Campus Connection

BRINGING TOGETHER FORMER, CURRENT, AND FUTURE IMSD SCHOLARS @ NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY

Letter from the Director

This has been a truly awesome semester filled with celebrations of accomplishments, milestones and mapping out directions for new beginnings. We had the opportunity to implement a very exciting project that brings together IMSD Scholars in a way that goes beyond the research lab and classroom by extending into the community in an effort to communicate science and give back to those less fortunate. It was the birth of the IMSD Ambassador Project.

The IMSD Ambassador Project has three goals. First, we want to increase science identity among IMSD Scholars. We want the Scholars to see themselves as early career scientists and build a connection between the work they do in the labs and the work that scientists do. In essence, the work is the same and by highlighting what the Scholars do and having them communicate their work to others, they increase their science identity. Second, the Scholars engage in community outreach programs that are increasing the interest in science among K-12 students. In fact, feedback from some of our visitors has indicated that they are now considering a science career! Third, the Ambassador Project strives to create a sense of community among current and former Scholars. Through participation in the Ambassador Projects, the Scholars serve as informal mentors to the participating students and have increased their own self-efficacy to conduct research.

Since January we have partnered with Chesterbrook Academy, Green Road Year Round School and Southwest Middle School in Jacksonville, NC. These events consisted of Scholars conducting science experiments, “talking about science,” taking a tour of Hunt Library and having lunch with the Scholars, aka, scientists! In addition to our outreach efforts with grades K-12, the Scholars conducted a canned food drive in celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

The IMSD Program hosted the Spring Crosstalk and several professional development seminars. It is the hoped that through participation in the professional development, research training, mentoring and outreach components of the IMSD Program, Scholars will be well-equipped to become successful scientists and role models for other students, especially underrepresented minority students in the areas of biomedical and behavioral sciences.

Moreover, the IMSD Program at NC State is hosting the Third Annual Mid Atlantic PREP/IMSD Research Symposium which will take place May 20-21 at Hunt Library. This event will bring together research training programs in the Southeast for an opportunity to engage in research presentations, networking, and professional development.

Lastly, I would like to congratulate our graduating seniors: Maurita Harris, Maria Camille Cruz, Divya Rao and Supriya Sadagopan. It has truly been an honor being apart of your academic journey. Remember our IMSD motto as you embark on your new journey, “Once an IMSD Scholar, Always an IMSD Scholar!”

Erin Banks, Ph.D., Director
Initiative for Maximizing Student Diversity

Morjan Rahhal speaks to a group of students at Southwest Middle School.
Dear IMSD and IMSD family,

You will never know the extent of what you have done for me so let me sum it up for you. You took me under your wing as an incoming freshman, where the only people I knew were individuals that attended Symposium and the only research I knew was searching on the Internet. You introduced me to some of the most wonderful people on campus that I am beyond proud to call as my friends (I am here for all of you if you ever need me). You allowed me to find my passion in Human Factors psychology, which I know I would never have found if you did not guide me. You gave me the skills I needed to show that I am good enough to get into my top choices of graduate school, even when I didn't think I did. Which leads into you helping me understand that I am not crazy, but that I live through stages of the Impostor Syndrome with other BRILLIANT people.

You gave me some of the best memories with these people, especially when some of those moments we were all dreading to go through together (retreats during test time). Although we all dreaded them we grew together. Think about it. We have all seen what we look like in the morning! If that is not love and trust right there I don’t know what is. We have all been there to motivate someone in IMSD during their low times and celebrate with them in their best of times as well. We created friendships that we did not think would go beyond IMSD and without many of you my college career would have not been the same.

Now to the lovely Dr. Banks. You have told us countless times that we don’t see what you are doing right now, but that we will see later the meaning behind it all. Now that I am graduating I can truly attest to that, because WOO, if going through some of these things I didn't think you were crazy (still love you :D). Now I can look back at everything you have done and see the love that you had for us when we didn't even have it ourselves. You are an amazing individual and I am beyond thankful to call you a mentor, a mom, a teacher, and a friend.

Upon graduating I will be in Berlin, Germany for a year attending the Technische Universität Berlin (TUB) to create a video game to teach German Sign Language through the Fulbright program. While I am there I plan to take graduate level courses, volunteer with organizations that focus on underrepresented groups, and work on some of the research projects my research mentor is conducting. Once I am back in the United States, I will begin the PhD Engineering Psychology program at the Georgia Institute of Technology (GA Tech) working with Dr. Wendy Rogers. Because of the impact you have made on me, I plan to begin an IMSD program at GA Tech so that it can impact students from underrepresented groups the way that it has impacted me. Although I am graduating, I have no better way to end this than by saying, “Once an IMSD Scholar always an IMSD Scholar.”

