

SPRING 2023 / Vol. 2

MILESTONES:

RESEARCH AND PRACTICE AT ALBANY STATE UNIVERSITY



The Human Microbiome Provides Whispers of Forensic Evidence at a Crime Scene

The Albany Symphony Orchestra's Interdisciplinary Community Arts Collaboration

Students Make Capable Co-Researchers



MILESTONES:

RESEARCH AND PRACTICE AT ALBANY STATE UNIVERSITY

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Milestones: Research and Practice at Albany State University is published annually.

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MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT DR. MARION ROSS FEDRICK

The unsinkable, indestructible Albany State University (ASU) has weathered torrential floods, hurricanes, fallen Rams, and the COVID-19 Pandemic, but together, we have learned to be fearless and courageous in our efforts to educate students despite adversity. As the University continues its commitment to education and service to the community, we focus on the Standard (2025 Strategic Plan) to grow a culture that inspires the workforce.

Milestones: Research and Practice at ASU is exemplary evidence of the Strategic Plan in action, as it chronicles best teaching practices, student engagement, support from the administration, and collaboration at its best. It shows our bold commitment to academic research and service excellence as we invest in innovation, exploration, and technological advances.

I invite you to visit ASU and connect (or reconnect) with us as we continue to work together to educate our students and uplift our community. There is much to be proud of at ASU, but I am confident that there are even greater achievements ahead.

Sincerely,

Marion Ross Fedrick



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

...And the Practice of Research Thrives at ASU

The second volume of *Milestones* continues to illustrate the research efforts and success of faculty and students at ASU as well as the administration's support.

The evolving growth of the magazine is seen through the breadth of the areas of research included this year. Research is being done throughout many academic units of the University, and the topics are diverse. For example, there are articles in the areas of English, art, science, music, education, nursing, and agriculture.

In step with contemporary issues in society today, many of the articles discuss social justice concerns, such as the environment, food deserts, homeschooling, gun violence, teenage pregnancy, and racial disparities. In addition, they often provide solutions to these problems and/or different thought-provoking perspectives on them.

Also included are the research efforts of students. Working with professors on research projects becomes a pathway for students to gain more intellectual curiosity, have academic success, attend graduate school, and become valued professionals in the workforce.

Milestones shows the interconnectedness between students, faculty, staff, and the administration and how this produces not only student success but also work that improves our communities and society as a whole.

Many thanks to the editorial committee for their review and guidance throughout this process, (Dr. Linda Amankwaa, Dr. Erica Decuir, Dr. Anta'Sha Jones, Dr. Florence Lyons, and Dr. Charles Ochie). I would particularly like to thank Dr. Louise Wrensford, associate editor in chief and Dr. Patricia Bonner, editor, for their invaluable contributions and for working relentlessly to make this publication a reality. I would be remiss if I did not express my sincerest gratitude to and acknowledgment of President Dr. Marion Ross Fedrick's vision, support, and leadership.

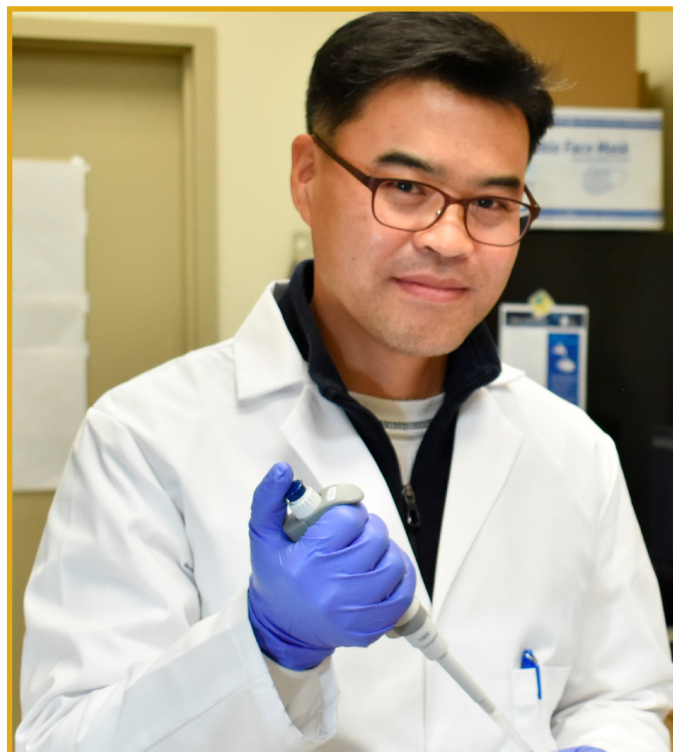
Go Rams!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angela W. Peters". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a thin horizontal line.

Angela Peters, PhD
Provost and Vice President
for Academic Affairs

THE HUMAN MICROBIOME PROVIDES WHISPERS OF FORENSIC EVIDENCE AT A CRIME SCENE

DR. YONG JIN LEE



An old microbiological tenet states, “Microorganisms are everywhere, but the environment selects.” They are the most dominant organisms on earth and sustain life on our ecosystem. By investigating the structure, composition, and functions of microbial communities or microbiome in various environments, we can answer many scientific questions, including those related to forensic identification and bioremediation. This is the focus of Professor Yong Jin Lee’s research at Albany State University (ASU).

Dr. Lee has been conducting research in two major areas that focus on microbiome. One area is on microbial forensics, a recent development in the field of forensic science. Dr. Lee says that there are more microbial cells than human cells on and in our body, and those microbial cells can be different between individuals. Whenever we touch something, we leave our microorganisms, called human microbiome, on it. In this research, a collaborative effort with forensic science faculty, Dr. Uzoma Okafor and Dr. Zachariah Oommen, Dr. Lee is examining whether such microbiome on human-touched objects can be used as trace evidence to identify victims and suspects at a crime scene. The next generation sequencing (NGS) technology is used to link the microbial profiles obtained from human-touched objects to that of the person who touched the objects. The forensic identification requires collecting as much evidence as possible. According to Dr. Lee,

the human microbiome can be used as a new forensic tool since it shows individual variability, and it can be collected as trace evidence at a crime scene and used for forensic identification.

The other focus of Dr. Lee’s research is on soil microbiome. This research is related to tritium contamination in soil. Tritium, a naturally occurring radioactive form of hydrogen, is released as water vapor from the Savannah River Site (SRS) into the environment by either normal operations or waste disposal activities. The SRS has employed a phytoremediation

“Whenever we touch something, we leave our microorganisms, called human microbiome, on it.”

project to limit the release of tritiated water. Because soil microorganisms are closely associated with plants, the change in microbial community structure and functions may affect the growth of vegetation, which in turn, impacts the efficiency of the phytoremediation system implemented at the SRS. Therefore, Dr. Lee’s research uses NGS to monitor changes in the

structure and functions of soil microbiota to better understand tritium's fate, distribution, and cycling at the tritium irrigation site of the SRS. In the soil microbiome project, the research team also suggests that soil microbiome can be used as a tool to monitor and assess the passive remediation strategy employed by the SRS to reduce the tritium contamination.

There is real world importance as well as applications of Dr. Lee's work with microbiomes. The microbiome from human-touched objects can be used as trace evidence for identifying victims and suspects in crime scenes, which will contribute to the advancement of forensic investigation. The soil microbiome can possibly be used to monitor the fate and transport of many environmental contaminants, so this research will contribute to the field of bioremediation.

Dr. Lee's work has not gone unrecognized. The American Society for Microbiology highlighted his research entitled "Retrieving Microbial DNA from Human Touched Objects for the Microbiome-Based Forensic Applications in the press room at ASM Microbe in 2018. A Department of Justice article focused on microbial forensics included his work on using the microbiome on human-touched objects for forensic identification (<https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/forensic-microbiome-invisible-traces-we-leave-behind#citation--0>).

“The microbiome from human-touched objects can be used as trace evidence for identifying victims and suspects in crime scenes, which will contribute to the advancement of forensic investigation.

In support of his research, Dr. Lee has received over a million dollars in funding from federal agencies. This has not only allowed him to contribute to the body of research in the microbiome field but also to the training and mentoring of undergraduate students at ASU. In fact, Dr. Lee says that being able to give students research opportunities, so they can experience real research and get motivated “is probably the coolest thing about my work here at ASU.” He also incorporates his research results in his courses, so this is a benefit that expands his teaching content and delivers cutting-edge research and information to his students. More than a dozen students have been mentored and trained in research by Dr. Lee. These students have presented their research in national meetings, including the annual American Association of Forensic Science Meeting (AAFS) and the American Society for Microbiology (ASM) meetings. The experience that the students received conducting undergraduate research under the mentorship of Dr. Lee has increased their competitiveness for jobs in the STEM field and graduate school. For example, one student is employed in a forensic lab and another in the food industry. Another student went to graduate school to pursue a master's degree in biological sciences. Another student graduated and is currently working as a lab coordinator with plans to go to graduate school next fall. Dr. Lee's positive impact on students through his research is demonstrated every year through their academic development and success.

For his research achievements, Dr. Lee was honored as ASU's Scholar of the Year in 2021. He continues to build on his work to create a vibrant space for research and discovery that will benefit the scientific community as well as his students.

THE STRESS AND RESILIENCE OF NURSING STUDENTS DURING THE PANDEMIC

DR. OLUWATOYIN OKAFOR AND DR. ANDREA DOZIER

The coronavirus pandemic caused a storm of uncertainty and fear all over the world. Its deadly impact is felt in every aspect of the fabric of America. One major casualty of this pandemic is the stability and effectiveness of education. The traditional methods of teaching and learning were disrupted. Several colleges and universities underwent abrupt transitioning to synchronous online teaching. This transition was a major source of stress on students. They had difficulties adapting to the sudden and unplanned shift to online learning (Baticulon et al., 2021).

Stress is a worldwide problem; however, it particularly affects undergraduate nursing students. According to Rafati et al. (2017), the

“**Stressors habitually hamper students’ learning capability and academic performance, often resulting in failure and withdrawal from the nursing program.**”

level of stress experienced by nursing students is higher than the level of stress experienced by students in other health science programs. Stressors habitually hamper students’ learning capability and academic performance, often resulting in failure and withdrawal from the nursing program. High levels of stress among nursing students can cause mental, emotional, and physiological health complications.

Stress is mental, physical, and emotional strain caused by a response to environmental pressure. Parveen and Inayat (2017) define



Dr. Oluwatoyin Okafor (left) and Dr. Andrea Dozier

stress as the body’s non-specific reaction to any demand made on the body through an individual’s interaction with the environment. The inability to effectively cope with a stressful situation can harm an individual’s mental, emotional, and physical well-being. It can lead to cognitive, emotional, and physical health problems as well as impair personal growth, academic performance, and professional development (Llapa-Rodriguez et al., 2016).

Undergraduate nursing students experience significant stress levels during their nursing program because of the various challenges they encounter (Alghamdi et al., 2019), and this can negatively impact their success in the program. In addition, stress may also negatively impact the health of nursing students, causing emotional and psychological symptoms. Rathnayake and Ekanayaka (2016) stated that it is related to depression and anxiety. Sources of stress experienced by nursing students include

academic, clinical, and personal/environmental stressors. Other sources may include social, emotional, private, and family factors (Parveen & Inayat, 2017).

The Covid-19 pandemic worsened the problem of stress among nursing students. Labrague (2021) stated that the changes that were made to the learning platform and the clinical component of the nursing program due to the Covid-19 pandemic brought additional pressures to the personal and academic lives of nursing students. Although minimal levels of stress are believed to increase students' learning and performance (Cooper et al., 2018), high levels can be detrimental to the well-being of nursing students and cause them to withdraw from their nursing program (Parveen & Inayat, 2017).

Having over 30 combined years of higher education teaching experience, the researchers recurrently encountered nursing students who expressed their frustrations and lack confidence in continuing their study. The researchers observed that the pressures students felt and the rise in their stress levels led to high dropout rates. As a result of these observations, researchers' curiosity regarding the effect of stress on nursing students' intent to continue their nursing program developed, and the desire to provide support for them prompted the current research interests.

Nursing students' stressful experiences jeopardize their learning ability and often lead to withdrawal from the program. Dropping out of nursing school has two severe rebound effects. Firstly, the departure of nursing students from nursing programs contributes to the existing shortage of the nursing workforce (Kubec, 2017).

Table 1
Participants' Intent to Withdraw from the Nursing Program Due to Stress
N=20

Intent to withdraw from nursing program	Frequency	Percentage
Never	14	70
Almost Never	2	10
Sometimes	4	20
Fairly Often	-	-
Very Often	-	-
Total	20	100

Note: The dash in the table signifies that data was not reported.

Secondly, student failure is counterproductive to the University System of Georgia (USG) initiatives. For example, the University of Georgia has the Complete College Georgia Initiative geared towards helping students earn a degree. There are several aspects to this initiative, but Momentum Year has Academic Mindsets components that help shape students' perspectives about their chances for success in college. Students' Academic Mindsets highly influence their college success (Board of Regents of the USG 2021).

Given that the nursing program is academically challenging, students often experience numerous stressors and regularly drop out of nursing school. The Academic Mindsets of grit, perseverance, and resilience are very much needed to earn a nursing degree. Therefore, it is vital to implement stress reduction

“The students expressed an ardent desire to continue to work towards completing the program, and the struggle to academically achieve led to their self-awareness and made them more determined to improve themselves.

interventions and support to help these students successfully complete their course work and other requirements of the program. Even more, because of the illnesses and deaths caused by Covid 19, today there is a greater need for nursing students to become competent nurses in the workforce; therefore, educators must implement effective strategies to assure that students graduate and receive their degrees.

A quantitative study was conducted to assess nursing students' intent to continue or withdraw from the nursing program. A detailed proposal outlining the study method was submitted to ASU's institutional review board, and permission

was granted for the investigation to proceed. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the potential risks and benefits, and how their privacy and confidentiality would be protected. They consented to participate in the pilot study by signing the informed consent form. The study population was comprised of 20 Associate of Science nursing degree students. Nonprobability sampling, using the purposive sampling method, was used to recruit study participants.

Data was collected anonymously online using self-completed questionnaires during the summer of 2020, the first year of the COVID 19 pandemic. The following five-point Likert-type scale was utilized in rating nursing students' intent to withdraw from the nursing program: (0 = Never, 1 = Almost Never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Fairly Often, and 4 = Very Often). Descriptive analysis of data obtained from this study was conducted using Microsoft Excel.

The results of the survey were extremely revealing of the resilience of undergraduate nursing students at ASU. Of the 20 students that were surveyed, 70% percent never intended to withdraw from the nursing program despite their experience of stress.

Although the students experienced more stressors because of the pandemic, the tenacity of nursing student participants to continue in the program was very inspiring to the researchers. The students expressed an ardent desire to continue to work towards completing the program, and the struggle to academically achieve led to their self-awareness and made them more determined to improve themselves. Aware of the turmoil in society because of the pandemic, students wanted to get their degrees so that they could help others and add to the betterment of society. Another aspect of this study which was rewarding and productive was formulating a trusting student-faculty relationship.

This research is extremely valuable from a faculty perspective because it examined the impact of stressors on student success from the students' point-of-view. Often educators become overwhelmed with the daily tasks associated with job expectations and duties, and they may not recognize the source and impact of these stressors on students' academic performance. Additionally, the current research broadened researchers' knowledge and improved their ability to identify many sources of students' stress. As a result,

researchers gained a more empathetic sense of the pressures students face when they interact with them. This allows the faculty to provide support that can enhance student success.

According to Reeve et al. (2013), nursing students exhibit positive and negative responses to stress. Some of these responses include drug and alcohol abuse, social isolation, depression, projection, and crying. Plans are underway to begin the implementation of interventions to help decrease the level of stress experienced by nursing students. For instance, researchers are currently investigating the inception of a local Mindfulness Meditation program for nursing students. This would be beneficial to nursing students because according to Koren, (2017), mindfulness meditation decreases stress and anxiety.

The literature review indicated that undergraduate nursing students experience varying sources of stress such as academic, clinical, and personal stressors. The findings of this study indicated that these stressors may not negatively impact nursing students' desire to continue in the program. Despite their resilience to stress and determination to continue their nursing program, implementing stress reduction interventions to reduce or manage their stress should be prioritized to prevent its adverse effects on the cognitive, emotional, and physical health of nursing students.

The current research was accepted as a poster presentation at a national nursing conference. Also, findings of this research have been presented to nursing students and nursing faculty at different institutions. Dissemination is intended to increase nursing faculty's awareness and empathy when working with their students. The current research serves as a foundation for additional research about sources of student stress. The researchers intend to conduct similar studies recruiting different demographical participants, such as graduate students and faculty. A mixed-method and qualitative study design would be helpful to provide additional information on this critical topic.

