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# STEMUS

HBCU STEM UNDERGRADUATE SUCCESS RESEARCH CENTER

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TRIANNAL NEWSLETTER



## FAMU Joins Historic NSF Partnership for Fertilizer Production

“This is a tremendous opportunity to solve one of the largest problems in the world: how we feed the growing population while protecting and sustaining our environment.”  
 — CASFER Center Director Gerardine Botte

Florida A&M University (FAMU) is one of five educational institutions partnering with the National Science Foundation (NSF) to create the Center for Advancing Sustainable and Distributed Fertilizer Production (CASFER). FAMU has joined Texas Tech, which is leading the collaborative center, Georgia Tech, Case Western Reserve University, and MIT.

CASFER received a \$26-million NSF grant for an initial five-year period, with the possibility of renewing the grant for five more years and another \$25 million.

“FAMU is proud to be a key member of this partnership,” said FAMU President Larry Robinson, Ph.D. “This research project to create sustainable fertilizers reflects on our core mission as a Land Grant institution to provide leadership in agriculture to address food insecurity worldwide while protecting our precious ecosystems.”

The vision for the CASFER Center is to “enable resilient and sustainable food production for the U.S. by developing next-generation, modular, distributed, and efficient technologies for capturing, recycling, and producing decarbonized nitrogen-based fertilizers,” explained CASFER Center Director Gerardine (Gerri) Botte, the Whitacre endowed chair of the Texas Tech Department of Chemical Engineering. Botte is tasked with leading a diverse team in developing next-generation, modular, distributed and



efficient technologies for capturing, recycling and producing decarbonized nitrogen-based fertilizers (NBFs).

“This is a tremendous opportunity to solve one of the largest problems in the world: how we feed the growing population while protecting and sustaining our environment,” Botte said.

Co-Principal Investigator Odemari Mbuya, Ph.D., professor of Agricultural Sciences and director of the Center for Water Resources at FAMU, said the project will focus on a different way of making fertilizer by removing nitrogen from animal waste and wastewater. “We can remove the nitrogen from that wastewater to make fertilizer for crop production,” explained Mbuya, who has taught at FAMU since 1996 and has a teaching appointment at the University of Florida.

For the last 100 years, the main method of manufacturing fertilizer has been carbon and energy intensive and requires high pressure and high temperatures. In Florida, fertilizer use leads to environmental pollution and algae blooms, Mbuya noted.

## FAMU Joins Historic NSF Partnership ...cont'd.



"It's not sustainable. We want to solve that. And if we are successful, this will be a major scientific innovation," he said. "It will have global implications."

The FAMU team is being led by Mbuya and Dean Robert W. Taylor, Ph.D., who serves on the Council of Deans for CASFER. Other FAMU scientists and engineers involved are: Katherine Milla, Ph.D., professor of geology and geospatial sciences in the Center for Water Resources; Associate Professor Daniel Solis, Ph.D.; Amita Jain, Ph.D., research associate in the Center for Water Resources; and Tarek Abichou, Ph.D., professor of civil and environmental Engineering in the FAMU-FSU College of Engineering.



Odemari Mbuya, Ph.D.

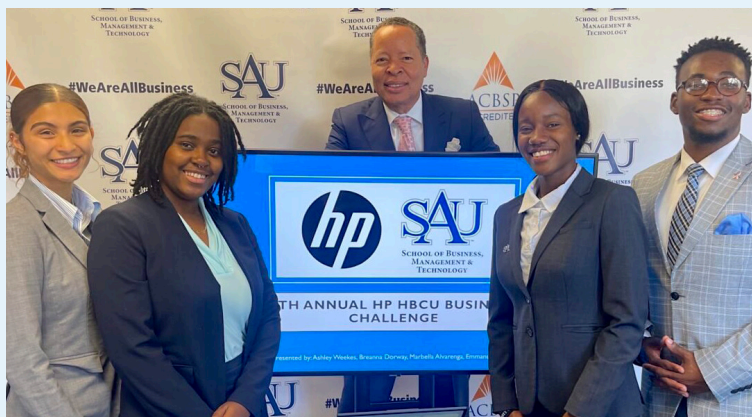
Texas Tech University is housing the CASFER headquarters. ■



SAINT AUGUSTINE'S  
UNIVERSITY

*Transform. Excel. Lead.*

## SAINT AUGUSTINE'S UNIVERSITY WINS ANNUAL HP HBCU BUSINESS CHALLENGE



Students from Saint Augustine's University (SAU) won the 6th Annual HP HBCU Business Challenge ending Oct. 27.

For the 2022 Challenge, competing teams concentrated on the Future of Work, primarily focusing on hybrid work and its impact on tech companies. SAU's winning idea consisted of a one-of-a-kind Hybrid Optimum Work Package, which included aspects of security, collaboration, and accountability.

As first-place winners, SAU students received computer-related prizes and mentorship from HP executives.

SAU's team made the finals last fall with four other schools: Jackson State

University, Morgan State University, South Carolina State, and Alabama State University. Business deans from the National HBCU Business Deans Roundtable member institutions nominated the participating teams. Dean Van Sapp of the SAU School of Business, Management, & Technology, selected the university's 2022 team of students: Marbella Alvarenga, Emmanuel Bryant, Breanna Dorway, and Ashley Weekes. Bernard Zandonda served as the student assistant coach.

Each year, students in some 35 HBCU business programs compete in the Challenge.

"Winning this Challenge is the evidence of SAU's leadership in adapting to dynamic environments by solving the problems in the rapidly changing technology industry," said SAU President Christine Johnson McPhail. "I commend Dr. Sapp and our students for their dedication, and HP for creating a platform showcasing how SAU's mission aligns with their commitment to diversity.

"This victory proves that with the proper motivation and effort, SAU students can compete with anybody," Sapp said. "Our faculty are skilled at preparing our students for success." ■





# Google.org’s \$5-Million Grant to Spelman Supports Project on STEM Women of Color

Donation is largest single Google.org grant to support a project focused on STEM women of color.

Spelman College has announced a \$5-million grant from Google.org, Google’s charitable arm, to the College’s Center of Excellence for Minority Women in STEM. It’s the largest single grant that Google.org has awarded to support a project focused on women of color in STEM.

The grant will support the development of a comprehensive data dashboard designed to help shape the narrative of the impact of Black women leading, working, and studying in STEM. This dashboard will primarily serve as a virtual hub for the dissemination of data and research regarding the experiences and “untold stories” of Black women in STEM disciplines. (The dashboard will also include the impact of women who are Indigenous and Latina.)



Tasha R. Inniss, Ph.D.

“Access to this type of dashboard with comprehensive data is necessary for making the case for systematic change in STEM,” said Tasha R. Inniss,

Ph.D., Spelman’s associate provost for research and principal investigator for the Center of Excellence. “Our goal is to become the leading global hub for the development and dissemination of research, data, and curriculum focused on the recruitment, retention, experiences, and advancement of Black women in STEM.”

One barrier discovered by researchers who are focused on Black women in STEM, for example, is the time it takes to pull data from multiple sources—some of which do not report findings specifically about Black women. A robust, publicly accessible dashboard with easily understandable data, then, is seen as critical for building educational equity.

In addition to the \$5-million grant, Google.org will provide a team of Google.org Fellows—Google engineers, product managers, UX (user experience) researchers, and designers—who will work with Spelman pro bono and full-time to help build the data dashboard.

The Center of Excellence, with Spelman researchers and Google.org Fellows, will design the initial version of the dashboard, focusing on Black

women but including other women of color who have been historically underrepresented in STEM fields, Inniss said.

“Spelman College is uniquely qualified to lead this important initiative to highlight the successes and stories of Black women,” noted Dolores Bradley Brennan, Ph.D., Spelman’s interim provost. “We hope that the Center of Excellence’s data dashboard will become the ‘go-to resource’ for researchers, policymakers, journalists, K-12 teachers, and anyone else interested in developing, utilizing, and elevating the work of Black women in STEM.”

