**15767, Sarah Otaru**

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor to speak to this dinner for the Dean’s Advisory Board for the School of Public Health for Boston University. This is my third semester here as an international, Nigerian, graduate student studying Global Health.

I was born in Nigeria, where I earned my Undergraduate education, and studied medicine and surgery, so I am a trained physician. I practiced for three years before deciding to come to the US to pursue a career in public health. I decided on public health because as a physician practicing medicine in a developing African country, I was often inundated with the level of health disparities that surrounded me. Infectious disease rates were alarmingly high, and more recently Africa is also having to battle with an increasing rate of non-communicable diseases. Statistics show that the poor, due to a lack of finances, information and access to healthcare, are more affected by these ills. Considerations of these factors made me feel disappointed and helpless because being able to help people was the reason I decided to study medicine in the first place. From my perspective, public health with its preventive and wide reaching innovations was like a light at the end of the tunnel.

Despite my reasons for making this choice, coming to the US was a great challenge for me. It was the first time I was away from my family for a long period of time, and I also had to bring my 2year old son with me. Not only was I very homesick for the first few months, I also struggled with some culture shock acclimating to the fast paced learning environment.

For a while, I doubted myself and questioned my decision to come to the US. As I progressed with my MPH program I knew that I had made the best choice, from the cutting edge, evidence based education, to the wonderful faculty and staff, to all the great friends that have made my stay here in the US so comfortable and memorable.

Amidst the racial turmoil in the US today, Diversity and Inclusion are two words that I find to be so real in the BUSPH community. It’s a privilege to be a part of it, and for that, I will always be grateful. I have rediscovered my love for medicine, because now more than ever before I see its crucial tie-ins with public health. I hope to be able to complete a residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology here in the US. After that I eagerly look forward to putting all the skills I have learned to good use through collaboration with the Nigerian government in areas of transnational reproductive health research. Through that research, I hope to invest in the lives of indigent Nigerian women and children, just as you all have invested in mine.

I consider it an honor and a privilege to have this opportunity to earn such a valued education that I can take back with me so I can help the people in my country.

Thank you