# Current Students and May 2019 BS Degree Recipients on Why They Chose to Attend UMD to Study Computer, Mathematical, and Natural Sciences

**Aaron-Knoxville, MD:** I initially choose University of Maryland because it was a great in-state school for what I wanted to do (mathematics and computer science). After going here for four years, I can see that I made a great choice. In particular, the math department (my primary major) has wonderful and supportive faculty. The department has provided me with so many opportunities you can only get at schools that have a lot of research going on, while still giving me the chance to get to know some of my professors very well. I was a Strauss Undergraduate Teaching Assistant and recently my 3-person team placed 9th out of 568 teams in the William Lowell Putnam Mathematical Competition. And outside of academics, Maryland has just been a great place for me to be. The campus is still one of the most beautiful I've ever been on for a college, and most of the people I've met here just seem to really want to be here.

**Alina-Hanover, MD:** I was very impressed with the computer science program at UMD - I came in with barely any knowledge in the field, but over the years I have learned an incredible amount of information and pushed myself to complete projects I could not have imagined doing back in high school. My internships at the Applied Physics Laboratory taught me so much about self-reliance, working in an office setting, and picking up new skills quickly. At the end of both summers I had completed projects that continue to be useful to APL, and I have accepted a full-time job there upon graduating. I have attended events and have to access resources that simply would not have been available at smaller schools, all of which have made me more confident and self-reliant. I am in the Association for Women in Computing and the CS Peer Mentoring program, which give me a sense of community with women in tech. Lastly, I have loved participating in fitness classes, especially dance fit and other dance master classes; I think being active in a way I truly enjoy has made me a happier person and a better student.

**Andre-Waldorf, MD:** I chose UMD for a lot of reasons. I knew I wanted to study CS and UMD is both local and a top 10 CS school. On top of that, the size of the campus was really exciting to me. It was aesthetically pleasing, and also seemed like it was full of opportunities. My sister had previously attended UMD and seemed to enjoy her experience. I have worked for three years at the campus' network operations center and been an active member of Code: Black. Last summer, I did an internship with Cisco Systems, and I will be relocating to North Carolina to work at Cisco following my graduation. Throughout my years in college, I learned to embrace being out of my comfort zone, garnered lots of soft skills, and my time management is way better than it was in high school.

**Chaoyang-North Potomac, MD:** I chose UMD because it was the most financially viable option, close to friends and family (so I could begin college with a solid support network), and the opportunities it presented through the incredible array of extracurriculars and clubs. My Honors College (Integrated Life Sciences) provided me an environment where I felt like I could flourish both academically, extracurricularly, and personally. The thing I liked best about UMD was how large the school is - it really encouraged me to break out of my shell and meet of all the wonderful people around me and form lasting relationships with students and faculty alike. Opportunities like the Alternative Breaks Program and the American Medical Student Association allowed me to develop my leadership and professionalism, which ultimately aided my acceptance into medical school. I also greatly enjoyed my travel-study trip to Alaska with fellow students and UMD faculty members last summer!

**Connor-Walkersville, MD:** I knew I wanted to go to a school that was fairly local to where I grew up, but I decided on UMD because it has one of the more well reputed computer science programs. A computer science degree from UMD has one of the best overall values of any degree from any school in the country. There are a lot of really smart people in computer science here, yet I never feel overwhelmed or intimidated by my peers. Everyone has a great balance between being smart yet also

being humble and collaborative. There are a lot of opportunities for proactive students to gain work experience. Both of my summer internships were with employers I networked with either at a computer science career fair on-campus, or a CS lobby day visit. I also got a part-time programming job during the semester in Washington, D.C. by applying on Careers4Terps, a career search website specifically for UMD students, and got to be a teaching assistant within the CS department for a semester. All of these opportunities will help me get the best job I can upon graduation, and I do not think I could have gotten them without assistance from the University.

