



Dr. Jocelyn Turner-Musa

Greetings ASCEND Scholars! During the 2022-2023 Academic Year, we welcomed 14 new ASCEND Scholars to the ASCEND family. As you will see in this edition of the ASCEND Scholars Newsletter, these Cohort 8 scholars are from diverse disciplinary backgrounds and will no doubt continue the legacy of the scholars program. This past fall, Cohort 7 scholars participated in the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minoritized Scientists (ABRCMS) and continued to work on their research projects. Cohort 7 Scholar Faith Hudnall won an award for her oral presentation. Her research examined associations between adolescents' social experiences and mood during the Covid-19 pandemic. Faith was featured in a [YouTube](#) video produced by the BUILD UCLA Coordination & Evaluation Center (CEC) on what she likes about research. We are proud of Faith and all scholars as they continue to ASCEND. We are also proud of Alexis Carlon who graduated in December with her Bachelor of Science in Psychology. Alexis was also featured in a [YouTube](#) video produced by the CEC. As we continue with BUILD II, we are focused on sustaining the program for future ASCEND Scholars. To do so WE NEED YOU! Please contact us to find out how you can assist. As always, please share information with us as you continue to ASCEND!

ASCEND Program Updates

The ASCEND Center for Biomedical Research was established in 2014 based on a transformative vision about the future of biomedical workforce training. The main philosophy of ASCEND's vision rested on the important assumption that our undergraduate students could be trusted to develop their own research agendas aligned with their interests and core values and successfully complete their projects. We believed that with proper support and encouragement - mainly through peers, near-peers, and faculty mentors - our students can design and implement research of impact to their communities while learning how to think and act like scientists. This spring the 6th cohort of ASCEND Scholars completed their two-year program, trained in the novel ASCEND entrepreneurial research training model and our students have firmly established that what we envisioned does not only work but can become a model for others to follow. This is a model that does not simply "feed" into the proverbial pipeline but has the potential to alter its flow by preparing students from underrepresented minority populations to set their own goals and objectives for what research is important for them and carry it out. Every year now a few more of our former Scholars complete their post-graduate training. Our graduates continue to seek out research areas and careers in behavioral health, public health and biomedicine that have a direct impact on the well-being of communities of color and ultimately all Americans. As the NIH BUILD program enters its final two years, the challenge has shifted from proving that the ASCEND model can work to ensuring that this training approach will continue at Morgan once the funding ends, embedded into the fabric of the institution, and whether this approach will be used beyond Morgan, as an option for other training programs across the country. The responsibility for this rests heavily on our minds and we are counting on the entire ASCEND team as well as our graduates to help us make it happen. Drs. Christine Hohmann and Payam Sheikhattari serve as Principal Investigators for the ASCEND Center for Biomedical Research.



MEET OUR NEW COHORT 8 SCHOLARS!

In the Fall of 2022, ASCEND welcomed 14 new scholars into our community of researchers all aspiring to become a part of the next generation of great discovery.



To the left we have some of our scholars enjoying their first official day as ASCEND scholars! Join us in welcoming: Kennedi Sullivan, Anaya Van Heyningen, Zanaiah Hayes Marsalis, Cherise Castello, Olakiitan Adedeji, Gabriela Hiciano, Paityn Amor Brooks, Alana Powell, Amaya Nance, Kailyn Smith, Madina Diallo, Kelly Mouling, Zya Spruell, and Janae McDowell to our community of researchers!

During the recruitment season for the ASCEND scholars program we search all over our National Treasure campus to find the next group of students equipped to uphold our traditions of great discovery, valuable research, and impact. They come from all different walks of life and bring their experiences to our community. Our scholars' studies range from STEM to social science. Their areas of interest include: Chemistry, Medical Technology, Political Science, Nursing, Biology, and Psychology.



CELEBRATING OUR SCHOLARS

Alexis Carlon



Senior Psychology, Minor in Women & Gender Studies, Cohort 7

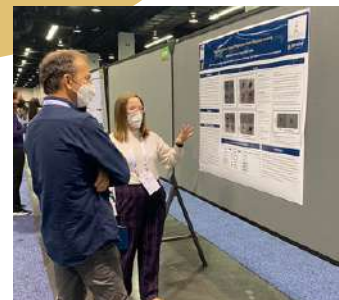
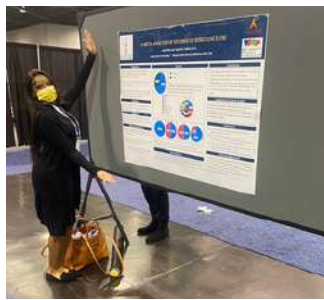
Project Title: The Relationship between Course Modality and Neuroscience Anxiety during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Discipline: Social and Behavioral Sciences and Public Health

Summary of Project: My project sought to determine if course delivery modality is related to neuroscience anxiety in students enrolled in neuroscience-related courses at a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was predicted that students would report more anxiety in courses delivered online.

How did you feel about presenting an oral presentation at ABRCMS: Presenting orally at ABRCMS further boosted my confidence in the field of psychology. I enjoyed the feedback I received and the mentorship from older women within the field.