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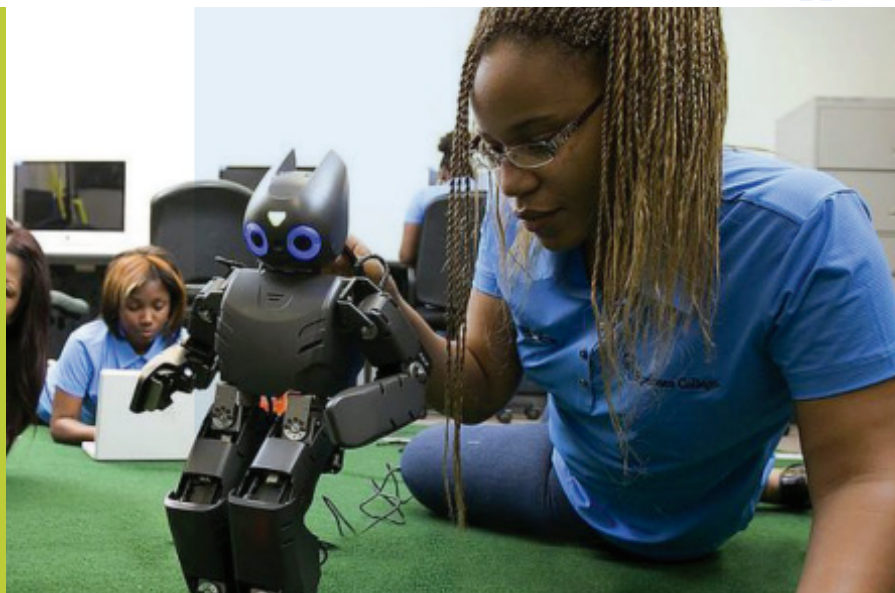
**“Spelman College is uniquely qualified to lead this important initiative to highlight the successes and stories of Black women.”**

Dolores Bradley Brennan, Ph.D., *Interim Provost, Spelman College*

Equip.  
Empower.  
Elevate.

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CENTER OF EXCELLENCE  
FOR MINORITY WOMEN IN STEM



## Spelman College's Center of Excellence for Minority Women in STEM

The Center of Excellence for Minority Women in STEM (COE-MWS) expands on Spelman's strategies to educate Black women in STEM, and strengthens and deepens the knowledge and experiences afforded to students and faculty through partnerships with industry, academia, and governmental agencies.

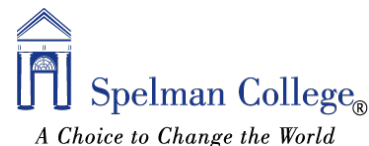
Serving as the foundation for the COE-MWS are three pillars of excellence:

1  
Research

2  
Academic  
Advancement

3  
Leadership &  
Professional  
Development

Guided by these pillars, and through collaboration with and funding from the U.S. Department of Defense, the center serves as the hub for all STEM undergraduate research, training and programmatic activities in the Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics.



## Google.org's \$5-Million Grant to Spelman...cont'd.



Some 40 years ago, Spelman committed to becoming the nation's principal educator of Black women in STEM, said college officials. Today, the college is nationally recognized as the top producer of Black women who receive doctoral degrees in STEM fields.



President Helene Gayle

"We are thankful for this generous contribution from Google.org, which will support our ability to continue Spelman's long history of recognizing and nurturing the contributions of women of color in STEM," said Helene Gayle, M.D., MPH., president of Spelman College. "Black women continue to play pivotal roles in various scientific disciplines. Being able to effectively document those efforts will strengthen our ability to elevate and value the voices, research, and intersectional experiences of these women." ■





## Darrell K. Williams Takes the Helm as President of Hampton University

### Williams focuses on providing supportive environment, academic excellence to students

Ret. U.S. Army Gen. Darrell K. Williams has been named president at Hampton University, almost 40 years after graduating from the historically Black university in Virginia with a bachelor's degree.

Williams, a three-star general, business leader and educator with nonprofit development experience, said he is striving to create an unparalleled higher education experience for students that includes excellent academics, support for strong physical, emotional, and mental health, and access to cutting-edge technology, research opportunities, and innovative studies.

A native of West Palm Beach, Florida, Williams came to the university from the Fortune 250 technology company Leidos, where he served as the global organization's United Kingdom vice president and managing director of the U.K. Ministry of Defence Logistics Commodities and Services Transformation Programme, which provides logistical support to U.K. military forces.

Williams holds: a master's in business administration from Pennsylvania State University; a master's in military art and science from the Army Combined and General Staff College; and a master's in national security strategy (distinguished graduate) from the National War College. While a Hampton student, he was Mister Freshman 1979, a three-year Reserve Officer Training scholarship cadet, a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, and senior class president.

Hampton University just formally celebrated its 130th Annual Founder's Day anniversary on Jan. 29. A forerunner of the university, the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, was

founded after the Civil War by former Brigadier General Samuel Chapman Armstrong, with the help of the American Missionary Association. The Institute was meant to be a place where Black students could receive post-secondary education, as well as training in useful job skills while paying for their education through manual labor.



President Darrell Williams and wife, Myra Richardson Williams, also a graduate of Hampton University.

Ultimately, Hampton became a normal school (teacher's school) for future Black teachers. In theory, these Black teachers would apply the Hampton idea of self-help and industry at schools throughout the United States, especially in the South, according to Hampton officials. "To this end, a prerequisite for admission to Hampton was the intent to become a teacher. In fact, approximately 84 percent of the 723 graduates of Hampton's first 20 classes became teachers.

"Armstrong strove to instill in these disciples the moral value of manual labor. This concept became a crucial component of Hampton's training of Black educators."

In February, Hampton also celebrated the 20th anniversary of the establishment of its Scripps Howard School of Journalism and Communications on campus. A celebratory program was held on Feb. 10, along with a commemorative career fair, featuring top U.S. news and public relations firms.

For more information about Hampton University, click [here](#). ■

# Grant Warner Appointed Inaugural Director of the Center for Black Entrepreneurship



Grant Warner, Ph.D., was appointed in December to serve as the inaugural Bank of America Endowed Professor of Entrepreneurship and Director of the Center for Black Entrepreneurship (CBE) in Atlanta. Warner is charged with supporting the CBE's vision to connect Black entrepreneurs with corporate leaders and the funding they need to succeed in the business world.

Warner will partner with the Morehouse Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center (MIEC), the Spelman Innovation Lab, the Morehouse Business Administration and Economics Division, and the Spelman Economics Department academic leadership to implement CBE initiatives, enhance learning experiences for entrepreneurship students, and lead an online certificate program for professionals seeking to deepen their knowledge about Black entrepreneurship.

A collaboration among the BEA Foundation, Spelman College, and Morehouse College—and anchored by a \$10-million contribution from Bank of America—the CBE aims to grow the pipeline of Black entrepreneurs and connect them to investment opportunities. Through academic training, access to mentors, and exposure to the program's robust network of business leaders and investors, CBE students will be supported in navigating the structural challenges that Black entrepreneurs traditionally face when attempting to launch and sustain a businesses. By increasing investment in Black-founded companies, the CBE will ultimately contribute to closing the investment gap.

"I am honored to join the CBE, to build on Spelman's and Morehouse's strong legacies of innovation and partner with the Black Economic Alliance to achieve the CBE's mission," said Warner. "I have dedicated my career to identifying and implementing new opportunities for Black entrepreneurs, particularly at HBCUs. I strongly believe in the CBE's vision of developing commercial pathways for Black entrepreneurs and building an ecosystem of investors and business leaders to support them, and I am excited to help bring the vision to life."

An established HBCU educator and technology entrepreneur, Warner brings a unique mix of first-hand and administrative leadership to his work. Before joining the CBE, he served as a professor and director of innovation at Howard University, where he developed HowU Innovate, an interdisciplinary initiative providing campus-wide innovation programming in which students

are guided through founding technology startups. Warner also initiated the Howard University—Hampton University I-Corps Site program to commercialize university research from HBCUs.

An advocate for inclusive innovation, he holds a bachelor's degree from Cornell University, a master's degree from Penn State University and a doctorate from Columbia University, all in mechanical engineering.

"As a founding partner of the Center for Black Entrepreneurship, it is critical for our institutions to support the development of modern, impactful, and sustainable businesses, while continuing to foster a community of innovation for young Black entrepreneurs," said David A. Thomas, president of Morehouse College. "Dr. Warner's first-hand entrepreneurial experience, particularly in the technology innovation space, will be instrumental in implementing and expanding our participants' growth opportunities." ■

*Spelman will house its CBE site in a new academic facility, the Center for Innovation & the Arts. Morehouse will house its CBE site within a new facility on campus.*



## RESOURCES

- Information and news about the Center for Black Entrepreneurship is available [here](#).
- For more about the Spelman Innovation Lab, click [here](#).
- Find more about the MIEC [here](#).
- More about the Black Economic Alliance can be found [here](#).



