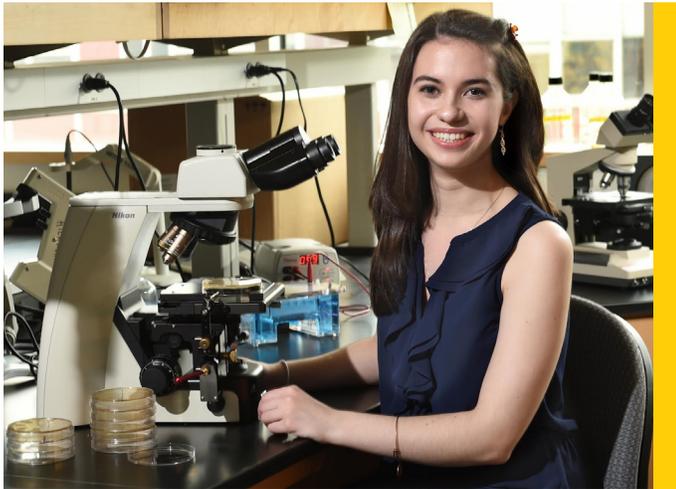


National Disability Employment Awareness Month Achievers Award Winner

WINNER



Erica Avery

Graduate Student

Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

Erica Avery maintains a leadership position in Equal Access in Science and Medicine Committee, an organization dedicated to students with disabilities at the schools on the East Baltimore campus. The group has held book clubs, documentary watch parties, social events, a celebration for the 30th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and seminar series given by disabled researchers. In addition, they were recently awarded a “JH Needs U” COVID-19 Well-Being Grant from University Health Services Wellness, allowing them to hold a two-day panel discussion event with a variety of students who are disabled to discuss with the Johns Hopkins community how their education, research, and everyday lives have been impacted by COVID-19. Subsequently, Erica was asked by the dean of biomedical graduate education to present the summary and conclusions from this event to the masters/Ph.D. committee to discuss improvements in accessibility and accommodations for students. The committee is established under the Graduate Student Association, and as such Erica is responsible for working closely with the association, speaking to the student community at meetings and listening to questions and concerns.

She works closely in collaboration with disability coordinators and Homewood’s Students Disability Justice Club to make improvements to student disability services as well as enriching student life according to the Diversity Innovation Grant EASM.

As an advocate for the disability community, Erica has published essays and op-eds in publications such as ASBMB Today and Scientific American discussing her chronic illness and the needs of the community to spread awareness and reduce stigma. These publications included discussions on the lack of health care options and research into misunderstood chronic illnesses and what living with a chronic illness is really like. Erica also wrote two essays for the American Chemical Society about focusing on improving mental health struggles due to the pandemic. Additionally, she’s written for Johns Hopkins Technology ventures to highlight Johns Hopkins students and physicians working on health care and medical tech ventures such as devices for portable oxygen, dialysis, asthma, mental health apps, etc.

Erica works closely on projects in collaboration with Johns Hopkins Disability Health Research Center, a center established to address health care disparities, representation in academia, and inclusion in medical and public health research. As one of the main student leaders in the disability community, Erica has often advocated for the health care needs of students to the university administration in meetings and listening sessions. She’s expressed the feedback from many students that their disability has made them reconsider if they can financially afford graduate education or balance the unreasonable demands and expectations of their degree and not exacerbate their health struggles.

