

2025



# MAP Summer Team

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## A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

I am extremely pleased to welcome you to MAP Centre for Urban Solutions and the MAP Summer Student Program.

As a Research Student with MAP, you have joined the ranks of Unity Health Toronto, a remarkable organization that excels in clinical care, education and research across a network of three sites: Providence Healthcare, St. Joseph's Health Centre, and St. Michael's Hospital.

Our work focuses on working collaboratively with communities and policy partners to develop and test real-world solutions to complex urban health issues. We are defined by our commitment to system and policy change to achieve health equity, long-term community partnerships, and scientific excellence. However, our success and global recognition would not be possible without all the brilliant and dedicated minds who work here.

Thank you for your passion for advancing equity and justice, and for joining us at MAP in our mission to create a healthier future for all.

Remember, my door is always open!

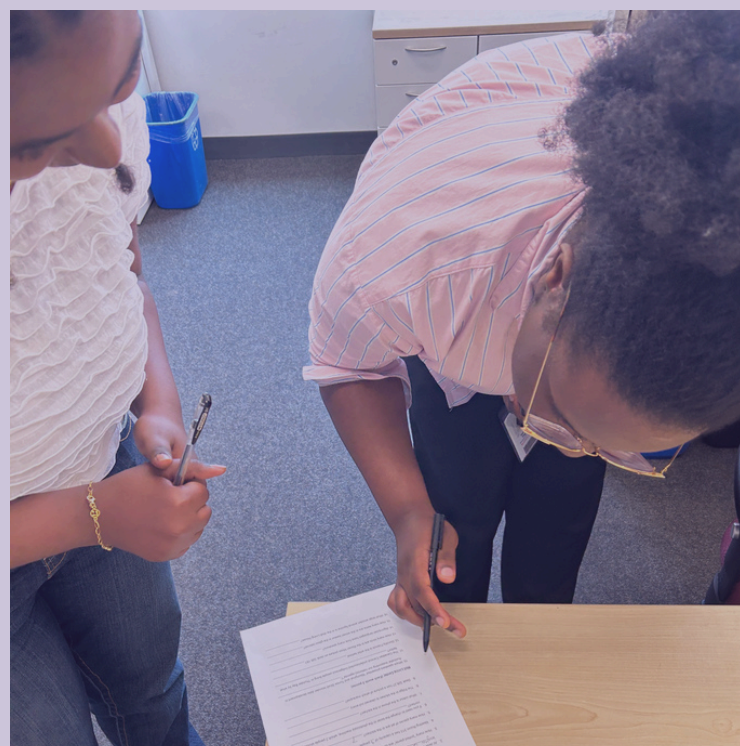
**- DR. STEPHEN HWANG  
DIRECTOR, MAP CENTRE FOR URBAN  
HEALTH SOLUTIONS**





# WORDS FROM MAP'S FIFTH COHORT OF SUMMER STUDENTS

MAP SUMMER STUDENT  
PROGRAM 2025





# GASSAN ABDULLAH

he/him



Gassan is a UTM student in Biology for Health Sciences with minors in Biomedical Communications and Education. As a Syrian student passionate about dentistry, he hopes to bridge research and clinical care in an underrepresented field. He enjoys playing soccer, going to the gym, and promoting wellness.

## **What was one highlight of the summer program for you?**

“A highlight was working alongside healthcare professionals while developing skills I’ll carry throughout my career—from hands-on tasks like coding and environmental scans to building resilience. I also felt genuinely supported by my peers and coordinator, Martha, which made the experience both professionally valuable and personally meaningful.”

## **What was one thing about the program you were surprised we did?**

“I was surprised by the scale of the KRSS poster competition—connecting with graduate and medical students from across the world, including Ireland, was an incredible opportunity. I also didn’t expect to be so involved in impactful research like Safe at Home Hamilton and hands-on coding and qualitative analysis work.”

## **PARTING THOUGHTS & REFLECTIONS**

“This program has been one of the most rewarding parts of my summer. It pushed me to grow both professionally and personally, and I’m truly grateful for the opportunity to contribute to meaningful projects like Safe at Home Hamilton. I gained skills I didn’t expect—coding, qualitative analysis, manuscript development—and built lasting connections with peers and mentors who made the experience genuinely enjoyable. What stood out most was the intentionality behind every aspect of the program: the workshops were relevant and engaging, the research was rooted in equity and impact, and the guidance we received never felt out of reach. It was clear that we weren’t just interns—we were part of something bigger. I’m leaving this experience more confident in my path and more excited about how I can use research and advocacy to improve health outcomes in underserved communities. Thank you for creating a space where that was possible.”

