

Issue

07

Spring 2023
Semester



NEWSLETTER



DR. JOCELYN TURNER-MUSA
PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Greetings! Once again, our scholars have successfully completed another academic year and concluded the 8th year of the ASCEND Scholars program. To date, we have worked with 125 scholars. 109 of these students have graduated from Morgan State University, 26 have received a master's degree, and 2 have received a doctorate degree.

In May 2023, Cohort 7 scholars completed their tenure in the program by showcasing their entrepreneurial research. Their research ranged from examining the role of reactive oxygen species and macrophages in prostate cancer to assessing the impact of COVID-19 on risky sexual behaviors.

For the past 2 years these scholars have taken courses, participated in professional development activities, completed an internship, presented at conferences, and worked with faculty and near peer mentors on their entrepreneurial research projects. In this edition of the ASCEND Scholars Newsletter, we showcase Cohort 7 and 8 scholars, ASCEND Scholar Alumni and Ambassadors, the ASCEND Student Research Center, as well as our phenomenal mentors. The ASCEND Scholars program recognizes the importance of providing the mentorship and guidance necessary to grow our students intellectually and psychologically. The ASCEND program has brought together an interdisciplinary team of some of the best of those individuals. It does indeed take a village to BUILD and support the development of scholars who will address key problems facing our communities. Next year marks the last year of funding through the National Institutes of Health. As we continue with BUILD II, we ask for your continued support as we focus on sustaining the ASCEND Scholars program. Please contact us to find out how you can assist. As always, please keep us posted on what you're doing as you continue to ASCEND!

Dr. Cleo Hughes-Darden serves as the Program Co-Director for the ASCEND Scholars Program.

Drs. Christine Hohmann and Payam Sheikhattari serve as Principal Investigators for the ASCEND Center for Biomedical Research.

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CELEBRATING OUR 2023 ASCEND GRADUATES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ASCEND SCHOLARS PROGRAM



OUR SCHOLARS HAVE WORKED TIRELESSLY THIS ACADEMIC SCHOOL YEAR, JOIN US IN CELEBRATING THEIR TREMENDOUS ACCOMPLISHMENTS!

Emma Gudmundsson
Brooklyne Chaney
Keyra Hall
Faith Hudnall
Fopefoluwa Atanda

Ajeñee Williams
Kayla Mack-Easley
Jadyn Giles
Pamela Osseyi

Celebrating Our Scholars

2022 AWARD WINNERS

SPRING INTO RESEARCH

WEEK:

- AJEÑEE WILLIAMS
- KAYLA MACK-EASLEY
- FOPEFOLUWA ATANDA
- JADYN GILES

38TH ANNUAL MAE P.

CLAYTOR & MARTIN D.

JENKINS BEHAVIORAL

SCIENCE RESEARCH

CONFERENCE:

- FAITH HUDNALL

2023 INTERNSHIP RECIPIENTS

ALANA POWELL

AMYA NANCE

ANAYA VAN HEYNINGEN

CHERISE CASTELLO

GABRIELA HICIANO

JANAE MCDOWELL

KAILYN SMITH

KELLY MOULING

KENNEDI SULLIVAN

MADINA DIALLO

OLAKIITAN ADEDEJI

PAITYN AMOR BROOKS

ZANAI AH HAYNES-

MARSALIS

ZYA SPRUELL





The Student Research Center



ALL ABOUT THE SRC

The Student Research Center (SRC) members came back from a well-deserved winter break with many exciting events to get students involved in biomedical research. As the semester started, the SRC members celebrated the SRC's 7th Birthday by remembering and continuing its legacy of excellence. The SRC made it a priority to impact the campus community and beyond this spring through events like weekly Wellness Wednesdays, Vision Board Party, engaging Speaker Series, and an informative LinkedIn Workshop. SRC events are held in the SRC space, Spencer Hall Room 200, often referred to as a home away from home for many students. This semester, the SRC students made it their mission to increase member recruitment and involvement. In the University Student Center, members and Mrs. Shamara Murphy held events such as Recruitment tables, Open House, Karaoke Night, and a Game Night. 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 spring with Campus Cleanup Event and a Spice Drive. Essence Research Week: SRC Edition 2023 was a big hit on campus. This week showcased engaging activities with fellow students around campus. 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.

We bid our graduating e-board members @ Morgan farewell: Nakia Bailey, Ajene Williams, Alexis Carlon (December 2022).

