



PARTNERSHIPS

ASCEND has been built in partnership with different research institutions and pipeline institutions. Johns Hopkins University, University of Maryland Medical Center, National Institutes of Health are the research institutions who are serving as mentors for ASCEND Scholars and support the ASCEND program in other ways. ASCEND is working with many high schools, community colleges, and related organizations in order to develop a pipeline of highly-qualified students to participate in the ASCEND program and to support the efforts of these entities to educate their students in areas that will prepare them to enter college and graduate school and become biomedical researchers. Some of the organizations ASCEND is working with include: A Bridge to Academic Excellence (ABAE), Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS), College Readiness Division, Boy Scouts of America, Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC), Medical Education Resources Initiative for Teens (MERIT), The Juxtapia Group/JUICE and Prince George's Community College.



Jocelyn Turner-Musa, PhD
Director, ASCEND Student
Training Core

Greetings ASCEND Scholars! This newsletter is designed to provide updates about the ASCEND Scholars Program and disseminate information about ASCEND Scholar alumni. We want to hear from YOU! What are you doing? How are you doing? Where are you? We want to know this and more! We are proud of you and are here to support you in your entrepreneurial endeavors. Please use this newsletter as one way to share your news and we will do the same. Keep ASCENDING!

MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS

This year our fifth cohort of ASCEND Scholars started their two-year program, and our fourth cohort started the second year of their program. We are very pleased with our Scholars' accomplishments in many ways.

The ASCEND training model depends on trusting the undergraduate students to lead their own research project—to take the helm—with the support of like-minded peers and experienced mentors. Our trainees continue to prove that they take the authority and responsibility that comes with this trust very seriously. They think, exchange ideas, and lead. The impressive research these young scholars are doing is adding to the knowledge base in their respective fields. They represent ASCEND very well in national meetings and have attracted the attention of many educators to this entrepreneurship-mindset model of training.

The ASCEND Scholars will always remain an important part of the ASCEND family, and we count on them to be good ambassadors and liaisons for ASCEND. We know that they have already achieved so much, and, in time, will achieve much more.



Farin Kamangar,
MD, PhD
Principal
Investigator |
School of
Computer,
Mathematical
and Natural
Sciences



Payam Sheikhattari,
MD, MPH
Co-Principal
Investigator |
School of
Community Health
and Policy



SCHOLAR PROGRAM PROGRESS REPORT

Since its inception in 2015, the ASCEND Scholars program has made great strides. The Scholars have found success during and after their participation in the program. Almost all Scholars have received external internships in organizations that welcome a diversity of interests. Many graduating scholars move on to prestigious graduate schools as a result of their ASCEND experiences.

The focus on accountability and flexibility has worked well for the ASCEND Scholars program, an immersive experience that is successfully shaping future leaders in biomedical research. Over the years, ASCEND Scholars have been groomed in basic laboratory skills and have gained a wide range of experience from various classes, workshops, professional conferences, external summer internships, and personal/professional development. The Scholars have showcased their various research with poster or oral presentations at the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS) and

at various conferences both on and off campus. Scholars from previous cohorts served as near-peer mentors for the Summer Research Institute (now completed) and the ASCEND Scholars program.

ASCEND funding opportunities are also supporting the faculty members' efforts to do more research and publish their findings. The ASCEND program provided resources for faculty with a health focus to redesign courses to be student-centered and research-based, for faculty to conduct research and mentor students along the way, and for students to make outstanding achievements as ASCEND Scholars. ASCEND has been instrumental in enhancing MSU's research culture by providing grant-writing workshops and short courses, purchasing much-needed equipment, and offering pilot research grants.

The ASCEND Scholar program has now moved into its second phase which is structured quite differently from the initial phase. This new phase allows for an enhanced synergy between the Scholar program and the Student Research Center (SRC) which is an organization under the ASCEND initiative.

SCHOLAR PROGRAM MENTORS

ASCEND pairs faculty lead mentors and near-peer mentors with Scholar research teams to ensure the students become exceptional biomedical researchers. The mentors guide and assist the Scholars with their team-based projects and also guide the Scholars in professional development and in enhancing their critical thinking, strategic planning, organizational and leadership skills.