Thank you, and I love you all!

Maurita Harris, Psychology Class of 2015
These past four years at NC State for my undergraduate career have been phenomenal. As a biomedical engineering student, I loved understanding the human body through an engineering lens and designing a medical device for our senior year project. I also became heavily involved with several other groups: the Goodnight Scholars Program, the Catholic Campus Ministry, Barkada Filipino Student Association, and Biomedical Engineering Ambassadors. All of these experiences strengthened my passion for learning and serving others, but one of the most eye opening experiences was through the Initiative for Maximizing Student Diversity Program (IMSD).

When I joined IMSD, I did not realize the impact this exposure to research would have on me. I worked in Dr. McCarty’s lab looking for cells under microscopes and optimizing a chemical etching process for electrodes and in Dr. Sawicki’s rehabilitation lab analyzing ankle mechanics and fabricating leg and foot braces. Working with my hands reinforced class material and taught me more skills outside the classroom. These tasks also unveiled how research involves a lot of trial and error, patience, new skills, literature review, and collaboration with other labs. From the long experiments to lab meetings to attending local and national conferences, I began to appreciate that tackling the unknown is not an easy process, but it is necessary to better understand the world around us.

Yet IMSD influenced more than my understanding of research. These skills easily translated to other parts of my life – having more patience, reading papers for class, working with other people, and most importantly, how I viewed myself. Being an Asian-American woman in science, it can be difficult to find the support of someone who understands the challenges of both being a minority and pursuing higher education. IMSD allowed us to connect with others who have gone through and are going through the same situation by bringing in speakers, attending educational workshops, establishing a mentor program between graduate and undergraduate students, networking with other IMSD programs across the region, and having monthly program director Dr. Banks to talk about our research project during my time there. Engaging in research has taught me that failures are necessary to succeed in life.

Starting in June, I will be pursuing a Masters of Science in Orthotics and Prosthetics at Baylor College of Medicine. With this degree, I plan on becoming a certified prosthetist and orthotist to fabricate and fit prosthetic limbs and body braces for people. After practicing for a number of years, I hope to give back by teaching and helping out at an Orthotic and Prosthetic program and potentially getting a PhD. I am ecstatic to start this new chapter in my life, and I know that IMSD has prepared me well for these next couple of years with my strengthened appreciation for research, professionalism, diversity, myself, and people.
May 20-21, 2015, North Carolina State University

The Mid-Atlantic PREP & IMSD Research Symposium (MAPRS) is just around the corner. MAPRS began as an opportunity to bring together multiple colleges in the Southeast region that have IMSD and/or PREP programs. The symposium provides networking and professional development opportunities for students, faculty, and administrators affiliated with the Mid-Atlantic PREP/IMSD Research Symposium network in the Southeast region. Our goal is to train and promote scientists of the next generation whose research interests are in the areas of biomedical and behavioral sciences.

The first MAPRS was held in 2013 and hosted by Virginia Tech, followed by UNC-Chapel Hill in 2014. This year, we at NC State have the pleasure of hosting the event.

We will convene on Wednesday evening with talks by the 2015 Distinguished Scholar Awardees for IMSD (Liara Gonzalez, Ph.D.) and PREP (Chevon Thorpe, Ph.D.). Undergraduate students will also have an opportunity to speak with representatives from the partner institutions to discuss graduate school. On Thursday, there will be a Keynote address by Dr. Valerie Ashby of UNC-Chapel Hill, followed by a poster competition and opportunities for networking and professional development.

Over 100 people have registered to attend MAPRS 2015. I look forward to seeing you there! - Dr. Felysha Jenkins

Information:

Dates: May 20-21, 2015

Location: James B. Hunt, Jr. Library

Partner Institutions:
North Carolina State University
Duke University
Johns Hopkins University
University of Maryland - Baltimore County
University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill
Virginia Commonwealth University
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Wake Forest University

For more information on MAPRS, please visit our website at
www.ncsu.edu/imsd/maprs.html
Spring into Success

Celebrating IMSD at North Carolina State University

IMSD at North Carolina State University
Program Director – Erin Banks, Ph.D.
Principal Investigator – Trudy Mackay, Ph.D.
Co-Principal Investigator – David Shafer, Ph.D.
Program Assistant – Felysha Jenkins, Ph.D.
Graduate Research Assistant – Amy Leonard