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PRESENTING

THE MASTER'S NURSING GRANT RECIPIENTS FOR THE 2022 ALBANY STATE UNIVERSITY GRADUATING CLASS OF FAMILY NURSE PRACTITIONERS

Dr. Sarah Brinson, Dean

Dr. Cathy Williams, Professor of Nursing

Dr. Donyale Childs, Director of Master's Nursing Programs

Dr. Nicole Watkins, FNP-C Director of Family Nurse Practitioner Program

Dr. Linda Amankwaa, Thesis Coordinator

Albany State University's (ASU) Department of Nursing Graduate Faculty and Darton College of Health Professions are proud to highlight the scholastic accomplishments of our 2022 nursing students. Our graduate nursing students completed either a scoping review, a research proposal, or a thesis with IRB approval, as well as data collection with the assistance of graduate nursing faculty. Notably, several students were unable to collect data due to Covid restrictions but "stayed the course" to complete their graduation requirements. These nursing students, who also worked Covid shifts, completed their work and are now graduating. They are to be commended for their persistence.

Graduate nursing students' research topics ranged from knowledge level concerns of the nursing staff as they cared for patients' concerns during the healing process. Students have presented their findings at local, regional, and national conferences. Recently, a master's nursing student presented at the GA Board of Regents. There, she demonstrated the usefulness of her ASU master's thesis experience and how it prepared her to transfer her research knowledge from the master's level to the PhD.

The need for family nurse practitioners is documented by the American Nurses Association within an Executive Summary (2018). Nestled in Southwest Georgia is a jewel of a program graduating nurses to meet this national need-ASU/FNP. Research suggests that FNP's provide consistently high-quality patient care (Buerhaus, P., et al, 2018; Kippenbrock, T., et al., 2019), and patients are satisfied with this practitioner level of care (Ortiz, J., et al, 2018). There is a significant need to graduate more family nurse practitioners who provide care for the region as well as

surrounding areas.

A grant housed in the ASU Graduate Studies Office, written by Dr. Joyce Johnson and directed by Dr. Charles Ochie, provided support for the students' academic success. The 2022 Virtual Graduate Research Symposium will be posted online at the ASU graduate site later this year. This is one of the largest classes of master's nursing students since the inception of the Graduate Nursing Program in 1988 (Communication, Williams, C.). The total number of FNP graduate nursing students marching in Spring graduation 2022 is 28. The students highlighted here, along with the title of their scholarly works, mentors, and thesis committees, are the grant recipients of this year's graduating class. They are listed alphabetically below:

Nurses' Knowledge of Barriers to Colorectal Cancer Screenings

Student: Taheisha Deese, BSN, RN

Chair: Dr. Joyce Johnson, RN

Mentor: Dr. Deanna Howe, RN

Nursing Faculty Committee Member: Prof. LaToya Phillips, RN

The Impact of Workplace Stressors on Nurses' Psychosomatic Well-being

Student: Monique Ellis, BSN, RN

Chair: Dr. Linda Grimsley, RN

Mentor: Dr. Nicole Watkins, FNP-C, RN

Nursing Faculty Committee Member: Prof. Jan Rodd, RN/Dr. Laura Gosa, RN

What Did Nurses Do to Alleviate Stress and Reduce Burnout During the Covid-19 Pandemic?

Student: Eric Fusan, BSN, RN

Chair: Dr. Laura Gosa, RN

Mentor: Dr. Laura Gosa, RN
Nursing Faculty Committee Member: Prof. Seketha Silas, MSN, RN

Postpartum Depression Knowledge Level

Student: Cierra Green, BSN, RN
Chair: Dr. Andrea Dozier, RN
Mentor: Dr. Nicole Watkins, FNP-C, RN
Nursing Faculty Committee Member: Dr. Oluwatoyin Okafor, RN

The Risk Factors Associated with an Increase in Maternal Mortality Among Black Women

Student: Antonia Harris, BSN, RN
Chair: Dr. Linda Grimsley, RN
Mentors: Dr. Andrea Dozier, RN & Dr. Oluwatoyin Okafor, RN
Nursing Faculty Committee Member: Prof. Jennifer Heyer, MSN, RN

Work Stress and Burnout of Acute Care Nurses: A Scoping Review

Student: Charity Hulin, BSN, RN
Chair: Dr. Zelda Peters, FNP-C, RN
Mentor: Dr. Zelda Peters, FNP-C, RN
Nursing Faculty Committee Member: Dr. Laura Gosa, RN

Resolutions for Lateral Violence in Nursing

Student: Brenicke Johnson, BSN, RN
Chair: Dr. Linda Grimsley, RN
Mentor: Dr. Donyale Childs, RN
Nursing Faculty Committee Member: Prof. Jennifer Heyer, MSN, RN

Nurses' Knowledge about Substance Abuse

Students: Christie Jolly, BSN, RN and Queeona Jenkins, BSN, RN
Chair: Dr. Deanne Howe, RN
Mentor: Dr. Deanne Howe, RN
Nursing Faculty Committee Member: Dr. Sheree Dickerson, RN

The Multiple Effects Nursing Shortages Have on Patient Care and the Burnout It Causes in the Nursing Profession: A Scoping Paper

Student: Appolonia Mark, BSN, RN
Chair: Dr. Linda Grimsley, RN
Mentor: Dr. Schvon Bussey, FNP-C, RN, PMCH-BC
Nursing Faculty Committee Member: Prof. Sandy Vargovich, MSN, RN

Telehealth and Oncology

Student: Merrill May, BSN, RN
Chair: Dr. Linda Grimsley
Mentor: Dr. Laura Gosa
Nursing Faculty Committee Member: Prof. Sandy Vargovich, MSN, RN

An Examination of the Effectiveness of Pain Management in the Terminally Ill

Student: Parthenia McGowan, BSN, RN
Chair: Dr. Andrea Dozier, RN
Mentors: Dr. Andrea Dozier, RN & Dr. Oluwatoyin Okafor, RN
Nursing Faculty Committee Member: Dr. Nicole Watkins, FNP-C, RN

Nurse-to-Patient Ratio Policy Change to Reduce Nurse Burnout: A Scoping Paper

Student: Stephanie Morrison, BSN, RN
Chair: Dr. Linda Grimsley, RN
Mentor: Dr. Zelda Peters, FNP-C, RN
Nursing Faculty Committee Member: Prof. Sandy Vargovich, MSN, RN

How Do NICU Nurses Support Mothers during Their First Week of Admission?

Student: Brandi Smith, BSN, RN
Chair: Dr. Linda Grimsley, RN
Mentor: Dr. Donyale Childs, RN
Nursing Faculty Committee Member: Prof. Sandy Vargovich, MSN, RN

Nurse Burnout and COVID-19

Student: Felisha Tune, BSN, RN
Chair: Dr. Linda Amankwaa, RN
Mentor: Dr. Cynthia Summerlin, RN
Nursing Faculty Committee Member: Prof. Jennifer Heyer, MSN, RN

Music and Memory Therapy for Alzheimer's Patients

Student: Jessi Shiver-Woods, BSN, RN
Chair: Dr. Linda Grimsley, RN
Mentor: Dr. Nicole Watkins, RN
Nursing Faculty Committee Member: Prof. Sandy Vargovich, MSN, RN

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SOUTHWEST GEORGIA COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS: ALBANY STATE UNIVERSITY LEADS THE WAY THROUGH WATER INFRASTRUCTURE AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD INITIATIVES

MARK MASTERS AND DR. ROBERT OWOR



Dr. Robert Owor (left) and Mark Masters

Investment in Water and Sewer Infrastructure

In February, Georgia Governor Brian P. Kemp, joined by members of the Water and Sewer Infrastructure Committee and state leaders, awarded the Albany State University (ASU) Georgia Water Planning and Policy Center led by Mr. Mark Masters, in partnership with the Department of Natural Resources and the Golden Triangle Resource Conservation and Development Council, a grant under the American Rescue Plan Act of \$49.8 million dollars. This grant will fund the conversion of surface water irrigation in Southwest Georgia to deep groundwater sources. Reducing the surface water use, particularly in times of drought, will improve water supply security and protect the rivers and streams of the Lower

Flint River Basin. The project will make the region more resilient to drought and sustain its economy, natural systems, and communities.

In addition to installing approximately 242 deep aquifer wells in Southwest Georgia, this project will also support conservation planning at each participating farm, environmental monitoring and assessment of groundwater aquifers and aquatic ecosystems, as well as stakeholder-driven water resource and endangered species management planning. It will also enhance an existing flow augmentation system near Colquitt, Georgia, and install a new flow augmentation system in another part of the Lower Flint River Basin. These augmentation systems provide flows to important aquatic habitats during drought. The benefits of this

project will accrue to a region that includes 27 counties with a population of approximately 590,000 people. Farming accounts for 24% of the regional economy and over 70% of the water use in the region. The project budget includes \$49.8 million dollars in federal funds and \$3.7 million dollars in local matching investments.

The Smart Community Gardens Project

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) maintains that food deserts exist in rural areas whenever a significant amount of people live more than 10 miles away from the nearest fresh produce seller. They can also be found in urban areas if roughly 500 people live over ½ a mile away from an adequate grocery store. Typically, food deserts exist in low-income rural areas where healthy fruits and vegetables are scarce; however, oftentimes, processed and packaged products, as well as foods with high sodium, sugar, and fat content, can be found at numerous convenience stores and “Dollar” stores which are often easily accessible. According to the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, food deserts exist throughout the state of Georgia, with approximately two million Georgia residents, including about 500,000 children living in them (Werner, 2017).

Congressman Sanford Bishop, the U.S. representative for Georgia’s 2nd congressional district and dean of Georgia’s congressional delegation, is aware of the problem of food deserts and has provided a way to address it by awarding grant money to two educational institutions in rural Southwest Georgia. In March 2022 Congressman Bishop secured \$746,250 for a collaborative project between Fort Valley State University (FVSU) and Albany State University (ASU) to establish community gardens that will help eliminate food deserts and promote outdoor activity and healthy living. Led by Dr. Robert Owor. The Smart Community Gardens Project will promote healthy living and community interaction in Albany, Georgia.

Food deserts are prevalent in economically strained rural and urban counties in Middle and Southwest Georgia. Incidences of obesity, diabetes, and hypertension tend to be higher in these communities. To address this crisis, FVSU and ASU are proposing a collaborative project to establish community gardens in selected locations designated as rural areas. The objectives of this project are to eliminate food deserts by enabling community members to grow fresh fruits and vegetables on their own, engaging them in outdoor physical activity

through gardening, and educating families on the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Both institutions will collaboratively train people in communities on gardening, food and nutrition, and health. This project will also help develop stronger communities because these gardens give families an opportunity to spend time together and connect with their community. This \$746,250 dollar grant is the beginning of the implementation of Smart Agriculture in Southwest Georgia.

The grant will create a tremendous positive impact in the communities in Southwest Georgia through giving people opportunities to grow healthy food for their families. The gardens will do the following:

- Provide fresh, nutritious produce for many families
- Promote a healthy lifestyle that provides a peaceful retreat, fresh air, and outdoor exercise
- Promote a cleaner environment since gardens add oxygen to the environment, absorb rainwater and prevent runoffs
- Develop stronger families and communities because community gardens provide opportunities for families to spend time together as well as connect with neighbors and other community members
- Provide educational opportunities for adults and children to learn about food, nutrition, and the environment, and
- Provide opportunities for introducing smart agriculture and training farmers in modern methods of climate smart agriculture and increased production through agricultural priming.

Investing in the communities in Southwest Georgia with significant life-changing projects, such as improving water and sewer infrastructure as well as implementing community gardening, encourages a healthy relationship between our elected officials, universities, and communities. Empowering people to help solve their problems is a victory for society as a whole.

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WHY CONSIDER DIVERSITY AND MICROAGGRESSIONS IN ACADEMIA?



DR. ANTA'SHA M. JONES

Diversity is a term that is consistently echoed through many forms of communication in academics. It defines how an individual is different and recognizes those differences from others. Diversity also often refers to race and ethnicity in society. Society continuously evolves, and so has academia to include other entities of diversity, such as sexual identity, gender, orientation, socio-economic status, physical abilities, religious belief, age, first-generation status, cultural background, and many other ideologies (Queensborough Community College, 2021). However, no matter how the definition of diversity continues to expand, individuals are still faced with defending their individuality in a society that promotes diversity, especially in academia.

Academia has been identified as an excellent opportunity to join the part of society connected with studying and thinking to pursue research, education, and scholarship (*Cambridge Dictionary*, 2022). For many individuals, participating beyond secondary education is a personal desire and a benefit to society (Chan, 2016). Attending post-secondary institutions also allows individuals to receive job security, increase knowledge and marketability, develop and acquire skills, gain access to career opportunities, increase earning potential, receive networking opportunities, and improve personal growth and self-esteem (Chan, 2016; Zaback, Carlson, & Crellin, 2012). Because

of the numerous advantages of receiving a college degree, it is not surprising that it is so attractive to various diverse bodies in society. Colleges and universities have a responsibility to cultivate citizens for an improved society regardless of one's individuality. Therefore, post-secondary institutions should acknowledge societal diversity and prioritize creating inclusive environments that provide educational opportunities for everyone despite their differences.

Research indicates that more than 16 million students have enrolled in post-secondary institutions located in the United States between fall 2009 and fall 2019 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). These enrollment rates in these institutions include a vastly diverse population of students who wanted to experience opportunities to expand their education and change their circumstances (United States Department of Education, 2016). As a result of this academic expansion, post-secondary institutions are now being identified as institutions known to merge diverse bodies of societal members to advance their education through pursuing their personal and educational goals (United States Department of Education, 2016). For some students achieving their education goals, barriers will exist that may impact their academic success and retention at these post-secondary institutions (Clement, 2016). Some of those barriers may be

expected and easy to navigate with mentoring and support from their academic and family environments. However, some of those barriers may be unexpected and challenging to identify and navigate in higher education (Fine & Handelsman, 2004). For those individuals, barriers may exist that center around entities that identify and recognize an individual's identity, resulting in a student experiencing a microaggression (Fine & Handelsman, 2004).

Microaggressions are everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages that target persons solely upon their marginalized group membership (Nadal et al., 2014; Sue et al., 2007). They can occur everywhere and anywhere there are diverse groups of individuals, in different forms, such as verbal, behavioral, and environmental. The three types are as follows: (1) Microaggressions that occur verbally involve hurtful or stigmatizing comments or questions to marginalized groups of people, for example, the phrase "All lives matter." (2) Behavioral microaggressions occur when someone behaves in a hurtful or discriminatory way to a particular group of individuals, for example, someone who crosses the street when a person of color approaches. (3) Environmental microaggressions involve subtle discriminations arising within society, for example, when someone says, "You don't belong here." No matter which forms one experiences, the impact can be detrimental to one's self-esteem and impact his or her decision-making processes (Sue et al., 2007).

As mentioned before, these daily environmental interactions can occur everywhere and anywhere to marginalized groups in various forms and even types (Lilienfeld, 2017). The three types of microaggressions are microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidation. Microassaults involve an individual intentionally behaving in a discriminatory way, not intending to be offensive. Microinsults are comments or actions that are unintentionally discriminatory. Microinvalidations occur when a person's comment invalidates or undermines the experiences of a specific group of people (Lilienfeld, 2017). No matter which type of microaggression one experiences, the impact can be detrimental to his or her identity and can cause adverse health and mental outcomes, especially in academia (Sue et al., 2010).

Microaggression is a term initially coined by Dr. Chester Pierce, a Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and a Professor of Education at Harvard University. Dr. Pierce worked diligently almost 50 years ago to unpack environmental or behavioral slights that were communicated verbally as being unconsciously or consciously hostile or derogatory towards African Americans. He identified microaggression as a "subtle and stunning" mechanism of daily racial offenses (Pierce, 1970; Pierce, 1995). Over time, Dr. Pierce's phenomenon has been investigated by other psychologists, such as Dr. Derald Wing Sue, who is a Professor of Counseling Psychology at Columbia University and had an interest in understanding microaggressions and their effects. His research expanded from Dr. Pierce's research to include other targeted groups affected by microaggressions, such as other people of color, women, persons with disabilities, ethnic and religious minority groups, Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals (LGBTQ) (Nadal et al., 2011; Sue et al., 2010). Dr. Sue's (2007) research revealed that any individual in any culturally marginalized group or stigmatized group can experience subtle unintentional or intentional communication in his or her everyday environment. These experiences can exist in various forms and types. As a result, it is crucial to understand their negative impact that can cause individuals to experience confusion, anger, anxiety, frustration, paranoia, withdrawal, hopelessness, and fear (Sue et al., 2010; Sue et al., 2008; Sue et al., 2007).