# SIMRAN DHAWAN

she/her



Simran is entering her 4th year of Health Sciences at McMaster University. As part of Dr. Ann Burchell's team and with the mentorship of Saeedeh Moayedini-Nia, she worked on a systematic review on lung cancer screening among people living with HIV and had an enriching learning experience!

## **What was one highlight of the summer program for you?**

"A highlight of the summer program was the weekly MAP sessions. Learning about different aspects of research from diverse guest speakers was really insightful for my project, as well as future research endeavours. The sessions were also a great space to catch up with the summer students every week :)"

## **What was one thing about the program you were surprised we did?**

"The scavenger hunt on orientation day was really memorable and enjoyable!! Not only was it great to get more familiar with the MAP space and building, it also provided the opportunity to get to know my MAP peers better through a fun activity."

## **PARTING THOUGHTS & REFLECTIONS**

"This summer has been wonderful with the ESTIMATE Lab! Not only did I learn more about lung cancer screening referral, adherence, barriers, and facilitators among people living with HIV, but I also got to experience the 'behind-the-scenes' of the research process. From drafting a protocol, to running a search, to seeking and incorporating feedback into every step, working on this project taught me a lot about collaboration, patience, and reflection. Along with this, I also assisted with the ethics proposal and community partners recruitment for an upcoming, related study which was really insightful. Huge thank you to Saeedeh for her mentorship and guidance throughout the summer in shaping this project, as well as Dr. Yeung and Dr. Burchell for their continuous support and feedback!"



# MERIKA GRAHAM

she/her



Merika is entering her 3rd year at the University of Toronto. As part of Dr. Stephen Hwang's team, she worked on a targeted grey literature review on Coordinated Entry, contributed to the Recuperative Health Space (RHS) project, and supported the development of policy briefs for the Beyond Housing initiative. It was an enriching learning experience that deepened her interest in health equity and social policy. Outside of academics, Merika enjoys dance and knitting in her spare time.

## **What was one highlight of the summer program for you?**

"One of the highlights of my experience in the program was participating in team meetings with Dr. Stephen Hwang's research group, where I had the opportunity to engage in thoughtful discussions and learn from what others are currently doing. I also greatly valued the weekly meetings with the other MAP students, which created a supportive learning environment and allowed us to share insights, challenges, and progress throughout the summer."

## **What was one thing about the program you were surprised we did?**

"One thing that pleasantly surprised me about the program was the effort put into organizing events and socials for us."

## **PARTING THOUGHTS & REFLECTIONS**

"Looking back on my time in the program, I feel incredibly grateful for the opportunity to be part of such a thoughtful, engaging, and supportive environment. Working with Dr. Stephen Hwang's team and alongside other passionate MAP students has deepened my understanding of health equity and community-based research in ways I didn't even think about in hindsight. From meaningful project work, to collaborative discussions, and even the fun social events, every aspect of the experience helped me grow both academically and personally. This summer has reinforced my passion for addressing social determinants of health and has inspired me to continue pursuing work that bridges research with real-world impact. I'm leaving this program not only with new skills and knowledge, but with a greater sense of purpose, and for that, I'm truly thankful."

# HAFSA HUSSEIN

she/her



Hafsa is an ambitious MAP summer student who is just as dedicated to her hobbies as her studies. In her free time, you can find her swimming laps, reading a good book, enjoying live music, or challenging friends to a game of table tennis.