# Winston-Salem University's Jill Keith

**“We graduate 30 percent of African American STEM professionals who advance to obtain their Ph.D.s, while teaching more classes and working longer hours than faculty at other institutions.”**

## Directs Biomedical Research Infrastructure Center



When Jill Keith was a young girl in New York City, she became intrigued by science. And as she grew older, this scientific interest never wavered.

Keith went on to earn two degrees in the science field and became an award-winning professor of biochemistry at Winston-Salem University (WSSU), where, today, she serves as interim director of the university's Biomedical Research Infrastructure Center (BRIC).

“I was always into science,” she recalls. “It was never anything else but science for me, ever since I was in elementary school. I had toys that were scientific—like a microscope and a chemistry set—and I was always tinkering with things.”

Keith's native city also nurtured the young girl's passion for science. “They have science high schools in New York,” she explains, “and every Tuesday, *The New York Times* ran a science article.”

After graduating from high school, Keith remained in New York to work on a bachelor's degree at York College–City University of New York, where her dedication to science grew even stronger. “I enjoyed chemistry a lot—taking organic chemistry, where you make compounds, that is, synthesize compounds in the lab.”

As an undergrad, Keith learned how to make compounds and store them, but she also wanted to learn about various applications for her work. “How

could we use these compounds to help people?” So, she continued to graduate school to study organic chemistry.

The New Yorker earned a doctorate in organic chemistry at the University of Maryland-College Park in 1991, and for the next two years served as an NIH Postdoctoral Fellow at Duke University, scrutinizing the connection between biology and chemistry. As a research fellow at Wake Forest University, Keith also studied compounds that could be used in biological studies to improve health.

Keith joined the WSSU faculty in 1997 as an assistant professor, became a full professor, and then, in 2011, received the prestigious North Carolina Board of Governors Award for Excellence in Teaching for her use of active learning in the classroom.

Today, Keith—as a WSSU professor and adjunct professor at Wake Forest University Health Sciences in Physiology and Pharmacology—is particularly interested in Central Nervous System disorders related to drug addiction and other disorders. “A lot of people are looking for cures for drug addiction,” she says. “The issue is that





The Biomedical Research Infrastructure Center (BRIC), a Center of Excellence at Winston-Salem State University (WSSU), was established in 1996 through funding from the National Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities, National Institutes of Health.

BRIC researchers promote the understanding about and prevention of human diseases. These include but are not limited to, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, drug addiction, neurological disorders, and pain. The Center is also designed to nurture undergraduates in research—especially those underrepresented in science—with the goal of ensuring success in their careers while they participate in advancing innovative projects.

“BRIC researchers conduct original and innovative biomedical/behavioral research aimed at eliminating health disparities as they relate to hypertension/cardiovascular disease, drug addiction, and diabetes,” said Jill Keith, interim director. “Our research in improving minority health is the foundation for new strategies necessary to reduce the mortality rate in the minority community.”

The core BRIC faculty comprises 12 Ph.D. researchers and two research staff members; they share a basic laboratory research building with Wake Forest University School of Medicine in the Innovation Quarter. Importantly, Keith noted, researchers from both institutions have joint projects designed to positively impact human health.

For more about the BRIC, click [here](#).

## Jill Keith... cont'd

even if there is one, the craving that addicts have has to be overcome. You must have behavioral therapy, as well. It's not just one approach.”

Since WSSU is a comprehensive master's institution, Keith also teaches chemistry, something she's passionate about, as well. She's received research and educational grants to enhance student, staff, and faculty training, and has taught undergrads as well as graduate students, teaching biochemistry to pharmacology graduate students, for example, and teaching chemistry to pre-nursing majors.



“I was always into science. It was never anything else but science for me, ever since I was in elementary school.”

As a dedicated educator, though, Keith is not focused on awards. She says she's proudest of how successful her students are and committed to her work as an HBCU educator and researcher.

“There are 101 HBCUs, and we graduate 70 percent of your African American doctors and dentists and 50 percent of African American teachers,” she says. “We graduate 30 percent of African American STEM professionals who advance to obtain their Ph.D.s, while teaching more classes and working longer hours than faculty at other institutions.

“We understand that some of our students come from under-resourced schools,” she adds. “And we put more time into fostering a healthy self-esteem.”

HBCU faculty and staff also spend more time trying to help each student “take care of the whole person,” Keith firmly believes. “Everybody hasn't grown up under circumstances we feel are ideal in America. Just look at the impoverished. Their lives are totally different, but we don't talk about it in mainstream America. We talk about middle-class struggles.”

As much as she and other dedicated teachers have been able to accomplish with their students, however, Keith recognizes that significant challenges remain, particularly at HBCUs. “We're still researching how best to deliver content so that students learn,” she explains. “We haven't been very good at teaching students how their brains learn—how



## Jill Keith... cont'd



to eat correctly and hydrate for the brain, and how to structure their work week to get all of their studying and sleep in.”

Keith also advises young men and women to discover their own learning style—auditory or visual—and to study subjects they enjoy. “Go to your learning center and take a career inventory test; it’ll ask you a lot of questions and reveal options best for you.”

Drawing from her years of research, education, and experience, Keith now also advises STEM students, first and foremost, to learn how to study. “Students don’t know that highlighting something in a book is not studying,” she explains. “You retain what you write, and you retain things when you work out a lot of problems.

“There is a science to learning,” says the dedicated educator, “and once students find out how to study, it’s easier and they’ll learn.” ■



## Fisk University Introduces Bachelor of Social Work Program

Fisk University in Nashville has launched a new Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree program with a four-year curriculum designed to prepare students for professions in advocacy and allow them to work with underserved populations.

The BSW program combines rigorous academic coursework with hands-on field experience, according to Fisk officials, giving students the opportunity to put what they learn into practice. This approach should give graduates the best chance for success in their chosen careers, said Brandon A. Owens Sr., Ph.D., Fisk’s former associate provost and associate vice president for academic affairs and a 2007 graduate of Fisk University.

The program offers a comprehensive curriculum covering all aspects of social work, from human development and behavior to social policy and research. In addition, Fisk students are provided with opportunities to gain practical experience through internships and field placements.

“Social work is not only one of the fastest growing career fields in this country right now, but it is also another way for graduates of Fisk University to have a positive impact on the lives of individuals and communities around the world,” Owens explained. “Social workers help people in need, fight for social justice, and aim to improve the well-being of society as a whole.”

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that employment of child, family, and school social workers is projected to grow some 14 percent from 2016 to 2026, much faster than the national average job growth. “As the world changes, people are struggling to adapt and needing more assistance in coping with these difficulties,” stated a Fisk news release. “There are 700,000 social workers employed in child and family services, healthcare settings, mental and substance abuse agencies, and other human service programs. A new social work program will help Fisk University students become competent generalist practitioners with problem-solving skills by studying both general sociology courses as well as courses specific to rehabilitation.” ■

For more on Fisk’s social work program, [click here](#), or contact Brenda Norman, coordinator of social work at [bnorman@fisk.edu](mailto:bnorman@fisk.edu).

# United Negro College Fund Coaching Initiative

## Helping HBCU Students Through College



With UNCF support, HBCUs will offer coaching to help thousands of students of color chart pathways to, and through, college.



UNCF (the United Negro College Fund) has announced a four-year coaching initiative designed to help HBCU students access and complete college. The initiative is funded by Strada Education Network, the Macquarie Group Foundation, and Blue Meridian Partners.

The coaching project expands on a year-long collaboration between UNCF's Institute for Capacity Building (ICB) and the national student success nonprofit InsideTrack, which support former HBCU students re-enrolling in higher education.

UNCF and InsideTrack are now in the second year of a multi-year, multi-campus partnership focused on HBCU student enrollment and success. The project began in 2021 as a pilot focused on helping former HBCU students re-enroll in higher education in the wake of a tumultuous year. Supported by funding from the Strada Education Network, InsideTrack coaches reached out to more than 4,000 former students and helped some 400 of them return to nine campuses participating in the project.

"Research—and lived experience—tell us that HBCUs offer a strong positive return on investment for their graduates, while also making a powerful contribution to social mobility across generations," said Edward Smith-Lewis, vice president of strategic partnerships and institutional programs at UNCF. "This work is about equipping our member institutions to scale high-impact support services that can help current and prospective HBCU students achieve their education and career aspirations.

"It's also about helping HBCUs sustain the long-lasting change for alumni, families, and communities that we know they are uniquely capable of producing."