Today, microaggressions are in several scholastic conversations at higher educational institutions among administration, faculty, students, and staff members (Sykes, 2021). These conversations engage the administration and collegiate members to discuss challenges such as inappropriate jokes, malicious comments, stereotyping, as well as microaggressions in the academic environment from marginalized groups about these adverse experiences in the classroom and their impact (e.g., health, mental, and matriculation). It is essential to include microaggressions in these conversations where these negative experiences occur daily due to diverse populations. The aftermath of these experiences in academia can prompt students to withdraw from the institution's population, feeling helpless and hopeless along with not achieving their educational goals by receiving a degree or diploma (Sykes, 2021). Therefore, it is vital to

create awareness and provide resources such as micro-intervention training, diversity officers, and a Chief Diversity Division or Department available to adequately curtail these adverse environmental college experiences to marginalized populations (Sue et al., 2010). With available resources previously mentioned throughout colleges and universities, collegiate members will be able to utilize them effectively to identify microaggressions, address them, and limit their occurrences in their academic environment, which can lead to the elimination of trauma encountered by disenfranchised groups. Hopefully, academic community members will not remain silent. They will be proactive in incorporating and implementing coping mechanisms shared to combat these

“ We want our students to be visible and heard in their academic communities. For this to occur, stakeholders and administrators at institutions need to create awareness forums to introduce microaggressions and their effects on on-campus communities. ”

experiences with the help of trained academic professionals (e.g., counselors, outreach faculty members). As a result, students will not allow microaggression experiences to interfere with their pursuit of higher education throughout their life’s journey (United States Department of Education, 2016).

In higher education, we must be mindful that we don’t want students to experience invisibility (Sue et al., 2007). We want our students to be visible and heard in their academic communities. For this to occur, stakeholders and administrators at institutions need to create awareness forums to introduce microaggressions and their effects on

on-campus communities. Trainings and workshops should be required and available to minimize these occurrences throughout campus for all administration, faculty, and staff members. These professional development activities will allow them to identify and inform students about what is appropriate in an inclusive higher educational environment.

Although Albany State University (ASU) is an Historically Black College and University (HBCU), it has a diverse student body, administration, faculty, and staff, where inclusion is consistently promoted for outreach purposes. However, it is vital to determine if these experiences exist and negatively impact our inclusive population at our institution. My proposed research project explores these questions and the effects of these microaggression experiences at HBCUs. Understanding these experiences and effects can determine which barriers are present in our academic environment that allow these conditions to exist. Hopefully, identifying these barriers can create a healthy space for our students in higher education to be able to successfully perform academically. By identifying these barriers, ASU will provide a safer place that monitors and eliminates these microaggression experiences among students. Administration, faculty, and staff at ASU will be able to provide a progressive environment which can lead to improved matriculation rates for students. The faculty, staff, administration and students cannot be naive to the fact that these experiences don’t occur in our population just because we are an HBCU. Therefore, it is essential to investigate and identify any possible barrier that affects matriculation for our students so that educational opportunities can continue to enrich the quality of life for the diverse communities we serve in Southwest Georgia and beyond.

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PROMOTING INTENTIONAL SELF-CARE AMONG FACULTY AMID THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

DR. CLAUDIA CALDER

“Caring for myself is not self-indulgence; it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.” – Audre Lorde

The unexpected 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) disrupted the educational experiences of students and faculty. Amid the pandemic, college and university presidents listed the mental health of their employees as a top “short term” concern, second only to students’ mental health (Lederman, 2020). However, as the pandemic progressed, mental health resources seemed to continue to focus, as they have been for years in higher education, more on improving students’ mental health support than faculty’s mental health support needs.

As faculty members transition from online teaching to face-to-face instruction, they continue to serve as the first responders to students with mental health issues. Taking precautions to ensure students’ safety while making efforts to maintain their own personal and professional circumstances can weigh heavily on faculty members and negatively impact their mental well-being. Now, more than ever, faculty need support in maintaining their mental health and wellness as they cope with the effects of COVID-19. Findings from a study conducted by Course Hero (2020) suggest that faculty members believe their jobs have gotten more difficult because of the COVID-19 pandemic and report increased emotional drain and work-related stress, both highly correlated with burnout. While the long-term psychological effects of COVID-19 will not be known for years to come, there must be an intentional focus on faculty mental health support. Institutions must promote intentional self-care among faculty because the mental health and well-being of faculty are essential to student success.

Current self-care practice efforts usually task faculty members to maintain their wellness while also engaging in their professional responsibilities of teaching, research, service,



and professional development. However, when faced with multiple external barriers and internal struggles, balancing the professional and personal responsibilities associated with being an effective instructor can result in faculty members feeling depleted with little time or energy left to develop and maintain healthy self-care routines. Thus, higher-education administrators can be critical allies for faculty members by establishing institutional support to lessen the possibility of mental health struggles which affect their work lives. Being an ally requires universities moving towards creating an access culture which provides systemic support at the individual and institutional level to promote self-care for faculty members and mitigate stressors.

To move towards this access culture, administrators must consider the University’s current culture by asking the following questions: Do university administrators compile data to assess faculty’s wellness needs amid the pandemic? Are faculty members provided with information and resources that promote self-care? Are there organizations that support faculty wellness across the university or within departments or programs? Do university administrators create a safe space during meetings and build a communication strategy

that transparently addresses and acknowledges the impact of COVID-19 on their own and faculty's mental health?

University administrators should be intentional about consulting with faculty regarding the perceived mental health culture of the University through different forms of assessments. This is vital because faculty members face high levels of stress, anxiety, and burnout and are often more prone to mental health conditions than the general population. However, conversations regarding faculty's mental health and well-being were absent even before the pandemic. Continued silence as it relates to the mental health concerns of faculty is counterproductive to the access culture needed to promote wellness. It can further perpetuate a plethora of unchecked mental health problems in higher education. Therefore, universities should develop, establish, or expand university-wide and department-wide programs and wellness resources that promote self-care among faculty members. Administrative policies such as leave time, performance evaluations, and Employee Assistant Programs (EAP) should be adjusted to structurally support faculty's mental health during COVID-19 and beyond. Additionally, administrators should intentionally model self-care for faculty and integrate self-care plans and wellness resources into university policies and structures to alleviate the added stress placed on these faculty members because of the pandemic.

Many faculty members often neglect their mental health needs while managing their busy schedules despite its importance. However, creating an access culture that promotes intentional self-care will help faculty understand that there are many ways to adequately care for their mental well-being and encourage them to actively do it. University administrators should intentionally connect faculty to internal and external resources and organizations that allow them to share their experiences with their peers, support one another, and work together to meet common challenges. The fostering, maintenance, and expansion of such communities are critical components for validating faculty experiences, encouraging self-care, and assuring that students receive the best instruction. This is a key weapon in the continuing fight during the pandemic and beyond to help provide a quality education for all students.

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PORTRAIT OF AN ASU ALUMNUS:

DR. O'NEIL SMITH, SENIOR PROCESSING ENGINEER AT INTEL

ELIZABETH JONES, SENIOR COMMUNICATIONS MAJOR – ALBANY STATE UNIVERSITY

The sun rises and shines on the beautiful island of Jamaica in the parish of Clarendon. The Smith family is preparing for their day. This is no ordinary family. With six brothers and one sister, ten-year-old O'Neil Smith has his work cut out for him. He eats his breakfast and gets ready for school. As soon as he leaves the house, the countdown begins. He has to make it to the bus stop by six o'clock to catch public transportation. When boarding the bus, he prepares himself for the two-hour journey ahead. This is an everyday occurrence.

When he finally arrives at school, the trouble is not over. Unlike the American school system, there is no middle school. O'Neil, at the ripe age of ten, is entering high school for the next five years. Going from elementary school to high school is an adjustment, to say the least. He describes this time as "survival of the fittest." With time he adjusts to these circumstances and ultimately succeeds in high school due to a passion that he developed for chemistry.

O'Neil graduates from high school at sixteen-years-old. Although he is only required to attend for five years, students are given the option of taking two additional years of schooling. However, O'Neil opts not to. He had always been told that the path to success is high school, university, then work. To feel better prepared to attend a university, he figures he would go back to high school and take a few engineering courses. When he re-enrolls in high school, he makes the acquaintance of a new chemistry teacher. She asks, "Why are you here?" He explains his desire to take additional classes. He is shocked when she says, "You're wasting your time!" This teacher instead encourages him to apply to the University of Technology. He applies to the college on his own and informs his parents of his plans. The question on everyone's mind is how he plans to fund this education.

The Smiths are not considered a wealthy family. O'Neil grows up in a two-parent household. His mother stays at home while his father goes to work. O'Neil's parents instill in him and his siblings the importance of sharing and having each other's backs. They often find themselves swapping clothes and visiting the shoe repairman once their shoes are too worn. Growing up in a financially challenged home, his main goal is



Dr. O'Neil Smith

to never find himself in that situation again. He knows that attending the University is the best way to prevent that from happening. He takes out a loan, and his parents support his decision.

O'Neil graduates from the University of Technology with a diploma in mechanical engineering. Even though he earns an engineering diploma, he ends up in Kingston, Jamaica, working as a sales representative. His biggest fear is beginning to present itself. "I'm going to be broke forever," he thinks as he had come to the realization that getting his diploma alone was not enough to manifest his dreams or lifestyle.

Little did O'Neil know, he would soon meet a man who would change his life. This gentleman approaches him with the opportunity of a lifetime. For \$500.00 he would be able to prepare for the SAT's and study abroad. To O'Neil, this seems to be a great opportunity, but \$500.00 is not in the budget. He asks the man, "How much is the book?" He learns the material on his own and goes on to do very well on the SATs. He is one of eleven Jamaicans afforded the opportunity to study at Albany State University (ASU).

After arriving at ASU, he attends a seminar by Dr. Seth Marder. This is the first time he encounters someone making something from what appears

to have been nothing. O'Neil is fascinated by this encounter and wants to pursue a field where he could do the same. In 2008, he graduates from ASU with a BS degree in chemistry. Where is he now? Meet Dr. O'Neil Smith. He now serves as a senior processing engineer at Intel. Below is my interview with Dr. Smith:

Jones: What do you love most about your job?

Dr. Smith: What I love most about where I work is really the people I work with. We have a lot of difficult problems that we're trying to solve, and I love the collaborative nature of what we do. Sometimes we're faced with really tough problems, and you brainstorm in a room with your peers; you think about it; then, you come up with good models and bad models. Everything is on the table; there's no right or wrong. I love being able to solve problems in that way.

Jones: What does your job entail?

Dr. Smith: The company as a whole is built around developing semiconductor technology (chips). Everything is tech driven. The world as a whole is generating a lot of data, and we need a way to process, provide feedback, utilize, and monitor that data in real time.

Jones: So where does Intel come into the picture?

Dr. Smith: Intel is the entity that creates the capacity for all these things to happen. What we make is considered the brain. These chips, they're what take this data, process it in real time, and get the data back to you. My job is to help make those devices. I am at the forefront of developing these devices that we rely on so much. Right now, I am one of the hiring managers for my area. We are hiring a bunch of technicians. This particular job position landed in my lap late last year, and I've been doing it since.

Jones: Can you recall any moments that helped prepare you for your current position?

Dr. Smith: I received my PhD at Georgia Tech while working for Dr. Marder. It was one of those environments that was unique. Dr. Marder by training is an organic chemist. And I went to his group because I liked what he was working on, but I didn't care much about organic chemistry; I wanted to do analytical chemistry. As a graduate student, you had a committee of people that advised you and looked at the data, etc. I surrounded myself with people who knew what they were talking about. My approach to grad school was, "Okay, problem here. I need a solution. Who knows what they're talking about? Let me go find them." I found them and then I nagged them by email, visited them and did whatever I needed

to do. I got my data, and then called it "good." Because of this experience, I learned so much.

Jones: How did your ASU experience prepare you for your career today?

Dr. Smith: I think what I will say about ASU is that it provided for me a very nurturing environment. Coming from a foreign land so to speak with so many uncertainties, the faculty, staff, and administration stepped up in several ways to make sure that we were successful. ASU provided us with research experiences; they worked with us to apply for internships. They were always supportive of that. They would always bring in guest speakers. My career as a whole came about because of a guest speaker. And faculty members were always available for you to talk to. It was important for me to find good mentors because growing up I had to figure things out on my own. The ASU environment is exactly what I needed at that time, and I think that's why I was able to reset my path in some ways and be where I am today. I am entirely grateful for that.

Jones: What advice would you give to current students on how to best prepare for their career?

Dr. Smith: There are no silly questions. If you don't understand, say you don't understand. That would be my advice. It's okay not to know. One of the things I found that happened all the time is people didn't ask enough questions. People thought, "I don't want to look like the silly one in class." It's okay, ask the question. When you ask it now, you get an answer, and you won't ask it again. Be curious. Be inquisitive. If you don't know, say you don't know. Never just accept things for what they are or because someone told you so. Try to understand it as well.

Jones: Lastly, if you could talk to that 10-year-old Jamaican boy today, what would you tell him?

Dr. Smith: This is a tough one. I'd tell him to stay centered. Remember the way you were raised; remember how you were brought up. Never lose sight of that because that is what's going to get you to where you need to go. Always remember to respect your elders and have manners. Those things go a very long way. Next, it is important to be respectful and treat people well and not just care about yourself, but also others.

I try to influence others in a positive way. My professional success today is by no measure of my own doing. I've had so much help along the way, and I think if one of those had been different, my whole life could have potentially been different. Always remain grounded, and if you can do that, you'll be okay.

LIBERATED LEARNING: HOW ENGAGED DETROIT HOMESCHOOL COOPERATIVE PROVIDED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY AND ACCESS DURING THE COVID-19 GLOBAL PANDEMIC

MS. JOY JONES, DR. BRITANY GATEWOOD AND DR. KATHALEENA EDWARD MONDS

“W.E.B. DuBois did more than introduce new research methods. He introduced a new philosophy of research as a wholly integrative and immersive experience, and using people to represent numbers, rather than numbers to represent people. Every number is associated with human characteristics that researchers should not ignore. Behind every statistic, there is a person with dreams, aspirations, fears and needs. Separating numbers from people allows people to oppress people without conscience or consequence” (Toldson, 2018, p. 191).

This study examines Engaged Detroit, a Black homeschooling cooperative formed on August 25, 2020, in response to COVID-19 school disruptions in Detroit, Michigan. For the millions of families who experienced the unprecedented global health pandemic and its attendant educational, economic and social upheaval, many relied on their local school districts to determine how to best provide educational access and opportunity during forced school shutdowns. In the spirit of mutual aid societies that have been the foundation of Black communities for generations, 32 families took matters into their own hands and formed a COVID-safe learning community led by a veteran social entrepreneur and education reform activist, Bernita Bradley. Engaged Detroit is an exemplar of social entrepreneurs providing bottom-up solutions for pressing social issues. In this case, a homeschooling cooperative provided innovative support, resources, and know-how for families to educate their children in a crisis and beyond.

SYNOPSIS

The Albany State University Center for Educational Opportunity (ASU CEO) sought to answer the question: How have African-American families demonstrated agency in the education of their children in the face of school closures and learning interruption during a global pandemic?



Conducted in partnership with the Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE), a think tank affiliated with the University of Washington Bothell, this qualitative study aligns with the work of ASU CEO, which seeks to deploy bottom-up approaches to educational inquiry via engagement of stakeholders (i.e. communities, students, parents, teachers, administrators, organizations and education partners) in research that is action- and impact-oriented, thus leading to long-term societal change. Such research allows us to study and observe outcomes that serve as solutions to educational challenges with shared data findings. In doing so, the deployment of solutions is strategic and timely.

Liberated Learning: How Engaged Detroit Homeschool Cooperative Provided Educational Opportunity and Access During the 2020 COVID-19 Global Pandemic centers Black families' response to educational disruption at the height of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. Explored are the ways families navigated the crisis to ensure that their children remained engaged and learning. The cooperative has

many features of mutual aid societies, namely a supportive, affirming community and the sharing of resources and information. Among the themes that emerged are advocacy, resistance and self-sufficiency.

CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

Engaged Detroit's success serves as a model for other communities of color who seek alternative educational options, regardless of income. Parents' talents and ability to educate their children are often overlooked in traditional K-12 settings. Scads of research examine the correlation between parent involvement and a student's academic achievement, and whereas there are many studies on homeschooling, most of the homeschooling research focuses primarily on White families. Foremost, parents were not only involved in their students' learning, but they were also fully responsible for it. Engaged Detroit families are part of a growing trend of Black families who have chosen to homeschool.

