








integrated Translational Health Research Institute of Virginia

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## iTHRIV Program Promotes Data Science Foundation for HBCU Students



“It got me on the computer more, it got me coding a bit more, it got me using R a bit more, because before I wanted to stay very far away from the computer and now I want to program every day,” a smiling K’Risa Chesterfield recalls. “I didn’t start out [with] an interest in doing any of that, like I didn’t want to code anything or know any type of other language besides English or Spanish or something. But it definitely opened my eyes to a bunch of different other things.”

K’Risa is one of the first students to matriculate from the Collaborative Undergraduate Biostatistics Experience (CUBE). CUBE was conceived by Dr. Alexandra Hanlon, Director of Virginia Tech’s Center for Biostatistics and Health Data Science (CBHDS) and Co-Director of the iTHRIV Biostatistics, Epidemiology and Research Design (BERD) Methods Core, to provide a holistic approach to undergraduate biostatistics education and increase representation in science. The program is jointly managed by the integrated Translational Health Research Institute of Virginia (iTHRIV) and Virginia Tech’s CBHDS, and launched in the summer of 2021 with two students studying mathematics from Virginia State University in Richmond.

CUBE is a 12-week program that educates and empowers undergraduate students in biostatistics through a full-time collaborative data analysis project, along with related professional development seminars, social events, and a final symposium where students present their research. The data analysis projects are based on real-world questions posed by subject matter investigators and collaborators committed to increasing the number of biostatisticians from HBCUs. CBHDS Assistant Director Alicia Lozano explains, “[CBHDS] Director, Dr. Alex Hanlon, was invited to present at Virginia State University as part of a Virginia Tech HBCU diversity initiative in March of 2021. This program arose from a gap of understanding how statistics can be utilized beyond the classroom as well as the need to bring diversity into the collaborative biostatistics profession.”

### **The CUBE program is based on six guiding principles:**

1. Respecting CUBE student researchers and CBHDS collaborators as professional colleagues
2. Fostering community
3. Encouraging broader participation in the research community
4. Promoting an understanding of team science
5. Developing lasting relationships and networks
6. Providing opportunities for professional development

“To go along with our program name, these six guiding principles reflect the six colors (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, white) that make up a Rubik’s cube.”

These principles are developed and reinforced throughout the program. Exercises include daily check-ins, mentorship sessions, resume writing workshops, and even a poster presentation. The program contains a mix of presentations and discussions with opportunities for students to build their experience while exploring different aspects of biostatistics.

Preparations are underway for summer 2022. Based on feedback from the pilot program in 2021, the administrative team plans to incorporate guest speakers committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), add registration to the Joint Statistical Meeting (JSM) in August, and organize opportunities for students to present their research and participate in other networking activities. Alicia is enthusiastic about the future of the program: “We are very excited to expand the CUBE program to 4 students studying mathematics and/or statistics from Virginia HBCUs in summer 2022, two of which will be hosted at Virginia Tech and the other two by our colleagues at University of Virginia. Our plans for summer 2023 include expanding the program nationally to HBCU students across the United States.”

Though 2021 was the only the pilot year, for K’Risa, the benefits were palpable. “I learned a lot, and I really enjoyed being a part of the program. It was genuinely eye opening! I will be adding this and everything that I’ve done to my resume.” K’Risa also expressed her desire to apply for graduate programs in Epidemiology, a field she admittedly did not know existed prior to her experience with CUBE.

Recruitment for summer 2022 has begun. Visit the CUBE webpage for more information:

<https://biostat.centers.vt.edu/CUBE.html>

### **About CBHDS**

Located in Roanoke Virginia, the Center for Biostatistics and Health Data Science seeks to achieve excellence in Virginia Tech’s health- and medically-related research portfolio through fostering collaborations across biostatistics, data science, health analytics, computer science, engineering, bioinformatics, biology, database management and integration, project coordination, clinical practice, health economics, translation and public policy. CBHDS is housed in Virginia Tech’s Department of Statistics, in the College of Science.

### **About iTHRIV**

iTHRIV is a cross-state translational research institute which combines the expertise of clinical translational biomedical researchers and data scientists to create infrastructure and investigator resources for using data to improve health across the Commonwealth of Virginia. Partner sites include University of Virginia, Virginia Tech, Carilion Clinic, and Inova Health System. iTHRIV is funded by the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences, part of the National Institutes of Health, through award number UL1TR003015.

