may come about, making them the backbone of the hospital. The patients I often encounter are seeking recovery from trauma, attempted suicide, mental health crises due to challenges with medical adherence and access to care, as well as surgical complications such as delirium. Recently, I was paired with a teen struggling with borderline personality disorder, anxiety, and thoughts of self-harm. She also carries a weighted history of sexual abuse, trauma, and substance use. During this 1:1 support, we sat in the common area with other patients, playing card games. What started as a game of put your finger down (i.e., if you are from Virginia or enjoy black olives or pineapple on your pizza) revealed several unsuccessful mental health interventions from hospitals all over Virginia and the constant state of sadness revealed by the consensus 'Put your thumbs down if you are sad all the time'. The shift in tone left me with a heavy heart but a more significant interest in how the healthcare system has been unable to serve them. Their challenges ranged from the availability of providers to the dismal lack of wellness and stimulating activities offered during inpatient hospitalization. To further fuel the current mental health crisis, more than half the U.S. population lives in a Mental Health Professional Shortage Area (Mental Health HSPA, 2023). As a nurse, I envision myself making an impact by improving mental health and well-being outcomes through integrative practice, teaching, clinical research, and advocacy. This area presents an outstanding opportunity for connection, compassion, and growth that I can embrace as a person, healthcare leader, and social change agent."



Melanie Zufall is a 47-year-old student at Rowan-Cabarrus Community College studying to become an Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA). After spending 20 years as a stay-at-home parent, she is ready to merge her passions and professional skills to fulfill her lifelong dream of being an OTA. Her volunteer work as a Guardian ad Litem and part-time work as a community liaison equipped her with the qualities necessary for assisting individuals in regaining independence and improving their daily lives which are fundamental in the role of an OTA. Melanie's goal is to

pursue a career in mental health or substance use rehabilitation where she can contribute to creating more supportive, inclusive environments for individuals to thrive.

“Pursuing an occupational therapy assistant (OTA) career after spending 20 years as a stay-at-home parent is a deeply personal and meaningful decision. This career path allows me to merge my passion for caregiving with a professional role that enhances the quality of life for others. While neither my race nor gender sets me apart, my age and life experiences lend diversity to this field. At a time when many practitioners my age are preparing for retirement, I am just getting started. For two decades, my primary role was to nurture, guide, and support my children through their developmental stages. During this time, I honed essential skills such as patience, empathy, adaptability, and problem-solving. Volunteering as a Guardian ad Litem allowed me to advocate for children in custody of the state, strengthening my ability to communicate effectively, assess needs, and provide compassionate support. Furthermore, my part-time work as a community liaison enabled me to bridge gaps between organizations and individuals, reinforcing my ability to connect people with valuable resources and support systems. These qualities are fundamental in the role of an OTA, where assisting individuals in regaining independence and improving their daily lives is at the core of the profession. I am deeply committed to empowering others to achieve their personal goals, a value that has shaped my life and my career aspirations. My passion for occupational therapy stems from my desire to help individuals with mental health challenges develop essential skills for independent living—whether through work, socialization, or self-care. Upon graduation, I plan to pursue a career in mental health or substance use rehabilitation, where I can contribute to creating more supportive, inclusive environments for individuals to thrive. This scholarship will empower me to achieve my lifelong dream of becoming an occupational therapy assistant. As an OTA, I will embrace the roles of caregiver, educator, and advocate—roles in which my life experiences have already provided invaluable training. I am committed to applying the therapeutic use of self to build strong, collaborative relationships with both intradisciplinary and interdisciplinary team members, all united in the goal of delivering the highest quality care.”