AMBRCMS Takeaway: I left this experience feeling motivated and prepared to continue in my academic journey.



Project Title: "And How Did That Make You Feel?": Associations Between Adolescents' Social Experiences and Mood During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Discipline: Psychology

Summary of Project: Life for everyone has changed due to the Covid-19 Pandemic; however, the social isolation caused by the pandemic may be more detrimental for adolescents. With this study we aimed to investigate these three questions: (1) What social experiences during the pandemic relate to overall mood? (2) Are depressive symptoms associated with mood and loneliness in the pandemic? (3) Do depressive symptoms impact the relation between social experience and mood and loneliness? Through mood assessing daily diaries completed by participants during March and June of 2021, we saw that there was more positive mood experienced than negative mood and loneliness. We also saw a positive correlation between the number of liked interactions and positive mood. We saw that for teens with depressive symptoms, more negative interactions related to more loneliness and negative mood. Our study highlighted that more disliked interactions was linked to less positive mood, more loneliness, and more negative mood. Lastly, our sample showed that adolescents were not experiencing a significant amount of negative mood and loneliness during the pandemic.

How you felt about presenting an oral presentation at ABRCMS: Slightly daunting. I had never spoken about my research in front of so many people so I had a few jitters. I felt that I was prepared well by my mentors Dr. Heather Yarger and Dr. Elizabeth Redcay from UMD College Park and with the support from my ASCEND Cohort, I knew that I would be just fine. Overall, it was exciting to share a project I enjoyed with others.

AMBRCMS Takeaway: Trust myself and my work. I never dreamed of winning an award for my presentation; however, I trusted that if I put my best effort forward, that God would take care of the rest. I am excited for the future conferences to come! *Faith won an award for her presentation at ABRCMS.

Faith Hudnall



Senior Psychology, Minor in Religious Studies, Cohort 7





THE STUDENT RESEARCH CENTER



All About the SRC

The Student Research Center (SRC) started the 2022-2023 academic year hitting the ground running. As the COVID-19 pandemic settled down and students began moving back on campus, the SRC made it a priority to impact the campus community and beyond this fall through events like SRC Open House, weekly SRC Wellness Wednesdays, Game Night, "I Will Listen" Mental Health Awareness table, Let's Talk About Suicide Prevention, SRC Goes Pink Week, and many more events. These events exposed our students to the various areas of research and captivated the minds of students who did not think they were cut out for research. One of the core pillars of the SRC is community service, and our scholars went above and beyond to fulfill the needs of others this fall, especially during the holiday season. Fall 2022 also marks the first SRC Party Drive for the local Baltimore City Community. Being involved with the SRC is just one of the many ways we get to engage our ASCEND scholars. As the current E-board passes on the torch to the upcoming E-Board, the desire to "answer the big questions" will be a part of this new legacy to expand the knowledge of biomedical/health-related research. The Fall 2022 President, Alexis Carlon graduated from our illustrious institution in December 2022 and our new Spring 2023 President, Madina Diallo will be sure to lead the SRC into greatness this year!

Farewell Message from Fall 2022 SRC President Alexis Carlon



"To my E-board, members, and family I've gained along the way, thank you for the opportunity to serve and lead over the last few months. This experience has tremendously helped me evolve as an individual. I have learned that leadership is much more than simply leading others, it is important to listen and explore. To our wonderful advisors, thank you for being one step away and providing me with all of the necessary resources needed.

My advice to for the next E-board, be intentional in all that you do. the more you put in, the more you will get out."

~Yours Truly, Alexis Carlon "BIG PREZZZ"



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

ASCEND excels in producing well-rounded, biomedical researchers that are familiar with the root causes of health and health disparity problems and are highly competent to address them.



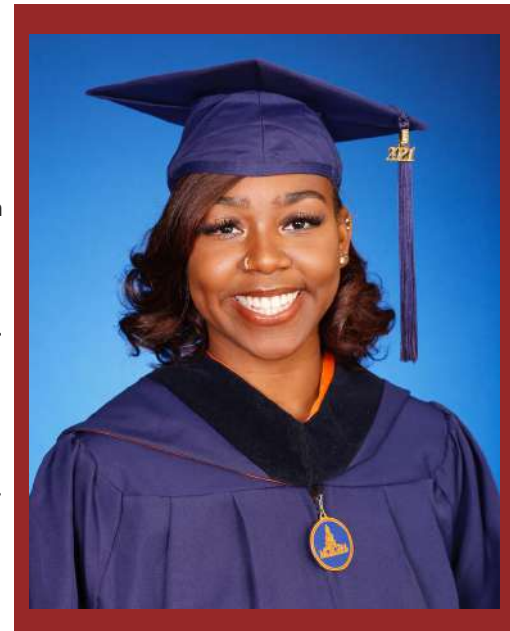
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For this segment let's take a look back at a few of the many accomplished ASCEND scholars to see what these student researchers are currently working on to this day.



