I consider it a privilege to have been chosen to represent the medical school in the Cal Turner Program for Moral Leadership in the Professions for the 2009-2010 school year. The experience has been beneficial in several ways. First, it afforded me the opportunity to meet and connect with students across various disciplines that I would not have otherwise met. Learning the perspectives and unique challenges of these students enriched me in ways that cannot be measured. Secondly, the leadership development workshops enabled me to deepen my understanding of what it means to be an effective leader while providing practical knowledge on how to sharpen the skills I already possess. For instance, one workshop presenter challenged the assumption that people within organizations behave and think as adults merely because they are over the age of eighteen. Instead, the presenter showed us that there are various developmental stages through which people operate, and an effective leader inspires followers to ascend to more mature levels. She also urged us to be introspective enough to know when we are not operating as full adults. This workshop, as well as many others, was thought provoking and eye opening. The final way in which the Cal Turner Program benefitted me was through the collaborative project, intended to address a need within the local community.

I was on the planning committee for the Women in Leadership Breakfast panel discussion along with 4 other fellows. The purpose of the breakfast was to facilitate a forum where women leaders could gather and candidly discuss issues relevant to them. We were certain this project would meet a need in the community because, to our knowledge, no similar projects had been done across disciplines. We felt that women leaders from different backgrounds would have similar struggles and could consequently learn from each other. Our assumptions about the need were confirmed; we had over seventy attendees including students representing various graduate and professional schools as well as community leaders. I personally received positive feedback from medical school attendees and two community lawyers, who wanted to continue the discussion through an online medium at a later point. In addition, one attendee was inspired to restart her contributions to the Martha O’Bryan Center. I am proud of the fact that I was partly responsible for the event’s success. Specifically, I created the event flyers, participated in regular committee meetings, helped coordinate logistics, recruited one of four speakers, and helped moderate the event.

Although I have benefitted from the fellowship, there is one criticism worth mentioning. First, to be nominated for the fellowship, one has to have already demonstrated an ability to lead. In essence, it is those students who are already overcommitted that end up being part of
the fellowship. To avoid this, I propose that the program require an essay of interest from the potential fellow prior to being accepted into the program. This may weed out people who are only participating for financial gain or for CV building. Additionally, group members should have an opportunity to evaluate the contributions of other members, such that the burden of responsibility to complete the collaborative project does not fall on a select few.