Christiana N Ukwuegbu is a 34-year-old first generation student at Seattle Central College pursuing an associate’s degree in nursing. Christiana was born and raised in Lagos, Nigeria and has always found solace in helping others. The Foundation’s first outreach focused on maternal and newborn care. Its expanded efforts focused on empowering children with disabilities through compassionate care. Her passion for

healthcare was inspired by the death of her father from an undiagnosed illness which reminded her how broken Nigeria's healthcare system is. Her dream is to reform this system so that others will not have to experience the same fate. This scholarship will be an investment in her future so she can continue to develop the skills and expertise to advocate for underserved populations, ensuring that quality healthcare is accessible to those who need it most.

"When will you stop volunteering? Aren't you tired of giving without receiving?" My former colleagues would ask, half-jokingly. But for me, giving has never been about receiving. Service has always been my purpose, my guiding force—even when life gave me reasons to turn inward. I was born and raised in Lagos, Nigeria, a city where healthcare is a privilege, not a right. I know what it feels like to go without, to watch people suffer simply because they were born into circumstances beyond their control. As a child, I had to drop out of elementary school due to financial hardship. Yet, even in my own struggles, I found solace in helping others. At 16 years old, I joined my local church's Feed the Orphans campaign, handing out food to over 150 children each week. I quickly realized that compassion is the bridge between hardship and hope—a lesson that has shaped every decision I've made since. Determined to build a better future, I became an elementary school teacher after high school. But my desire to serve extended beyond the classroom. When I moved to the United States in 2019, I continued my commitment to giving back, volunteering as a social coordinator at the Yale School of Management Partners Club, helping spouses and partners adjust to life in a new country. While pursuing my pre-nursing studies, I also volunteered as an orientation leader at Seattle Colleges, guiding international students as they navigated their own fresh starts. In 2023, I took a leap of faith and founded the Christiana Ukwuegbu Foundation. Our first outreach focused on Maternal and Newborn Care, aiming to reduce preventable deaths among mothers and infants. By 2024, we expanded our efforts with the initiative Empowering Children with Disabilities Through Compassionate Care, providing essential support and promoting self-sufficiency. My passion for healthcare is not just about statistics or programs, it is personal. In 2013, I lost my father to an undiagnosed illness, a devastating reminder of how broken Nigeria's healthcare system is. His death was preventable. The lack of medical access, proper diagnostics, and affordable care took him from us too soon. My dream is to reform Nigeria's healthcare system by 2036—to create a future where rural communities have access to life-saving care, where health insurance is not a privilege but a right, and where no family loses a loved one simply because they could not afford treatment. A nursing degree is my path to making that future possible. It will equip me with the clinical expertise, leadership skills, and global perspective needed to drive meaningful change. Receiving this scholarship would be more than just financial assistance, it would be an investment in a future nurse

committed to making a difference. With this support, I can focus on developing the skills and expertise needed to advocate for underserved communities, both here in the U.S. and in Nigeria, ensuring that quality healthcare is accessible to those who need it most. So, am I tired of giving? Never. As Muhammad Ali once said, 'Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on Earth.' I intend to keep paying that rent—for as long as I live."

F.A. Davis Scholarships

The scholarship application process was open to students pursuing undergraduate or graduate degrees or certifications in most of the leading nursing and health science specialties. Applicants were required to be enrolled in an accredited program for the Spring 2025 semester, students in good standing with an overall GPA of 3.0 or higher, and U.S. or Canadian citizens, legal residents, or holders of a valid student visa. Each completed an application form and submitted proof of enrollment as well as an essay. Information about future scholarships will be announced on F.A. Davis's web and social media sites.

About F.A. Davis

F. A. Davis is an independent, family-owned publisher of educational solutions for the Nursing and Health Science professions. Headquartered in Philadelphia, the city of its founding in 1879, the company is dedicated to developing teaching and learning products that meet the needs of nursing and health science students, educators, and practitioners. The breadth and depth of our digital, print, and online resources across disciplines and specialties reflect our commitment to listening to our customers and to developing innovative products empowered by the technology that is changing how students are learning, instructors are teaching, and professionals are practicing.

For more information, visit FADavis.com.