**Please provide a brief description of your research interests and your interest in this program. (Limit of 5,000 characters.)**

It took me years to realize that research was always at the center of my heart. As a child, I was curious about the world as I always asked questions and was rarely given an answer. Rural Mississippi is where my journey of science began. I would like to believe that being from rural Mississippi conditioned me in an environment where I was taught to not ask questions, yet I have decided to pursue a career where I will forever seek answers to the unsolved questions of science.

Questions that I often asked as a child was why my grandmother had to take nine pills in the morning, why were the pills different shapes, why did she have to go to the doctor and get scans every two weeks, why did my mother have to make her finger bleed in the morning, why did my grandfather have to stick himself in the stomach? At the time I did not know I would be pursing this avenue of education and career; however, I believe that these questions created the foundation of my love for science and the relevance of health in world coincidently becoming a part of my research interests. Although I realized that numerous people in my family had the same diseases, I did not learn the term predisposition until recently. Being a member of my family means that I, myself, am predisposed to numerous disease such as hypertension, diabetes mellitus, cancer, and neurodegenerative disorders. Learning this term and what it means fostered a passion and ignited a flame for what is considered my research interest.

As a sophomore in college, I was able to secure a position within the School of Pharmacy as a research assistant. Working in Dr. Nicole Ashpole’s pharmacological/neuroscience laboratory, I received the opportunity to study neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer’s. Soon before I received that position, my great-grandmother had recently died from Alzheimer’s Disease; therefore, studying this disease resonated in my heart. Throughout my tenure as an undergraduate student working as a research assistant, my love for science was only strengthened which is why I chose to pursue graduate school. Studying Alzheimer’s disease was my first research passion; however, it did not stop there.

As I learned more about Alzheimer’s Disease, I learned more about the predispositions that increased the likely hood of developing the disorder. These predispositions have also become a passion of mine since the women and men of my family all have been diagnosed with diabetes and/or hypertension which increase their likely hood of developing other diseases. Similar as Alzheimer’s disease, these predispositions increase the likely hood of developing other things like cardiovascular disease including stroke. As I pursue my doctorate, I am interested in studying the effects that diabetes and hypertension have on not only neurological disorders but ischemia and cardiovascular health. Oddly enough, I have begun graduate school with the submission of a manuscript from my undergraduate work on neurological deficits caused by reduction of Insulin Growth Factor-1 and restoring cognition with Rho Kinase inhibitors. Recently, my research advisor and I have framed a new project which could result in my dissertation within the coming years. This project centers around my passion-predisposed diseases and ischemia. With a clear research outline involving hypertension and ischemia in combination with my previous work of IGF-1, I will be pursing my graduate project that is closely related to issues that I have seen in my own family for my entire life.

This program caught my interest as these same health predispositions are used as predictors of cardiovascular health. According to the Mississippi State Department of Health, cardiovascular disease including heart disease and stroke is the leading cause of death for residents of MS, and MS has the highest-ranking mortality rate in the U.S. caused by CVD. Much of the Mississippian lifestyle sets them up for developing these diseases. Although it would be idea for everyone to change their lifestyle to combat the development of these diseases, it is not feasible. Being a resident of MS throughout my life and hoping to remain a resident of MS, these statistics affect me directly. UMMC-GTEC primary goal of enhancing student’s knowledge of cardiovascular epidemiology, health disparities, and responsible conducting of research directly aligns with the values that I hold most high as a scientist. Every person in Mississippi has some type of relationship and experience CVD and that needs change. I chose to pursue admittance in this program because I have gigantic dreams of changing the world, but to change the world, we must start with ourselves. I am Mississippi; therefore, my journey of change needs to begin here, and it started with pursuing a doctoral degree that allows me to pursue my passions. My next step is pursuing opportunities that allow me to understand the world outside of