



Shekinah Davis (center) leads a UMBC Peaceworker ethical reflection session. Each week throughout the academic year, Peaceworker fellows meet to discuss a topic of personal interest to consider together.

# Aligning experience, interests and goals

## Graduate programs connect students' past experiences with future goals

By Katie Turner, Contributing Writer

Unlike traditional undergraduate students, many people starting graduate programs already have significant work and life experiences. Three graduate programs in Maryland are working to capitalize on the knowledge students are bringing to the classroom and channeling those skills toward accomplishing their goals.

### UMBC's Peaceworker Program

What do you do with a group of smart people with diverse cultural experiences who are committed to making a positive impact in their communities?

This was the question that UMBC's Shriver Center answered when it created the Peaceworker Fellows program in 1994. Now starting its 30th cohort, the program welcomes returning Peace Corps volunteers to earn their graduate degree at UMBC.

"Our program has a dual focus to engage

returning Peace Corps volunteers who want to continue the good work that they've been doing, and to support Baltimore area nonprofits and public service agencies in doing the good work that they're already doing," explains Charlotte Keniston, director of the Shriver Peaceworker Fellows Program. However, she says that the ethical reflection embedded in the program is what really sets it apart.

"Every Friday we bring the Fellows together for ethical reflection," said Keniston, who says that the conversation allows students to discuss their academic work through the lens of service. "They're bringing all of these really unique perspectives to the conversation; they're really cross-disciplinary in the work they are doing."

Shekinah Davis is a 2021 graduate of the program. She began her Peace Corps service in 2017, working as a community health volunteer in Ecuador. Originally from Oregon, she decided to move to Maryland when she heard about the program at UMBC.

All Peaceworker students complete a

22-month internship with a Baltimore nonprofit. Davis interned with Wide Angle Youth Media, a nonprofit organization that provides media arts education for middle and high school students in Baltimore City.

Now, she is working as a client engagement manager for MOMcares, a nonprofit that provides under-supported Black birthing mothers and families in Baltimore City with prenatal and postpartum doula care, health advocacy and self-care support.

She says that beyond academics, Peaceworkers helped her find her place and her path.

"It is a community of like-minded people who are all passionate about justice work and helping people access that power that they already have," says Davis. "The shared love for justice doesn't end when the program ends."

### UMD Online Masters in Management

"Management is for everyone," said Rellie Derfler-Rozin, associate professor and academ-

ic director of the online master in management studies at the University of Maryland Robert H. Smith School of Business. The program welcomes students from all industry backgrounds who want to improve their management acumen.

"Wherever you are - higher education, art, sports, if you want to grow within your career into leadership roles, you need to gain those skills," she says. "We had someone with an undergrad in violin performance and she wanted to go to arts management. Now she is an arts development associate at Carnegie Hall in New York."

While an in-person masters in management program already exists, this fall the university began the first cohort of online masters in management program, which, Derfler-Rozin explains, makes advanced business education more accessible to a wider range of students.

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