Nationally, HBCUs account for just 3 percent of all four-year, nonprofit colleges and universities; they enroll 10 percent of all Black college students and produce 16 percent of the bachelor's degrees and 20 percent of the STEM degrees earned by Black students, according to UNCF. A recent analysis from UNCF's Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute also found that HBCUs move their graduates into the middle class at nearly twice the rate of other institutions of higher education.

"Since the beginning of the pandemic, HBCU leaders and advocates have linked arms to effectively respond to the unprecedented challenges our students have faced over the past two years—from financial headwinds and public health concerns to pandemic isolation and even threats of violence," said Julian Thompson, director of strategy at UNCF. "Tapping into the same spirit of collaboration, this is about working with HBCUs to build on an extraordinary legacy of student achievement and engagement to help more HBCU students realize the full promise of higher education."

Institutions participating in the next phase of the coaching initiative include Benedict College, Bethune-Cookman University, Claflin University, Clark Atlanta University, Dillard University, Florida Memorial University, Jarvis Christian University, Johnson C. Smith University, Lane College, Morehouse College, Philander Smith University, Stillman College, Talladega College, Voorhees College, and Wiley College. ■



# BESMART HACKATHON 2022

## Morehouse Students Take First Place in BE Smart Hackathon

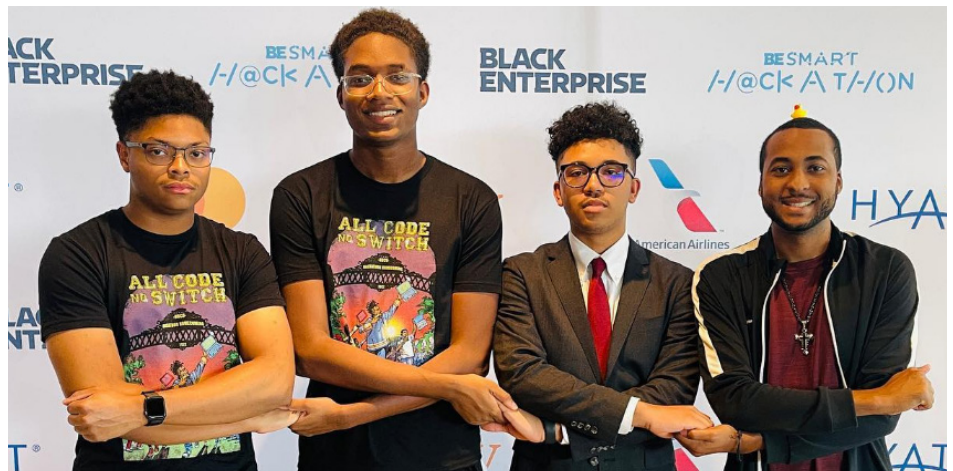
Students competed for internships, full-time jobs, and other career opportunities, as well as for prizes from American Airlines and other technology partners.

Morehouse College juniors Kevin Drew, Trent Gaylord, and Elijah Truitt won the 7th Annual BE Smart Hackathon Oct. 6-9 in Dallas-Fort Worth. The Morehouse team took first place for its innovative luggage tag app, designed to offer customers ease and affordability while checking baggage.

Top HBCU students in tech from across the country—23 teams from 19 HBCUs—competed with the theme “Homecoming 2022: All Code, No Switch!”

In addition to the main competition, the hackathon also included virtual workshops on technologies such as artificial intelligence, data analytics, and natural language processing from Microsoft, IBM, and HP, among others. In addition, Black Enterprise held the Town Hall, “HBCUs: Developing Top Tech Talent,” featuring academicians from North Carolina A&T and Jackson State University, as well as senior executives from American Airlines and Hyatt Hotels Corp.

Hackathon attendees participated for internships, full-time jobs, and other career opportunities, as well as for prizes from American Airlines and other technology partners. According to Black Enterprise, the hackathon also gave students the opportunities to network, build relationships, gain mentorship, engage in career preparation, and add meaningful experiences to their resumes.



*Celebrating their BE Smart Hackathon win were Morehouse students (left to right): Kevin Drew '24, Trent Gaylord '24, and Elijah Truitt '24, as well as Professor John Porter III '14, a Morehouse alumnus.*

Two teams from Alabama A&M took second and third places in the main hackathon competition. Team Binary Beast came in second for its rewards app, and Team Tai earned third place for its enhancement of the American Airlines' AAdvantage® program. Binary Beasts were Asa Rogers, DaQuandalon Daniel, DeTavein Walker, Eyerusalem Girma, and Lyric Sampson. Competing on Team Tai were: Opeyeoluwa Olanipekun, Olasubomi Olawepo, Shemaiah Mbetwa, Mphande Phiri, and Prosper Banda.

American Airlines was a primary sponsor of the hackathon, hosted by Black Enterprise. Hyatt served as a presenting sponsor. Other sponsors included DXC

Technology, Etsy, Mastercard, Now and Later, Rap Snacks, and Teradata.

For winning the competition, each member of the Morehouse team received 100,000 AA Advantage miles and two hotel night stays at a Hyatt hotel. Team Morehouse was also given the opportunity to present its winning concept to Hyatt's chief information officer at the company's Chicago headquarters.

“You are all winners,” Tomias Davis, director of American Airlines' Development Program Technology and one of the driving forces behind the BE Hackathon, told competitors at the event. “You all exhibit HBCU excellence.” ■



# Diya Flenaugh



Diya Flenaugh, a graduating senior at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (NC A&T), plans to follow in her parents' footsteps and become a physician. The 22-year-old biology major from Decatur, Georgia, has worked diligently to prepare herself for a future as a pediatrician, serving, in part, as an undergraduate researcher, student intern at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine, and licensed pharmacy technician—as well as helping residents in Ghana and Honduras through the Global Medical Brigade.

In different cultures, Flenaugh's unusual first name, Diya, can mean light, compassion, and even love—all of which reflect her personality, friends say. "Diya has always been full of positive energy and curiosity," says longtime family friend Gwen Gable. "Her smile and positive outlook brighten those around her."

Diya Flenaugh shared her thoughts about HBCUs, STEM studies, exploring graduate schools, and more.

“

I know I'm a scientist at heart. I know I'm a science girl. I laugh at biology jokes that people make, and I really do love learning about science.”

## When did you decide to be a doctor?

“My dad is a pulmonologist at Grady Memorial Hospital in downtown Atlanta, and my mom does internal medicine at Grady. When I was 4 or 5, people would ask me if I was going to be a doctor, like my parents, and I'd say, no, that I was going to be a lawyer or a flight attendant. But the seeds of interest were planted there.

“In eighth grade I was playing soccer and got my first concussion. I had to stay overnight and do the follow-up visits and everything, and I really appreciated the physician who handled that, so I thought sports medicine might be something I'd be interested in.

“I worked for four years at the Jewish center (Marcus Jewish Community Center) in Atlanta, at a summer day camp for kids. I decided I wanted a career where I could explore medicine and work with children, so that brought me to pediatrics, and I stuck with that. I ended up shadowing at the Thomas Eye Group (pediatric eye care) at home, during Covid, and with a pediatrician in Greensboro.”

## Did you seriously consider another career?

“My mom wanted me to be a computer scientist so badly. I did a program at Georgia Tech and we had to program a robot. And my robot was not a robot! That's when I realized that the computer science/engineering pathway was not for me. But both my parents are very proud of me.

“At the end of the day, I think I know what I want my career to be focused on. I know I'm a scientist at heart. I know I'm a science girl. I laugh at biology jokes that people make, and I really do love learning about science.”

## Where else did you think about going to college?

“Originally, I had my heart set on Texas A&M, but as I really started to explore other schools and my options, I thought being at an HBCU was my best opportunity to not always be the minority in my classes. So, I chose between Howard and NC A&T. I attended admitted student day at Howard, and I just didn't feel I was going to mesh well. I wasn't enjoying the campus the way I thought I would.

“At A&T, there were also opportunities to play soccer. And my biggest class there was 30, so I felt I'd have more of an interpersonal connection with my professors.”





## Diya Flenaugh... cont'd



As a teen, Flenaugh (fourth from left) suffered a concussion while playing soccer and had to stay overnight in the hospital. That experience piqued her interest in sports medicine.

### How did you do in your early college science courses?

"I would say, personally, that the harder classes to complete for the major lay in the chemistry and physics departments. Especially trying to understand organic chemistry. Organic chemistry was definitely my struggle class."