**Danayt-Silver Spring, MD:** I chose UMD for 3 major reasons: 1) it was close to home and I knew having family support would be crucial in college, 2) it had a strong biology and pre-medical program which I knew would help me pursue my dream of becoming a physician, and 3) it was a big school that could offer flexibility in terms of the professors and classes I wanted to take. At UMD, I majored in Biological Sciences, with a specialization in Physiology and Neurobiology. UMD's strong biology program is a big reason why I chose to come, and my experiences in the major certainly did not disappoint! I was able to take several advanced biology classes that most students aren't able to take until medical school. I also loved the sheer number of clubs and extracurricular activities UMD provided. I participated in a Global Medical Brigade with other students at the University in Honduras, which was one of the most eye-opening medical experiences I had. I was also able to meet people that were just as passionate about medicine as me.

**Dee Dee-New Market, MD:** I chose to come to Maryland mainly because I am an in-state student and it was what I could afford, but also because we excel in academic areas, especially STEM. The quality of education for the price is a really great deal. Also, I knew I wanted to go to a large college. I am from a small town where you know everybody, so I wanted the feel of a large school where I could reshape myself and allow myself to grow without the scrutiny of everyone already knowing who I was. We do have a good enough faculty to student ratio where you don't get lost in your classes even though they may be big, which is important for getting the most out of your education. I am one of the leaders of the student-run UMD Weather, which I wouldn't be able to participate in anywhere else! I also interned at NOAA's National Center for Weather and Climate Prediction doing research with the Ocean Prediction Center.

**Emily-Monroe Township, NJ:** I chose to attend UMD because I was looking for a big school with a lot of opportunities that would allow me to succeed both academically and socially. When I visited UMD, I not only loved the campus, but I could not believe how many opportunities there were for me take advantage of. I am majoring in Biological Sciences and there are many ways for me to succeed in my classes, including tutoring, guided study sessions, and more. UMD has many programs that make the campus feel smaller. My freshman year I was a member of BioFIRE and through this program, I met my best friends who also have the same major as me, which allows us to study together. I was also able to join a research lab my freshman year, which was an amazing opportunity. The resources that UMD provides has allowed me to succeed in my classes and believe that I can achieve anything that I set my mind to. I have met amazing friends through BioFIRE and also through the clubs and volunteer organizations that I became a part of.

**Erik-Rockville, MD:** I chose Maryland, and loved it, because it felt like a great mix of a big school and a small school. I was in the Integrated Life Sciences program, so I would go to class, study, and hangout with the same group of kids most of the time, but I could also branch out and do a number of other things that a smaller school would not have allowed me to do (like going to basketball and soccer games of some of the best collegiate teams in the country). As a biological sciences major, I also really appreciated the academic opportunities I was given here, like taking a class titled Diseases of the Nervous System (almost exactly what I want to specialize in as a physician) and volunteer in a neuroscience research lab studying the hormonal pathway involved in aggression in crayfish. Looking

back on my time at UMD, I believe I have changed a lot from the person I was when I first moved into my residence hall due to my time spent as a Maryland Imager, volunteering at a crisis hotline, studying abroad, and everything else I have experienced here. I am a much more mature and well-spoken person, I have been forced to become more flexible and adaptable due to a number of academic challenges, and my view of the world and my place in it has shifted.

**Isaac-Silver Spring, MD:** My decision to study computer science at the University of Maryland was, happily, a simple one; with a terrific CS department, in-state tuition, and strong communal infrastructure, Maryland was the natural choice. In the spring of my freshman year I joined the QUEST (Quality Enhancement Systems and Teams) Honors Program, in which CS, engineering, and business students work on teams to study system thinking and build product design and development skills to help them navigate complex, real-world issues beyond graduation. From research opportunities to exhilarating basketball games, my time at Maryland has provided me with confidence in both technical and business environments, as well as an incredible four years to recall fondly down the road.

**Jessica-Gaithersburg, MD:** I chose UMD because I wanted to go to a big school so that I could meet a lot of new people and because it made a lot of sense financially. I really love this school and my time here so I think I made a fantastic decision! The best part about UMD is definitely the professors. It's so humbling to realize you're being taught by some of the smartest and most accomplished people in their field. Across three majors, I've had wonderful professors in biology, chemistry, and history, all of whom really care about their students' education. I wouldn't be who I am today without UMD. I've been able to work for several years in two labs, a biochemistry lab and a bioinformatics lab, and the abundance of research opportunities here have definitely helped me mature as a person. They've taught me responsibility, persistence, and how to overcome challenges that you just don't get in the classroom. As I apply for medical school, I realize that UMD has more than prepared me for the next step in my career in so many ways.