## New iTHRIV Series aims to Amplify Underrepresented Voices in Health

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) funded Integrated Translational Health Research Institute of Virginia (iTHRIV) is pleased to announce a new educational offering called the Voices in Clinical and Translational Science. This speaker series is designed to serve as a platform and lift underrepresented voices in research across the iTHRIV partnership. Sandra Burks, iTHRIV's Administrative Program Director states, "experience teaches us that diversity of thought, diversity of background, and diversity of perspectives makes team science richer and stronger. This new series seeks to highlight excellence in clinical translational research and understand different lived experiences."

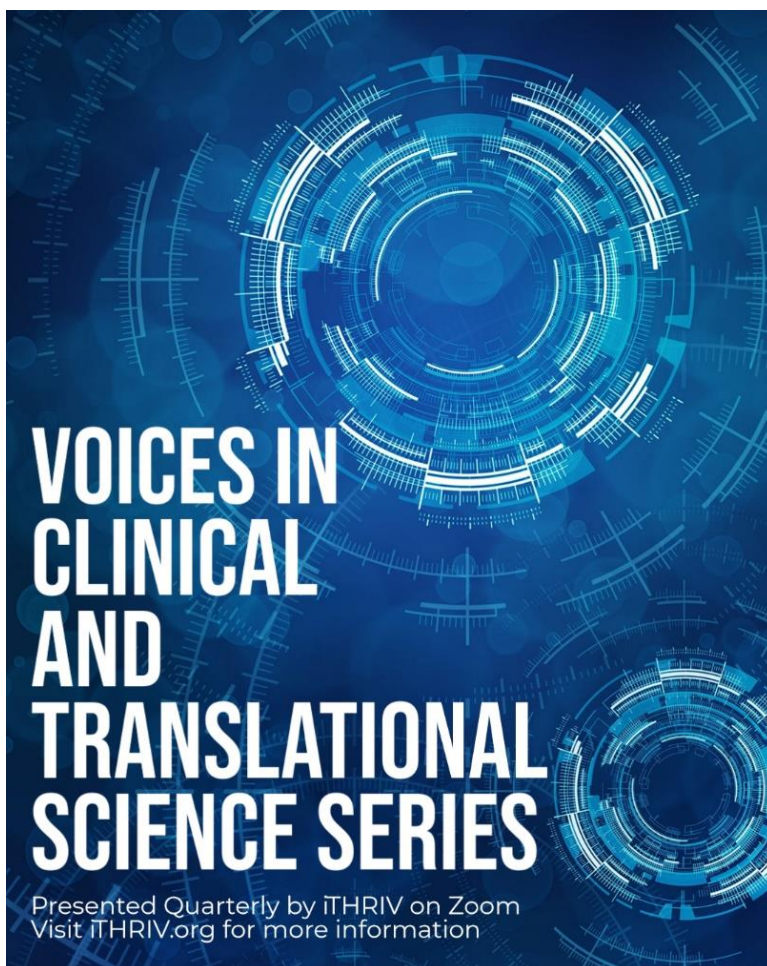
The Voices in Clinical and Translational Science series will focus on promoting dialogue and encouraging team science. "We hope that researchers will be excited to hear from colleagues across iTHRIV who may have backgrounds different from their own, and also find new potential collaborators who share common goals in their research" adds Burks.

The quarterly seminar series is designed to amplify diverse perspectives in clinical and translational research, and in doing so, foster innovation and an inclusive environment. Burks notes that "the goal really is to learn from one another about the impact of different lived experiences on the work that people do. The presenters will share their science and also their lived experience as an underrepresented person in research." The speaker series is aimed at translational health research professionals at all stages of their career.

iTHRIV hopes that attendees will use this series as an opportunity to listen more deeply to one another and to broaden their own research in the quest to improve the health of communities in Virginia and beyond. Burks notes that "iTHRIV is grateful to our presenters for their willingness to share their work and lived experience as an underrepresented clinical translational researcher." She is hopeful that "through this sharing of experiences and listening to one another, we can promote greater dialogue and understanding across our research community as we work together to address the important health problems in Virginia."

