
HONOR COLLEGE ALUMNI FEATURE, MARCH 6, 2018 DR. MICHAEL UKOHA, '14



Major: Biology

Current Title: Doctor of Physical Therapy

Honors College Graduate, Michael Ukoha D.P.T., '14

"...I personally had a sport's injury when I was younger...that was pretty traumatic. At that time, there was a surgeon that told me I wouldn't play basketball at a high level again...but after going through a rehab...I was able to play basketball again...the surgeon told me 'Maybe six months to a year,' and I was able to play within five months.

So just having a moment...that was devastating for me at the time, it made me shift my focus from just basketball to doing more for other people."

Welcome to the third installment of the *Alumni Feature*. As you read the opening quotation, I hope your attention focused on the closing statement: "...it made me shift my focus from just basketball *to doing more for other people*." So eloquently spoken, this quotation embodies the heart of Dr. Michael Ukoha, this semester's alumni feature. He has not only lead a life dedicated to service but is also an incredible example of the quality of person associated with the Honors College.

Having graduated from Towson University and the Honors College in '14 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology, Dr. Ukoha continued his educational career at the University of Maryland (UMD).

While there, Dr. Ukoha received a University and a Diversity Grant and graduated in '17 with a Doctorate in Physical Therapy. After graduation, Dr. Ukoha started working with FOX Rehabilitation, a rehabilitative center providing services to the geriatric community. It is no surprise Dr. Ukoha chose FOX Rehabilitation to start his career; for, during our interview, Dr. Ukoha shared that his "... drive in P.T. (is) pushing boundaries that people have in their endeavors." In essence, his focus and work throughout his career ties directly to the young eighth-grader who, in spite of injuring his right knee, knew that pushing past boundaries set by external - and at times, internal - forces was the key to truly achieving his goals. And at FOX Rehabilitation, that is exactly their motto: "to believe in our clients and their ability to achieve what they once thought impossible." By cultivating that understanding at a young age, Dr. Ukoha has influenced so many by leading a life driven by service while maintaining a strong focus on pushing through the impossible.

This heart of service not only is present in his current position but also was manifested while he completed his undergraduate career at Towson University. He shared, "The experience I had at Towson...gave me opportunities I never would have thought I have...when I was going through the process of getting to where I am, there (were) so many people along the way that supported me and gave me direction...for the position I am in now, it is only right for me to do the same for students that come behind me." Living this out, Dr. Ukoha served as an alumni mentor through several capacities including with Towson University's College of Health Professions Mentor Night and Pre-Physical Therapy and Exercise Science Clubs. He also was responsible for helping two Towson University students gain acceptance into the number one physical therapy school of their choosing and currently serves on the Honors Alumni Council. Although these endeavors are nothing short of amazing, Dr. Ukoha continued his service endeavors while at UMD. While there, he co-founded the Student Special Interest Group for the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) chapter in Maryland and received the 2017 Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Science Geriatrics and Gerontology Education and Research Program award for being an outstanding professional graduate student who demonstrated commitment to the field of geriatrics and gerontological studies. As if this wasn't enough, Dr. Ukoha also received the APTA of Maryland '16 Rising Star Student Leadership Award for exhibiting superior scholastic ability and potential for future professional contribution. Dr. Ukoha also found time to advance his service work in advocacy

by serving as a Maryland APTA Alternate Student Delegate and participating in the APTA of Maryland Student Advocacy Days in Annapolis.

As is evident, the list is endless when it comes to the incredible work and service Dr. Ukoha has contributed to his collegiate and professional career; he has worked tirelessly to pursue a passion of service and has dedicated his time to helping those that come after. Through all of this, however, his passion for pursuing goals that are deemed impossible has been a lighting force. Much of where he is in life he bears gratitude towards not only Towson University but also the Honors College for imparting to him confidence in feeling that he belonged not only in his field but at a doctorate level of work and study. As he recalls, "...I would see other students...following their dreams...and being able to do things that they could only hope and dream," and shares how that gave him the courage and confidence to pursue what was seemingly deemed impossible. And truly, this courage and confidence is at the heart of the Honors College; for it embodies a mission to cultivate a desire among its student to challenge themselves academically, personally, and professionally, and thus has Dr. Ukoha done throughout his career. Using the tragedy that gripped his life at a young age, he forged a passion to strive for excellence, served with dedication and sought to make possible the impossible for himself and so many. We are honored to call him one of our own and thankful for the time he has bestowed upon Towson University and the Honors College.

If you have any questions for or are interested in connecting with Dr. Ukoha please contact the Honors College office at honors@towson.edu.

By: Sheariah Yousefi, Honors College Alumni, '13 Sheariah is a founding member of the Honors Alumni Council and creator of the Alumni Feature. She writes the features from her home in South Korea, where she lives with her husband, works as an ESL Instructor with the Special District for International Education through the Ministry of Education of South Korea and volunteers within the community through support and outreach programs. Have an idea for an Alumni Feature? Email Honors@towson.edu to have your idea passed along to Sheariah.