**What was one highlight of the summer program for you?**

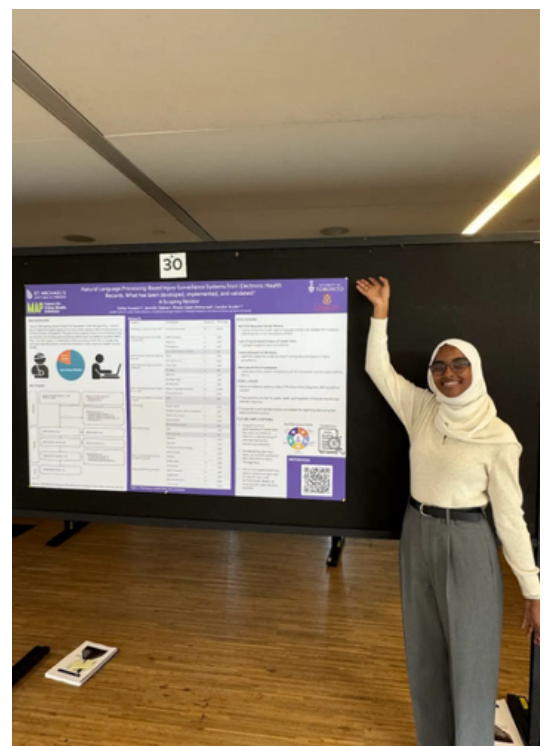
“My biggest highlight was the opportunity to connect with so many brilliant people. Getting to know all the MAP staff and scientists, and learning from their expertise, was truly inspiring and a great way to network.”

**What was one thing about the program you were surprised we did?**

“I was surprised by the emphasis on knowledge translation in the workshops. Learning to communicate our research through creative mediums was an unexpected and really fun part of the program.”

## PARTING THOUGHTS & REFLECTIONS

“The highlight of my summer was connecting with all the brilliant staff, scientists, and my fellow students. I’ll take the lessons and friendships from this summer with me as I move forward in my academic journey. Thank you to everyone who made this such an unforgettable experience. I wish the next MAP cohort all the best!”





# LILLIAN LIU

she/her



Lillian is a Health Sciences student at Queen's University and a member of Dr. Ahmed Bayoumi's Margins Lab, contributing to a literature review on quality indicators for programs serving people who use opioids. Outside academics, she enjoys art, fencing, thrifting, and spending time with her cat, Soya.

## **What was one highlight of the summer program for you?**

"I really loved meeting everyone in the summer program! Even though I joined later in the program, I instantly felt welcomed and included. It truly felt like we had all known each other for much longer. Thank you for being so inclusive, kind, and supportive throughout this experience!"

## **What was one thing about the program you were surprised we did?**

"All the workshops were truly surprising to me, as I never expected to have seminars where we could dive deeper into processes directly connected to our future careers. Every session offered new insights, practical tips, and valuable perspectives that I know will benefit us greatly moving forward. Super helpful!"

## **PARTING THOUGHTS & REFLECTIONS**

"I am grateful to Dr. Ahmed Bayoumi's lab for welcoming me into such a valuable program and for the opportunity to contribute to meaningful work! Thank you to Martha and the presenters and organizers for creating such an engaging and enriching experience. I also deeply appreciate my peers for their kindness, collaboration, and support throughout this journey!"

# MAIRA MUHIUDDIN

she/her



Maira is entering her final year of the Biology program at York University. She is passionate about health equity and supporting underserved communities. She plans to pursue a Master's in Public Health. Outside of academics, she enjoys baking and crafting.

## **What was one highlight of the summer program for you?**

“The highlight of my summer was attending the weekly MAP workshops! They provided a great opportunity to learn valuable skills, network, and connect with fellow MAP interns.”

## **What was one thing about the program you were surprised we did?**

“I was surprised by how interactive the MAP workshops were. It made the sessions more engaging and helped me grasp the material better.”

## **PARTING THOUGHTS & REFLECTIONS**

“A special thank you to Dr. Nav Persaud, Aine, and Moizza for all your support and guidance throughout my project. I'm also grateful to the MAP team for putting together such great workshops, each one giving me the chance to learn something new and connect with so many amazing people! Being part of the MAP Summer Student Program was such an amazing experience, and I'm so glad I had the opportunity to be a part of it.”



# KAMSIYOCHI ONYEKERE

she/her



Kamsiyochi Onyekere is entering her 4th year at the University of Toronto Mississauga, pursuing an Honours Bachelor of Science in Biology for Health Science, Psychology, and Biomedical Communications. As part of Dr. Flora Matheson's team, she contributed to the First Contact: Supporting Police Response to Intimate Partner Violence and Brain Injury project, assisting in data collection and conference planning to support the development of a toolkit for police first responders. This experience has strengthened her passion for health equity, mental health, and community advocacy. Outside of academics, Kamsiyochi enjoys cooking, baking, and exploring new creative projects.

## What was one highlight of the summer program for you?

"One highlight of my summer as a MAP research student was planning and attending the First Contact: Supporting Police Response to Intimate Partner Violence and Brain Injury workshop in Ottawa. Being part of the event's coordination and engaging directly with police, researchers, and community partners was an incredible opportunity to see our work come to life and foster meaningful conversations about improving support for survivors."

