Summer Research Opportunities Program (SROP) 2015

SROP students arrived on May 31st and the program ended on July 24th. Purdue welcomed 28 student participants including three incoming AGEP Bridge students. The program goal is to encourage talented undergraduate students who are underrepresented in research careers to pursue graduate education and to enhance their preparation for graduate study. It provides an opportunity for students to work on a research project with a Purdue faculty member as well as participate in several workshops including Public Speaking, RCR, GRE Preparation, Professional Development, and Creating a Poster Presentation. AGEP staff, Quincy Clark, presented workshops on the book “GPS for Graduate School, Students Share Their Stories” and GRE Test Preparation. AGEP scholars, Reginald McGee and Rachelle Henderson, presented GRE practice writing and math workshops. The AGEP scholars also participated in a panel question and answer session about graduate school. The SROP coordinators this year were Amber Johnson, Reginald McGee, Shana Hardy, Victor Roman, Tyrell Conner and Sasha Vega-Alvarez. Dr. Susan Mendrysa joined Dr. Kathy Dixon as a co-director of the program.

AGEP Community Garden Summer Project 2015

AGEP scholars and staff volunteered their lunch hours, evening hours and Saturday mornings to participate in a community garden project this summer. AGEP staff purchased two plots and donated them to AGEP for the community project. Besides planting, watering and weeding our own designated plots, we volunteered our time (and green thumbs) working in the community garden plots grown for the community to enjoy. The garden project provided an opportunity to give back to the community, gain gardening experience and put some healthy vegetables on our tables. The dirt under our fingernails was a bonus!

“It has truly been one of the best experiences I’ve had on both an academic and personal level. Words cannot describe how grateful and happy I am of being able to grow and develop in a professional environment with hands-on experience on what I’m passionate about. Thank you so much!”

-Yesenia I Castillo-Melecio, SROP 2015
Recent AGEP Graduates

Dr. Tyrell Connor received his PhD in Sociology in June, 2015. He has accepted a Tenure Track Assistant Professor Position in the Sociology department at the State University of New York (SUNY, New Paltz). At Purdue his research focus has been on inequalities and disparities following release from prison; structural barriers to successful prisoner re-entry into the community and recidivism. Dr. Connor received the Purdue University Martin Luther King, Jr. Dreamer Award in 2014 and was actively involved in his community as a mentor for high school students and a case manager for the Parole Reentry program. He also devoted his time and leadership to many student organizations on campus including the Black Graduate Student Association, Purdue Anti-Racism Coalition, Multicultural HBI program, AGEP program and was a coordinator and mentor for the Summer Research Opportunities Program (SROP), LSAMP and Science Bound.

Dr. Janie McClurkin received her PhD in Agricultural and Biological Engineering in August, 2015. She accepted a Postdoctoral Scholarship at the rank of Assistant Professor at the California University of Pennsylvania’s Frederick Douglass Institute. Dr. McClurkin’s research focus is on Grain Post-Harvest Technology. In particular, developing a cost-effective method for increasing the shelf-life of wet distillers grains (WDG). At Purdue, she has been very active in the AGEP, Science Bound, MANRRS and LSAMP programs as a mentor for undergraduate students. She also attended the COMPACT for Faculty Diversity Institute and has volunteered her time and leadership to the Minority Engineering Program as a summer camp counselor and instructor. Dr. McClurkin’s dedication to her research resulted in numerous summer internships, research assistantships and a position as an Extension Specialist’s Assistant.

Dr. Oyeleye Alabi received his PhD in Chemistry in August, 2015. He has accepted a Postdoctoral position with the Food and Drug Administration in Maryland. Dr. Alabi completed his undergraduate education at Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria. He completed his Masters at Emporia State University in Kansas earning two awards for his thesis work on the extraction of Epigallocatechingallate (EGCG), a health beneficial compound in green tea; “The Laurence C. Boylan Award for the Most Outstanding Master’s Thesis for the year 2010” and “The Best Poster Award” at the annual meeting of the Kansas Academy of Science. At Purdue, Dr. Alabi’s research was focused on the reversed-phase liquid chromatography of monoclonal antibody aggregates using submicron nonporous silica particles. When he was not in the lab working on his research, Dr. Alabi volunteered his time as a mentor for LSAMP, was a tutor for Chemistry courses, was an active member of the National Organization for the Professional Advancement of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers (NOBCChE), and presented his research at various conferences.