### What about math?

"I took calculus my freshman year, and it was OK, but I was used to being a straight-A student in high school, and that was the first college class I got a B in. I had a good professor, though, so I made it pretty well."

### What's been the advantage of going to an HBCU?

"I can agree that there is a big impact when you're going to class with people who look like you, particularly in the harder subjects. When I got to pre-calculus and physics, I felt very, very behind. I was not confident in my STEM capabilities until I got here."

"At NC A&T, we come to envision ourselves as future scientists."

### What are you doing now in your last semester of NC A&T?

"Applying to medical school. I started that process back in July. I did a summer program with the UNC School of Medicine for rising seniors, so that's what my big focus was after junior year."

### How do you feel about leaving undergraduate school?

"It's very bittersweet. I've really enjoyed it here. I've made some lifelong friends. Covid did rob me of a good year of college experience. Freshman year, they sent us home in March. And in August that year, we were allowed to come back but most classes were online. I had only two classes I could attend in person, like microbiology lab."

### What med school programs are you considering?

"I'm looking at HBCUs—Howard, Meharry, the Morehouse School of Medicine—as well as UNC-Chapel Hill, the Medical College of Georgia, Duke, and Georgia. My preference would probably be an HBCU environment because I understand how critical it can be, sometimes, when you're going into a field where you are heavily unrepresented in what you do."

"I really like the Morehouse program, so I've been looking hard at that. But I enjoyed my time at Chapel Hill last summer, too. They make sure you have peer mentors and all that."

### Will you return to Georgia after college?

"I grew up in Dekalb County (near Atlanta) and I'd like to do some of my own initiatives there. I know what Dekalb County really needs because there are a lot of things I've sat back and observed. One thing I'd like to see is more access to food pantries. If I had my own practice or was in partnership with someone, I'd be aware of those on food stamps."

### Do you see yourself working in the community when you're a doctor?

"Yes. When it comes to health, not every solution is at the doctor's office. It really takes community awareness. I have big plans, but it may take awhile to get everything in place."

### What work were you doing at Walgreens?

"Working as a pharmacy technician—one of the people in scrubs who are filling meds and typing things in for the pharmacist to review. You get on-the-job training, and you can become certified. I was hired through an apprentice program in June of 2021. Then, when I went back to school I worked at a Walgreens in Greensboro."

### What's the hardest thing about being a pharmacy technician?

"It's hard when you feel like you're the middleman, like with insurance discrepancies. People expect you to call the insurance company, but I can't access it the way they can access it. And I couldn't touch some drugs like Oxycodone or Hydrocodone. One lady came in with her two daughters and she said the doctor sent it (her prescription) in. She wanted us to move fast. But I couldn't give it to her till the pharmacist went through all the records."

"You can tell when patients are not trusting what a doctor or pharmacist says, too. In the Black community a lot of people don't trust

doctors. That goes back to the Tuskegee project (Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male). They feel that doctors and pharmacists don't have the patient's best interests at heart.

"Only about 5 percent of doctors are Black. And when you're not seeing that representation, you don't know if you can express your concerns to a physician."

## What have you been working on lately?

"I'm adding finishing touches on a manuscript for publication, and I'm part of Global Medical and going to Honduras in May. They're a nonprofit and they have several chapters at universities. They go to under-served communities internationally to provide services and supplies.

"Last May, we went to two communities in Ghana. We worked under the supervision of local physicians, and some of the people who went with us were physicians. We also brought hygiene supplies, and I taught some classes on hygiene. We had eyeglasses for the ophthalmologists and assisted the pharmacy in packaging medications for the patients."

## Are you working this summer or taking a break?

"I'm taking some time for myself. I don't think I ever spent a summer that didn't involve taking some sort of class or working. I have to take some time, maybe some vacation."

## What do you do in your free time?

"Well, I played soccer for a long time, and I still play on a club team. I've been pretty much with my other senior friends, facilitating practices, and managing things. I've recently gotten back into baking and crocheting, too, and I have a boyfriend."

## How does being in a relationship work with school?

"I met him when I was a freshman, before Covid. He was a student from Charlotte, in business. During Covid we switched to online.

"We've talked about what that would look like for us after I graduate, and he's been very supportive of what I want to do. He said he'd try to make the most of it. If I choose a



*The 22-year-old biology major has worked diligently to prepare herself for a future as a pediatrician, serving, in part, as an undergraduate researcher, student intern at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine, and licensed pharmacy technician.*

“

**My preference (for med school) would probably be an HBCU environment because I understand how critical it can be, sometimes, when you're going into a field where you are heavily unrepresented in what you do.”**

Georgia school, it's not more than a five-hour drive. Howard would be the farthest away.”

## How do you plan to balance family life with a demanding career?

"I think it's do-able. A lot of people think when you go into medicine your life is over. I did get a feel for what medical school feels like when I did my summer program. I felt what it feels like to balance and plan out my schedule a couple weeks in advance. Both my parents were physicians and managed to have a family."

## Do you have advice for students considering a STEM field?

"I would say one of the biggest things that really helped me even when I felt it would be difficult—like studying for the MCAT®

(Medical College Admission Test®)—was reminding myself of what I was really capable of. If you are a great leader of your soccer team or you worked hard to be in your choir, remind yourself of what you're capable of. Just because you haven't achieved something yet doesn't mean you can't.

"Sometimes you might need to look on social media to see people with great impact who look like us. I learned by being here to redefine what failure is. What I mean by that is understanding that failure doesn't mean the worst thing in the world. I think of all the things that have happened to me, like being rejected by several summer programs. Look at that as an opportunity to grow; it puts it into perspective.

"One of the biggest things, to me, was the Critical Language Scholarship—a fully funded scholarship from the U.S. Department of State. (They pay for you to travel to a country with one of the critical languages.) I applied two years in a row, and I was an alternate but I never ended up actually getting it. After reviewing my applications, though, it was like, 'OK, here's where I could have done better.'

"Another big disappointment was that I had to take the MCAT again. I was disappointed because the score I got was five points lower than the score I had gotten on a practice exam."

## How do you picture your career after med school?

"I would like to work in a hospital to begin with, especially since we have Children's Healthcare of Atlanta in Atlanta. I think I could find a good career there. But my desire isn't just to make money. I'm open to taking things in my own hands and do all I can with my resources. So, I'm very flexible and open but will probably start off in a hospital."

## Do you consider yourself a spiritual person?

"I would definitely say there is a higher power. My mom is Hindu, and my father is a Christian. At the end of the day, I'm more so into believing in a higher power and taking time to sit with my thoughts, pray about things, and make sure my own wellbeing is intact.

"If you're not taking care of your mental health, it can take a part in how you succeed or tackle a challenge." ■



# Morehouse, Partner Launch Center to Help Diversify Tech Industry

Center for Broadening Participation in Computing is designed to help underrepresented students compete for lucrative careers in tech.

Morehouse College and the global Information Technology Industry Council (ITI) are now partnering to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in the tech ecosystem by launching the new Center for Broadening Participation in Computing (CBPC). ITI is a global trade association for the tech sector.

Both an academic and industry collaboration, the CBPC will help prepare underrepresented students to compete for careers in tech, while also developing strategies to make the tech ecosystem a more just, innovative, and equitable space for people of all socioeconomic backgrounds. According to national research, Black employees are among the most underrepresented groups in the tech workforce, accounting for only 7 percent of workers, CBPC officials said.

“The Center for Broadening Participation in Computing will help ensure that people of color remain the drivers of ingenuity they have always been, especially as we navigate the boundary-less open range of the scientific and technological frontier,” said Morehouse President David A. Thomas. “A cutting-edge STEM education—infused with a top-tier liberal arts foundation and close engagement with leaders in the field—will provide talented students with a one-of-a-kind experience that will

make them uniquely prepared to be global leaders of innovation.”

Housed on the Morehouse College campus in Atlanta, the CBPC represents a fusion of Morehouse programs, including the Morehouse Software Engineering Degree Program, the Morehouse Culturally Relevant Computing Lab, and the Institute for African American Mentoring in Computing Sciences. As part of its outreach, the Center will hold conferences to share research and strategies with peers in higher education and the tech industry, serve as a hub for training college students across 19 Metro Atlanta area institutions, and give Georgia high school students opportunities to participate in center activities. Morehouse faculty will also receive tech-education and professional development opportunities.