## What was one thing about the program you were surprised we did?

"One thing that surprised me about the program was how intentional it was in creating space for relationship-building alongside the research. I didn't expect the level of community and support among team members, which made the work environment collaborative, encouraging, and deeply rewarding."

## PARTING THOUGHTS & REFLECTIONS

"Participating in the summer research program at MAP has been an incredibly rewarding and eye-opening experience. I've had the opportunity to work on meaningful projects, build new skills, and engage with researchers and community partners who are deeply committed to creating positive change. I was especially struck by the strong sense of community within the program—the support, collaboration, and encouragement from everyone made each challenge an opportunity to grow. I am deeply grateful to the Justice and Equity Lab team: Dr. Flora Matheson, and to Dr. Arthur McLuhan, Madison Ford, Nikoleta Curcin, and Monique Redway for their guidance, mentorship, and generosity throughout the summer. This experience has not only strengthened my passion for health equity and social impact but has also inspired me to carry these lessons forward in my academic and professional journey."

# SARA OSMAN

she/her



Sara is going into her second year of the Integrated Science program at McMaster University. Sara's interests are boundless, ranging from equity in education to physics and astronomy. Sara's work this summer involved exploring over 700 parks and greenspaces across Toronto to collect data for a "park prescription" project.

**What was one highlight of the summer program for you?**

"The seminars every Wednesday were a huge highlight! The community we built from those seminars and little games was beautiful."

**What was one thing about the program you were surprised we did?**

"I did expect our sessions every Wednesday to be interactive, but I was surprised at the depth of some of the conversations we had. It felt nice to relate so much to a group of people and be reminded that I'm not alone in my journey :)"







# WORDS FROM OUR SUPERVISORS & WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

MAP SUMMER STUDENT PROGRAM  
2025

# SUPERVISOR INSIGHTS

## TEAM O'CAMPO

"It has been a pleasure working with Gassan Abdullah over the past 12 weeks. Gassan has contributed to many of our research projects including undertaking coding of qualitative interviews on our COVID-19 and Precarious Employment study, led a lit review and environmental scan on our Safe at Home Hamilton project, and supported our Postdoctoral Fellow start up their research study. One of the highlights of working with Gassan this summer has been watching him present his work at the 2025 Keenan Research Summer Student Poster Competition. We wish Gassan the best of luck in his future work and study, and have no doubt he will achieve great success!"

- **Pearl Buhariwala, Research Project Manager**

## TEAM BURCHELL

"It has been a pleasure working with Simran this summer. From the start, she demonstrated a high level of responsibility and professionalism in all her tasks. Simran took initiative, communicated clearly, and was consistently organized and dependable. She made meaningful contributions to our project, particularly through her work on a systematic review of lung cancer screening among people living with HIV, where her attention to detail stood out. Simran approached each task thoughtfully and was receptive to feedback throughout. We wish her all the best in her journey ahead and hope to have the opportunity to work with her again in the future!"

- **Saeedeh Moayedi-Nia, Co-Supervisor**

## TEAM HWANG

"It's been great having Merika on our team! Her energy and enthusiasm is so positive, and I think she has gained a lot through her experience doing research and participating in our team's work."

- **Dr. Stephen Hwang, Director & Scientist**

"Working with Merika over the summer has been an absolute pleasure. She demonstrated curiosity, enthusiasm, and a remarkable work ethic in every task she undertook. Her ability to adapt quickly and build strong relationships enhanced her integration and contributions to the team. Merika consistently asked thoughtful questions and offered valuable insights that enriched our projects and discussions. ->

Her professionalism and positive attitude were truly commendable, and it was inspiring to witness her growth throughout the placement. She has shown great potential for future career success, and I am confident that her experiences at MAP will significantly support that journey.”

- **Shadrach Korsah, Research Coordinator**

## TEAM SNIDER

“Hafsa is a shining light on our team. Her brilliant questions, insightful input, hard work and wisdom is appreciated daily. We are proud of the incredible work she is doing on her project and know that she will be an asset to everyone that gets to work with her in the future. We are going to miss her greatly but are excited for her next career steps!”