Welcome the new e-board members: Madina Diallo (President), Iyana Gross (Vice President of Research Productivity), Sophia Selenou-Yemgang (Vice President of Mentorship), Dosiah Chatelier (Mister SRC) and Kennedi Sullivan (Miss SRC). Good luck in the upcoming academic year!



SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT

KAILYN SMITH



**SENIOR
PHILOSOPHY MAJOR, POLITICAL SCIENCE MINOR
ASCEND COHORT 8 SCHOLAR**

Kailyn presented at the National Undergraduate Humanities Research Symposium where she evaluated passages from Ludwig Feuerbach's 1841 publication *The Essence of Christianity* and compared different theories of self consciousness during that time period. "ASCEND prepared me well for my conference presentation by helping me develop skills to organize my research and present effectively."

This summer Kailyn will be participating in a summer internship with the Leadership Alliance at Johns Hopkins University. There she will be studying Philosophy.

PAMELA OSSEYI



**GRADUATED
PSYCHOLOGY MAJOR, CRIMINAL JUSTICE MINOR
ASCEND COHORT 7 SCHOLAR**

Following graduation Pamela will be participating in a post Baccalaureate Intramural Research Training Award (IRTA) at the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

"I am looking forward to increasing my professional skills within the research field and grow my writing and speaking skills to become a stronger researcher"

Pamela also graduated this semester Summa Cum Laude! She credits ASCEND for giving her the foundation she needed to engage in the research field and the encouragement to continue to do research.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

MEET DEJA CATON

Deja Caton, a member of Cohort 5, is currently pursuing her Master's Degree of Nursing at Johns Hopkins University studying to become a Nurse Practitioner. She also currently assists ASCEND scholars with their research as a Near Peer Mentor. Read on to hear how ASCEND impacted her life.



Q: AS AN ASCEND SCHOLAR WHAT WAS YOUR MAJOR, COHORT/ GRADUATION YEAR, AND RESEARCH FOCUS?

A: I WAS A BIOLOGY MAJOR AND CHEMISTRY MINOR GRADUATING IN 2021. MY RESEARCH FOCUSED ON VAPING SPECIFICALLY ANALYZING THE DETRIMENTAL EFFECTS OF VITAMIN E ACETATE, A CHEMICAL OF CONCERN LINKED TO THE OUTBREAK OF E-CIGARETTE OR VAPING-ASSOCIATED LUNG INJURIES, OR EVALI. MY PARTNER, CHRISTABELLE AGYAPONG, TOOK THE APPROACH TO CORRELATE THIS WITH COVID-19 AS WE WERE IN THE LATE STAGES OF THE PANDEMIC.

Q: DESCRIBE THE MOST VALUABLE EXPERIENCE YOU RECEIVED FROM THE PROGRAM?

A: TRAVELING TO ANAHEIM, CALIFORNIA TO THE ANNUAL BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE FOR MINORITIZED STUDENTS (ABRCMS) WAS THE MOST EYE-OPENING EXPERIENCE. IT ALLOWED ME TO LEARN FROM OTHER STUDENTS. ATTENDING THE VIRTUAL CONFERENCE, THE FOLLOWING YEAR, I WAS ABLE TO BROADCAST MY RESEARCH AND TEACH OTHERS ABOUT WHAT I CONTRIBUTED TO THE SCARCE FIELD OF INFORMATION ON VAPING AND COVID-19. ADDITIONALLY, GAINING FEEDBACK FROM MY PEERS IN ADDITION TO JUDGES ALLOWED ME TO UTILIZE THEIR CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICS & BETTER MYSELF MOVING FORWARD.

Q: HOW HAS THE ASCEND SCHOLARS PROGRAM SET YOU UP FOR LIFE POST-GRAD?

A: YOU TRULY WILL NOT UNDERSTAND THE EXTENSIVE GROWTH IN YOURSELF UNTIL YOU HAVE GRADUATED FROM THE PROGRAM. THE ASCEND SCHOLARS' PROGRAM HAS PROVIDED ME WITH BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE THAT MANY OF MY PEERS IN GRADUATE SCHOOL HAVE NEVER OBTAINED PRIOR GIVING ME THE ADVANTAGE. I AM ABLE TO EFFECTIVELY CONDUCT RESEARCH AND CRITICALLY THINK WHEN ADDRESSING HEALTH DISPARITY PROBLEMS.

Q: ANY ADVICE FOR CURRENT ASCEND SCHOLARS ON GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THE PROGRAM?