Lead Mentors

Paul Archibald, PhD
Justin Bonny, PhD
Terra Bowen- Reid, PhD
Charlene Chester, PhD
Anthony Estreet, PhD
Craig Ferris, PhD
Maryam Ganjavi, PhD
Christine Hohmann, PhD
Farin Kamangar, MD, PhD
Niangoran Koissi, PhD
Mollie Lange, MA
Yuejin Li, PhD
Ming Liu, PhD
Marciea McMillian, PhD
Simon Nyaga, PhD
Alexandr Samokhvalov, PhD
Payam Sheikhatari, MD, MPH
Viji Sittther, PhD
Dawn Thurman, PhD
Jocelyn Turner- Musa, PhD
Ingrid Tulloch, PhD
James Wachira, PhD

Near- peer mentors

Adekunle Adejumo, MPH*
Agnieszka Tarasiewicz, BSc
Paris Adkins-Jackson, PhD
Oluwatoyin Ajayi, MPH*
Loretta Anankwaah, BSc
George Anyumba, DrPH
Tabatobi Behnam, PhD
Kelly Boham, BSc
Eric Boorman, MSc
Kaveh Emdad, BSc
Givania Griffin, BSc*
Opuruiche Ibekwe, MBBS, MPH *
Elana Levine MS
Sandra Oguwole, BSc
Ebele Oranuba, MD, DrPH
Joshua Ross, BSc
Atia Sharmeen, MBBS, MPH*
Karin Yearwood

*Newsletter Committee

Ambassadors

Bolutife Baiyewu
Jade Dodge
James Green
Marvellous Oke
Christine Okempa
Funmilayo Omole
Henry Onyedum



STUDENT RESEARCH CENTER HIGHLIGHT



The Student Research Center is a registered Morgan State University undergraduate student organization, partially run by students with the support of the SRC Coordinator/staff advisor and faculty advisor. The SRC encourages networking and health research enrichment for the students by engaging students in a vibrant research environment, where they will be surrounded by and can exchange research ideas with peers and near-peer mentors. It is a place where students will have the opportunity to broaden their knowledge of biomedical research and to interact with other students who have a shared interest in biomedical research. The goal is for students to be motivated, trained, and empowered to conduct their own research.

The SRC became a registered organization under the Morgan State University (MSU) Office of Student Life and Development (OSLD) on Monday, February 8, 2016. Since then, the SRC has been able to maintain active organization registration with OSLD, and for the 2017-2018 academic year, deemed Co-Ed Organization of the Year, and deemed an Organization of Merit for the 2018-2019 academic year.

There have been four executive boards since the inception of the SRC. The current 2019 - 2020 executive board consists of:

- President - Christabelle Agyapong
- Vice president - Amanda Nweke
- Secretary - Kenni Rudd
- Mister SRC - Dagmawi Zewdu
- Miss SRC - Nashae Prout.

Message from the SRC President -

“My vision for the SRC is for all members to grow in a positive way, come together as one big family, and make a big impact on Morgan State’s campus, and on biomedical research. Stay positive and persevere through the rough times because there is a greater reward at the end and I hope to see you in the SRC!”



ASCEND IN THE NEWS

26th Annual Undergraduate & Graduate Research Symposium (4/11/19)

Cohort 3 ASCEND scholars showcased poster presentations at the 26TH ANNUAL UNDERGRADUATE & GRADUATE RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM, hosted by Morgan's biology department. It presents work from undergraduate and graduate students. They had the opportunity to answer questions about their research as well as explain aspects of their projects such as methodology, scope, samples, etc.

The symposium also held separate sessions in which 3 to 4 students each took twenty minutes to present their work to a panel of judges. Judges rated each presentation in an effort to determine if the work merits an award. Rayna Wallace (Cohort 3) received an award for Best Oral Presentation for her research thesis, "Primary Care engagement Among an at-risk Population at the Johns Hopkins After Care Clinic."