Funded in part by a Clinical and Translational Science Award, iTHRIV combines the expertise of biomedical researchers and data scientists to facilitate team science and accelerate innovation to improve health across the Commonwealth of Virginia. Partner sites include Virginia Tech, the University of Virginia, Carilion Clinic, and Inova Health System.

iTHRIV is partially supported by the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences, part of the National Institutes of Health, through award number UL1TR003015/KL2TR003016. For information, visit [www.iTHRIV.org/voices](http://www.iTHRIV.org/voices)



## iTHRIV Under the Microscope: The Dynamic Duo

**Leigh Guarinello** is one of the Directors of Community Health Programs at Inova, one-half of a dynamic duo with Deron Campbell, where they lead community-based efforts in Northern Virginia through the Community Health Needs Assessment. Leigh joined the Inova Community Health team with the Inova Juniper Program in 2004 as an HIV Health Educator providing education and capacity building services to healthcare workers across the region. Leigh has combined the creative, interpersonal, and technical throughout her career when managing people, programs, and budgets; writing and administering grants; and facilitating community and system-level change. In all of her roles, she has been fortunate to integrate her passion for connecting people, teaching, and improving health equity. As the lead of the Community and Collaboration Core of iTHRIV for Inova, Leigh has partnered to improve health outcomes through intentional connections between research and communities.



Leigh is from New Jersey and received her BA from UVA and her MPH from Yale. She enjoys crafting, Lord of the Rings, crafting Lord of the Rings things, and hanging with her nibblings.



**Deron Campbell** is one of the Directors of Community Health Programs at Inova Health System, one-half of a dynamic duo with Leigh Guarinello, where they lead community-based efforts in Northern Virginia through the Community Health Needs Assessment. Deron initially joined Inova's Community and Population Health Division in 2012 as a Community Case Manager with the Inova Juniper Program. Deron, as a passionate health professional, has remained in this division to continue to grow as an internal and external leader across Inova and Northern Virginia. Prior to joining Inova, Deron worked for non-profit organizations in Washington, DC focusing on human and sexual rights policy and advocacy and held a successful career as a fashion stylist. Deron has a combined 15 years of experience as a community-based public health professional. As a member of the Community and Collaboration Core of iTHRIV at Inova Deron brings his years of community partnership experience to the research arena.

Deron is from Washington, DC and completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Maryland, College Park and graduate studies at Purdue University Global. Deron enjoys spending money, looking good, and practicing a lot of stress-reducing and age-defying self-care.

## Meet an iTHRIV Scholar Mentor

Ukpong Eyo

Assistant Professor, UVA School of Medicine

"Dr. Eyo has been a tremendous mentor through the iTHRIV program. In addition to his personal research success, he is an accomplished mentor to many young scientists. Although I am not directly involved in his research field, he has given valuable advice in developing a research career, collaborating, and growing a laboratory." - **Kaitlin Love, MD**



## Portal Highlight - Recruitment Enhancing Resources Program (RERP)

iTHRIV team seeks to facilitate inclusive, collaborative research in partnership with our diverse, often underrepresented communities in Virginia. iTHRIV is committed to increase the integration of under-invited and underrepresented persons in clinical research. Under the leadership of the iTHRIV Hub Capacity Core, Dr. James Nataro will lead this effort in collaboration with the Clinical Research Access Committee (C-RAC). The C-RAC works closely with the iTHRIV Community and Collaboration Core to ensure that information about clinical research is spread throughout the local community. Research Ethics Consultation Service (TRECS) provides consultation on ethical issues that arise anywhere along the translational spectrum of research, including during the development, conduct, analysis, reporting or commercialization of research.

Access the service here: <https://portal.ithriv.org/#/resource/1248>

The screenshot displays the Research Concierge Portal interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a logo, a search bar, and buttons for 'Help' and 'Request a consult'. Below the navigation bar, there are four circular icons labeled 'LEARN', 'PROPOSE', 'CONDUCT', and 'CONNECT'. A heading reads 'Find Health Research Resources and Support' with a subtext: 'To browse content, select the circle on the left that best fits your current project goals. You can also search content or request a consult by using buttons in upper right.' Below this is the 'myTHRIV Workspace' section, which has tabs for 'Research Data Commons', 'Events', 'My Favorites', 'My Resources and Events', and 'Recently Updated'. The 'Events' tab is active, showing a grid of event cards. Each card includes an event title, dates, time, and location, along with an 'Add to Calendar' button. A 'Download this list as a CSV file' link is also present. The events listed include: NIH Grants Conference and PreCon Events; FUNDING: 2022-3 Ivy Biomedical Innovation Fund; FUNDING: Molecular Phenotypes of Null Alleles in Cells (MorPhIC) Phase I: Data Analysis and Validation Centers; 2022 iTHRIV Scholars Clinical Translational Research Symposium; 4th Annual Healthcare Disparities Conference; 'Sprints and Marathons: The Realities of Clinical Research'; Health Sciences Entrepreneurship; Datapalooza 2022; iPRIME Launch Symposium; and REGISTRATION IS OPEN for the 12th Annual Appalachian Translational Research Network Summit.