**Karlie-Pasadena, MD:** I chose UMD because of its incredible location and its supportive community. As a pre-med Biological Sciences major specializing in physiology and neurobiology, it was very important for me to go to a school with plenty of research, volunteering and clinical opportunities near campus so that I could better explore my medical interests and become an active learner. I also wanted to have the opportunity to build a support system of friends, faculty, and advisors who would push me to be the best student and person I could be. Besides the location and community, my favorite thing about UMD is the beautiful campus. There is just something so special about the old brick buildings with large white columns that you can't find anywhere else. While at UMD, I have had some amazing opportunities that I believe I could not have had anywhere else. I have gone on three medical mission trips, tutored disadvantaged children at a local elementary school, and even researched at the Port Discovery museum in Baltimore among many other things. These experiences have really changed me as a person to become more compassionate, understanding, and inquisitive. Without UMD's convenient location, supportive staff, and commitment to creating well-rounded students, I don't believe I would be the student or person I am today. For that, I will always be grateful.

**Kristen-Tyngsborough, MA:** I chose UMD both because of my major and the opportunities nearby, but also because of the campus culture. When I first stepped on this campus students were friendly and excited, and student groups and their influences were all over the campus. I love all of the opportunities from my department (astronomy) and the constant push to improve both our department and campus at large. I've gotten the opportunity to become a student leader through my involvement in Kappa Lambda Xi Multicultural Sorority, Inc. I am involved in my department through committees and research. Because of these involvements on campus, I will be interning this summer at NASA Marshall.

**Laura-Severna Park, MD:** I chose UMD because I didn't know where to go, and my uncle told me that I should go to UMD.☺ I am so GLAD I came to UMD because of all of the opportunities I have had on and off campus. I like UMD because the learning doesn't have to happen in the classroom - it also happens in the community. I have made connections to broaden my academics in Baltimore, College Park, and Langley Park. I have done research at Shock Trauma Center in Baltimore and I have worked as an ED Scribe in West Baltimore. I have adopted a stream in PG County just south of campus, volunteered as an EMT with College Park Volunteer Fire Department, and taught English as a Second Language Courses in Langley Park as an Independent Study with the Spanish Department. These opportunities have helped me grow as a person, become connected with my greater community, and given me opportunity to get credit and learn outside of the classroom.

**Lyra-Lutherville, MD:** I chose UMD because I was interested in conducting biological research as an undergrad and potentially pursuing a career in research. At UMD there are countless opportunities to conduct research starting your freshmen year which is quite rare. My favorite thing about UMD is the communities I have built wherever I go on campus. Everyone is incredibly welcoming and supportive. One specific community that changes our lives is our floor in the residence halls. Our freshmen year, we often build friendships that last a lifetime, which is why I chose to become a resident assistant in a freshman hall. The opportunities I have had at UMD have shaped me into a passionate, independent, and even more open-minded individual and every internship and job interviewer I've met with has been impressed by the experience I have obtained at UMD. I will be graduating this year and going on to conduct full-time research at one of the most prestigious research institutes in the world, the National Institutes of Health, for two years before applying to MD/PhD programs.

**Manolya-McLean, VA:** I chose UMD because its architecture and student body contribute to a very unique and extraordinary energy. UMD has a secluded and mellow college-town feel in addition to an exciting and high-energy city feel that is a result of its proximity to Washington, D.C. I am very happy with the College of Computer, Mathematical, and Natural Sciences, and my major, Biological Sciences, because the faculty that teach each subject are specialized and excited about that material. Not only do they enjoy teaching, but faculty also enjoy working alongside students. UMD frequently has lectures from visiting scientists that both students and faculty attend. It's an amazing feeling to be able to sit next to your professor during the lecture and connect with them about class and real-world material. Opportunities such as these have enhanced my ability to connect to my professors. I have been able to learn new material from them through my courses as well as how they reached their current level of expertise. I plan on using faculty mentorship to progress in my future plans and goals.