34th Annual Mae P. Claytor/Martin D. Jenkins Behavioral Science Research Conference (4/23/19)

At this research conference, Morgan celebrated its 70th anniversary of the psychology program. This year's theme was "Back to the Future," urging our next generation of thought leaders to conduct progressive and limitless research on topics they are passionate about. To complement the future, we must look to our past in appreciation of all the progress that has been made. The main conference table displayed several books containing research projects from the late 1950s and early 1960s. All data were recorded using a typewriter. Charts and graphs were constructed with ruler and pencil, some of the erased markings still visible. Observing the impressive level of detail those students possessed gives us reassurance that we can reach new heights of scientific research.

Two of our ASCEND students, Kayla Griffin and Rayna Wallace presented their research theses on the main stage during the conference's afternoon segment. Rayna Wallace from Cohort 3 received another award for Best Oral Presentation for her research thesis, "Primary Care engagement Among an at-risk Population at the Johns Hopkins After Care Clinic." Kayla Griffin from Cohort 3 presented her research thesis, "Childhood Trauma and Social Functioning."



NIH Field Trip (4/10/19)

Students of the ASCEND program, Near Peer Mentors, and faculty members were invited to the 2019 NIGMS Director's Early-Career Investigator Lecture. The group had the opportunity to hear a presentation and talk with Dr. Melissa A. Wilson, Assistant Professor, Arizona State University on Sex-Biased Genome Evolution.

Following her presentation, Dr. Wilson welcomed students to join her for a close-knit Q&A session. Dr. Wilson shared candid stories about her experience as a woman in the field of microbiology and how her educational journey led her to her current position.

The afternoon included lunch with Dr. Wilson and a tour of the National Library of Medicine.

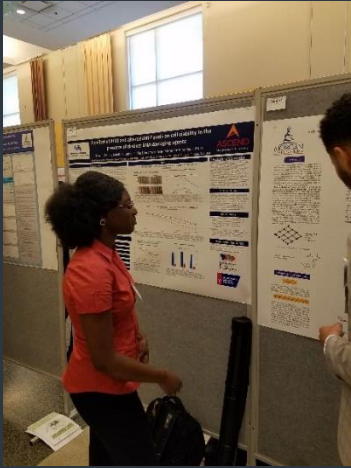
Cohort 3 Graduation Ceremony-- (5/9/19)



A celebration of Cohort 3 and farewell took place on May 9, 2019. The evening welcomed parents, family, friends, and ASCEND affiliates to enjoy dinner and view presentations of all the research projects. The event concluded with awards and remarks from the program administrators and directors.

Celebrating Scholars.....

