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U.S. Department of Education

Fall 2020 Newsletter Office of Postsecondary Education

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U.S. Department of Education
Office of Postsecondary Education

Grantee Voices From the Field

Fall 2020 Newsletter

Supporting Grantees Throughout the Pandemic

I hope you are all off to a good school year. It is my privilege to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education at a crucial and unprecedented moment in higher education. The Department remains committed to helping each of you support students across the United States in their pursuit of education. In my previous job, my organization was a recipient of a large OPE grant under the GEAR UP program. I know firsthand how frustrating the federal grantmaking process can be for the community, and we have taken several significant steps to try to improve our processes to better serve our grantees. Below are a few changes and initiatives we have undertaken to help you navigate the pandemic.



[1\) Implementation of the Education Emergency Relief Funds \(HEERF\), as authorized by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#)

As you all know, the *CARES Act* provided the Department with over \$12 billion in funds to support institutions of higher education and students. The Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE) has obligated almost all of the appropriated funds and continues to work to provide guidance on the allowable uses of funds and on how institutions should report how they have used grant funds. Deputy Assistant Secretary Chris McCaghren and Director of Higher Education Programs Dr. Linda Byrd Johnson are also working collaboratively to assist grantees experiencing difficulties as a result of the pandemic. Please stay in contact with your designated program officer or visit the OPE *CARES Act* website to learn more.

[2\) Revamped Frequently Asked Questions Section of OPE's Website](#)

In past years, grantees have repeatedly shared their frustration with the presentation of information on the Department's website. In response to these complaints, we have improved and revamped the website to make it easier to navigate and locate important guidance information. Please visit the website regularly to check for new and updated guidance information.

3) Increased Staffing

With the passage of the *CARES Act*, OPE has issued nearly three times more grants in FY 2020 than we did in FY 2019. This has put a tremendous strain on our staff to handle the enormous increase in workload. In response, we have hired 15 additional staff members who will help provide administration and technical assistance to grantees that have received funds under the *CARES Act*. Each new staff member has a strong background in education and public service. They are trained to support you along this journey, and we look forward to building strong teams to reduce the burden when managing the increased workload.

An Inspiring Academic Year

I am confident that the 2020-2021 academic year will be one of the most extraordinary that

the higher education community has ever faced. The challenges are unprecedented, and they demand innovative thinking and creative solutions. The Department remains committed to helping you navigate these unprecedented times, so that we can help all students succeed.

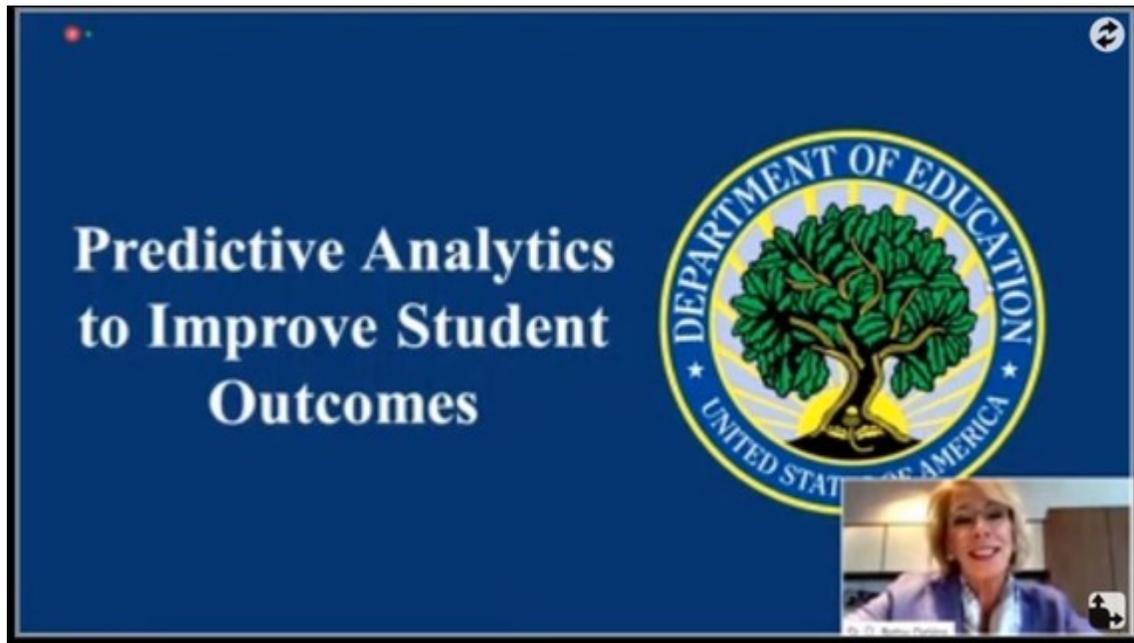
With my best wishes,

Robert L. King

Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education, U.S. Department of Education