STEM majors and other college students interested in in tech careers will also benefit from the Center’s career development and networking opportunities, and industry insight into tech growth areas. Strategic partnerships with universities such as Carnegie Mellon University, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and the Georgia Institute of Technology, for example, will also provide students with access to opportunities and training from top-ranked computer science programs. Students will receive free, practice

technical interviews from a Center collaboration with tech startup Karat, and the Center’s partnership with online course provider Coursera will give students access to more than 3,000 courses in business, tech, and data science.



**CENTER FOR BROADENING PARTICIPATION IN COMPUTING**



**The Center for Broadening Participation in Computing will help ensure that people of color remain the drivers of ingenuity they have always been, especially as we navigate the boundary-less, open range of the scientific and technological frontier.”**

— **David A. Thomas, Ph.D.**  
*President, Morehouse College*

## Morehouse, Partner Launch Center... cont'd

The Center boasts an Innovation Advisory Board (IAB) of tech industry experts and Morehouse educators committed to sharing best practices and research in STEM curriculum innovation and tech equity. The board includes representatives from 80 ITI-member companies that will provide internships, fellowships, and direct recruitment pipelines, as well as guidance to strengthen Morehouse's curriculum and certification programs in emerging and leading-edge technologies and related fields. ITI and its companies will also provide expertise, logistics, and financial resources to support the board.



*Kinnis Gosha, Ph.D.*

“What makes the Innovation Advisory Board special is the collective expertise from 80 tech companies united with a common goal,” said Kinnis Gosha, the CBPC's inaugural executive director. “The board is well aware that investments and programming from individual companies alone will never lead to sustainable and impactful change to the nation's ability to produce a diverse technology workforce. They are also aware that investments must be strategic and involve the institutions that are ultimately responsible for training prospective students.”



*Jason Oxman*



*Angelo Riddick*

The partnership between ITI and Morehouse has attracted stakeholders to serve as inaugural members of the board, including New York State Chief Information Officer Angelo Riddick and representatives from Amazon, AMD, Dropbox, EY, IBM, HP, Mastercard, NetApp, SAP, Tata Consultancy Services, Tenable, and Twilio.

“Innovation depends upon the inclusion of diverse voices and experiences across all industries,” said ITI's President and CEO Jason Oxman. “By leveraging the expertise of the world's leading technology companies and the educational excellence at Morehouse College, this partnership will equip students with the skills and experiences they need to build careers in tech and lead the industry in addressing the risks and opportunities presented by technology.

“This partnership will turn capabilities into action, transform tech education at minority serving institutions, and deepen engagement between industry and academia to the benefit of our future leaders.” ■

“

Innovation depends upon the inclusion of diverse voices and experiences across all industries.”

—  
*Jason Oxman*  
*President and CEO, ITI*







# AltFinance Donates \$2 Million to HBCU Founding Partners

AltFinance continues creating pathways for Black students in the alternative investment industry.

AltFinance, a program created to increase diversity in the alternative investment industry, has made a \$2-million gift to its HBCU founding partners: the Atlanta University Center institutions (Clark Atlanta University, Morehouse College, and Spelman College), as well as Howard University in Washington, D.C.

The gift commemorates the launch of AltFinance in 2021 and expands its investment in business scholars.

“The partnership between these four colleges and universities and AltFinance has already begun to create a meaningful and lasting impact for HBCU students, the alternative investments industry, and our shared future,” said Marcus Shaw, CEO of AltFinance. “We have established a solid foundation of work, and we look forward to continued collaboration with the students and staff from each school over the next several years.”

Each of the four liberal arts institutions received \$500,000 to further support the collective effort to tackle diversity challenges in the alternative investment industry. Launched in collaboration with

“



**The partnership between these four colleges and universities and AltFinance has already begun to create a meaningful and lasting impact for HBCU students, the alternative investments industry, and our shared future.”**

—  
Marcus Shaw, CEO, AltFinance

alternative investment industry firms in 2021, AltFinance seeks to educate, train, mentor, and guide HBCU students into successful careers in the alternative asset management industry.

At Morehouse, the \$500,000 AltFinance gift, for example, will help fund academic initiatives in the Business and Economics Division and provide additional resources for the general fund. “Financial leadership is among the most important attributes of a Morehouse student and graduate,” said Morehouse President David A. Thomas.

“Our partnership with AltFinance will empower our students to become financial change agents who can not only build wealth for themselves, but also foster sustainable prosperity in challenged communities for individuals and families from all economic backgrounds.

“We continue to prepare professionals who can catalyze a more equitable financial future based on broader access to investment opportunities.”

In its first year, AltFinance hosted 12

## AltFinance... cont'd

networking and information sessions reaching more than 200 HBCU students. The AltFinance Fellowship was also launched. This inaugural cohort of fellows—31 students from the four founding schools—participated in five months of immersive curriculum, networking, and workshops to learn about the alternative investment industry and how to navigate a successful career in the finance field. Nearly 70 percent of fellows are now part of the pipeline to careers in finance through highly competitive internships at alternative investment firms or investment banks.

“The AltFinance Fellowship program has provided our students an opportunity to join a trillion-dollar, fast-paced and limitless industry that impacts innovation and finances projects in important industries such as healthcare, technology, and the service sector,” said Dean Anthony Wilbon of the Howard University School of Business.

AltFinance scholars are provided with training, mentoring, networking, and internship opportunities under three main pillars: the AltFinance Fellowship, the AltFinance Institute, and the AltFinance Scholarship:

- The AltFinance Fellowship provides students from partner HBCUs intensive preparation, mentorship, and guidance for breaking into a career in the alternative investment industry.
- The AltFinance Institute provides students at all HBCUs with virtual courses and programming to build financial acumen through a partnership with The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.
- The AltFinance Scholarship provides program fellows with need-based funding each year they are in the program to pursue their academic endeavors.

For more about AltFinance, visit:  
[www.altfinance.com](http://www.altfinance.com). ■



AltFinance: Investing in Black Futures is a 10-year, \$90-million initiative established by Apollo Global Management Inc., Ares Management Corp., and Oaktree Capital Management L.P. to help diversify the financial services industry. AltFinance is administered by AltFinance Corp., a nonprofit established by the three founding firms. The initiative provides clear pathways for students at partnering HBCUs into careers in the alternative investment industry. The program provides access to education, training, mentorship, scholarship funding, internships, and full-time career opportunities. The fellowship program is managed in conjunction with Management Leadership for Tomorrow. The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania is the exclusive academic partner to create a virtual institute.

### FOUNDING HBCU PARTNERS





# STEM-US Webinars Continue Helping to 'Tell the Story' of HBCUs

Webinars teach how to create, fund, and publish successful proposals for STEM projects at HBCUs.

To learn more about the HBCU Undergraduate Success Research Center, the Academic Pipeline, the Analytic Hub (the Center's research arm), and more, visit the STEM-US center at its new website: [stemuscenter.org](https://stemuscenter.org)



## ABOUT STEM-US WEBINARS

Since September 2018, the HBCU STEM-US Research Center has offered several webinars designed to promote the positive identity of HBCUs. The webinars are coordinated by Mark Melton, Ph.D., interim provost and vice president of academic affairs at St. Augustine's University.

Past topics have included "How to Identify Funding Sources," "Planning for External Evaluation," and "Strategies for Capacity Building at Small Private/Public HBCUs."

Webinar presenters are representatives of federal and private agencies, such as the National Science Foundation (NSF). During each webinar, a moderator begins with several slides and then opens the floor/chat box for discussion.

"The basis of the webinars are HBCUs working together to develop strategies to write and submit competitive proposals," Melton said. "And one of the best ways of promoting the accomplishments of HBCUs is for faculty members to publish peer review papers. Publishing data in peer review journals requires the acquisition of data through grants, and acquiring grants requires expertise in proposal writing.

"Consequently, one of our aims is to train faculty in proposal writing, so that faculty at HBCUs can tell our story." Mark Melton is available to provide group webinars as well as individual proposal and writing guidance/sessions.

## Webinar topics recommended by NSF and now being considered:

- "Efficient Proposal Writing"
- "Locating Appropriate Proposal Submission Programs"
- "I was declined: Interpreting Reviewer Comments"
- "I've Been Funded: Grants Management"
- "The Role of Evaluation in a Federal Grant"
- "Developing a Budget for a Proposal"
- "Spending Your Budget in a Timely Manner"
- "No-Cost Extensions: What are They?"