The Census Bureau found that by October 2020, the nationwide proportion of homeschoolers—parents who had withdrawn their children from public or private schools and taken full control of their education—had risen to more than 11%, from 5% at the start of the pandemic. For Black families, the growth has been sharper. Around 3% of Black students were homeschooled before the pandemic; by October, the number had risen to 16% (Parks, 2021).

POSSIBLE REAL-WORLD APPLICATION

The theory of action that guided the study set out to examine the “liberation of learning” from the traditional bonds of time and place and breaking down barriers that sidelined community members (Heyward, 2020). Engaged Detroit helped parents with resources and support that helped nurture their confidence to teach their children by tapping into their funds of knowledge (Andrews & Yee, 2006) and cultural capital that were already present. “Various forms of capital nurtured through cultural wealth include aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial and resistant capital” (Yosso, 2005).

“Social cognitive theory suggests that self-efficacy, people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances (Bandura, 1986, p. 391), strongly influences the choices people make, the effort they expend, and how long they persevere in the

face of challenge” (Pajares & Miller, 1994).

Parents were initially “sidelined” by beliefs that they needed to have degrees and that homeschooling was not affordable to them. Forced school shutdowns, health and safety concerns, and layoffs were catalysts. Members of the homeschooling cooperative were transformed by the opportunities to develop new ways of teaching and learning, thereby creating a multiplier effect in that students are learning from students, parents from parents, coaches from coaches — all for mutual benefit. Beyond the pandemic, what will sustain them is a renewed understanding and experimentation of what it means to teach your own children and the profound discovery of their personal agency to take on the most important job they will ever have as a parent. For their children, this is a lifetime lesson in self-reliance, for their parents have taught them empathy, agency and action.

“The phenomena of increasing Black home education represents a radical transformative act of self-determination, the likes of which have not been witnessed since the 1960s and 70s,” according to homeschool researchers, Dr. Cheryl Fields Smith and Monica Wells-Kisura (p. 265, 2013). As the nation seeks to “reimagine education,” now is a prime opportunity to allow funding to follow children, instead of school systems, for families who wish to provide an alternative educational framework upon which to build their child's learning journey, especially in light of an ongoing pandemic which continues to produce variant strains and cause school interruptions. Through its coordinated data collection and sharing through CPRE's vast national network, it can also help researchers assess and discover emerging innovations while also serving to bridge the gap between research and policy (Center on Reinventing Public Education, 2022).

Engaged Detroit has emerged as an exemplar among homeschool collectives. Their story has been told in popular press. Prior to the pandemic, the parents who were interviewed shared that while they had previously been motivated to homeschool, certain myths and stereotypes about the practice deterred them. These included the following:

- Homeschooling requires that a parent have prior teaching knowledge and experience.
- Homeschooling requires a parent to have a college degree.
- A parent must be able to teach all subjects.

- Homeschooled children miss out on socialization.
- Homeschooled children cannot go to college.
- Homeschooling is an option reserved for wealthy families.

The opportunity to educate their children at home was viewed as a silver lining. Engaged Detroit helped to eliminate many barriers — especially the perceived lack of resources to help them begin and persist. Too often, Black families’ ability to educate their children is viewed from a deficit lens — whether it be a lack of ability, time, or money. Engaged Detroit created a network between parents and coaches which allowed them to reap the benefits of collaboration through shared leadership and advocacy. Families’ personal resources were tapped into for the greater good, and community assets were leveraged on behalf of the learning community.

SOCIETAL RELEVANCE

Perhaps one of the most encouraging aspects of the research is how change happens when a single person is willing to lead a village. Engaged Detroit embodies the potential to produce more flexible, individualized, humane, and effective educational arrangements in ways that could be sustained beyond the pandemic (Jochim & Poon, 2022). “We couldn’t wait for the school system to get it together,” said Bradley.

The similarities between Engaged Detroit and other mutual aid groups throughout history are stark. The focus on the whole family and community, not just the curriculum, is a way of living that has sustained Black families from its origins. The principle of Sankofa, which is a Ghanaian term that reminds African descendants of the importance of reaching back to knowledge gained in the past in order to make positive progress, is evident in Engaged Detroit’s work and instructive for living.

IMPLICATIONS

While education has historically been viewed as a means for racial uplift for Black families, it is the researchers’ hope that even more Black families will embrace homeschooling as a viable choice for schooling, among those that are available, to ensure that their children have the highest quality, equitable education. There is a myriad of benefits.

Parents touted the virtues of “unschooling,” the practice of letting children lead learning

through their everyday experiences, recognizing that learning happens everywhere. Selecting a curriculum that supports their children’s interests and family’s values was also cited as an advantage, along with getting to better know their children, learning how they learn and realizing the merits of customizing their education as they discovered that even among siblings, children learn at their own pace. Some found value in allowing their child to spend more time on task in order to master a subject matter they found difficult. Others discovered that their children were performing above grade level, and they were able to support children’s respective learning paces. Many were surprised to discover their children’s interests and aptitudes about which they had not been previously aware. All noted their children’s renewed love for learning. Parents’ views of the purpose of education also evolved. Beyond going to college and getting a job, they want their children to be educated for life outside the walls of the classroom in a world that is wrought with social inequities that as Black children they are sure to face. Homeschooling contributes to resiliency.

Providing a culturally relevant and responsive curriculum as a rule, rather than the exception, will markedly improve student engagement and academic achievement. “Compelling research highlights the benefits of culturally responsive teaching. For instance, studies in brain science

“**Providing a culturally relevant and responsive curriculum as a rule, rather than the exception, will markedly improve student engagement and academic achievement.**”

and education find that drawing on learners’ background knowledge shapes comprehension; indeed, all learners process new information best when it is linked to what they already know. Research also illustrates that instructional materials, assignments, and texts that reflect students’ backgrounds and experiences are

critical to engagement and deep, meaningful learning” (New America, 2022).

The current anti-Critical Race Theory (CRT) climate, a term coined by legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw, “critiques how the social construction of race and institutionalized racism perpetuate a racial caste system that relegates people of color to the bottom tiers” and seeks to limit the accurate teaching of the role of racism in America’s schools. This is evidence of government schools’ role in promoting white supremacy and hegemony. This provides even more reasons for families to take charge of their children’s education (George, 2021).

Healthy families are better able to provide the context for socio-emotional development and mental health support that their children need to thrive in and out of school. Engaged Detroit secured resources that aided families beyond homework. A few parents experienced a loss of income as a result of COVID-19 layoffs and were provided with food, funds for internet access and school supplies that aided them in ways that did not require government intervention.

Homeschooling can also interrupt the school-prison pipeline. Fewer discipline problems will rise to the case of suspension, expulsion and criminal justice involvement when Black youth are educated away from policed public-school environments. “Black students in the United States are subject to disciplinary action at rates much higher than their white counterparts. These disciplinary actions put students at higher risk for negative life outcomes, including involvement in the criminal justice system” (Riddle & Sinclair, 2019).

Freeing up public funds will also eliminate one of the main barriers that restricts some families from homeschooling and form supportive, cooperative learning communities outside of traditional government schools. Finally, showcasing the talent within the Detroit community and how Black parents can effectively homeschool their children is timely and relevant. The way the collective used its own resources and leveraged community benefits and resources can be replicated in other communities.

AUTHOR REFLECTIONS

The Engaged Detroit study elicited several thoughts around systemic and institutional racism, economic barriers and how educational bootstrapping is a viable option that leads to success. The pandemic illuminated the

vastness of our country’s caste and class divide. Nowhere are the structural inequalities taught and reinforced more than in the nation’s public schools. In fact, public education continues, in many ways, to be a gatekeeper for the status quo, functioning in some places as failure factories, dashing the dreams of Black children, year-after-year, generation-after-generation. Malcolm X shared pointedly, “Only a fool would let his enemy teach his children.” Reclaiming the central role of educating our children is an important act of Black liberation.

RESEARCH IMPACT

The ASU CEO is part of a larger network of more than 150 researchers across the country invited to participate by CPRE to understand and identify the most important questions and share information through its findings of “transformative evidence-based ideas that can improve K-12 education” (Parks, 2020). The research has the potential to broaden what the literature regards as “homeschooling” and the role the community shares in supporting student achievement and well-being in educational contexts. Our study, “Pods in Action: Engaged Detroit,” was published in April 2022 (Gatewood et al., 2022). Dr. Britany Gatewood presented “Teach Me to Teach My Own: Homeschool Advocacy and Parent Agency” at the International School Choice and Reform Conference in Dublin, Ireland, in January 2022. An abstract has been approved by the Howard University *Journal of Negro Education*, a peer-reviewed journal.

The study adds to the growing body of literature on Black homeschooling and builds upon the work of Paula Penn-Nabrit and Dr. Cheryl Fields-Smith, leading Black homeschool researchers. It can also be used as an example for other families who are motivated to homeschool. The principals of Engaged Detroit share that one of their goals is to proliferate their model. Since its inception, Engaged Detroit’s efforts have gained national attention, and we anticipate that inquiries about its operations will be included in our studies. Thus, the research-based findings from our study lend supporting evidence of challenges and educational opportunities that avail. Additional field research into the dynamics of Black homeschooling is warranted.

BIOGRAPHY

The ASU CEO examines the barriers to educational access and attainment for fragile families. We seek out the best practices that will impact the way educators, policymakers and

stakeholders provide educational opportunity and choice. The Center's mission is to advance educational research in order to strengthen and empower fragile communities from the bottom up. The Center's staff is actively engaged year-round in producing and supporting K-12 action research.

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STUDENTS MAKE CAPABLE CO-RESEARCHERS

DR. PATRICK WHITEHEAD

The following is a personal account of what it was like having a student assist me with my research. This experience demonstrates how students make capable and competent co-researchers, and even the most expert co-researcher cannot keep the PI from spilling a research project down the front of his or her pants. That is to say, research projects with students are dynamic learning experiences.

Early Fall semester 2020, when faculty were puzzling over how to stream their classrooms virtually, I received the following e-mail from a student:

Good morning,

I am a senior majoring in forensic science... [etc.]. Are you able to take on students for research this semester? If so, what are your interests?

Sincerely,

Michal

Because I receive e-mails such as this 10-12 times a year from students anxious to pad their graduate school applications, I did my best to scare her off. Below is my response:

Hi Michal,

How lovely of you to offer! I am happy to take on students as co-researchers, and I can promise you that research is exciting and engaging, but it is also a lot of hard work. I will take the fun and exciting bits, and, if you are genuinely eager to help, then you can take the lots of hard work. How does that sound?

Dr. W.

I received a reply later that day, and I had to read it twice. Michal explained how having a research experience with a scholar in her chosen field would help shape her into the kind of scholar she hoped to become. Then, I began to worry about the effects my reputation might have on her. I arranged a meeting so I could impress upon her the possible “dangers” of working with me because of my unconventional perspectives. For example, I recently called



Dr. Patrick Whitehead

neuropsychologists “confused” (2020c), I explained how psychologists often represent religious devotees more than scientists (Whitehead, 2020a) and I claimed that the author of a leading psychology textbook had added nothing to the conversation (Whitehead, 2020b). When she heard this, her eyes widened, but her resolve to work with me was not shaken.

So I gave Michal her first assignment, which was to help me interview participants who had been given drugs as treatment for depression. She was excited to begin. When she checked in with me a week later, I confessed that I had changed my mind about our research. We would not be conducting interviews after all. I had since become interested in writing a book about the hidden technologies of higher education. She would now help me write a chapter about grading as a destructive bit of educational technology.

Three weeks later, Michal submitted to me an etymology of “grades,” which covered everything from leveling soil to rank-ordering students. She also described the first interval



MICHAL WEST, BS
ASU GRADUATE

Michal is currently in graduate school at Fisk University.

scale used to measure student learning. I told her that her writing was impressive, and I was pleased with the amount of work she had done. However, it pained me to admit to her that I was no longer interested in the hidden technology of grades.

Perhaps one can anticipate our next several exchanges. Over a period of two months, Michal, bless her heart, wrote essays at my request which covered the Gestalt learning theory, the Köhler's monkey experiments, the law of Prägnanz, something called Connectivism, and Wertheimer's Productive Thinking. Despite all of this work, may the Patron Saint of Research Advisors banish me forever from the ivory halls because Michal and I still had not reached our research destination.

In late November we had a meeting to discuss what was going on. I used phrases like "alinerity of thought" and "more of a planning stage." Michal was gracious and understanding. She also said some gratuitously kind and generous things about me which I had done nothing to deserve, but they did wonders for my soul. When my cheeks returned to their ordinary color, we got to work on what would become our first project.

Michal and I began to collect in-class data to see whether a series of activities would

measurably improve students' internal locus of control. It sounds tidy written here in its declarative form. Hidden here are the wanderings, dead ends, and false starts that more commonly characterize original research.

I collected essays from students before and after a series of activities. Michal and I scored these essays using a rating scale that I designed in order to assess locus of control. We used a Pearson correlation to test inner-rater reliability between her ratings and mine (which was positive, but low). Our ratings showed that students did not experience the sort of change we had hoped for. If the data indicated anything, then it demonstrated that the opposite had occurred; the in-class activities had decreased students' internal locus of control.

For her sake as much as mine, I explained to Michal how the forward movement of science is owed to successes and failures, even though the successes are more rewarding and fun. We presented our findings (Whitehead & West, 2021b) with smiles at the Southeast Teaching of Psychology annual conference and were surprised when the conference organizers asked to publish our results in the *Teaching of Psychology Journal*. We accepted (Whitehead & West, in press).

The following day we presented a second paper (Whitehead & West, 2021) at the Southeast Philosophy of Education Society conference. We compared eight teaching theories in terms of the freedom and control they require. We also designed diagrams and provided archival data. The purpose of this second paper was to demonstrate that however different theories of teaching seemed to be from one another, the exemplars of each are more similar than dissimilar in terms of classroom structure.

I asked Michal about her experiences working with me. Here is some of what she had to say:

Early on, I knew that my experience working with you would be fruitful because you [...] challenged me to become a thorough researcher and present quality work. It has given me a new perspective on psychology as a whole and how it pertains to many aspects of daily life. [...] Overall, I believe that being a co-researcher was one of the most beneficial experiences I had during my time at ASU.

It is important to note that the work Michal did was not for a grade, course credits, or grant dollars. This student was eager to learn and determined to do research that was meaningful with a challenging professor. This academic experience is an example of the often unpredictable journey of research collaboration, as well as the benefits. Finally, this personal account hopefully demonstrates that college professors can reveal their strengths and weaknesses to a student, and this can lead to a valuable and cherished authentic learning experience for both.

If you have plans for research, then perhaps you will also be willing to reveal your strengths and weaknesses to a student so that he or she might have a valuable learning experience that will propel him or her to graduate school and/or professional success.

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MENTORED STUDENT RESEARCH: THE CENTER FOR UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

DR. MARK THOMAS AND DR. YEMISI MILLEDGE

KAYLA CONGRESS

Senior Forensic Science and Psychology Dual Major

Research: Comparison of Age of Race Realization and Rating of Experience by Cohort: 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, 2000–2002

Mentor: Dr. Patrick Whitehead

Dr. Whitehead has helped me further my knowledge in conducting research and problem-solving. I wanted to pursue research to gain experience in conducting an original study and working with the Institutional Review Board (IRB). In my previous two years, I worked on other research projects with two other faculty members, Dr. Theodosia Lovett and Dr. Mark Thomas. Conducting research has allowed me to develop and refine my skills in statistical measures, software programs and public speaking, which is very beneficial both inside and outside the classroom. I plan to continue my education by completing a dual JD/PhD in psychology to either work in the field of forensic psychology or become a prosecuting attorney.



ZOIE FOSTON

Junior Health and Human Performance Major

Research: Return-to-Play Strategies and Factors Influencing Confidence after Multiple ACL Injuries: A Qualitative Case Study

Mentor: Dr. Timothy Hughley

The research that I am conducting gauges whether or not an athlete's confidence has an impact on how quickly he or she returns to play after undergoing multiple anterior cruciate ligament reconstruction surgeries. This qualitative case study will be followed until the athlete returns to play.

My mentor, Dr. Hughley, has helped me in so many ways, from helping me with this research to facilitating my learning in the classroom. He has shown me what it's like to be an athletic trainer as well as familiarized me with all of the behind-the-scenes paperwork. I participated in this research because I felt like it was a great opportunity for me to see if I was willing to do the work of an athletic trainer. It also made me see everything that goes into doing this kind of work and the many responsibilities of the job. After I graduate, I plan on becoming an athletic trainer for the NFL. I also would like to open my own sports performance training facility that would be geared towards college athletes as well as elite high school athletes.



