



2008 Alumni Honor Roll | Reasons to Believe



Role models who give us *Reasons to Believe* in the power of education

Kim Bland, Ph.D.

Sumner Academy of Arts and Science, 1990

Kim Bland's daily work could lead to a better quality of life for millions of people. Bland is the senior director of research and development for Proteon Therapeutics, a Kansas City company that is leading the development of novel drugs for the treatment of vascular disease.

"I'm really a researcher at heart," she said. "I like the discovery part of the process."

Because Bland's family owned a newspaper business while she was growing up, some of her teachers naturally assumed she would follow suit with a career in writing. In fact, her second grade teacher at Claude Huyck Elementary School, Maxine Berry, encouraged her to write and once told her that she wanted a copy of her first novel.

But science sparked Bland's interest at the University of Kansas. As a freshman, she took a job as an office assistant for the center for biomedical research. Her work, along with a series of science classes, piqued her interest in the field and it blossomed from there.

After graduating (with highest honors) from KU with a bachelor's degree in chemistry and biology in 1995, she was offered a fellowship at the University of California at Berkeley. She earned a Ph.D. in molecular and cell biology from UC Berkeley in 2001. She dedicated her dissertation to the people in her life who, early on, gave her reasons to believe in herself – her parents and her second grade teacher. Remembering her teacher's original request, she sent her a copy.

To help guide other aspiring scientists and researchers, Bland has been involved in a mentoring program with KU for the past 10 years. She encourages students and gives them advice based on first-hand experience.

Her advice for today's students is "keep an open mind. Look around every corner and if there is something you are interested in, explore it and ask questions."

