Meet the Rural Health Scholars

CLASS OF 2019

Annika Bannon - SOM, Class of 2019
I became interested in rural medicine while doing consulting work with federally qualified health centers prior to medical school. There, I saw family physicians’ partner with local resources available to improve health on both individual and population levels. Through my experiences in the Rural Health Scholars Program at UMass, specifically the longitudinal preceptor program, population health clerkship, and clinical clerkships, my interest in the field has only been reinforced. I am planning for residency in family medicine and hope to find a program that will allow me to continue exploring rural medicine.

Nate Bombardier - SOM, Class of 2019
I am from the small farm town Hadley, MA. Living my whole life there, I have come to understand the small-town dynamics and politics that are important for a rural physician to be able to navigate. A physician in a small town immediately assumes a leadership role that is not necessarily as evident when practicing in a city. I am interested in dermatology.
Tiffany Chen- SOM, Class of 2019
After growing up in the suburbs, I found myself curious about what life would be like in a rural setting. I find that I work best when I can build profound relationships with people and eventually understand where they are coming from. In a rural area or small town, I think I would have the unique opportunity to gain a deep understanding of the big picture where my patients come from. I am interested in Geriatrics, family medicine, and palliative care.

Eun Kyung Ellen Kim- SOM, Class of 2019
I joined Rural Health Pathways to learn about health care in all parts of Massachusetts. My family medicine clerkship at Barre Family Health Center and other rotations at Berkshire Medical Center showed me the role of primary care in Central and Western Massachusetts and the needs of the population they serve.
Max Pianka - GSN Class of 2019
Born and raised in a small rural town in Connecticut, I became very close with my pediatrician growing up. I turned my focus towards medicine and developed an interest towards caring for my small community. I am drawn to rural health care because of the personal connections made between providers and patients. I find it delightfully challenging to maintain a comprehensive foundation of knowledge that is required to provide care to rural communities.

Steve Purcell - GSN, Class of 2019
I am originally from Ohio, but have lived in California, Pennsylvania, and Hong Kong prior to moving to Boston. My professional experience prior to the DNP program was in public health program management and applied research in rural areas in developing countries. My experience with and future aspirations for global health in challenging environments is well-aligned with rural health settings anywhere, including New England and the US. I am interested in emergency medicine, rural primary care, search and rescue, expedition, and disaster response.
Meghan Schmidt, MS, FNP-BC, GSN Class of 2019
I grew up in a small town in Massachusetts and I’m honored to be a nurse practitioner in my home state. I am a Central Massachusetts Advanced Nursing Education Academic-Practice Partnership (CMAAPP) grant scholar with an interest in rural health. I’ve always envisioned working in a small town and being a part of its community. As a health care provider, I value building relationships with my patients, providing evidence-based care and education about health promotion and disease prevention.

Arielle Stopa- SOM Class of 2019
I was raised in a Rhode Island suburb. Prior to attending UMass, I served as an Americorps/CommunityHealthcorps member at Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program. I am very interested in exploring the practice of medicine in a rural setting. I am very interested in public and community psychiatry, which would allow me to explore the integration of behavioral health and aspects of physical health and wellbeing.
Rachel Wasserman- GSN Class of 2019
I spent the majority of my childhood living in Sharon, MA, and got a taste of small-town life when I spent four months living in Wellfleet, MA. Most interested in working in primary care in a community health setting with a diverse patient population. Particular interests of mine include nutrition/obesity medicine, behavioral health, and preventative medicine. I am drawn to the rural practice setting because of the increased opportunities to function independently, be creative, be familiar with local resources, and promote health at the community level. I also appreciate the emphasis on public health measures and identify with a more holistic perspective and conservative attitude towards medical interventions that is common in rural areas.

Kari Whitney- GSN, Class of 2019
I got the experience of living in many small towns in many different states growing up. My community changed often when I was younger because I had a father that was an Episcopal priest and we moved every 3 years due to his job. I’m interested in working in rural areas because I am excited about the prospect of living and working in the same town and creating a deep connection with my community.
Inbar Yamin - SOM, Class of 2019
I grew up in Brighton, MA, and my main experience living in a rural area took place in a small village in Zambia for 3 weeks. I am interested in pediatrics and family medicine because of the longitudinal relationship that you can develop with patients over years of treating them. I also love the community aspect of rural health where a physician can develop a great relationship with the community as a whole and practice community health as well.

Julia Yasek, RN, MS, FNP-BC - GSN, Class of 2019
I am a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) student at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, Graduate School of Nursing where I am completed my clinical FNP residency as a CMAAPP grant scholar with a focus on underserved populations in a rural setting with a concentration in palliative care. I completed my B.S. in biochemistry at Denison University in Granville, OH.

Although I grew up in an urban area, Rural Health Scholars (RHS) has expanded my understanding of underserved populations. Since I started my residency in central MA, I have focused on the differences and commonalities among medically underserved populations in both urban and rural settings and hope to contribute to health policy solutions that improve overall access to care.

Prior to my nursing career, I did laboratory and clinical research in neurology with a focus on neuromuscular disorders (specifically ALS), genetics, and imaging. My background has inspired me to work in primary care serving underserved populations with a focus on palliative care integration with chronic and terminal illnesses.