**Matt-Basking Ridge, NJ:** I had a lot of great choices back when I was deciding on where to go for college. I ended up choosing UMD because I knew that I would have an incredible experience for the next four years in all aspects of college life. From a great academic program to an amazing campus that has so many social opportunities, this school really allowed me to make the best of college. In terms of academics, UMD has always provided me amazing opportunities in my physics major and my two minors. I loved being able to access the faculty so easily, which really helped me whenever I needed to clarify things in class. Also, the academic atmosphere was always really supportive instead of competitive. Outside of class, there were so many opportunities for me to find interesting ways to be involved. I ended up joining a social fraternity and business clubs that really opened my eyes beyond my major and minors, and I know countless friends that have discovered new interests at UMD. This school has shown me to work hard and keep an open mind, all while providing me with the best college experience I could hope for.

**Mica-Silver Spring, MD:** I chose to come to UMD because I heard the computer science program was superb and would give me the experience I was looking for. I had older friends in the program who told me they found the classes very valuable. And finally, being close to home was a plus for me since I knew

that I could always visit my family whenever I wanted to! I love how University of Maryland's campus culture and student body cater to my interests. The program has prepared me well for my future, as I have already been an intern at Amazon with Alexa. College has made me more independent and confident in myself. I'm now able to make my own decisions and express those decisions to others, even if they're wrong.

**Mike-Bronxville, NY:** I chose UMD because of the high potential to do student research, and the proximity to and collaboration with influential government research labs like NASA, NIST, and the Space Telescope Science Institute, along with the lifestyle opportunities that come with a large campus and student population that has every sport club, extracurricular activity, or volunteer opportunity that I could possibly want. The things I like most about UMD are the strong program in physics and astronomy that has prepared me for graduate school, my ability to do novel astronomy work with my faculty research mentor, and the friends I've made. My research with an astronomy professor at UMD has been the most helpful thing in my undergraduate career. It led me to become a published scientific author, sent me to conferences, and gave me the experience I needed to get three separate competitive summer internships. Without my research with UMD faculty, I would not have gotten my start in science that led me to acceptance to PhD programs.

**Simone-New Castle, DE:** I chose UMD because I wanted to go to a big school that also shared the properties of a small school. I love meeting new people every day but I also enjoy having intimate class settings - and UMD provides that and more. We have large lectures with smaller discussions and lab sections so I am able to still interact with many people when I'd like, but I also have access to an environment where I can receive specialized attention. The best thing about UMD is the plethora of opportunities that this school offers. Whether it be the many internship opportunities a Metro-ride away in Washington, D.C. or the numerous research positions available in on-campus research labs, UMD definitely gives students many ways to excel. Through UMD, I was able to secure a research position as a sophomore, gain clinical experience as a scribe through the many job postings sent out, and stay on top of my schoolwork through all the tutoring sessions (i.e. Guided Study Sessions, or GSS) offered. UMD has helped me grow in so many aspects and I am thankful for all of the opportunities my school has given me!

**Soma-Clarksville, MD:** I chose UMD because of the friendly and exciting campus atmosphere, as well as the vast wealth of opportunities available for students to pursue here. I have gained a significant amount of research experience and learned how to work well in a team through the Gemstone Honors Program. I mentored and taught students as a Gemstone Section Leader and as a Peer Assisted Learning Coach. I have also been able to dabble in my interest in the performing arts through a couple of student theatre organizations and at the Clarice. I was even able to travel to Ecuador for a service learning experience through Alternative Breaks and locally led a six-week self-management workshop as a health educator. All of these experiences and others have helped me grow into a more confident, thoughtful, and socially aware person ready to engage in the next steps of my life post-graduation.

**Yuval-Rockville, MD:** I chose UMD because of the entrepreneurial spirit I found on campus. I am someone who learns best by doing and by pursuing and building projects outside of the classroom. UMD has given me endless opportunities to be able to pursue my interests and passions outside of class. Internships with big name companies, exciting student clubs and student groups, inventive and original hackathons, and enlightening undergraduate teaching and research positions are only a few of the great things Maryland has to offer. I am a teaching assistant for CS classes, a student manager at Sandbox, and a tutor for a variety of math and science topics on campus. Since coming to UMD, I've changed and grown in ways I did not expect, as a leader, as an educator, and as a student, and as a computer science student. I've been exposed to the disruptive technologies of tomorrow and the theories behind the large-scale computing networks of today.