## Submit Webinar Topics

### Interested in new STEM webinars?



Contact:  
**Mark A. Melton, Ph.D.**  
*Interim Provost and  
 Vice President for Academic Affairs*  
 Saint Augustine's University  
 1315 Oakwood Ave., Raleigh N.C. 27610  
 (919) 516-4029, [mamelton@st-aug.edu](mailto:mamelton@st-aug.edu)

## NEWS YOU CAN USE

## FACULTY/STAFF BRIEFS

## Black Men's Research Institute Gets Interim Head



Walter M. Kimbrough, a distinguished educator and higher education administrator, has been appointed interim executive director of Morehouse College's Black Men's Research

Institute (BMRI). The first-of-its-kind institute is dedicated to "the in-depth, nuanced, and intersectional study of Black men, their impact, and societal influences."

Kimbrough previously served as president of Philander Smith College and Dillard University, and he has held leadership roles in student affairs at Emory University, Georgia State University, Old Dominion University, and Albany State University. An Atlanta native, Kimbrough graduated with honors from Benjamin E. Mays High School and received his bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Georgia, a master's degree in college student personnel services from Miami University, and a doctorate in higher education from Georgia State University. He is an internationally recognized voice in higher education, known particularly for his research, published writings, and advocacy for African American men in college.

As interim executive director, Kimbrough is working with Derrick Bryan, an associate professor of sociology at Morehouse and BMRI associate director, to launch the institute's inaugural annual symposium, which includes a public lecture series on March 29-30, teaching and scholarship fund awards, social justice policy fund awards, and curriculum development workshops. He is also leading an internal advisory board composed of Morehouse faculty and an external board of prominent scholars in Black Masculinities Studies to guide the early years of the BMRI's growth and impact.

"I've been actively working to better outcomes for Black men during my professional career, and this institute gives us an opportunity to develop research and, most importantly, actionable practices that may be implemented across the country," Kimbrough said.

BMRI is being funded through a four-year grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. For more information on BMRI, click [here](#).



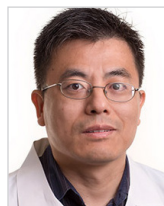
## Alabama A&amp;M Names New Dean



Zhengtao (Z.T.) Deng has been named dean of Alabama A&M University's (AAMU) College of Engineering, Technology and Physical Sciences.

Deng began his academic career at AAMU in 1992. He has served as a principal investigator on multiple externally funded research grants and contracts, and in 2015, he became the faculty associate for research and scholarship in the college. An award-winning teacher and researcher, Deng was one of the founding members of AAMU's Mechanical Engineering Program. In 2019, he was appointed Interim dean of the college, and he is also a full professor in the department.

Deng earned his doctorate in aerospace engineering from the University of Tennessee.



## N.C. A&amp;T Scientist Gets Grant for Diabetes Research

Shengmin Sang, Ph.D., a North Carolina

Agricultural and Technical State University (N.C. A&T) researcher, has received a four-year, \$2.65-million grant to advance his work in functional foods and human health. His project is aimed at studying the biomarkers of dietary flavonoids and

targeting carbonyl stress to help prevent Type 2 diabetes.

The grant is from the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, part of the National Institutes of Health.

"The main goal of this study is to provide scientific evidence that eating flavonoid-rich food can prevent the development of metabolic diseases," Sang said. "We all believe that fruits and vegetables are healthy foods. We want to know if these healthy foods can lower the levels of toxic, reactive carbonyl species in our bodies."

Sang is the Distinguished Professor of Functional Foods and Human Health with A&T's College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences. He has devoted most of his career to researching the connection between functional foods—foods that provide more than just basic energy and nutrition—and human health.



HOWARD  
UNIVERSITY

## Howard President Elected to National Academy of Medicine



Wayne A. I. Frederick, M.D., MBA, the Charles R. Drew Professor of Surgery and Howard University president, has been elected to the National Academy of Medicine (NAM).

Election to NAM is considered one of the highest honors in the health and medicine fields, recognizing individuals who have demonstrated outstanding professional achievement and commitment to service.

According to NAM officials, Frederick was chosen "for being a tireless and gifted higher education leader, health care administrator and world-renowned surgeon. As president of Howard University, he has worked to develop a diverse health care workforce while serving as an adviser to U.S. and international officials in navigating the COVID-19 pandemic."



## NEWS YOU CAN USE FACULTY/STAFF BRIEFS... cont'd

Frederick said he was both humbled and honored to join the academy.

"The individuals in this academy have shaped medicine for decades," he noted. "They represent the most compassionate and dedicated professionals. It is my sincere intent and hope to uphold their values and to contribute as they have to the advancement of medicine worldwide."



### Alabama State President Receives Federal Appointment



Alabama State University President Quinton T. Ross Jr. has received a federal appointment to serve as a member of the Historically Black College and Universities Capital Financing

Advisory Board (HBCUCFAB). He is one of six HBCU presidents to serve on the 11-member board. Ross will serve on the HBCUCFAB for at least two years.

In accepting the appointment, Ross expressed enthusiasm about serving on the advisory board of a program that helps HBCUs in such a critical area. "HBCUs have traditionally been underfunded and have not always been allowed access to loans that would finance new construction or upgrades to existing facilities," Ross said. "A few HBCUs, including Alabama State University, have already benefited from the refinancing program."

This was Ross's second, recent, federal appointment. In April, President Joe Biden appointed him to serve on the President's Board of Advisors on Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

### Howard Appoints Executive Director of New Center



Kali-Ahset Amen, Ph.D., has been named inaugural executive director of Howard University's new Center for Journalism & Democracy. The center, launched

in mid-November and committed to "strengthening historically-informed, pro-democracy journalism," is being led by founder Nikole Hannah-Jones, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and the Knight Chair in Race and Journalism at Howard's Cathy Hughes School of Communications.

Amen is overseeing the center's day-to-day operations and fundraising, including meeting a \$25-million goal within the next five years. She previously served as managing director of Johns Hopkins University's Billie Holiday Center for Liberation Arts, and assistant research professor of sociology at Hopkins' main Baltimore campus.

"I believe deeply that independent Black thought and strong Black institutions are critical to creating the kind of democracy that all Americans want," she said in a statement. "History has already shown us that when Black voices are lifted in defense of truth and justice, the entire society benefits."

For more on Howard's Center for Journalism & Democracy, click [here](#).



### Anthony Davis Named President of Livingstone College



The Livingstone College Board of Trustees has named Anthony J. Davis 13th president of Livingstone College in Salisbury, N.C.

Davis, a Livingstone College alumnus previously served as the college's senior vice president of institutional advancement and chief operating officer. He led Livingstone through the COVID-19 pandemic as chair of its task force, managed the day-to-day operations of the college, and supervised and provided leadership for fundraising.

A 2001 graduate of Livingstone College, Davis earned his master's degree in philanthropy and development from St. Mary's University in Minnesota. He attended the Fundraising School of Indiana University and completed his doctoral work at United Theological Seminary, where he earned a doctor of ministry degree.

Prior to his work at Livingstone, Davis served as vice president for development with The Consortium for Graduate Study in Management.



## NEWS YOU CAN USE

# GENERAL BRIEFS

### Benedict College Launches Esports Gaming Room, Degree Track



Benedict College has become the first HBCU to offer an esports degree track and gaming room. The gaming room addition, opened in August, was created after 2020 when the college partnered with Blaze Fire Games (a licensed digital online games provider) to start an esports club and hosted its first Madden and NCAA college football tournaments.

Benedict students can now earn more than 250 esports micro-credentialing certifications.

"In keeping with Benedict's strategic plan to offer transformational learning experiences, our innovative esports administration curriculum is designed to prepare students to create new applications and to engage in all facets of the industry," said Janeen Witty, Benedict's vice president of academic affairs.

Kylah Montgomery, a Benedict student enrolled in the program, said officials and students are on a mission to make a change. "We're here to put Black faces in all colors of the scale into esports."



### Fisk Offers Bachelor's Degree in Kinesiology

## FISK UNIVERSITY

Last fall, Fisk University launched a bachelor of science degree in kinesiology program, designed to provide students with "a comprehensive understanding of the role physical activity plays in promoting overall well-being." Physical activity is being examined from multiple angles, according to university officials, including biological, physiological, and sociological analyses, as well as its effects across a range of tasks, including exercise, daily living, play, sport, and employment.

Andrea K. Stevenson, Ph.D., a former adjunct professor of health and human performance at the University of Mississippi, was chosen to lead the program. Stevenson said she is especially enthusiastic about Fisk's impressive student body and is also eager that students will be able to gain hands-on experience, particularly in light of the city's growing fitness industry.