- **Dr. Carolyn Snider, Principal Investigator**

“It has been an absolute delight having Hafsa as a part of our team this summer! She has approached her project with energy and enthusiasm, and she is such a great fit with the team it feels like she has been with us for much longer than one summer. It has been a privilege having her on the team, and we look forward to watching her continue to succeed in everything she puts her mind towards. Thank you Hafsa, for your work, but even more importantly, for the opportunity to get to know you and to be a part of your amazing journey!”

- **Jennifer Dekker, Research Program Manager**

## TEAM BAYOUMI

“Lillian brings so much warmth and positive energy! It's been such a pleasure working with her and having her skills contribute to the team. She has been working hard to help us with a systematic literature review for The Toronto Opioid Overdose Network. We're grateful for Lillian's work ethic and enthusiasm and wouldn't have been able to make this much progress without her. Looking forward to seeing what she accomplishes in the future!”

- **Uzma Ahmed, Research Project Manager**

## TEAM PERSAUD

“Maira has been a wonderful addition to our team this summer, working on a living systematic review of healthy food interventions for people with prediabetes and diabetes. She quickly got up to speed and made steady progress, including registering the review and submitting the protocol for publication. Maira collaborated closely with the team, keeping everyone updated on her progress and welcoming feedback. Her curiosity, thoughtful approach, and consistent effort moved the project forward. We've greatly valued her contributions and the positive, collaborative energy she brought to the team. ->



We're excited to see where her skills and dedication take her next!"

- **Aine Workentin, Research Coordinator**

## TEAM MATHESON

"It has been an immense pleasure working with Kamsy this summer. She has been a standout from her start. She hit the ground running on a complex community-based project. She joined and coordinated a multidisciplinary team comprising researchers, clinicians, police and persons with lived experience to develop an intersectoral workshop delivered at a global Law Enforcement and Public Health Conference in Ottawa in July 2025. This event was a big success – we would not have been able to pull it off with her expertise. She also synthesized a huge amount of data collected during the event that will inform a toolkit for police response to encounters with women during situations of intimate partner violence in the context of brain injury. We are thrilled that we will have the opportunity to co-design the toolkit in the weeks ahead with Kamsy."

- **Dr. Flora Matheson & Dr. Arthur McLuhan, Supervisors**

"Working with Kamsy has been an absolute pleasure! She has brought a positive attitude, strong work ethic, and a collaborative spirit to the NSPC Committee (co-chaired by Flora Matheson) and toolkit workshop held in Ottawa in July 2025. Whether tackling a complex challenge or supporting the team with everyday tasks, Kamsy consistently demonstrates reliability, creativity, and a genuine willingness to help our team succeed. Her professionalism and dedication makes her not only a valuable team member but also someone who contributes to a supportive and productive work environment. We are glad to have Kamsy with us!"

- **Monique Redway, Research Assistant**

## TEAM BOOTH

"Sara has demonstrated exceptional dedication, enthusiasm, and tenacity throughout her summer with us. As part of her project, Sara conducted detailed audits of park quality, which will help us explore whether there is an association between greenspace quality and neighbourhood income, diabetes rates, and ethnic diversity. So far, Sara has visited over 500 parks (!) throughout Toronto and Scarborough which is a monumental achievement! On top of this, Sara has approached every task with diligence and thoughtful curiosity, and her critical thinking consistently elevated our discussions. She also created a fantastic scientific poster for the Keenan Research Summer Student competition and delivered a confident, articulate presentation. It's been an absolute pleasure to work with Sara this summer!"

- **Natalie McGlynn, Research Project Manager**



# SUMMER STUDENT WORKING GROUP INSIGHTS

“Working with this year's cohort has truly been an absolute pleasure! All the laughter, insightful conversations, and genuine good vibes during our weekly seminar sessions made Wednesday a day I greatly looked forward to. The 1:1 meetings I had with each of you further showed me that you all have wonderful souls and honourable aspirations that I fervently hope come true. You are the future generation of amazing healthcare professionals! <3”

- **Martha Taylor, Program Coordinator & Anti-Racism and Equity Advisory (AREA) co-Lead**

“Participating in the planning of the MAP Summer Student Program is always a deeply meaningful experience for me. While I haven't had the chance to work with you students directly this year, my heart remains with you every step of the way. I'm incredibly grateful that you've chosen this program—a space designed to uplift, affirm, and support you on your journeys. Your presence is a reminder of why this work matters. This program isn't just about the research—it's about creating opportunities, nurturing your potential, and building pathways for future generations of changemakers. Thank you for joining us this year!”

