

## In The Spotlight: Delisha Stewart, Ph.D.

September 2003 -- Annually, The College Fund/UNCF and The Merck Company present 37 [scholarship awards](#) to "outstanding African-American students pursuing studies and careers in the field of biomedical research." Of these 37 awards, fifteen are given to undergraduates, twelve to graduate students, and ten to postdoctoral researchers. Earlier this year, Delisha Stewart, a Postdoctoral Fellow and member of [Dr. Robert Sikes'](#) laboratory, learned that she would be a recipient of one of the ten postdoctoral awards for 2003. This award provides Delisha with up to \$50,000 to conduct breast cancer research.

Delisha was born and raised in Dayton, Ohio. After receiving a B.S. in Biochemistry from the University of Dayton, she attended the University of Alabama at Birmingham, where she received a Ph.D. in Biochemistry in December 2001. A few months later, she joined the Sikes lab here at the University of Delaware and applied for the award after receiving a notice about it from the department chairperson. When asked about her work with his lab, Dr. Sikes comments that, "Delisha is a pleasant person, and easily interacts with a team. She is really beginning to hit her stride as a postdoc."



Stewart

The research performed in the Sikes lab is primarily focused on prostate cancer. They are trying to determine which genes are used in the course of prostate development, which ones contribute to prostate cancer, and how these two groups of genes compare to each other. The lab also has an active program in therapeutic drug discovery and validation for advanced prostate cancer. It's this therapeutic work that Delisha will draw experience from and apply to breast cancer. Her research will examine the role that sodium channels (which are like microscopic pores) play in malignant breast cells. She will also try to determine if, like prostate cancer cells, breast cancer cells can be killed with sodium channel inhibitory compounds.



Delisha working in the lab with graduate student Rose Deeter

In her free time, Delisha enjoys traveling within the United States. When asked what her ultimate career goal is, she said she would eventually like to work with a large pharmaceutical corporation or smaller research foundation. Additionally, Delisha intends to become an adjunct faculty member within a higher education institution, explaining that this would allow her to, "keep academic ties as well as give back to the community."



Delisha receives her award from Merck

representatives Dr. Bradley Sheares (left)  
and Dr. Shuang Ruy Huang (right)

Special thanks to Merck for providing some of the pictures used in this article.