- 2019 Graduates - Rayna Wallace, Kayla Griffin, Veneisha Vincent, Kiana Bynum, Oluwadunsin Akinyemi, Daniel Ugoamadi, James Greene, Funmilayo Omole, Christine Okempka, Breanne Matin.
- Award winners at symposium & conferences: Damian Gauthney, Rayna Wallace, Marvellous Oke, Amanda Nweke, Autumn Taylor and Veneisha Vincent. Adetunji Adeniran-Adetoye won 2nd place for his research presentation at the UMBC STEM symposium. Funmilayo Omole won 2nd place at the 22nd Annual Undergraduate Research Symposium and 3rd place for the J. Howard Brown Award for undergraduates in Microbiology at the UMB Award Ceremony. Damion Trotter and Marvellous Oke won awards for their poster presentations at ABCRMS 2019.
- Graduate School acceptance & admission: Rayna Wallace (Cohort 3) - MSW program at the University of Maryland College Park; Kiana Bynum - Ph.D program at the Buffalo University, New York; Arsene Noe - Masters program in Biotechnology at JHU. James Green - M.S. in Clinical Nursing Leader program at the University of Maryland School of Nursing Baltimore County.
- Morgan Hall was accepted into the Global Experience Research Experience for undergraduate internships in food security in Kenya.
- Devin Saunders was accepted into the University of Arizona Research Opportunities Consortium Minimizing Health Disparities summer internship.
- Ismael Bousso (Cohort 4) was accepted into the Leadership Alliance Summer Research Program at Brown University.
- Adetunji Adetoye (Cohort 4) was accepted into the University of Utah Genomics Summer Research for Minorities internship.
- Osaretin Aimufua (Cohort 4) was accepted into the Boston University Early Medical School Selection Program.
- Oluwadunsin Akinyemi (Cohort 4) was accepted into the University of Maryland Summer Research Initiative.
- Jyoti Maharjan (Cohort 4) was accepted into a summer internship at the NIH.
- Damion Trotter (Cohort 4) was accepted into the UCLA-HBCU Neuroscience Pathway summer internship.
- Maya Purnell (Cohort 4) was accepted into the PEARL Summer Internship program.
- Jade Dodge (Cohort 3) was offered a summer internship at the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke and internship at NIH.
- Fred Johnson was accepted into a summer internship at Walter Reed and Thomas Jefferson University.
- Dymon Walker (Cohort 2) has a publication on her ASCEND project titled "Microcystin Toxin Production: *Microcystis Aeruginosa* and *Anabaena Cylindrica*".
- Breonna McNeil & Courtenay Brown (Cohort 3) were accepted into the nurse externship program with MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital. They will work on the Medical Surgical Unit.
- Jordan Dawson (Cohort 4) was accepted as a research assistant in the lab of Dr. Dionna Williams in the Department of Molecular and Comparative Pathobiology at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine.
- Rayna Wallace (Cohort 3) received an award for Best Oral Presentation for her research thesis, "Primary Care engagement Among an at-risk Population at the Johns Hopkins After Care Clinic." at the 26th Annual Undergraduate and Graduate Research Symposium.
- Cohort 2 Graduating Alumni Scholars May 2019: Thelma Ejimofor, Arsene Noe, Nadia Moore, Kaaliyah McDowell, Letisha Vincent, Maya Parker, Carolyn Felton.
- Thelma Ejimofor (Cohort 2) was accepted into the Johns Hopkins University MSN Nursing Program!
- Deshawn Collington, Markea Carter, & Aliyah Tolliver (Cohort 1) have a publication on their ASCEND project titled "Sexual assault among college students attending a Historically Black College/University" in the American Journal of Undergraduate Research.



Morgan Highlights



INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

STUDENT IMPACT AWARD

Who will have the biggest impact on innovator and entrepreneurship at Morgan during the 2019-2020 school year? What will you do? How will you do it?

Applications due March 27, 2020

Finalists/awardees will be recognized at the spring 2020 Entrepreneurship Showcase. Awards up to \$500 will be granted. For more information contact Dr Mary Foster at mary.foster@morgan.edu or Dr Golshan Javadian at golshan.javadian@morgan.edu



Upcoming Events.....

COHORT 4 GRADUATION CEREMONY

May 7th, 2020
University Student Center
Morgan State University



Have content you want to be featured in the newsletter? We want to hear from you!

Submit to ascendscholarnewsletter@morgan.edu



Professional Development

- [Morgan State online professional/personal enrichment courses](#)
- [JHU Applied Physics Laboratory ATLAS Summer Internship Program, Summer 2020. Application deadline March 31, 2020
https://www.jhuapl.edu/Careers/ATLAS](#)
- [UC Davis Center for Neuroscience](#)
- [Doctoralnet - Masters and doctoral professional development services.](#)



**DIVERSITY
PROGRAM
CONSORTIUM**

Supported by the National Institutes of Health

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Gillian Silver, MPH, CPH
Program Manager
ASCEND Center for Biomedical Research
Morgan State University
Portage Avenue Campus, Room 110
1700 E Cold Spring Lane
Baltimore, MD 21251
P: 443-885-3541
ascendscholarnewsletter@morgan.edu



Supported by
NIGMS-BUILD TL4GM118974

Donate to ASCEND Scholar Program
Be a part of ASCEND milestone achievements

Use this link: <https://givetomorgan.org/give/>

(Indicate *ASCEND Scholar Program* as beneficiary for your donation)