A: TAKE ADVANTAGE OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY ASCEND HAS TO OFFER AS IT WILL GET YOU INTO MANY DOORS. AS IT IS SUPPORTED BY THE NIH, THE ASCEND PROGRAM HOLDS WEIGHT IN TERMS OF APPLYING FOR INTERNSHIPS, FELLOWSHIPS, JOBS & GRADUATE SCHOOLS. WITH THAT BEING SAID, NETWORK AS MUCH AS YOU CAN! ACCEPT AS MANY OPPORTUNITIES AS POSSIBLE TO PRESENT AT CONFERENCES. PUSH YOURSELF OUTSIDE OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE AS IT WILL MAKE YOU MORE SUCCESSFUL. ASCEND HAS PROVIDED YOU ALL THE KNOWLEDGE YOU NEED TO SUCCESSFULLY PRODUCE RESEARCH, SO DON'T HESITATE TO SHOW OFF YOUR HARD-WORK!



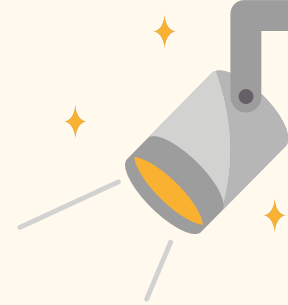
ADVICE FOR RECENT GRADUATES

- Research jobs and apprenticeship programs that align with your passion, education, and experience
- Check what certification/licensure is required for the positions you want
- Ask for recommendation letters early so your recommenders can just tweak it to each of your applications
- Stay in contact with hiring managers even if they don't have a position for you right away---something might come up in the future and you'll be the first person they contact before posting the job.
- Utilize social media, linked in, and email where it applies to stay in touch with people you met during your tenure at Morgan
- Find a hobby or interests and incorporate it in your weekly schedule
- Prioritize your principles and create a lifestyle that matches your beliefs
- Identify and amplify your marketable skills
- Apply to jobs early and constantly, you never know what you'll come across if you keep looking

Don't get too comfortable, stay goal oriented, and remember this is just the end of the beginning. Your next chapter holds so much more!



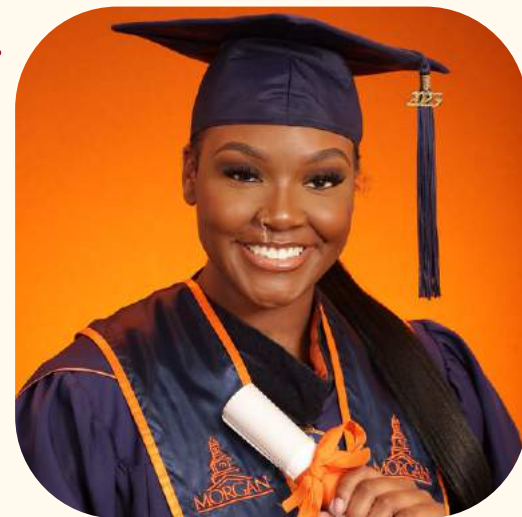
JADEN DAWSON ASCEND AMBASSADOR COHORT 6 SCHOLAR



Jaden Dawson is a May 2023 graduate of Morgan State University and a Cohort 6 ASCEND scholar. She graduated with her B.S in Biology and minored in Chemistry and Psychology. During her time at MSU her research topics included psychiatry, early life trauma, neurodegenerative diseases, computational medicine and hearing loss. She also served as Student Government Association President and held numerous executive board positions within campus organizations.

ASCEND AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT

THE LIFE OF A STUDENT LEADER AND SCHOLAR



Q: Was balancing ASCEND and student leadership difficult?

A: It had its moments because sometimes important dates would overlap. Luckily, both responsibilities were understanding and supportive throughout my tenure

Q: Is it possible to maintain good grades and be heavily involved on campus

A: Absolutely! Morgan is what you make it, you have to work hard then play hard. You are a student first and should always prioritize academics, but when you are finished its amazing to branch out and connect with your Morgan community through campus involvement.

Q: What advice would you give a scholar looking to be more involved on campus?

A: Explore your options! There are lots of organizations to choose from, don't limit yourself to one niche! Remain confident! You never know where the journey could take you, I would have never imagined my journey would be so spectacular. Most importantly, have fun! You will never get these moments again so cherish the little things!

ASCEND 2023 PHOTO DUMP



TO SEE WHAT WE'RE UP TO FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM @MSU.ASCEND

DONATING 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!



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

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

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

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ASCEND



**DIVERSITY
PROGRAM
CONSORTIUM**

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