CHRISTIAN ANDRADE HERRERA

Senior Chemistry Major

Research: The Synthesis, Characterization, and Antibacterial Properties of Imidazo[1,5-a]pyridine Compounds

Mentor: Dr. Richard Mason, Jr.

Antibiotic-resistant bacteria is becoming an issue for the world. The research we are exploring is synthesizing and characterizing a library of Imidazo[1,5-a] pyridine compounds and testing for possible antibacterial properties on gram-negative and gram-positive bacteria.

Dr. Mason has encouraged me to explore topics I find interesting. His approach is the perfect balance of allowing me to pursue my interests on my own while still being consistently present to answer any questions I may have. He also challenges me to think critically while also allowing me to be creative with my work.

I love working with my hands. Therefore, being in a laboratory setting allows me to reinforce the knowledge I gain in the classroom and apply it to real-world problems. I want to attend graduate school, and having the experience of working in a laboratory setting makes me a more competitive candidate. One of the biggest

benefits from working on and performing research is that it has shown me that research is 90% failure with 10% success. However, we often learn more from the failures of the experiments than we do from the successes we have.

While I am excited about graduating, I am still finalizing my plans. I know that I would like to work in higher education as a professor to help shape the next generation of scientists. I will be pursuing a postbaccalaureate program while working on a master's degree in higher educational leadership then applying to PhD programs in biomedical chemistry. Once I have completed my education and any further training, I plan to go back to my roots and work at an HBCU (Historically Black College and University) or HSI (Hispanic Serving Institutions) to help underrepresented minorities obtain opportunities and fill the gap that exists in STEM.



MENTORING SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATHEMATICS (STEM) MAJORS AT ALBANY STATE UNIVERSITY: EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND ENGAGEMENT

DR. RHONDA PORTER, DR. KENYA LEMON, DR. SEYED ROOSTA, ALBANY STATE UNIVERSITY, AND
SCOTT PIERCE, ABRAHAM BALDWIN AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

There were several concerns that led to the identification of the intrusive mentoring of STEM students as one technique that should be included in a study to improve student performance over the past three years. At Albany State University (ASU), the current situation of STEM students was dismal. Student performance in STEM courses was low in terms of grade point average (GPA) and final grades. The retention of STEM students was also low. Finally, these students were not achieving the next step of their education, either going into the workforce or attending graduate/professional schools. These results were the driving force to conduct a study which provided solutions that could improve or eradicate the low-performance of STEM students at ASU.

Research has shown that mentoring provides significant benefits to minority students (Buck, 2004). Therefore, in an effort to combat the low-performance of our students, a robust mentoring model was needed. Mentoring as an organizational learning process can provide the support system for changes that lead to real improvement" (Buck, 2004). It also provides an opportunity for the transfer of guided learning to the actual application of the knowledge. In continuing professional and educational programs, participants can apply what they have learned under the guiding eye of a mentor (Buck, 2004). The traditional organizational model of post-secondary learning has not included mentoring. However, it is an integral aspect of learning that supports the development of post-secondary learners and learning communities.

The University and all of its participants benefit from the supportive feedback and new insights generated from the mentoring relationship (Klinge, 2015). This inherent collaboration can

affect significant changes in a field of study. "It becomes vital to not simply advise the next generation of scholars, but also mentor them in ways that help to cultivate their minds, so they are prepared to use their voices in powerful ways to improve and advance the state of educational progress" (Muhammad & Tatum, 2015).

When mentoring is implemented effectively, there is an expectation that self-regulated learning is evident during all phases of the process. Therefore, a model for academic, social, and professional research that incorporates theory and research on self-regulated learning is useful in a post-secondary setting. Additionally, the methodologies used in research conducted on the nature of learners who are self-regulated align with assessing the interactions that are hypothesized to occur during mentoring (Schunk & Mullen, 2013). Another mentoring model is one that expands beyond a one-on-one mentor-mentee relationship and encourages a broader network of support. In this model, mentoring networks are built as a team of faculty members, other students, and community members at large. This networking includes multiple people from the areas of research, teaching, and career support who may all interact and provide various means of support (Sorcinelli & Jung, 2007).

Goal:

The overarching goal of the program was to improve student performance in STEM and related disciplines, including students either going into the workforce or attending graduate/professional schools.

Objectives:

The main objectives for this study were as follows:

1. To increase retention rates of STEM students;

2. To increase passing rates in identified STEM courses;
3. To increase STEM students' GPA's; and
4. To increase the number of STEM students that have internship and research experiences.

The mentors were selected from various content areas across the campus and included faculty, staff members, and administrators.

HBCU-UP Mentors

- Seyed Roosta, Principal Investigator, **Mentor**
 Scott Pierce, Project Director, **Mentor**
 Kenya Lemon, Biology, **Mentor**
 Kwaichow Chan, Physics, **Mentor**
 Rhonda Porter, Mathematics Education, **Mentor**
 Geneva Diamond, English, **Mentor**
 Jeffery Swords, Mathematics, **Mentor**
 Anilkumar Devarapu, Mathematics, **Mentor**
 Chinenye Ofodile, Mathematics, **Mentor**
 Richard Mason, Chemistry, **Mentor**
 Byung-Hoon Kim, Biology, **Mentor**

In addition to mentoring, other high impact practices were used in our model to support STEM students. The list below contains these high impact practices:

High Impact Practices (HIPS)

- Mentoring
- Active Learning Experiences
- Gap/Remediation
- Professional Development
- Summer Bridge Program

Selected Student Population

- In terms of academic performance, students in the 34th–67th percentile rank were chosen.
- STEM Majors

Design Strategy

- Professional Development
- Summer Bridge Program for Students
- Mentoring Component
- Research Experiences

Mentoring Topics

- Time Management
- Registration and Advisement
- Career and Graduate School Advisement
- Health
- Financial Aid
- Course and Faculty Concerns
- Advisement

- Success Plans
- Adult Support without Being “Too” Overbearing
- Study Groups
- Communications
- Technology
- Academic Support

Results of the Program:

Table 1: Albany State University's new freshmen four-year students 2015–2017

Major	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017
Biology	47	53	61
Computer Science	24	25	8
Chem/ENGN	14	10	5
Mathematics	2	5	5
All STEM	87 (86)*	93 (90)*	99 (94)*
All Majors	475	437	584

*Figures in parenthesis are the number of underrepresented students.

Table 2: HBCU-UP Cohort I and II Final Course Grades four-year students 2015–2017

Course	Institutional Average Passing (A+B+C) Rate (2009–2013)	Target Rate	HBCU-UP Cohort I Passing Rate	HBCU-UP Cohort II Passing Rate	HBCU-UP Cohort III Passing Rate
General Chemistry I	55%	80%	75% (F15)	94% (F16)	76% (F17)
General Chemistry II	70%	80%	60% (S16)	100% (S17)	82% (S18)
Organic Chemistry I	67%	80%	89% (F16)	88% (F17)	-
College Algebra	66%	80%	76% (F15)	82% (F16)	100% (F17)
PreCalc/Trig*	66%	80%	77% (S16)	100% (F16, S17)	81% (F17, S18)
Calc I*	65%	80%	86% (F16)	87% (F16, F17)	-
English Comp I	No Data	80%	N/A**	69% (F16)	73% (F17)
English Comp II	No Data	80%	90% (S16)	73% (S17)	78% (S18)
Biology I*	68%	80%	67% (S16)	67% (S17)	72% (F17, S18)
Biology II	75%	80%	100% (F16)	100% (F17)	100% (S18)

*Courses are reported for the cohort, along with the semesters students took the classes. Thus, figures may vary with report year as more students from the cohort take the class.

**Cohort I took English Composition I from non-HBCU-UP professors and is not reported here.

Table 3: HBCU-UP students' vs ASU students' overall GPA comparisons

STEM Student Group	Fall 2015	Spring 2016	Fall 2016	Spring 2017	Fall 2017	Spring 2018
All STEM	2.70	2.74	2.74	2.74	2.59	2.66
STEM Freshmen	2.36	2.16	2.45	2.20	2.18	2.07
HBCU-UP All Freshmen	2.79 (n=24)	2.83	2.78 (n=22)	2.66	2.84 (n=23)	2.69
HBCU-UP Fall Freshmen	2.77	2.78	2.51	2.41	3.30	3.20
HBCU-UP Summer Freshmen	2.81 (n=11)	2.98	3.36	3.19	2.41 (n=12)	2.30
STEM Sophomores	-	-	2.83	2.74	2.75	2.87
HBCU-UP All Sophomores	-	-	3.19 (n=14)	3.16	2.95 (n=15)	2.87
HBCU-UP Fall Sophomores	-	-	3.11	3.10	2.73	2.64
HBCU-UP Sophomores	-	-	3.31 (n=6)	3.25	3.38 (n=5)	3.34
STEM Juniors	-	-	-	-	2.86	2.93
HBCU-UP All Juniors	-	-	-	-	3.35 (n=9)	3.58
HBCU-UP Fall Juniors	-	-	-	-	3.21	3.61
HBCU-UP Juniors	-	-	-	-	3.35 (n=4)	3.56

Shaded text differentiates between HBCU-UP Cohort I; Cohort II; Cohort III

Conclusions

The HBCU-UP Program, including a strong mentoring program, showed strong results. Some are listed below:

- HBCU UP students tend to have higher grades.
- They tend to have higher GPA's.
- They have higher grades in the STEM courses.
- There was an increased 4-year STEM enrollment.
- The mentoring sessions foster stronger relationships with the faculty, school, and peers.
- They provide a sense of security/safety-net for the students.
- They provide a space for reflection and support.

Acknowledgement: This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. HRD-1436060. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily

reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

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ACADEMIC COOPERATIVES WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA

DR. DEANNA HOWE AND DR. SARAH KUCK

The University System of Georgia (USG) has been a leader in higher education through the formation of cooperative academic agreements. The goal of these agreements is to create strong partnerships to enhance current programs and leverage existing resources which promote student success, faculty support, and academic collaboration across the state. Georgia's newest collaboration includes RN to BSN programs throughout the state. This article will provide insight into the processes required to successfully implement a cooperative academic agreement.

Nursing in Georgia

Nursing schools throughout the nation have done an effective job in creating several pathways for students to enter the nursing profession. However, there remains a nursing shortage throughout the United States, but more significantly in low income and rural areas such as South Georgia. The registered nurse (RN) profession is expected to grow 9% from 2020 to 2030 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). The demand continues for RNs because of the increased burden for healthcare services, yet the U.S. is expected to experience a continued shortage of RNs (AACN, 2020). To meet this need, the newly created academic cooperative provides an opportunity for Georgia's nursing programs to reallocate faculty from RN to BSN programs to pre-licensure programs, leading to increased enrollments and new nurse graduates.

The University System of Georgia (USG) is a major resource in addressing healthcare needs in Georgia. Collectively, all pre-licensure programs throughout the state enroll about 14,000 students, which produce 3,000 graduates annually. Albany State University's (ASU) nursing department is one of the largest producers of new graduates in the state. However, there are still not enough nurses to meet the needs of Georgia's healthcare industry. The need for nurses impacts the state as a whole, yet more directly by region. Larger cities tend to fare better than smaller cities and rural areas because of higher wages and other incentives.

This has resulted in nurses leaving rural areas and relocating to more profitable cities.

RN to BSN Cooperative

The genesis of the RN to BSN cooperative began with a nursing summit in 2018 to review program productivity across the USG. Nursing faculty, deans, and members of the healthcare industry met to discuss a theme of "Collective Impact." The summit results identified challenges, commonalities, and opportunities for efficiency in nursing education in Georgia. The target program for the cooperative academic agreement was determined to be RN to BSN programs. Goals of the cooperative academic agreement are to leverage existing resources, provide collaboration, and reallocate faculty at the institutional level to expand pre-licensure programs. This potentially allows for the expansion of pre-licensure programs seen through increased student enrollment which ultimately should lead to an increase in entry-level nurses.

Cooperative Academic Agreement

Thirteen institutions agreed to join together and collectively offer five common courses. The Chief Academic Officer of each participating institution signed the cooperative academic agreement which reiterated the role of the partner institution's academic oversight. Each institution will provide ongoing academic oversight through course and faculty approval, regular evaluation of student learning outcomes, continuous improvement, academic quality assurance, and regular review. In addition, prudent collaborative services were determined to include instructional facilitation, assessments, support services and ongoing academic oversight documentation.

Curriculum Leadership Committee (CLC)

The planning and implementation of this cooperative academic agreement began with the creation of a Curriculum Leadership Committee (CLC). The CLC consists of nursing faculty from each participating institution who were designated to provide direction

and consultation regarding the newly created courses. This included the development of course descriptions, student learning outcomes, and alignment with nursing ethics and professional attributes. In addition, faculty subject matter experts (SME's) from participating institutions were recruited to create new courses and develop online materials in the learning management system. One key aspect of course development is the use of open education resources (OER) which will reduce student costs by hundreds of dollars in the shared courses.

Institutional Processes

Meeting the institutional needs was critical for swift and seamless change at ASU. ASU stakeholders were significant members who were informed and updated throughout the process of implementation and included the president, provost, Curriculum and New Program Committee, college dean, department chair, registrar, online learning division, institutional accreditation leadership, department faculty, and other administrative personnel. The University's regional accreditation body, SACSCOC, and nursing accreditation agencies were also notified of proposed changes. Updates to all program information, course descriptions, program website, program of study forms, and advising tools were completed as well as notifying students of upcoming changes.

Processes Expected to Change

For the successful implementation of the cooperative academic agreement, the courses utilize the USG's online collaborative ecosystem known as eCampus. eCampus has comprehensive system-level assets to facilitate online course delivery distributed across USG institutions. The courses will be delivered in the collaborative learning management system (LMS) known as 'GeorgiaView (GaView)' which is simply a separate version of Desire2Learn (D2L) and will utilize USG's common academic calendar. All institutions in the collaborative use D2L for institutional online course offerings, so students will already be acclimated to the technology; however, they will use a separate login and portal. Another consideration for collaborative course delivery includes academic policies. The faculty and the students originating from different institutions and subsequent academic policies, require a common set of agreed-upon academic policies and procedures that govern the courses, students, and faculty. On behalf of participating

institutions, eCampus serves as a mediator to reconcile any academic issues, with the student's home institution determining the final outcome.

Processes That Will Not Change

Overall governance of the nursing program will not change, and students will remain with ASU and the nursing department. Students will continue to be required to meet ASU's and the RN to BSN programs' admission requirements and program standards. Additionally, financial aid requirements and student fees will not change because of the cooperative. This means that cooperative course tuition will remain the same as current ASU course fees. The cooperative will offer 8-week term courses which allows ASU to retain the progression plan already in place.

Support Services Provided

On behalf of participating institutions, eCampus serves as an academic program coordinator to provide the necessary faculty training and support, as well as academic oversight artifacts. All instructors of the common courses in the collaborative learning environment are faculty employed by a USG higher education institution, and the faculty receive training from eCampus regarding collaborative procedures and protocols. In addition, eCampus provides routine faculty development opportunities around student engagement, online instruction, and high-impact practices that are open to all USG faculty. The faculty subject matter experts who developed the collaborative courses identify the key performance indicators for each of the course-level student learning outcomes. eCampus collects this data along with institutional and demographic information. The student performance data is reviewed routinely by the CLC, institutional partnership meetings, and published annually in the *Factbook*. The CLC and broader institutional stakeholders utilize the student performance data to inform course and program level improvements. On behalf of partner institutions, eCampus assists with organizing the CLC, academic artifacts, and instructional authorization.

Benefits of Cooperative Academic Agreements

Cooperative academic agreements are an innovative strategy for online programs. The use of such agreements serves many purposes, including scalable online offerings, access to high-demand courses by underserved populations, and better utilization of scarce

faculty resources. In addition, the collaborative aspect of the course instruction and development provides diverse and rich learning experiences for students, while each institution retains its individual institutional program of study.

There are many examples of successful cooperative academic agreements in the University System of Georgia. eCampus encompasses both eCore and eMajor offerings. eCore is the most mature cooperative academic agreement and includes a selection of common core courses offered online through 21 USG institutions. The purpose of eCore is to provide affordable high quality learning experiences for the students of Georgia while increasing the institutional instructional capacity. Another hallmark of eCore includes the use of open educational resources (OERs). Since Spring of 2013, the implementation of OERs in eCore courses has resulted in cost savings for students of approximately \$13,300,000 (*eCore Factbook*). eMajor collaborative programming varies from comprehensive programs of study to boutique courses that support high-demand careers. Institutional affiliation in eMajor programs and courses differ according to the institutional needs and mission. On behalf of participating institutions, eCampus facilitates over 50,000 student enrollments annually (*eCore Factbook*; *eMajor Factbook*).