Jordan Dawson | B.S. in Biology

Medical Assistant and Phlebotomist, Physician's Assistant Applicant, 2021 Cohort 4 Graduate



Jordan Dawson, a member of ASCEND Cohort 4, graduated from MSU with a B.S in Biology with a minor in Chemistry. She worked on a number of different research projects during her time at MSU. Her ASCEND research contributed to the Modes of Marijuana Intake and Their Affects on the Brain.

Upon graduating, she received an acceptance to Case Western Reserve University for a Masters in Applied Anatomy, but ultimately declined to pursue her passion of medicine and the need for minority frontline workers.

She then received her certification as a licensed medical assistant and phlebotomist. She did this with the goal of acquiring patient care hours to qualify as an applicant for a Physicians Assistant program and is currently applying.

Dai'shona Jones | B.S. in psychology

Clinical Social Work, Masters Student at Rutgers University, Camden, 2022 Cohort 6 Graduate

Dai'Shona Jones, a member of ASCEND Cohort 6, earned a BS in Psychology. Her ASCEND research contributed to Racialize Sexual Violence awareness

Since graduating, Dai'Shona has been focused on finding her purpose and passion. Although she did change her field of interest she finds that her passion is still in helping those struggling with substance abuse addiction. She is expected to graduate in May of 2024 with her Masters



ASCEND STAFF SPOTLIGHT

SHAMARA MURPHY | Student Research Coordinator

Awarded Advisor of the Year
2021-2022 Academic Semester



For the 2021-2022 academic year, Ms. Shamara Murphy was awarded Advisor of the Year! Her efforts for the ASCEND Program & specifically the SRC are unmatched maintaining retention & fun events. Currently, she serves as the STC Program Coordinator in which she works directly with the Scholars in ensuring the administrative tasks are completed. As for the SRC, she oversees the executive board and manages the facility.

Additionally, she assists Dr. Brown and Mr. Waters with the Office of Undergraduate Research, while being completely devoted to being the best wife and mother that she can be. Lastly, she contributes her creativity skills by assisting in planning events for the SRC and ensuring that we are in compliance for OSLD. Please be sure to congratulate Ms. Shamara on her accomplishments & thank her devoted loyalty towards aiding students & staff.

KELLEY MURPHY | Senior Research Associate

Senior Research Associate



Ms. Kelley Murphy is most commonly known as the Career Guidance Counselor for the ASCEND program. She serves as a professor teaching PSYC103 (when offered)/203/303/403.

She additionally assists with SCIE200 if needed, and works closely with the Office of Undergraduate Research by facilitating professional development workshops. This semester she is hosting the Lunch Break Series; 1 - 3/month at noon in the SRC! She grants beneficial writing tips, resumes/CVs & much more.

She is also the definition of a “lab rat” as she loves laboratory research & has extensive experience & even serves as a mentor to ASCEND scholars. Please take the time to send her a message of appreciation!



ASCEND BEYOND CAMPUS



Ms. Oluwatoyin Ajayi and Dr. Jocelyn Turner-Musa participated in the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (APA) held in August 2022 in Minneapolis, MN . Ms. Ty Ajayi presented a poster on the ASCEND Scholars program entitled ASCEND: Interdisciplinary Training Diversifying the Biomedical and Behavioral Science Workforce. As the 2021-2022 President of APA Division 1, The Society for General Psychology, Dr. Turner-Musa gave a presidential address highlighting the ASCEND program: Bridging the Gap: Integrating Diverse Perspectives in Psychology Through Interdisciplinary Training and Engagement.



INTERNSHIPS

Key Hall



Research is core of the ASCEND Program, scholars are encouraged to pursue discovery in and outside of the classroom, as well as during the summer. For more internships and resources, scholars can visit The Office Of Undergraduate (OUR) research located in Key Hall room G37.

The Office of Undergraduate Research (O.U.R.) is a primary resource for ASCEND scholars and undergraduate students. Those looking to expand their knowledge beyond their required courses can stop by the office or reach out to Dr. Lisa Brown and Dr. Thomas Waters for resources. The O.U.R. has a commitment to career development, graduate school preparation, and research productivity on campus. As the internship application season comes to a close it becomes more difficult to find paid internships. To the right are a list of opportunities currently available to scholars for Summer 2023. All of which have a duration of 8-10 weeks, paying over \$5,000 in stipend money with housing and traveling expenses covered.

1. (WPI Summer REU, The NSF sponsored research program focuses on biochemical research. <https://www.nsfetap.org/award/642/opportunity/656>
2. POETS REU, A progra, focused primarily on bioengineering and thermodynamics. <https://poets-erc.org/reu>
3. BLANDY REU, A life science and ecology focused internship. <https://blandy.virginia.edu/reu-program-overview>
4. Kats and Manne Reaserch Institute Summer Scholars Program, The program provides research experiences in childhood health and disease.

DONATE TO ASCEND

When you donate to the ASCEND Scholars program you are contributing to the next generation of impactful research and great discovery. Your contribution funds scholarship, student research, and experiential learning opportunities for our students that build the foundation

Please consider donating



**DIVERSITY
PROGRAM
CONSORTIUM**
Supported by the National Institutes of Health

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