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Bus tour promotes diversity in medicine

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tour4diversity.org

"The wheels on the bus go 'round and 'round"—

This familiar chorus from a childhood nursery rhyme has some relevance for the drivers of the Tour for Diversity in Medicine. But the tune takes on a serious note as the bus chugs along to cities and campuses across the country.

Sounding the theme, "Each one, teach one," they consume hundreds of highway miles to motivate and empower the next generation of black and brown health care professionals. The goals, both individual and collective, are to reach underserved communities and eliminate health disparities.

A mentoring campaign on wheels, [Tour for Diversity in Medicine \(T4D\)](#) literally drives possibilities to underrepresented students aspiring to be health professionals of the future. The mobile team has hit nearly 30 campuses, reaching more than 2,000 students since the bus began rolling in 2012.

Tour for Diversity, a nonprofit organization founded by Alden Landry, MD, MPH and Kameron Matthews, MD, JD, blends social media and health education to reach and inspire young people who might otherwise not be exposed to opportunities and options. Both former leaders of the Student National Medical Association (SNMA), the two commiserated that recruiters often don't meet underrepresented students on their turf.

"So Kameron and I said—why don't we just get on the bus!" recounts Landry. He is accompanied by more than a dozen colleagues—physicians and dentists—who make the commitment each fall and spring to reach young people with their seminars and advice.

Since 2012, the T4D volunteers have visited more than 25 college campuses in Arizona, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and Washington, D.C.

This included: Hampton University, South Carolina State, Tuskegee, Jackson State (February 2012); Georgia State University, Fisk University, Kentucky State University, Indiana University, Central State University, University of Michigan (September 2012); The University of Texas at El Paso, University of Texas at San Antonio, Texas A&M International University, Texas A&M Corpus Christi, Prairie View A&M University, Texas Southern University (February 2013); Iona College (New Rochelle, N.Y.), Rowan University (Glassboro, N.J.), Delaware State University (Dover, Del.), Bowie State University (Bowie, Md.), Georgetown University School of Medicine (Washington, D.C.) (September 2013); University of New Mexico (Albuquerque, N.M.), Estrella Mountain Community College (Phoenix, Ariz.), California State University Dominguez Hills (Los Angeles), Sacramento State University, and University of Las Vegas Nevada (February 2014).

This fall the T4D bus will roll through California State University, Fresno and Samuel Merritt School of Podiatric Medicine in Oakland, Calif., The outreach will focus on both college and high school students with day-long preparatory programs (view the workshop schedule and register [here](#).)

Research confirms proven that minority patients are more likely to adhere to the health care recommendations provided by someone who looks like them. Underserved populations typically suffer higher rates of health disparities, particularly chronic and preventable diseases.

Landry, an emergency room physician at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, and Matthews, an attorney and chief medical officer at the University of Illinois Mile Square Health Center, were driven by their personal passion and the data.

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While minorities represent 26 percent of the U.S. population, less than 6 percent of American Indians, Blacks and Hispanics collectively are physicians or dentists, according to the [Association of American Medical Colleges](#).

"We know that if we're going to address health disparities and perpetuate an overall culture of health, we have to think outside the box," says Landry. To match talk with action, Landry, Matthews and their colleagues have adjusted their busy schedules to forward tomorrow's promise.

Their workshops address students' fears—"I'm not smart enough" or "I can't afford it"—by sharing insights and tools to capture dreams previously perceived as unattainable.

"Our purpose is to emphasize the importance of early exposure, advising and mentorship," says Matthews.

Landry's first mentor was his own grandmother, a registered nurse who pushed him to become a physician. Later, through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation-funded Minority Medical Education Program (now known as the [Summer Medical and Dental Education Program](#)), he met a Black ER doctor who mentored him through medical school and residency.

"I don't know if I would have discovered emergency medicine without that shadowing opportunity," he says.

"We always have people coming up saying, 'How can I get on the bus?'" Landry says. For more information visit <http://tour4diversity.org/>.



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