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## Xavier University Leads the Nation with the Most African-American STEM and Medical Graduates

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Rebecca Udokop is a Xavier Student and 2011 Claremont H.S. Graduate

Nation's Only Historically Black and Catholic University Excels in STEM-related Professions

New Orleans, LA — While the United States lags behind countries like China, Germany, and Japan in graduating students in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) curricula, Xavier University of Louisiana (XULA) is bucking the trend – enrolling and graduating more underrepresented African-Americans than any United States college or university.

With 65 percent of its incoming freshmen focusing on a STEM discipline, XULA has perfected the model in educating minority STEM students. The university's success is well-documented. According to data compiled by the Association of American Medical Colleges, in 2011 Xavier was the top producer of African-American students who earned medical degrees – besting the nation's most prestigious schools including Harvard, Yale and Stanford. Sixty of its alumni graduated from medical schools across the country compared to 22 Harvard graduates, 21 Yale graduates and 20 Stanford graduates.

"Xavier fully prepared me to embark on a career in the medical field. The focused attention from professors, the well-rounded curriculum and opportunities to participate in research were instrumental to my success as a physician," said U.S. Surgeon General and Xavier alumna Dr. Regina Benjamin.

According to the American Institute of Physics, the university is first in the nation in awarding African-Americans baccalaureate degrees in physics and the physical sciences. The university is ranked by the American Chemical Society as one of the top 25 universities to award bachelor's degrees in chemistry. The National Science Foundation ranks XULA ninth on its list of schools whose minority alumni complete a PhD. Xavier is also one of the top producers of African-American Doctor of Pharmacy graduates.

Through determination, XULA educators have promoted an environment where learning and success go hand in hand. "Success breeds



Students who attend Xavier University

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success. The rigorous academics at Xavier enables students to believe they are prepared to compete with their peers," said XULA President Dr. Norman Francis.

This is the result of years of dedication to the focus of STEM. In 1977, XULA academia recognized a problem-solving and test-taking gap minority students showed when they arrived in college. The curriculum requirements and the way the students were taught changed to ensure XULA students learned better analytical reasoning.

"Medical education can be compared to soil. Every individual has the potential to succeed with unlimited development, just like a plant has unlimited potential to grow. But it helps to have a good foundation, a good soil, to get you there," said Morehouse College Professor of Gynecology and Obstetrics and Xavier alumnus Dr. Roland Pattillo. "The seed and the soil is an analogy that can be applied to Xavier University. The soil is the depth of education Xavier offers." Dr. Pattillo credits his research skills learned at XULA with helping him develop a vaccine for the human papillomavirus.

XULA also offers summer bridge programs dedicated to instilling a solid understanding of STEM skills for incoming freshman. According to Dr. Francis, these programs provide a powerful recruiting tool for XULA and give under-served minority students an advantage in pursuing a STEM career. Once students arrive at XULA they receive preparation not available in many other universities. Drill sessions, peer mentoring, teacher mentoring, and counseling prepare them to succeed in the STEM profession.

"When we started the summer programs for high school students, we were unique in what was being done at other universities. Our success shows in the number of students who graduated from medical schools across the country, and in the percentage of former students employed in a STEM-related field," said Francis.

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