

Bangasser Scholarship



DEEMA AKARI, Class of 2019

U.C. Riverside School of Medicine

The phrase “success story” suddenly takes on new meaning when looking at the impressive accomplishments of Deema Akari. This extremely motivated and goal-oriented student is currently pursuing a medical degree at the University of California, Riverside, having been recruited into the 3rd class of the new medical school. She graduated with honors from UC Riverside with a B.S. in bioengineering in 2015.

She was born in East Jerusalem in the West Bank of Palestine, following which she and her family moved to New York when she was two years old. When she was 11, her family moved to Riverside County, where she graduated from Vista Murrieta High School.

Ms. Akari has worked with the Biomedical Sciences faculty on research related to the genetic, environmental and inflammatory factors that work together to increase the likelihood and susceptibility of developing a neurologic disorder in infancy and childhood that persists throughout life.

She plans to use her medical education and experiences to be an advocate on behalf of children and their families, using evidence-based science and medicine. In fact, she was awarded the prestigious First 5 Riverside Service Award Scholarship in 2015. She serves as an officer in the American Medical Student Association and is the coordinator of the Pediatric Interest Group at UCR SOM where she collaborates with local organizations such as First 5 Riverside and the Department of Social Services to provide children and their families with resources promoting reading proficiency and school readiness.

Ms. Akari is also one of the founding coordinators of the Health Equity and Structural Competency collective, focused on ensuring clinical and educational equality. She volunteers twice monthly at the Riverside Free clinic and is working to partner with Head Start of Riverside, First 5 Riverside and the local public library in order to provide services such as health care, preschool enrollment and nutritional and educational resources to underserved families. She also leads community-based lectures on topics such as breast cancer and heart disease through Doctor’s Corner at the Riverside Women’s Club.

She is a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Riverside County Medical Association (RCMA). In addition to being bilingual and speaking fluent Arabic, she is also learning medical Spanish, in order to become more inclusive as a future physician.

Ms. Akari says, “It was not just one experience that influenced my decision to become a physician. It was the symphony of experiences I have witnessed in others. Those who have suffered through pain and remorse, those who longed to turn back time and make a change and, unfortunately, those who were none the wiser, so deeply embedded in ignorance and disinformation that they never even realized there was an alternative. My path was influenced by them, and my service is to those who are survived by them.”

We extend our hearty congratulations, knowing the world (and the Inland Empire) is a better place because of Deema Akari’s transformational influence, now and in the future.