Summary

The evolving landscape of higher education tasks institutions to conserve resources while expanding quality learning experiences for students. The growing tension requires institutions and stakeholders to find or develop innovative ways to answer the needs of the citizens and workforce demands in Georgia. Cooperative academic agreements have a role in the future of higher education because they can increase institutional capacity, allow access to high demand courses, and conserve limited resources. As with any higher education endeavor, the focus must remain on student success, faculty development, and institutional health. The implementation of the RN to BSN cooperative academic agreement utilizes the lessons learned from nearly twenty years of collaborative course delivery across the state. Institutions and faculty are critical participants in the development and continued success of cooperative academic agreements.

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REFLECTIONS ON NARROWING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN SYNCHRONOUS ONLINE CLASSES: MUTE/UNMUTE

JOY HANDELMAN-SWIFT, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH, J.D.



With incredible energy and an impressive array of strategic adaptations, Albany State University (ASU) faculty and staff tackled the problem of instruction during the unprecedented COVID-19 outbreak beginning in March 2020. Having taught online for years, I felt confident even as we had to switch teaching modes in the middle of the semester, transitioning from face-to-face classes to online classes. I was certainly naïve in underestimating the tension and the toll the larger pandemic would wreak on the lives of students as they navigated care for sick family members, stepped in to help family businesses, or became isolated from family and friends. The death of loved ones was a constant threat and, all too often, a reality. We were all changed by that time, yet classes continued, and learning took place. A liberal incomplete policy for that first semester made completion of their courses possible for so many students who were caught in the worst of this struggle.

The Fall semester brought a new challenge. Synchronous online classes seemed to be a way to help overcome the well-documented isolation so present in the asynchronous online environment (McInerney & Roberts, 2004). Live classes on WebEx seemed to promise a way of taking the best from online and face-to-face classes and combining them in a format that would solve our current need for social distancing while creating that rich sense of community. The first WebEx sessions in my English Composition II classes were a shock. I felt as if I were in my first week of teaching all over again but on an isolated planet where silence was viewed as a perfectly acceptable response to a professor's questions or comments.

To encourage participation, I turned to breakout sessions and had them research topics related to the lesson and return to share their findings with the entire class. Students also worked on revising errors in writing samples in groups to share in the main session. Their research project required presentations. All these things worked in the sense of getting them talking for the required purpose. However, I was very dissatisfied with the tense quiet

that seemed a mainstay on our regular class days. Over and over, I wondered what I was missing. I cajoled, charmed, and reminded my students that class participation was a real part of their grade. They needed to show me that they were hearing me and understanding. Otherwise, how would I know what they were learning, through providing endless pop quizzes? That did not seem to be a solution that would ease tension.

A few comments in chat let me know that they were indeed hearing me, and some even answered my questions there. Of course, there were a few intrepid souls who were willing to save me from feeling as if I were speaking into a complete void. These students actually unmuted themselves, spoke briefly, then retreated to the haven of silence. Understand that, in all this, there was no animosity or rudeness; whenever there were responses, they were unfailingly polite and respectful.

For a while, I focused on the idea that students did not feel accountable or involved because they were able to attend the WebEx and hide behind their name tiles. Very few turned on their cameras. I felt as if I were on the receiving end of some Jedi mind trick. If I could not see my students, I could not require them to speak. Yet, I had to keep teaching to these little boxes bearing their names. I considered the possibility of requiring them to turn on those cameras. After talking with other faculty, I agreed with the conclusion that this was not something that could be required. After all, they were in their homes and living spaces and could not be required to relinquish that bit of privacy. Looking back, I am convinced that inactive cameras were not the real problem.

I started talking about crossing the WebEx divide to my students without being exactly sure of what I meant. I told my classes they had to be brave enough to put their voices out there. My hurried research offered no help for this specific problem.

Lacking other ideas, I had to explore or examine what is involved in “putting your voice out there.”

The mute/unmute function became my new focus. I remembered the hesitancy I felt in faculty meetings on WebEx. What was the right moment to hit unmute and ask my question? The whole group can see your muted status change. I had to suppress the feeling that my question had better be fabulous and brilliant, or I would never ask it. After all that deliberation, the moment for asking a question had often passed. If I felt that way, surely students could feel just as inhibited.

The need to know exactly what you will say as a comment before you unmute yourself takes a few more seconds than just speaking in normal conversation. “Think before you speak” is something we were taught as children. The truth is many of us speak to find out what we think, and sometimes, the speaker is just as surprised as the audience. Speech and thought are often dynamic and happen altogether at once. As Peter Elbow (1985) writes, “...the intention to speak usually results automatically in the act of speech...” (p. 284).

In our WebEx sessions, the technology does not simply facilitate communication. The technology actually mediates communication; it changes things. The mute/unmute requires a deliberation that lets in self-doubt for the timid and loses the moment for the self-assured. At best, it makes for awkward timing. At worst, that deliberation emphasizes what we all know--the spoken word, though ephemeral, can never be unsaid. Popular culture is replete with extreme and enduring examples of this truth. What adds to this on-stage feeling is the absolute lack of background noise. This quiet adds an unnecessary gravitas to the simplest comment or question. It heightens the anxiety. A student may wonder why he or she should go to the trouble to unmute for a simple question about due dates or clarification of a small detail.

Armed with this insight and the hope that small changes in teaching might make for a real improvement (Lang, 2016), I began the next semester with an assault on the power of the mute/unmute function. In hopes of demystifying it, my students and I talked about the awkwardness of having to unmute oneself before speaking. We laughed at how we all had unmuted ourselves mid-sentence at one time or another and a comment came out fractured and incomplete. I told them that they could “jump in” with comments or questions. If I had to come to a screeching halt while discussing something, it would be fine. It would not be considered an interruption, and they could always use the hand-raising icon if they wished. For my part, I started pausing at certain

points a little longer than I felt comfortable. Above all, I urged them not to worry if our discussions sometimes seemed bumpy or abrupt.

Reminding students that I am well aware that it is possible to log in to a WebEx meeting, leave the room, and take a flight to Paris helped many of them realize that just logging in was not enough to let me know they were present and listening. I began to get a few more chat responses which I acknowledged aloud.

In this context, the introductions that habitually happen the first day of class took on a new importance. I made the introductions for the WebEx classes simple but open-ended. I asked students to share their names, hometown, major and something they would like for the class to know. This low-key format created an environment where a student could say the minimum and feel that was acceptable. My goal was to have the students feel comfortable unmuting even if only for a few seconds. My hope was that if everyone spoke once in the first class, that divide would narrow a bit. Each speaking episode would make the next one a bit easier.

One other thing I have done this semester that has unexpectedly helped my class unmute is to start a routine with exit tickets. These are usually a question students answer in one or two sentences submitted to an assignment folder for a small stakes grade. Students who never talk out loud will ask me to repeat the exit ticket question and explain it. This is an example of a strategy that encourages and motivates students to use their voices and demonstrate that they are engaged and aware. Everyone has at least one easy thing to talk about.

These are small changes for sure; however, they are reaping consistent benefits. My students are talking more in class, and more students have come to me for voluntary conferences about their writing than ever (and that includes pre-pandemic). I continue to work to narrow the digital divide in my classes one unmute at a time to encourage and support student learning and success.

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The Albany Symphony Orchestra's Interdisciplinary Community Arts Collaboration

DR. CLAIRE FOX HILLARD



The Albany Symphony Orchestra of Albany, GA, under the baton of Dr. Claire Fox Hillard, opened its 2021 – 2022 concert season with a live performance in collaboration with Albany State University (ASU), the Albany Museum of Art, and Sphinx Competition MPower Artist Grant winner Patricia Weitzel. The concert was the first in-person performance by the

orchestra in over 21 months as a result of COVID-19 and was held in conjunction with the Albany Museum of Art's exhibition of "European Splendors," which featured art from the Renaissance and Baroque Europe.

In programming and curating the concert, Dr. Hillard focused on the music of Italy,

specifically, the music of the Renaissance; music which was inspired by visual art from the Renaissance; music composed by female composers; and music to feature double bass guest artist Patricia Weitzel. An antiphonal Canzon in Double Echo for three brass groups by Renaissance composer Giovanni Gabrieli (1557 – 1612) opened the performance. The composition was originally conceived for the San Marco Basilica (St. Mark's Basilica) in Venice where Gabrieli served as both principal organist and composer. The three brass groups were placed in the front, sides, and back of the basilica. For the performance in Albany, Maestro Hillard placed one group on stage and the other two groups in the 2nd level boxes – on opposite sides – in the historic Albany Municipal Auditorium. A centerpiece of the concert was a composition by composer Ottorino Respighi (1879 – 1936) in which he pays tribute to his fellow countryman, Renaissance artist Sandro Botticelli (1445 – 1510). Respighi's *Trittico botticeliano* (Botticelli Triptych) creates in sound his impressions of three of Botticelli's best-known paintings: *La Primavera* (Spring), *L'Adorazione dei Magi* (The Adoration of the Magi), and *La nascita di Venere* (The Birth of Venus). These works of art were projected over the orchestra during the performance and gave the audience visual references to the art that inspired Respighi's music.

An Italian-themed concert would not be complete without representative music from the world of opera. The orchestra performed Gioachino Rossini's *Overture to The Thieving Magpie* and Pietro Mascagni's "Intermezzo" from *Cavalleria rusticana*. In addition, an important composition was performed by Renaissance composer Francesca Caccini (1587 – 1640). The orchestra performed *Sinfonias and Ritornelli* from her opera *La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina* (The Liberation of Ruggiero from the Island of Alcina). This is believed to be the first opera written by a female composer.

The featured guest artist and soloist for the program was double bassist Patricia Weitzel, a recipient of the MPower Artist Grant from the Sphinx Competition, whose mission is to "transform lives through the power of diversity in the arts." Weitzel currently teaches at Columbus State University and maintains an active performance schedule as a recitalist, soloist, chamber musician, and teacher. A multi-talented artist, she recently performed

at the 62nd Grammy Awards Ceremony with Lizzo. While she was in Albany for the concert, Weitzel gave a lecture demonstration for music majors at ASU which discussed her pathway into the world of classical music and the challenges facing women of color in that field. Students were also given a preview of her performance with the Albany Symphony and were invited to the concert in which she performed the *Concerto #2 for Double Bass and Orchestra* by Giovanni Bottesini (1821 – 1889).

Following the evening's Symphony performance at the Albany Municipal Auditorium, all audience and orchestra members were invited to attend a wine and cheese reception at the Albany Museum of Art to view the "European Splendors" exhibit, meet guest artist Patricia Weitzel and members of the orchestra, and discuss the evening's performance while viewing and enjoying works of art connected to the performance. Sponsorship and funding for the collaborative event were received from Phoebe Putney Health Systems, Watson Spence, Hall Booth Smith PCs, Drew, Eckl & Farnham Attorneys at Law, and Stewbos. This interdisciplinary collaboration produced highly successful events that were academically and culturally instructive for ASU students, received support from local businesses and companies, and enriched the citizens in the community of Albany. The power of a live orchestral performance, in conjunction with other related events, demonstrates that the arts are inclusive and culturally gratifying.

USING VISUAL ARTS AS COMMENTARY ON SOCIAL ISSUES: AN EXHIBITION ON GUNS IN AMERICA

PROFESSOR SCOTT MARINI



From an early age, children are given toys that promote gun use and “good guy vs. bad guy” pursuits. I have asked myself, “Is this one of the possible causes of gun violence in America?” I grew up playing army with my friends, and even my four-year-old son loves to run around the back yard shooting his toy guns. Does this mean we are both violent people or prone to commit violent acts? The larger question becomes, is there an answer to solving our history of violence in America?

Art is instructive and inspiring; it provides a space for the viewer to make new discoveries and experience new ways of thinking critically. As an art professor, I use my art to make statements about issues in society that our students are aware of or are confronted with. Gun violence is a topic that is brought up most often after a tragic incident, such as a mass school shooting and firearms homicide. It has become politicized, and it often polarizes people. How do you keep guns out of the

wrong hands? How do you make a statement in art about gun violence in our lives without questioning our American right to own guns and the lost rights of the victims of gun related tragedies? Through my teaching and artwork, I am trying to start a dialogue with the viewer about what it means to be a victim of gun violence and what it means to be an American.

Each piece that I have created consists of found objects and fabricated elements from multiple mediums. I use wood, steel, fired ceramics, cast plaster, and leather, any material that I believe can relate to the statement I am trying to make. In the following exhibit, each piece of art relates to the innocence of the victims lost in tragedy but also the innocence of what we as Americans hold on to as a constitutional right. My art does not attempt to answer the questions on gun violence; it prompts the viewer to think about the rights of every individual. This is the “experience” that the art provokes. Photos of the exhibit follow:





DR. BALASUBRAMANI S. PARANTHAMAN

FOOD AS “SUPREME” MEDICINE

**AMINAT O. ANIMASHUN, LARRY T. ARNOLD AND DR. BALASUBRAMANI S. PARANTHAMAN,
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About 84% of the nation’s approximately 4 billion dollar health care expenditure is spent for people with chronic diseases. A disease that persists for at least a year and requires continuous long-term medical attention or limits daily activities is considered chronic. Some of the common chronic diseases include cardiac conditions, cancer, chronic lung diseases, stroke, Alzheimer’s, diabetes and kidney diseases. More than 50% of the U.S. population, including children, suffer

from at least one chronic disease. The risk and prevalence of chronic disease grow as individuals age. These ailments account for 70% of all deaths in America, killing close to two million people each year.¹

Nutritious food, increasing physical activity, reducing alcohol intake and smoking are considered as effective means to control chronic diseases. Optimal nutrition plays a significant role in determining the well-being of young, delay age-related degeneration

and reduces the risk of contracting disease. Prenatal nutrition and the food that we eat from birth onwards influence the size, shape and endurance of the human body throughout life. Diets composed of fruit, vegetables, fish, whole grains and starchy low-fat staple foods are likely to play a key role in promoting aspects of wellness and healthy aging, including life expectancy.² Research indicates that many chronic illnesses like diabetes, obesity, arthritis, heart disease and high blood pressure can be prevented through maintaining a healthy diet.

Food is the primary source of energy. Every culture has its own unique way of identifying, cultivating, preparing and consuming food. It is the major determining factor for the health, sustenance and productivity of the individual. Hippocrates, the Father of Medicine, said, "Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food." Metabolism refers to all chemical reactions involved in maintaining the living state of cells and organisms. It is composed of anabolism, pathways that construct molecules from smaller units and catabolism, a process that breaks down food and other complex molecules. In healthy people there is a balance between anabolic and catabolic processes. A dys-balance in the metabolic process leads to pathophysiology, chronic diseases and accelerated aging. Food plays a major role in the maintenance of metabolic homeostasis.

Ultra-processed foods (UPF) include frozen meals, soft drinks, fast foods, as well as packaged and salty snacks. They have high levels of salts, fats, starches, and sugars. Artificial colors, flavors, and stabilizers are added to them during processing. A study conducted for about two decades starting from 1999 on the U.S. population two-19 years of age identified that the consumption of UPF has significantly increased.³ In another study, Moore et al. identified that the prevalence of metabolic syndromes, including elevated waist circumference, elevated triglycerides, reduced high-density lipoprotein cholesterol, high blood pressure, and elevated fasting blood glucose, has risen by 35% in U.S. adults during 1998 through 2012.⁴ Though these two studies were independent of each other, they demonstrate cause and effect. The consumption of UPF has been linked to cardiometabolic diseases, frailty, irritable bowel syndrome, functional dyspepsia, cancers and increased risk of mortality in adults while also being associated with metabolic syndrome and dyslipidemia in adolescents and children respectively. There

has also been worldwide expansion of UPF consumption in developed and developing countries. A 15 months-long study of primates indicated that Western diets increased pro-inflammatory pathways and made them more anxious and less socially integrated when compared to the Mediterranean diet.⁵ We know that inflammation plays a major role in aggravating several diseases. Increased UPF consumption is expected to become a serious public health concern in future.

Several foods or food components have been identified for providing a healthy lifespan for people. Plant-based diets like vegetables and fruits, whole grains, pulses, nuts and seeds have been shown to have several health benefits.⁶ Healthy nutrition has been shown to reverse age-related degenerative changes and prevent the onset of disease. World Food Day is widely celebrated on October 16th of every year. On this day in 1945, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN) was founded with the belief that it could coordinate countries with the goals to achieve freedom from lack of food and provide suitable and adequate food or nutrition for the health and strength of all people. In keeping with their mission, the theme for World Food Day in 2021 was, "Our actions are our future—Better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life." The UN convened the first Food Systems Summit in 2021 to launch new actions to transform the way the world produces and consumes food, with a target to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The food we consume determines our health and also that of our planet.