Schane Coker received his Master’s of Science in Family and Consumer Economics in August, 2015. He accepted a position as a financial counselor at a financial institution in Florida. His research interests are in Financial Literacy and Education, Consumer Protection, Consumer Vulnerability Theory and Social Interaction Theory. Shane has been active in student organizations such as BGSAA, HBI and AGEP and he presented several Financial Literacy workshops for the AGEP Scholars and Bridge students. He is a member of the Association for Financial Counseling, Planning and Education (AFCPE) and a Notary Public for the State of Indiana.
Recent AGEP Graduates

**Dr. Joseph Rashon Chaney JR.** received his PhD in Chemistry in May, 2015. He is now a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at LSU Health Science Center in New Orleans. At Purdue, Dr. Chaney worked as a Research Assistant in the department of Chemistry and as a Graduate Assistant for AGEP. He authored a chapter in the book “GPS for Graduate School-Students Share Their Stories” and has published several research articles. Dr. Chaney assisted AGEP in many recruiting events across the country and he mentored undergraduate and graduate students as an AGEP Scholar. Having a strong belief in the critical need for mentorship and a diverse scientific workforce, Dr. Chaney organized seminars and workshops for LSAMP and Science Bound, taking a lead in coordinating the mentoring and tutoring needs for these and other programs on campus. He has also been active in the community as a Boys and Girls Club Counselor and summer camp counselor.

**Mario Rubio** completed his Master’s program in Mechanical Engineering in May, 2015. He is currently a Senior Engineer at Delphi Corporation in El Paso, Texas. Mario participated in the AGEP Bridge program when he first came to Purdue. He worked with AGEP as a grad assistant, recruited at grad fairs, was a mentor and tutor for undergraduate and graduate students and contributed to vignette stories for supplements to the book, GPS for Graduate School-Students Share Their Stories. Mario spent summers as an intern at NASA Johnson Space Center, NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory and Delphi Corporation. He was involved in the e-mentoring program at Purdue and several student organizations including the Latino Graduate Student Association. He worked as a research assistant in the Maurice J. Zucrow Propulsion Laboratory and volunteered his time in the community and with campus activities.

**Dr. Reginald McGee** received his PhD in Mathematics in August, 2015. He has accepted a Postdoctoral Fellowship position with the Mathematical Biosciences Institute at Ohio State University. His research interests include Analysis of models for biological systems, Dynamical systems, Cell signaling and Immunology. Dr. McGee served on several committees, taught Calculus and Geometry courses, presented seminars, workshops and a student Colloquium. He was involved in AGEP and student organizations such as BOSA and he was a mentor and tutor for LSAMP, Science Bound and the Purdue Science Opportunities to Advance Retention. Dr. McGee also reached out to undergraduate students outside of Purdue during recruitment trips for AGEP, mentoring SROP participants and as a volunteer with the HBI visitation program.

**Rachelle Henderson** completed her Master’s degree in English Language and Linguistics in August, 2015. Rachelle is currently working on her PhD in American Studies at the University of Minnesota, where she continues research in the areas of sociolinguistics, mixed race identity, and interracial relationships. Rachelle worked in the AGEP office as a Graduate Assistant during her Master’s program, from August 2013-August 2015. She helped facilitate AGEP semester banquets, workshops, The Biggest Loser Challenge (Fall 2013), participated in the California Forum for Diversity in Graduate Education, co-created and co-facilitated the GRE Writing Workshop for SROP students (Summer 2015), among other activities. During her time at Purdue, Rachelle was also an active member of the Purdue Social Justice Coalition, taught an after-school arts program through the Tippecanoe Arts Federation, and coached a co-ed adult recreational softball team. Rachelle looks forward to continuing community engagement and volunteer projects in Minneapolis, Minnesota, as she earns her doctoral degree.
**AGEP Workshops**

**June 18th:** Yoga & Meditation  
Presented by: Shih-Ping Kuo

**July 9th:** Public Speaking  
Presented by: Dr. Linda Mason

**September 4:** Transferrable Skills  
Presented by: Veronica Rahim

**September 17:** Start Up Packages & Skype Interviews  
For Postdocs and Grad Students  
Presented by: Dr. April Ginther

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**Upcoming Events**

- **September 11**  
  UMBC McNair, Baltimore

- **September 25**  
  McNair MKN, Kansas City

- **October 29**  
  SACNAS 2015, Maryland

- **October 30**  
  COMPACT for Faculty Diversity

- **November 2**  
  NRMN-CAN Conference, Chicago

- **November 4**  
  Postdoctoral Grant Writing

- **November 6**  
  ASHE Conference, Denver

- **November 18**  
  California Diversity Forum, UCSB

- **November 25-27**  
  AISES, Phoenix

- **December 2**  
  Thanksgiving

- **December 2**  
  CGS Annual Meeting, Seattle

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**Environments of Success**

**Brittini Brown**  
**AGEP Scholar**

How can we create an environment that encourages student success for students coming to Purdue from Minority Serving Institutions?

This is a great question and one that Brittini Brown, Doctoral student in the department of Youth Development and Agricultural Education, is hoping to help answer by bringing together four scholars whose work is focused on this very question.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2DIX3HAP7s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2DIX3HAP7s)