U.S. Department of Education Webinar on Predictive Analytics to Improve Student Outcomes

[OPE hosted a virtual event on Sept. 10 on Predictive Analytics to Improve Student Outcomes. Predictive Analytics to Improve Student Outcomes.](#) The webinar discusses how colleges and universities can use predictive analytics to improve student outcomes. These systems allow institutions to preemptively identify areas where students may struggle and match them with courses and programs of study that fit their unique skills, which in the long run translates into improved retention and graduation rates, and enhanced campus revenues.



Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos introduces the Predictive Analysis Webinar

If you were not able to join, please click on this link to access the captioned video of the entire webinar:

<https://mediasite.ed.gov/webcast/Play/44bab8fe1b54425792e62f452837a5641d>

Thank you to OPE Summer 2020 Intern Peter Simmons for coordinating the webinar.

OPE GRANTEE SUCCESS STORIES!

2020 HBCU STEM Interns at the U.S. Air Force Research Laboratory

Written by Jennifer Padgett, U.S. Department of Education

The Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE) [Minority Science and Engineering Improvement Program \(MSEIP\)](#) led by MSEIP Director Dr. Bernadette Hince and the U.S. Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL) – Information Directorate, in Rome, N.Y., recently launched a pioneering partnership to sponsor a 10-week virtual, paid, science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) internship and fellowship program.



The MSEIP is a competitive, discretionary STEM grant that supports expanding the scientific and technological capacity of the United States to build global competitiveness by increasing the number of minority graduates in STEM fields.

The MSEIP-AFRL partnership helps build pathways to engage faculty and students and strengthen the STEM capacity of Minority Serving Institutions.

This results-driven program highlights ED's commitment to supporting underrepresented minority scientists, engineers, and technical experts. This partnership model can be expanded to benefit more students and minority institutions. To that end, ED is working with AFRL to develop further research opportunities at other facilities.

"The Administration is focused on making sure each and every student has access to the education opportunities they need to reach their full potential," said Secretary DeVos. "All too often, minority students lack access to STEM education and are underrepresented in STEM jobs. That's why this grant program is so important. It provides HBCUs and other MSIs the opportunity to expand and enhance their STEM offerings so their students can be prepared for the science and technology jobs of today and tomorrow."

Through this summer's partnership, the students, all of whom received stipends, were matched directly with practicing Air Force scientists, creating a mentoring relationship. "Before beginning the internship, I was concerned about how it would contribute to my journey to becoming an astrophysicist," said intern Iyana Clemente, a rising senior at Tennessee State University. "Shortly after, I began to see that this was not only an internship but an opportunity to grow as a person and scientist. I've learned many valuable lessons that will help me professionally as well as personally. My mentor and teammates have exposed me to a whole new field of study that I never thought I'd be interested in. Not only has this internship taught me many things but has also opened doors for me in the future." This successful program is already growing legs! Of the 20 participants, 10 will be continuing their internships into the fall semester, with an opportunity to renew for the spring semester as well.

Congratulations to all of the participants!