"Whether it be them becoming a physical therapist, occupational therapist or a chiropractor, I'm dedicated to ensuring they meet their career goals," Stevenson said.

For more about the Fisk kinesiology degree, click [here](#).

### Morehouse Celebrates Independent Filmmakers

The fifth Morehouse College Human Rights Film Festival has been scheduled for Sept. 19, 2023, and submissions are now being accepted. The deadline for submissions is March 31; filmmakers will be notified by June 30.

The goal of the festival is threefold: to educate and expand awareness of social justice issues, both nationally and worldwide; to generate conversation and

dialogue around civil and human rights, justice, and injustice; and to inspire "innovative and creative new approaches to social change," organizers say.

The festival is designed to promote an



appreciation for world cultures and artistic expression, as well as highlight a commitment to global issues and social justice. Last year's festival showcased 26 films spanning six categories that were nominated for annual awards including Full Length Documentary, Full Length Feature, Short Documentary, Short Feature, Student Film category, and an all-new Chromatic Black category. Nominated films provoked discussions about immigration, race, gender identity, politics, health care, and law enforcement, along with many other human rights and social justice issues.

Throughout the year, the Human Rights Film Festival also hosts screenings of documentaries, features, and shorts leading up to the three-day festival and competition in the fall. For more information, click [here](#).

MOREHOUSE COLLEGE  
HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
FILM  
FESTIVAL



## NEWS YOU CAN USE GENERAL BRIEFS... cont'd

### Alabama A&M Receives \$100,000 STEM Scholarship Donation



The Science Applications International Corp. (SAIC) has announced a partnership with Alabama A&M University, and has made a \$100,000 STEM scholarship donation as part of the association.

The donation is helping to finance the education of two freshmen pursuing degrees in A&M's College of Engineering, Technology and Physical Sciences in Huntsville, Ala.

"These students are the technology leaders of tomorrow, and we are grateful to have the opportunity to provide support and guidance for them," said Greg Fortier, vice president of the Army Fires, Aviation and Missile Defense operation at SAIC. "SAIC partners with reputable universities such as Alabama A&M, who are responsible for helping our future scientists, technologists, engineers and mathematicians reach their full potential and enable STEM transformation critical to our society's success and well-being."

This is the first year SAIC has worked with Alabama A&M to provide opportunities for students through the College of Engineering, Technology and Physical Sciences (CETPS) and the AAMU-Rise Foundation, which facilitates research and development efforts with the school, industry and government partners.



The SAIC STEM Scholarship provides financial support to students pursuing careers in engineering, technology and physical sciences.

### Unity Charitable Fund Helps Spelman Expand Gaming+ Programs



Spelman College plans to offer the opportunity for more women of color to enter the gaming industry. And the nation's premier liberal arts college for African American women has received a helping hand with a \$300,000, three-year grant from the Unity Charitable Fund, administered by the Tides Foundation, to develop a gaming curriculum supported by Unity Technologies.

Unity was an early funder for Spelman's Innovation Lab, a campus-wide source for creative inquiry, unconventional research, experimental pedagogy and exploratory play, according to Spelman officials. The grant will allow the lab to extend gaming efforts to students at Spelman and other Atlanta University Center institutions.

"The grant from Unity really allows us to expand the gaming space to include more women of color," said Jerry Volcy, Innovation Lab director. "It gives women of color a voice in the industry and has created a lot of interest in purposeful games."



Spelman's Innovation Lab is home to a budding program, Gaming+, which encompasses game design, gaming theory, game development, elements of interactive media, virtual and extended reality, and other technologies linked to gaming.

"The grant will be used to develop Gaming+ into a formal curricular area of concentration or minor, support faculty research in gaming, and create and maintain gaming workshops," Volcy explained. "This will bring experts to campus and provide a learning and networking opportunity for the campus community."

### VSU Receives Special Gift, Renames Building

Virginia State University has received a \$500,000 gift from neurologist and retired professor Audrey Shields Penn in honor of her aunt and VSU trailblazer, Otelia Roberta Shields Howard.



Tonya Hall

"This gift from Dr. Penn is an example of the residuals of good deeds," said Tonya Hall, VSU vice president of external relations. In 2021, we renamed four buildings on campus to honor Black women who made history at Virginia State University. Ms. Howard was one of those women."

Howard, a Petersburg native, served VSU for more than two decades as a professor, advisor, and charter member of two organizations on campus. Penn, her niece, pledged to donate to the university after hearing news of her aunt being honored by VSU.

"I am appreciative to VSU for honoring my aunt with the rare distinction of a campus building which bears her name," stated Penn, a neurologist, educator, and the first Black woman to become acting director of a branch of the National Institutes of Health.

"It is my pleasure to give to VSU to continue to push the mission of providing a transformative education to deserving

## NEWS YOU CAN USE GENERAL BRIEFS... cont'd

students," she added. "My gift will honor my aunt by funding an annual scholarship to continue to cultivate and support students as my aunt did more than 70 years ago."

### Saint Augustine's Offers Cyber Education, Training and Certifications

Saint Augustine's University (SAU) has formed a partnership with the International System Security Certification Consortium Inc. or (ISC)<sup>2</sup>, an international, nonprofit membership association for information security leaders and professionals. The partnership is designed to prepare students for careers in cybersecurity, a field that is experiencing a shortage of highly trained, certified professionals.



"This partnership is a critical step forward in reimagining the core competencies of an SAU graduate in the areas of Science, Technology, Research, Arts, and Mathematics," said SAU

President Christine Johnson McPhail. "We are now positioned to meet the diversity, equity, and inclusion needs of a rapidly growing cybersecurity workforce."

(ISC)<sup>2</sup> has designated SAU as the premier institution to advance cybersecurity education, training, and research as a precursor for relaunching the SAU bachelor of science degree in computer science. Degrees can be focused in four key areas: cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, data science, and simulation and game design.

### Spike Lee, The Gersh Agency Create AUCC Fellows Program



Filmmaker Spike Lee has partnered with The Gersh Agency talent firm to create the Spike Fellows Program, a fellowship designed to support students at the Atlanta University Center Consortium (AUCC). The program is based on the principle that access plus exposure will create opportunities.

Lee is giving back to his alma mater, Morehouse College, along with Spelman College and Clark Atlanta University.

The inaugural class will consist of five graduating students from the AUCC—students who will receive academic debt relief, industry mentorship, post-graduate internships, and full-time employment. Juniors and seniors may participate in this opportunity, and the deadline is April 1, 2023.

"I know firsthand the education one receives at a Historically Black College and University," Lee said in a statement. "I am who I am because of my grandmother [Zimmie Jackson] and my mother [Jacquelyn Shelton Lee] who both graduated from Spelman College. I am who I am because of my grandfather [Richard Jackson Shelton] and my father [William Lee] who both graduated from Morehouse. It's on the campuses of Spelman and Morehouse where they met, fell in love, and got married.

"As my elders often told me, 'Deeds not words.'"

Jayson Council, Head of Culture at Gersh, will lead the fellowship program. "I joined Gersh to lead the charge in identifying powerful opportunities and signature moments to advance cultural competence and accelerate social impact," he stated. "As an HBCU graduate, I am extremely proud of Gersh and Spike for their commitment to growing opportunities for AUCC graduates."

For more about applications, click [here](#). ■

## HBCU STEM Undergraduate Success Research Center

### PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS



Lawrence Blumer, Ph.D.  
Professor of Biology  
Morehouse College



Derrick M. Bryan, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of  
Sociology/Division Chair  
Morehouse College



Brittany Chambers, Ed.D.  
Adjunct Faculty, Morehouse  
College Postdoctoral Researcher  
Morehouse College



Danielle Dickens, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Psychology  
Spelman College



Cheryl Talley, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of  
Neuroscience  
Virginia State University



Shondricka N. Lamb, M.S.  
Associate Director  
STEM-US Research Center  
Morehouse College



Alicia P. Thomas, M.S.  
Technical Director  
STEM-US Research Center  
Morehouse College

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The HBCU STEM Undergraduate Success Research Center (STEM-US) at Morehouse College studies how the formation of scientific identity in HBCU students builds confidence and motivates them to graduate and succeed with science, technology, engineering, and mathematics degrees. The STEM-US Research Center also aims to disseminate information that impacts mainstream education reform in STEM areas and promote the academic value of an HBCU education. STEM-US is supported by a National Science Foundation (NSF)-HBCU Undergraduate Program (HBCU-UP) Broadening Participation Research Center grant, number 1818458.