I have not always known that I would pursue a career in science, but I have always been driven by a desire to help children. While I had numerous experiences earlier in my life interacting with children, including daycare center work, volunteering with abused and neglected children, and being a mother myself, I had a persistent sense that I could do more to help children and their families. Having had a long-standing interest in the sciences, I returned to Cabrini College in 2003 to pursue a dual degree in biology and biotechnology and soon realized that I had found my true passion and a means to achieve my aspiration of helping children.

After graduating in 2007, I worked as a laboratory technician at Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia, PA, while also completing further biology coursework at a local university. It was during this time that I had the opportunity to hear Dr. Mina Bissell discuss her research of how breast cancer cells can regain 'normalcy' under certain environmental conditions. I immediately pondered if understanding this phenomenon could lead to more effective cancer treatments that would salvage diseased tissue rather than destroy it, an alternative particularly relevant for the brain. My degrees in psychology and the biological sciences, together with my work experiences in a cancer research facility, had collectively engendered a keen interest in studying brain cancer, particularly in children. Compelled by this desire, I am now a doctoral student, conducting my thesis research in a brain development laboratory at Shriners Hospitals Pediatric Research Center, with the goal of researching improved treatments for pediatric brain cancer patients.

As a graduate student at Temple University, I am in an interdisciplinary Biomedical Sciences program with a concentration in Neuroscience. The coursework I have completed in this program has significantly deepened my understanding not only of the brain, but also of cancer, immunology, and related fields. If selected to attend the 4th WHBA Summer School Program, I would have the opportunity to expand this knowledge base by learning about current research across multiple disciplines and novel advancements in technology which will expand our understanding of normal and diseased states. My prior experiences in diverse laboratory and academic settings, including a cutting-edge laboratory for personalized medicine, have instilled a broad interest in novel research methodologies and their applications. I am particularly interested in translational medicine and strongly feel that my current skill-set in biotechnology, along with the knowledge gained from the WHBA Program, will position me to be a productive contributor toward future research efforts in pediatric brain cancer treatment. Having the opportunity to learn from accomplished research scientists and to exchange ideas with other motivated students would be invaluable for my continued development as an independent investigator and future contributor toward the "biomedical revolution". I would look forward to sharing this experience with my graduate school colleagues, as I believe this exchange of ideas brings us together as a global scientific community, allowing us to progress more rapidly towards eventual cures.