 <p>Taylor Buchanna Dillard University New Orleans, LA</p> <p>Major: Mathematics Expected Graduation: May 2023 Air Force Research Topic Quantum Machine Learning</p>	 <p>Iyana Clemente Tennessee State University Nashville, TN</p> <p>Major: Aeronautical and Industrial Technology Expected Graduation: May 2021 Air Force Research Topic Game Theory Based Approaches for Secure and Efficient Cloud Computing</p>	 <p>Keonna Conkle Jackson State University Jackson, MS</p> <p>Major: Physics/Pre-Medicine Expected Graduation: May 2021 Air Force Research Topic How to build a simulator using Markov Chains and Python</p>	 <p>Trent Dalcourt Dillard University New Orleans, LA</p> <p>Major: Computer Science Expected Graduation: May 2022 Air Force Research Topic How to build a simulator using Markov Chains and Python</p>	 <p>Daylon Daye Dillard University New Orleans, LA</p> <p>Major: Computer Science Expected Graduation: May 2021 Air Force Research Topic Wi-Fi based indoor positioning system</p>
 <p>Annastacia Hammond Benedict College Columbia, SC</p> <p>Major: Electrical Engineering & Cybersecurity Expected Graduation: May 2021 Air Force Research Topic Non-GPS Navigation</p>	 <p>Diahmin Hawkins Tennessee State University Nashville, TN</p> <p>Major: Mathematics Expected Graduation: May 2021 Air Force Research Topic Quantum Machine Learning</p>	 <p>Christopher Ingram Dillard University New Orleans, LA</p> <p>Major: Computer Science Expected Graduation: June 2020 Air Force Research Topic Next Generation Wireless Networking</p>	 <p>Justin Matthews Dillard University New Orleans, LA</p> <p>Major: Computer Science Expected Graduation: May 2020 Air Force Research Topic Neutrino Communications</p>	 <p>Jada McCoy Tennessee State University Nashville, TN</p> <p>Major: Computer Science Expected Graduation: May 2020 Air Force Research topic Unity War Game Development</p>
 <p>Jaiden Moore Jackson State University Jackson, MS</p> <p>Major: Physics Expected Graduation: May 2023 Air Force Research Topic Military Information Support Operations</p>	 <p>Ashley Morgan Tennessee State University Nashville, TN</p> <p>Major: Computer Science Expected Graduation: May 2021 Air Force Research Topic WiFi Based Indoor Positioning System</p>	 <p>Shafi Muhammad Jackson State University Jackson, MS</p> <p>Major: Physics/Pre-Medicine Expected Graduation: May 2023 Air Force Research Topic Military Information Support Operations</p>	 <p>Jawnaye Nash Jackson State University Jackson, MS</p> <p>Major: Physics Expected Graduation: May 2022 Air Force Research Topic Military Information Support Operations</p>	 <p>Elijah Rachell Tennessee State University Nashville, TN</p> <p>Major: Mechanical Engineering Minor: Computer Science Expected Graduation: December 2022 Air Force Research Topic Military Information Support Operations</p>
 <p>Asleigh Reeves Benedict College Columbia, SC</p> <p>Major: Electrical Engineering Expected Graduation: May 2022 Air Force Research Topic Military Information Support Operations</p>	 <p>Katerra Stamps Prairie View A & M University Prairie View, TX</p> <p>Major: Computer Science Expected Graduation: May 2022 Air Force Research Topic Military Information Support Operations</p>	 <p>Courtney Walker Dillard University New Orleans, LA</p> <p>Major: Medical Physics Expected Graduation: May 2021 Air Force Research Topic Wi-Fi Based Indoor Positioning System</p>	 <p>Aaron Washington Central State University Wilberforce, OH</p> <p>Major: Computer Science Expected Graduation: May 2021 Air Force Research Topic A Process for Building Meaningful Machine Learning Models</p>	 <p>Elijah Waters Prairie View A & M University Prairie View, TX</p> <p>Major: Computer Science Expected Graduation: May 2021 Air Force Research Topic 3D Point Cloud Selection and Classification</p>

OPE Feature Employee of the Month

Vanessa Gomez is a new employee in OPE's [Policy, Planning, and Innovation](#) division. Her responsibilities include providing guidance and support to financial aid programs, such as the Pell Grant, direct loans, and the work study programs.



Vanessa is a first-generation college student who received the Pell Grant and participated in the Work-Study program. She also is a Returned U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer who served in China. Vanessa shares, “My time volunteering in China taught me to be approachable and proactively demonstrate to others that I care. People don’t open up unless they feel heard and respected, and, once I had that ‘guanxi’ (relationship) with my students and community members, I gained insightful perspectives about China and its people.”

Vanessa thinks it’s important to consider different students’ perspectives to ensure those most impacted by the Federal Pell Grants receive the support that they need.

OPE Peer Review Opportunities

Ongoing Opportunities to Serve as an OPE Peer Reviewer

The Department has announced opportunities for individuals to participate in its peer review process by reviewing applications for competitive grant funding. Learn how to become a peer reviewer by clicking here: [US Department of Education Peer Review Opportunities](#).

The 2020 Grantee Satisfaction Survey

The 2020 Grantee Satisfaction Survey is Live Until Nov. 13

The Department invites you to participate in the [2020 Grantee Satisfaction Survey](#). Grantees may share their experiences about their interactions with Department program staff, communications, technical assistance, and grant processes. The survey data collected is used to improve the delivery of services to our grantee community. Contact your U.S. Department program officer to learn more about the 2020 Grantee Satisfaction Survey.

Share Your Good News with the Grantee Community

Email photos, stories, updates and other news to OPE's Management and Support Unit, at Sariane.leigh@ed.gov or call 202-453-7768 



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