



Ashley Otto, was born and raised in South Orange, NJ. From her family, she learned at a young age the importance of integrity, giving onto others, and hard work. From humble beginnings, she lived in Essex County, NJ, one of the most polarizing areas in the country. Where wealth and poverty were separated by mere miles. This ignited her passion to close the social and economic gaps which too often plagues minority communities. She attended Rutgers University where she eagerly jumped into advocacy. During this time she worked with the Black Student Union and the United Black Council where she served as President. She also volunteered at local soup kitchens and was a tutor to both elementary students in the community and to students at Rutgers with a special focus on individuals who were learning English as a second language (ESL). Ultimately, she earned a Bachelor's degree from the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning, Policy, and Public Health and the School of Arts and Sciences as well as a minor in African Studies in 2013. She then went on to Rowan Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences earning a Master of Biomedical Sciences degree in 2016.

Currently, she is a second year medical student at Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. During her time at PCOM, she has become involved in numerous extracurricular activities aimed at enhancing diversity, supporting her peers, and working to bridge the social, economic, and educational gaps that are present in medicine. In her advocacy, she has raised the most money for PCOM's Student National Minority Association (SNMA) chapter along with her co-chair. During this 2019-2020 school year, she also enacted a peer tutoring program through SNMA for the school's Anatomy course. As Vice President during the 2020-2021 school year she has worked to increase cultural awareness through her work with over twelve student organizations via her role as the Director of PCOM's Cultural Competency Program (CCP). It is open to students in all degree programs and allows them to participate in forums and lectures which allow participants to expose their own biases, learn about other cultures, and develop a true understanding and respect for all. As the pandemic pressed on, so did she. She continued to fight for equality for minority students through her efforts creating

programming with SNMA to develop academic workshops for students in need. In addition, she recognized the importance of research and the need to understand the mechanisms of normal and diseased systems, which are imperative to better serving patients. As a result, she created alongside Dr. Marina D'Angelo, PhD a Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) Project where she ultimately studied and experimented with human lung fibroblast cells. This work was ultimately published in a FASEB abstract in April 2020 in addition to three other publications. She is grateful for the opportunities that she has been given and recognizes that with these privileges that is her duty and obligation to pay it forward, one day at a time.