- **Denese Frans-Joseph, Research Equity Specialist & Anti-Racism and Equity Advisory (AREA) Lead**

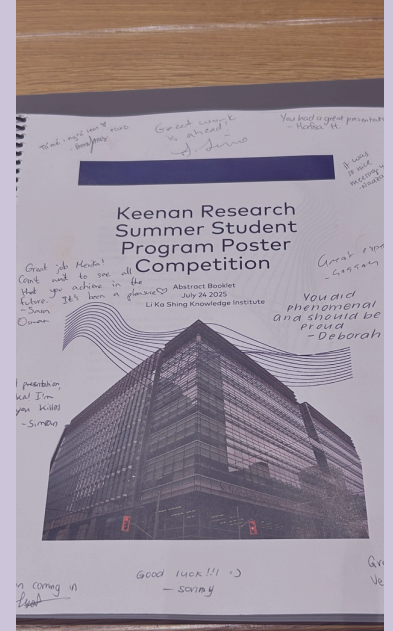
“What a pleasure it has been to watch all the students grow over the past few weeks! It's been truly inspiring to see their enthusiasm, curiosity, and insightful contributions to this program. This group has shown so much potential, and I have no doubt they will continue to do great things. Wishing each of you the very best of luck in all your future endeavours —keep reaching for the stars.”

- **Shajitha Rasiah, Research Coordinator II / AREA member**

“Melenna Awaju (she/her/elle) is a proud second-generation Eritrean-Canadian who participated in the inaugural MAP Summer Student Program in 2021. She is honored to now serve as a Consultant on MAP's Anti-Racism and Equity Advisory (AREA) board, contributing to the program's fifth year of transformative health equity research programming for racialized students. Melenna remains deeply inspired by the brilliance and dedication of each cohort; continually impressed by their eagerness to develop research skills and their ever-evolving spirit of collaboration within the culturally safe and inclusive environment she helps cultivate.”

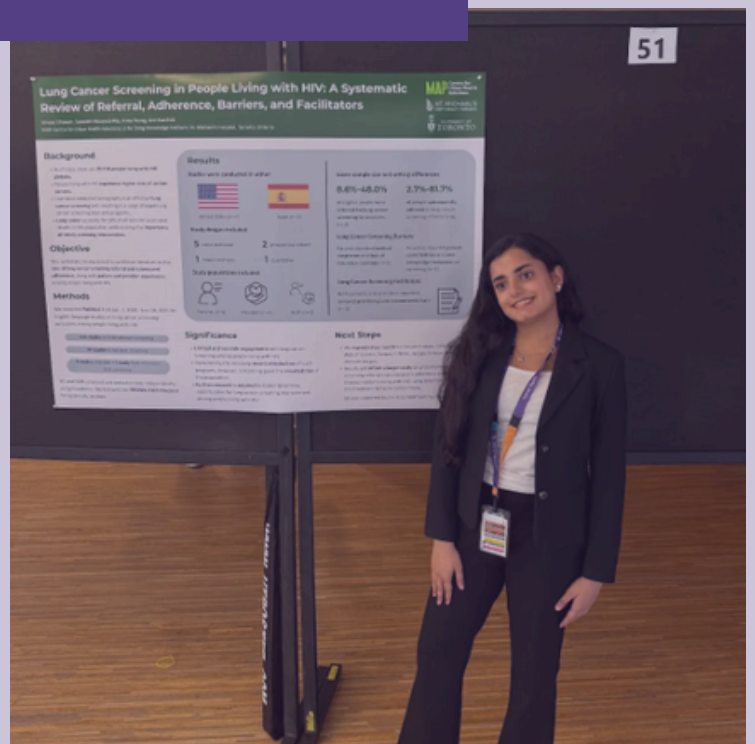
- **Melenna Awaju, MAP AREA Consultant**





# ADVICE FOR THE MAP 2026 COHORT

## MAP SUMMER STUDENT PROGRAM 2025





“Make the most of it—have fun, stay curious, and finish tasks ahead of time. Don’t hesitate to use the resources around you and connect with professionals; this is a unique opportunity many don’t get. The more you put in, the more you’ll grow—personally and professionally.”

-Gassan

“Don’t be afraid to ask questions! Whether that’s in MAP sessions, team meetings, or discussions with team members, everyone is very supportive and it is an opportunity to learn more about all the research that is occurring at Unity Heath!”