Wellness is defined as the state of being in good health. Healthcare focus is shifting from disease centric to wellness. It is widely accepted that healthy living is not just a 'fate effect' but also a result of interweaving behavioral, environmental, and genetic factors. In this context, food and nutrition are a behavioral determinant of health. Dr. Balasubramani S. Paranthaman is an assistant professor in the Department of Natural Sciences, and his research focuses on healthy aging through establishing metabolic homeostasis. Aging is defined as a continuous process that includes the loss of functional capability and the increased risk of disease and death. Researchers indicate that the investments and interventions for healthy aging would have greater effect on the quality of life more so than disease specific treatment approaches.

Several nutritional components, including primary and secondary metabolites of plants, have been experimentally shown to reduce cellular and organ damage, as well as enhance the organism's capacity to repair the damage, leading to a reduced risk of age-related diseases and extended longevity. An optimal intake of nutrients imparts metabolic harmony, which in turn prevents disease, imparts wellness and leads to healthy aging. Dr. Paranthaman's research will use interesting small organism models like *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* (baker's yeast), *Caenorhabditis elegans* (worms) and *Drosophila* (fruit flies) to study how nutrition can help in healthy aging. This has the potential to identify ways to provide healthy longevity extending nutraceutical products and also novel metabolic pathways for healthy aging in animals as well as humans.

Dr. Bala is also interested in optimizing the metabolism of micronutrients like iron, manganese, copper, zinc and selenium using natural products. These elements are needed in minute amounts and help with feeding oxygen to muscles, supporting nervous system function, healing wounds, defending cells against damage from stress and providing effective immune functions in humans. Therefore, an adequate intake of these mineral nutrients is necessary. At the same time, excess supplementation and accumulation of these mineral nutrients are harmful, as the body does not have distinct excretion mechanisms. This can lead to accelerated aging, the degeneration of organ systems and the development of several cancers. Therefore, maintaining an effective balance of the mineral nutrients is essential for healthy living. His research seeks to identify natural products with the ability to maintain functional quantities of the micronutrients in laboratory models which can be translated to the human system with further clinical studies.

Along with working on interesting projects related to aging and human health, students working with Dr. Bala will also have opportunities to get exposed to a variety of laboratory model organisms, molecular biology techniques and natural products characterization methods. Learning skills related to nutraceuticals and functional foods development can bring increased chances for employment and entrepreneurship to the students. Their preparation and training will hopefully contribute to the critical research of food as a form of medicine to improve

the healthiness of everyone. Incorporating this knowledge in the young generation will have a long-term impact and can lead to a sustainable future.

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ALUMNUS SPOTLIGHT: DR. KINNIS GOSHA

**ELIZABETH JONES,
SENIOR COMMUNICATIONS MAJOR
ALBANY STATE UNIVERSITY**

Bright lights illuminated the football stadium, as Kinnis Gosha graced the field his freshman year. The defensive tackle entered into each game more determined than the last. No one would ever guess that his heart was not in the game. Gosha, unlike most of his counterparts, was more concerned with his academics. He especially had an interest in computers.

Kinnis was reared by his mother in Phenix City, Alabama. In high school, he was encouraged to play football while working different odd jobs. As soon as he turned fifteen, he was earning a paycheck. Whether it was flipping Krystal burgers or working at the Boys and Girls Club, Kinnis had his hands full. While working simultaneously at the Boys and Girls Club and Hardees, he realized that the nine-to-five life was not for him.

Kinnis, heavily influenced by the television show, "The Practice," had hopes of becoming an attorney. It was not until his senior year of high school that he would indulge in what would become his future career. His uncle advised him that computers were the future. With his advice in mind, Kinnis decided to pursue a career in computer science. However, the question for him was ultimately, "Where would he start?"

Growing up during the time Kinnis did, excelling in school was not valued nearly as much as playing sports or being involved in other extracurricular activities. It was not "cool" to be the smart kid, so he had to keep his love for school a secret. When senior year came around, Kinnis had no idea where to start when it came to picking a college. Jean Lynn, a member of the Alumni Association, encouraged him to attend Albany State University (ASU). After performing exceptionally well on the SATs, Kinnis was awarded a presidential scholarship to attend ASU for the next four years.



Dr. Kinnis Gosha

When it became time to select a major, he did not exactly know much about the field of computer science. His thought process was, "I like computers, and this has computer in the name." He fully expected to be making labels, business cards, and wedding invitations. It was not until he arrived on ASU's campus that Kinnis understood his course of study. Once he examined the curriculum, he decided to stick with it. He did not want to continue to play football after high school. The South Georgia heat also helped him to make this decision.

The summer before beginning college, he enrolled into a course that would help him in his first programming class. He attended a new research program every summer afterwards. During his last summer at ASU, he participated in an internship at Synovus Bank. His time there solidified his disdain for the 9-to-5 lifestyle. While at ASU, he was encouraged to become a professor. He would be able to control his salary and make his own schedule. This suggestion became the impetus for his decision to attend graduate school. Where is Kinnis Gosha now?

Meet Dr. Kinnis Gosha. He graduated from ASU in 2005 with a degree in Computer Science. He went on to become a tenured professor in his

field and now serves as the Division Chair at Morehouse College. This is his 11th year at the prestigious HBCU in Atlanta, GA.

Below is my interview with Dr. Gosha:

Jones: What does your job include, or what are the responsibilities of your job?

Dr. Gosha: I do a couple of things. I am responsible for creating new and innovative academic programs. I run a unit that brings faculty together to create new interdisciplinary programs. I brought online education to Morehouse. I was the first person to do that. I also have a faculty position as a tenured professor. Even though I don't teach much anymore, I taught for a long time. I also run our software engineering program at Morehouse. We have the first software engineering program at an HBCU. I also work with a lot of tech companies and find ways to integrate them into the educational experience.

Jones: What is the most enjoyable part of your job?

Dr. Gosha: I would say working with students. I have a research lab, "The Culturally Relevant Computing Lab," and I work with a lot of researchers. Working with them and teaching them how to do research is what I think is the most fun.

Jones: How did your ASU experience prepare you for your career?

Dr. Gosha: There's a couple of directions I could go to answer that. I will say it really taught me about perseverance. When I left ASU, I went to Auburn University. There were times when I felt like I didn't know what the students knew at Auburn, but I think what made me special and how I stood apart was that I knew HOW to learn. I got that determination, will power, and survivor instincts while at ASU. I use that same mentality now in my career.

Jones: What advice would you give to current students on how to best prepare for a career?

Dr. Gosha: I would tell them to talk to people in that career. Make sure you're talking to folks that work in that space and get feedback about what to do. It's one thing to talk to your professor; it's another thing to talk to people who are actually in the field. They will give you

a different perspective. Don't limit yourself to what is taught in class. There might be things that you have to learn outside of class that the teacher might not teach you. I went to school to graduate. I didn't go to school to learn. I was dodging classes I should've been taking because sometimes I wanted to take the easy road. I wanted to keep my scholarship and thought that was the best way to do it. I should have been challenging myself by taking the most rigorous courses and trying to learn as much as possible. Students should go outside the classroom and learn, and when you're in the classroom, take the most challenging classes that are actually going to prepare you for graduate school or the competitive global workforce.

Jones: What advice would you give to your past self?

Dr. Gosha: Back in my day we didn't have the Internet, so students didn't have the ability to do as much research about the careers they're interested in. They didn't have the easy access to really learn things like they can now. When I was in high school, around the time the Internet just got started, there weren't as many websites/tools for you to learn on your own. If you have a vision about what you want to do, I would say you need to embrace it and learn as much as possible about that career. This is your craft, your field, so if you're not trying to learn as much as you can about your field, you're not doing the work needed to make the best decision. When it's time to go to work, you will find that you're competing with people who did take it seriously.

STOP SIGNS IN ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMES: CHEMICAL FINGERPRINTING AND SOURCE TRACKING CONTAMINANTS

DR. HAMIDREZA SHARIFAN



Forensic biochemistry and engineering are progressively evolving fields in the criminal justice system. With advancements in technologies and analytical techniques, discoveries shed light on the accuracy of measurements and the reliability of evidence. The advances in environmental chemistry and toxicology have proven invaluable in conducting investigations into environmental crimes.

The Department of Justice, Environmental Crimes Section (ECS) has forty-three prosecutors to bring criminal cases against organizations and people who break the laws that protect our nation's natural resources. ECS attorneys represent environmental crime cases throughout 94 federal judicial districts. A common environmental crime that often has been filed is the discharge of raw sewage into water bodies, in which the investigation has been led by ECS partners, including Special Agents of the Environmental Protection Agency's Criminal Investigation Division or the Special Agents of the Fish and Wildlife Service. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has reported environmental crimes with a projected annual cost of \$3.75 billion due to the fast turnover of electronic devices. Annually, more than ten million tons of electronic waste (i.e., computers, printers, and phones) are smuggled from the U.S. and Europe to Asia, leading to undocumented environmental crimes with long-lasting consequences.

Environmental forensic investigations are a crucial component to attest to the occurrence of environmental crime. Forensic chemists apply analytical techniques to reconstruct the contamination timeline, assess the scale of the loss, and determine causality. Their findings and interpretations are fundamentally relevant to documenting environmental criminal cases.

One of the emerging issues in environmental crimes is the contamination of public and private wells by per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFASs), which has led to the filing of many lawsuits in recent years. PFASs are key components in aqueous film-forming foam (AFFF) formulations used for firefighting. Due to regular firefighting training at military sites nationwide and their extensive application for commercial and noncommercial purposes, their release into the environment has raised concerns over drinking water contamination. *The National Report on Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals* has documented that the PFAS levels in human serum appear to be higher in the U.S. compared to other countries. Therefore, it is imperative to stop the invisible environmental crimes.

Forensic chemists have applied a variety of analytical instruments for source tracking and identification of the PFAAs. However, most of the analytical instruments have certain limitations for the detection of PFASs at the

molecular level. The unprecedented capability of ultrahigh-resolution Fourier-Transform Ion Cyclotron Resonance Mass Spectrometry (FT-ICR MS) compared to other instruments has further expanded the characterizing the complex PFAS contaminations at the molecular level. Our recent article "PFAS Analysis with Ultrahigh Resolution 21T FT-ICR MS: Suspect and Nontargeted Screening with Unrivaled Mass Resolving Power and Accuracy" indicates the high potential of FT-ICR MS in identification of the emerging contaminants that have not been detected before.

The lesson and outcome from the PFAS research and applied quantification techniques may be further extended into the residue of personal care products with complex structures that have been frequently found on human skin, nails, and hair in various crime scenes. This is critical research in cases of crime and violence against women because of the daily applications of a variety of cosmetics such as eyeliner, lipstick, nail polish, and vermilion, which are formulated with a combination of numerous organic molecules. Such personal care products (PCPs) are likely to be recovered from clothing, glassware, tissue paper, and cigarette butts. The examination of cosmetic evidence can also enhance knowledge about the perpetrator, the tools that were used, and the sequence of events that may be used in crime scene investigations and court cases. However, the fingerprinting of PCPs in crime scenes still need to be explored.

One of our research areas focuses on identifying the potential criminal cases that include the complexity of source tracking of exogenous substances and characterizing the molecular species. The Department of Natural Sciences at Albany State University (ASU) provides high-quality analytical instruments that can be used to characterize PCPs with complex structures. Currently, my undergraduate students are studying the persistence of personal care products on different polymers and biological tissues, rate of diffusion, and transportation to provide a better understanding of materials' physiochemistry at the crime scene. An example of one of my students who has demonstrated an understanding of and interest in this research area is Shameka Redding. She said, "Personal care products are an important piece of evidence in professional crime scene investigations. We are working on understanding the environmental behavior,

physiochemistry, and persistency of some commercial products that have been frequently found in the crime scene at the molecular scale. I am hoping my research can shed light on providing better forensic investigation."

As a new faculty member, an integral part of my interaction with undergraduate students is to involve them in research and establish a research-based pedagogy for teaching science. My approach provides a better understanding of applied science, and students can relate their knowledge and analytical skills with real-life examples such as investigating a crime scene from a forensic chemistry perspective.

In addition, I collaborate with research groups in other institutions through different environmental chemistry projects that focus on nanoparticles applications. The above-mentioned research on PFAS was supported by Colorado State University and the National High Magnetic Field Laboratory in Tallahassee, Florida. Environmental research as it relates to crime scene investigations continues to be important work. The evolving and dynamic research in this area can contribute to stopping environmental crimes. When environmental resources such as primary forests, freshwater resources, and wildlife species are lost, they are lost forever. Environmental restoration and recovery cannot be a treatment for environmental crimes.

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STRONGER TOGETHER: COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR YOUTH HEALTH INNOVATIONS

..... DR. PETER NGWAFU, DR. SANDRA HANDWERK, DR. SHERRYL JOHNSON, AND MS. ANGELA JOHNSON



HEROS for Success, Inc., a community partner in the Stronger Together Project.

Central to the mission of Albany State University (ASU) is the desire to improve the lives of the citizens of Southwest Georgia and beyond. Over the years these efforts have included the implementation of projects in strong partnerships with community organizations to address areas of need. One such program is the Stronger Together Project that is funded by Health and Human Services and the Office of Population Affairs. Its goals are to establish, fund, coordinate, and support a multidisciplinary network of partners to develop and test innovative interventions for expectant and parenting teens.

Expectant and parenting teens require an array of services and programs to sustain them through pregnancy, assist them to become good parents to their new babies, and delay another pregnancy. The expectation is that working through the innovation pipeline with expectant and parenting teens will yield new solutions that (1) can be shared with other teens who have had these experiences to provide new knowledge and encourage the use of new skills throughout the pregnancy and parenting; (2) reduce the number of teen pregnancies in Southwest Georgia; (3) shape local and state policies; and (4) can be shared with the broader field.

To achieve these goals, Stronger Together will bring ASU faculty together with local, national and international partners, adult and teen residents, and existing community organizations to provide state-of-the-art training in the effects of trauma and neuroscience, as well as youth empowerment. It will also develop and test effective interventions to address the challenges faced by expectant and parenting teens and those who support them in order to constructively change the environment around them. These community coalitions, which are seldom invited to help create change in teen pregnancy, will be a part of the conversation that will develop interventions to reduce repeat pregnancies and improve the optimal health of expectant and parenting teens. Specifically, the role of ASU is to combine its expertise with the expertise of these community coalitions to facilitate equitable partnerships of content and context bringing together ASU, community partners, and the youth through Planning and Action Councils.

The approach to implementing this project is to create Innovation Hubs in Southwest Georgia counties with a focus on each Hub bringing together a Council that includes expectant and parenting teens ages 15-19 as equal partners

in development. Each Hub includes contiguous counties which will work together to share resources, knowledge, and expertise in the development of the innovations. The Planning Council in each Hub serves as the clearing-house to recruit a network of members for the Action Councils that include expectant and parenting teens.

In year one of the project, after a six-month planning period, the innovation process began in Hub 1 (Dougherty, Lee, Sumter, and Terrell counties) and Hub 2 (Calhoun, Clay, Randolph, and Quitman counties). Expectant and parenting teens, youth, caregivers, and community members were recruited to form the Planning and Action Councils. Through input from the Councils and the community, a needs matrix was developed and updated for expectant and parenting teens (both male and female). The matrix identified specific areas of need, assets and gaps, as well as organizations that provide services relating to the needs. An environmental scan and stakeholder map were also updated throughout the period to reflect new information and partnerships. To gather formative and descriptive data in Hubs 1 and 2, a community survey was conducted with 344 adults and 267 youth to gather socio-demographics, develop profiles of beliefs and perceptions of STIs and teen pregnancy in their county, and record the frequency of risk behaviors, social cohesion, and readiness/motivation for change. Participants did not need to be involved with Stronger Together because the goal was to better understand the community as a whole. More than half of adult respondents reported that their community needs more resources to prevent teen pregnancy and STIs and to improve teen health. Adults responded favorably to questions asking about them wanting to be involved in supporting teens and receiving training about the innovation process, trauma and stress, and improving adolescent health. Youth were also asked to rate a variety of issues on how much of a concern they felt they were for teens. The five areas that received the highest number of responses were depression, STIs, illegal drugs, having no places to go to get help, and unplanned pregnancy.

