



Maimuna Nagey
2022 Optica Women
Scholar & Amplify Optics
Immersion Attendee
Creighton University, USA

possible. First, I was able to fund my undergraduate education in Kenya, relieving so much financial stress, as in my home country, it is nearly impossible to work and study simultaneously because classes occupy up to 14 hours per day. The scholarship also covered the costs of the equipment I needed—something that would not have been possible without the grant.

Building community

Then, that same year, the Optica Foundation invited me to attend the Amplify Optics Immersion Program—a unique program made possible by Edmund Optics—in Rochester, N.Y., which would mark my first time coming to the U.S. I was very nervous, concerned that people wouldn’t understand me or I them, but I needn’t have worried. Professors and peers were immediately invested

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in my knowledge, success, and what I wanted to do in the future. I had never seen such support in my life!

It was also an honor to be in a room filled with 50 other young Black scientists and engineers and to begin building relationships that will last a lifetime. I connected with leaders in the field, with whom I shared my story. The kindness I received was so much more than academic: It was love and acceptance.

Forging a career

At the program, I was fortunate to meet Turan Erdogan, president, Plymouth Grating Laboratory, Inc. During our conversation, he asked

me what I wanted to do. I shared my passion for medical physics, but I wasn’t sure I would be able to afford a master’s program at Creighton University, where I wanted to go. Mr. Erdogan immediately introduced me to Professor Timothy Baran, University of Rochester, U.S., who, in turn, connected me with the program director of Medical Physics at Creighton. Everyone encouraged me to finish the application, and a few days after I submitted it, I received my acceptance letter, along with a fellowship and research assistantship to cover the costs.

NEXT GENERATION STORIES

Advancing a career with community support.

My interest in optics was born in high school when a neighbor underwent laser surgery to remove a tumor. I was astonished by the possibilities of optical technologies, but as a Black Muslim woman interested in science in Kenya, I wasn’t supported or encouraged to pursue this path.

Enabling education

Receiving the US\$10,000 Optica Foundation Women Scholar award changed what I thought was



Amplify Optics Immersion at Frontiers in Optics + Laser Science (FiOLS) 2022



Maimuna Nagey meeting 2002 Optica President Anthony Johnson

It was a dream come true! This year, I anticipate graduating with a master's in medical physics and applying for residency in radiation oncology.

I truly believe the Optica Foundation helps to make dreams a reality. Donors should know that the impact they enable is immeasurable and forever lasting. I am so thankful that people like Janet Fender & L. John Otten III, Elizabeth Rogan and industry members including Coherent, Corning, and SourcePhotonics, among countless others, provided me with this life-transforming opportunity. Without

the foundation, I wouldn't be where I am today—a woman from East Africa who's been given confidence and the chance to pursue life-long career goals—and for that, I couldn't be more grateful.

The Optica Women Scholars program annually honors 20 women who receive a merit and need-based grant, and the Amplify Optics Immersion Program brings together Black physics and engineering undergraduate or graduate students to explore the research and career opportunities within optics and photonics. Learn more at optica.org/WomenScholars and optica.org/AmplifyImmersion

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