-Simran

“Every opportunity from the moment you get in, is an opportunity for you to connect and get to know the amazing people you’ll be working with. Network as these connections stay with you!”

-Merika

“My advice is to fully immerse yourself in every part of the program. You’ll gain invaluable skills that will benefit you long after the summer is over!”

-Hafsa

“Take full advantage of every resource offered! Build genuine connections with your peers and mentors as they are your greatest support. Stay curious and embrace every challenge as a chance to learn. Stay motivated in creating meaningful contributions! Don’t be afraid to ask questions :)”

-Lillian

“Be open to learning new things and don’t hesitate to ask questions. Your team is there to support you! Enjoy your experience and everything you learn along the way.”

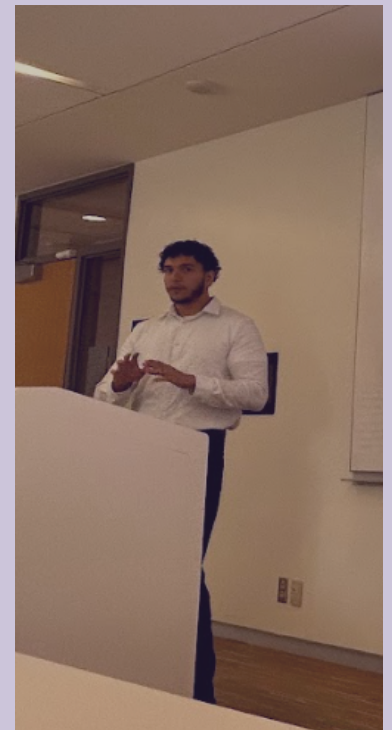
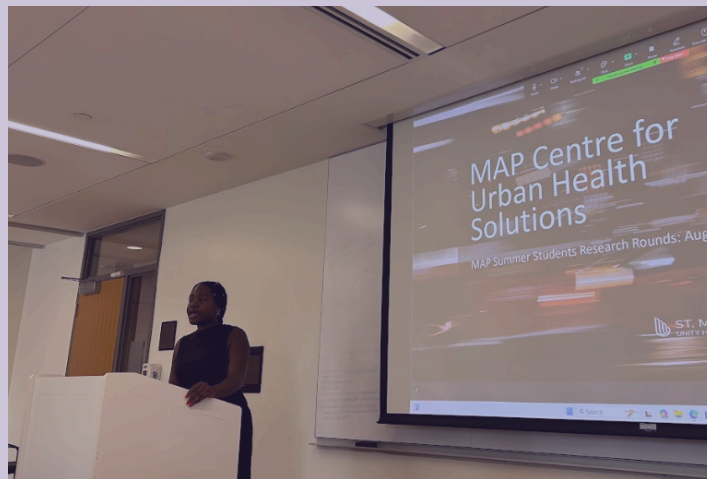
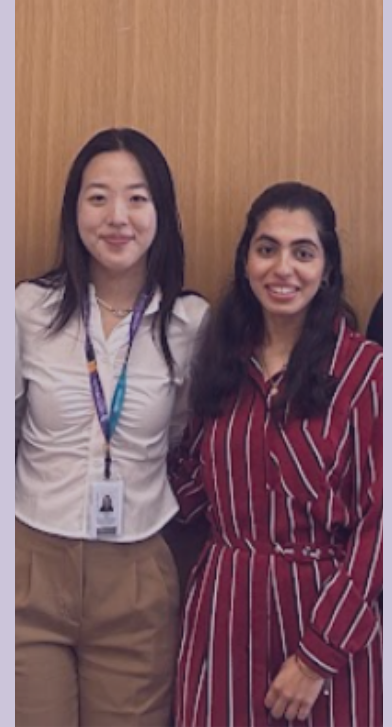
-Maira

“Talk to everyone at MAP—they are all so welcoming and open to sharing their journeys. Also, get to know the other MAP summer students; honestly, they were some of the best friendships I made this summer.”

-Kamsiyochi

“Plan fun outings with your colleagues! One of the best experiences in this program was going out with my fellow MAP students every other Wednesday, or even grabbing coffee together during lunch.”

-Sara







Sara O

Simran Dhawan

Lillian Liu

Kamsy Onyekere

Mairum

Merika Graham

Hafsa Hussein

Gassan Abdullah

Signing out.  
MAP 2025 Cohort