In Hub 1, 13 Community Partners received sub-awards to explore, develop, test, and refine innovative services and programming for expectant and parenting teens and those who support them with a focus on building partnerships and community networks. These include the following: A Better Way Grocers, Alpha Pregnancy Center, the Boys and Girls Club,

the Center for Human Rights, Communities in Schools, Faith Center Community Development Cooperation, Family Literacy Center, Family Wellness Outreach Center, Kinchafoonee Regional Library, Liberty House, Lily Pad, Open Arms, and Second Chance. The project is making an impact in strengthening partnerships with community organizations in pursuit of the common goal of improving the lives of expectant and parenting teens. According to Simone Turner, regional program manager of Communities in Schools, "Working with ASU Stronger Together gave expectant and parenting teens the opportunity to become aware of the resources available to them as teen parents. It showed them that they have a village they can count on to support them and their families."

ASU Alumnus Tiffany Terrell of A Better Way Grocers, Inc., demonstrates the role that ASU alumni in the community can play in seeing that projects such as Stronger Together take root in the community. She said, "Considering the fact that both Tommie and I are alumna of Albany State University, it was important to be a part of the Stronger Together project! The idea of being able to represent our Alma Mater and create something innovative for our community that promotes optimal health was a complete motivator."

A second round of sub-awards was awarded in 2021 to support the continued development and testing of promising interventions from the first round and brings in new partners, especially in the more rural counties of Hub 2 (Randolph, Calhoun, Clay, Quitman) and Hub 3 (Baker, Mitchell, Miller, Early) to begin the innovation process.

It is anticipated that the successful implementation of this project will significantly impact the personal development of the target population by increasing the knowledge of expectant and parenting teens, changing social norms, and reducing risky and traumatic behaviors that can contribute to repeat teen pregnancies and STI infections. This project will also increase protective behaviors and enhance the overall health of EPT's, spur their educational attainment through obtaining a GED or high school diploma, improve their communication and leadership skills, and expand economic opportunities for expectant and parenting teens.

The project described is supported by Grant Number TP2AH000071 from The Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Population Affairs.

DEPARTMENTAL HIGHLIGHTS

The School of Teacher Education was successful in securing the grant from the Department of Education's Childcare Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program, a 4-year award of \$2.4 million dollars. The project *Albany State University: Caring for the Next Generation of Golden Rams* will provide high-quality childcare at no cost for the 2-year-old, 3-year-old, and 4-year-old children of Pell-eligible student-parents who attend classes or use ASU study resources during weekday evenings or Saturday. The program also provides case management, skills-building workshops, family engagement activities for parents, and teacher professional development to ensure the consistent quality of care provided.

Dr. Kathaleena Edward Monds, Professor of Management Information Systems, has received a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF)-Racial Equity in STEM for the project *Understanding Persistence through the Lens of Interruption: A Framework for Transformation (UPLIFT)*. This 5-year project is an exploratory, sequential, mixed methods, longitudinal study focusing on the undergraduate experiences of interruption by forty-five (45) Black women in STEM at Spelman College, Albany State University, and the Georgia Institute of Technology. Through documenting the experiences of undergraduate Black women in STEM as they progress from first year to senior year, using a theoretical framework grounded in Black Feminist Thought and Intersectionality, the project team will develop a framework for interruption that investigates the relationship between systems of oppression and Black women's intent to persist in STEM.

The Department of Natural Sciences recently secured \$1.5 million dollars from the National Science Foundation Scholarships in the STEM (S-STEM) Program. The award will fund 3 yearly cohorts of 8 freshmen each, majoring in biology, chemistry or forensic science, with scholarships of up to \$10,000 each year. The overarching goal of the S-STEM program is to support academically talented students with financial need in completing their undergraduate degrees at Albany State without the burden of extra work and student debt. This support will prepare them for success in STEM careers and advanced study.

Dr. Olabisi Ojo and Dr. Shayla Williams, both Associate Professors of Biology, have each received the AIM-AHEAD Leadership Fellowship Award. The AIM-AHEAD Program is funded by the National Institutes of Health. The award will be used to support these faculty members' training in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) to develop the skillset needed to engage in research utilizing emerging technology fields to solve our nation's most pressing scientific and societal challenges.

The Department of Arts and Humanities hosted Memories and Inspiration: The Kerry and C. Betty Davis Collection of African American Art. For over thirty years, the Davises have amassed a collection of over 200 works, including some of the most historically important artists and providing a thorough representation of the evolution and different movements within African American art history. We are very proud that our own Arthur Berry had a painting in the collection that was on display next to Aaron Douglas, Professor Berry's mentor at Fisk University and one of the most famous African American artists in the exhibit. The part of the collection on display in the Arthur R. Berry Gallery had works dating back to the 1930s, as well as works by contemporary African American artists. International Arts and Artists, Inc. toured the exhibition nationwide. Albany State University was the only HBCU to exhibit the show and its only stop in the state of Georgia.

The College of Arts and Sciences has partnered with the Putnam County School District and the University of Georgia on a \$390,000 grant from the Spencer Foundation. The project, *Untelling the Past to Reimagine the Future: Transforming K-12 Education and Supporting the Transition to Higher Education in the Rural U.S. South* has a primary goal of preparing high school students to be successful in college.

ASU Faculty Internationalization Fellows published several articles in a special Issue of International Research and Review (IRR) *Journal of Phi Beta Delta Honor Society of International Scholars*, Spring/Summer, Vol. 11/2, 2022. The Special Issue is entitled Internationalizing the Curriculum for All Learners. This title reflects the focus of all the articles, which buttresses the need for all enrolled

students to acquire global learning as they graduate. Articles in the publication showcase the successful efforts of Albany State University faculty in internationalizing their courses. Dr. Nneka Nora Osakwe, Professor of English and the Provost's Special Assistant for Internationalization and Global Engagement, served as the guest editor for the special issue.

Construction began on the new Nursing and Health Sciences Simulation Center on Albany State University's west campus in November 2022. This new multidisciplinary simulation center will serve all current and future health care students with both a simulated hospital and outpatient clinical setting experience. It will include space for simulation labs with low, medium, and high-fidelity manikins, control rooms, observation spaces, related therapy simulation spaces, work areas and more. The addition of this new simulation center will create opportunities to support and enable collaboration with other programs, schools, and universities in the region and ultimately create a robust pipeline of nursing and health sciences graduates to fill the need for professional practitioners in Georgia.



Nursing and Health Sciences Simulation Center: Artist Rendition and Groundbreaking Ceremony (November 30, 2022)



The 25th Southeast Model African Union (SEMAU) Conference was hosted by Albany State University on November 9-12, 2022. The SEMAU Conference started in 1997 at Middle Georgia College, now Middle Georgia State University. In its 25 years of existence, this was the first time that ASU hosted the conference. Conference planning was spearheaded by Dr. Nneka Nora Osakwe, professor of English and the Provost's



Special Assistant for Internationalization and Global Engagement, with a sub-committee of the ASU Internationalization Task Force. SEMAU celebrated the 25th anniversary of this renowned conference whose distinct goal and foresight are educating students about the affairs of African countries, now 55 of them, through transformative experiential learning. During the SEMAU conference, students from various institutions of higher education in the University System of Georgia and beyond participated by simulating the activities of Heads of State of the African Union (AU), representing 55 countries in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the headquarters of the African Union. At the end of the three-day conference, they proposed authentic resolutions that are passed on for consideration by the African Heads of States at the African Union's annual deliberation. All departments of ASU provided support to the conference, which aided in its success. Ambassador Hilda Suka-Mafudze, the permanent representative of the African Union to the United States of America, served as keynote speaker for the conference.

2021-2022 PUBLICATIONS

THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

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DR. KATHALEENA EDWARD MONDS is professor of management information systems and founding director. A native of Detroit, Michigan, Dr. Monds holds a PhD in instructional technology with a concentration in human-centered computing from Wayne State University, an MA in economics and entrepreneurship for educators from the University of Delaware, an MS in computer science from Wayne State University, and a BS in computer science from Spelman College. She is a first-generation college graduate and joined ASU in January 2000.

DR. PETER AJONGWA NGWAFU is a professor of public administration and director of the Master of Public Administration Program at ASU, where he teaches courses in organizational behavior, public policy, human resources management and public management. His research interests are in the areas of development administration, diversity management, social justice, as well as policy and politics in transitional societies. He received his PhD in political science from Clark-Atlanta University in 1999, with areas of specialization in public administration, American government and politics, international relations and African politics.

DR. OLUWATOYIN OKAFOR is presently employed at ASU as an assistant professor of nursing where she serves as the undergraduate clinical coordinator. She completed her DNP program at Regis college in Massachusetts. Dr. Okafor's research work has been published in various peer-reviewed journals. Her current research interest focuses on reducing nursing students' stress. She is also a member of the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS).

DR. ROBERT OWOR is the executive director

of the Center for Innovation and Emerging Technologies (CIET). He is a professor of computer science and software engineering at ASU. His areas of expertise are cyber security, blockchain, analytics, machine learning, artificial intelligence, and Fintech.

DR. BALASUBRAMANI S. PARANTHAMAN

is an assistant professor of biology in the Department of Natural Sciences. His research interest is in exploiting natural products for the healthy aging of humans. He uses a variety of laboratory models to answer complex scientific questions.

SCOTT PIERCE is the director of Sponsored Programs at ABAC. He previously served as the project director of the NSF funding HBCU-UP Implementation Grant. Mr. Pierce has served as a faculty member in the ASU Department of Natural Sciences and as a faculty mentor.

DR. RHONDA PORTER is currently the associate provost at ASU. Her background is in mathematics and mathematics education. Dr. Porter has served in various leadership roles which include director of assessment, department chair of Teacher Education, and associate dean of the College of Business, Education, and Professional Studies.

DR. SEYED ROOSTA is a professor of computer science in the Department of Mathematics, Computer Science, and Physics. Dr. Roosta has previously served as the chair of the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science and dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Dr. Roosta was the Principal Investigator (PI) of the NSF funding HBCU-UP Implementation Grant.

DR. HAMIDREZA SHARIFAN is a new assistant professor in the Forensic Program at the Department of Natural Sciences at ASU. He received his PhD from Texas A&M University and joined ASU after his postdoctoral experience at the University of California, Davis. Dr. Sharifan

has supervised several international and domestic undergraduate students at Texas A&M. Currently, he serves on the editorial board of Data in Brief and as guest editor for several journals.

DR. NICOLE M. WATKINS FNP-C, is a certified family nurse practitioner with 18 years of experience in the healthcare field. Dr. Watkins' role as a member of the nursing faculty at ASU is to enhance the education of nurse practitioner students so that they are prepared to integrate health promotion and lifestyle approaches in practice to decrease health care disparities for underserved communities.

DR. PATRICK WHITEHEAD is an associate professor of psychology at ASU where he was named the 2019 Scholar of the Year. He has published five books and two dozen peer-reviewed articles in the areas of psychology, philosophy, higher education, and medicine. Dr. Whitehead also has publications with four former students.

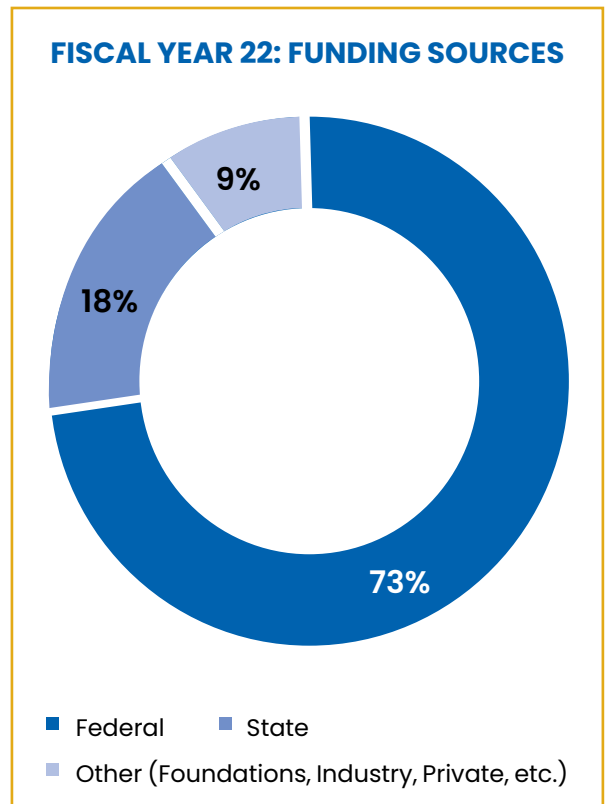
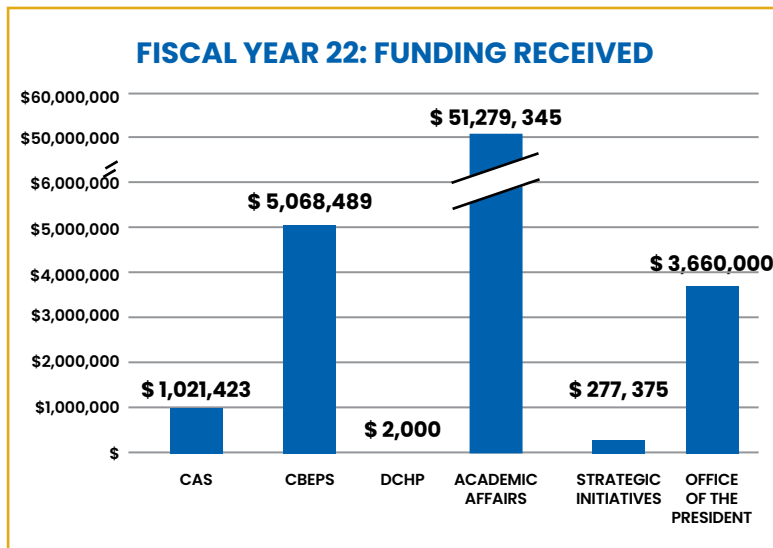
DR. CATHY WILLIAMS DNP, RN, is a professor and chair of the Department of Nursing and the Fuller E. Callaway Endowed Chair for the Department of Nursing in the Darton College of Health Professions at ASU. Dr. Williams received her doctoral degree from the Medical College of Georgia in 2007. She has over 37 years of nursing experience with 25 years devoted to administration and education. Her research focuses are HIV prevention, health disparities and educational disparities. Dr. Williams is also a member of Sigma Theta Tau, NLN and AACN.

GRANTS CORNER: FACTS & FIGURES

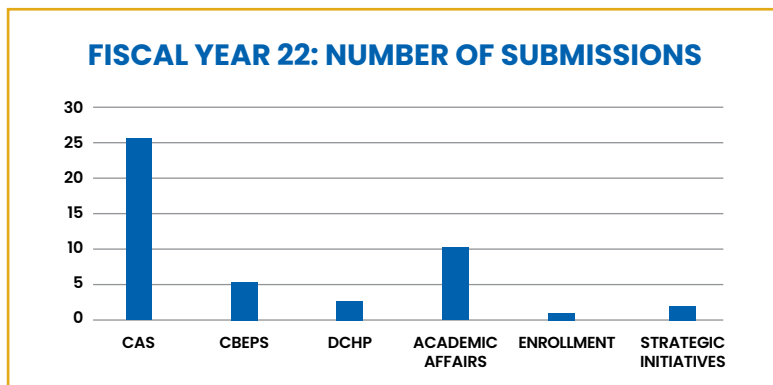
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

Albany State University received a total of 33 grants and contracts awards in FY 2022. These awards totaled over \$61M. The majority of the funding received was for research and educational programming at the institution and within the South GA community. For example, such projects include the long-term rehabilitation training grant from the U.S. Department of Education that provides scholarships for students who will serve in high needs areas;

the Stronger Together project funded by the Office of Population Affairs that partners with the community to develop innovative programs to support expectant and parenting teens; and the TRIO-Talent Search program funded by the U.S. Department of Education that provides support services to middle and high schoolers to encourage graduation from high school as well as entry and completion of post-secondary education.



The majority of the funding received (73%) was from federal sources, including the U.S. Department of Education (15%), Health and Human Services (12%), The National Science Foundation (9%) and NASA (6%). Eighteen percent of funding was from state sources, and the remaining 9% was from other sources that include private foundations, industry, and corporations.



Faculty continue to be active in submitting proposals for grants and contracts. Albany State University submitted 49 proposals, with a total funding request of over \$162M in FY22. This compares with 42 proposals and \$39.6M submitted in FY2021. This represents a 17% increase in the number of submissions in FY22 compared to the previous fiscal year. These proposals involved 51 faculty and staff in roles of principal investigator or Co-Principal Investigators.

Figures as of June 15, 2022.

CAS: College of Arts and Sciences; CBEPS-College of Business, Education and Professional Studies, DCHP Darton College of Health Professions Academic Affairs funding units include Provost's Office, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, GA Water Planning and Policy Center, Center for innovation and Emerging Technologies, and Graduate School.



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