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AUCC ANNOUNCES APPOINTMENT OF DR. TALITHA M. WASHINGTON AS THE INAUGURAL DIRECTOR OF THE DATA SCIENCE INITIATIVE

ATLANTA, Georgia, July, 15, 2020 – Following an extensive national search and selection by the presidents of member institutions Clark Atlanta University, Morehouse College, Morehouse School of Medicine, and Spelman College, the Atlanta University Center Consortium (AUCC) announces the appointment of noted scholar, author, interdisciplinary researcher, and innovator **Talitha M. Washington, Ph.D.**, as the new director of the AUCC Data Science Initiative. A collaboration between the AUCC member institutions, the AUCC Data Science Initiative is working to increase the number of highly-skilled underrepresented minorities with skills in data science and to advance data science research, especially as it impacts minority communities. Increasingly relevant to most employment fields and academic disciplines, data science transforms information into highly relevant data using analytical methods such as algorithms, statistics, data mining, and predictive analysis.



Dr. Washington begins her tenure as director in mid-August.

Dr. Washington's experience includes inventive leadership in math education, research methodologies, and partnership development, serving most recently as a program director at the National Science Foundation (NSF) and a tenured associate professor at Howard University. Her multifaceted career includes management of use-inspired convergence research to solve complex societal challenges. Her work at NSF facilitated the integration of interdisciplinary knowledge with data science using methods including predictive artificial intelligence and economic and labor market analyses, leading to innovation and the development of educational technologies connecting workers with the jobs of the future. Her published

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authorship includes groundbreaking work on nonstandard finite difference (NSFD) methodologies developed for various systems of differential equations.

A Spelman College graduate and internationally-featured speaker and presenter, Dr. Washington was recently recognized by NSF as a Women's History Maker and received the Black Engineer of the Year STEM Innovator Award. She received the NSF Director's Award for Superior Accomplishment for her work in establishing NSF's first Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program, a \$40 million initiative.

The search committee included faculty from each AUCC member institution and the AUC Woodruff Library along with leaders from industry and prominent university-based data science institutes. The committee was chaired by Morehouse School of Medicine professor Peter MacLeish, Ph.D., with the assistance of higher education executive search firm Harris Search Associates.

"With our broad goal of impacting the trajectories of societies throughout the world, Dr. Washington is uniquely suited to lead the development of data science expertise across the Atlanta University Center institutions," said Todd Greene, executive director of the Atlanta University Center Consortium. "Her unique combination of experience in program development, education, funding, and alliance-building will help forge connections among and between the Atlanta University Center students and faculty with global corporations, government agencies, and other colleges and universities."

Dr. Washington will enjoy the strong support of AUCC faculty, researchers, librarians, and administrators.

"Clark Atlanta University welcomes Dr. Washington on her appointment to serve as the Atlanta University Center Consortium's Data Science Director," said Dr. George T. French Jr., Clark Atlanta University president and AUCC Council of Presidents chair. "Her strong leadership and impressive track record in this field of study will advance the new Data Science Initiative and improve technological capabilities for all students within the Atlanta University Center."

"I look forward to working with Dr. Washington as she leads the AUCC Data Science Initiative to address the disparity of minorities in tech and other fields," said Dr. David A. Thomas, president of Morehouse College. "Our campuses will soon produce hundreds of students annually who will be well-equipped to compete internationally for lucrative careers in data science. The skill sets of a data scientist are in demand in a dynamic economy. In fact, the career is ranked among the top three occupations on Glassdoor's 'Best Jobs in America in 2020' list. Working in data analytics will allow our students, many of whom come from low income families, to build wealth after college and use their talents to become entrepreneurs."

"Our modern economy and society are increasingly fueled by interdisciplinary solutions that are based on the ability to extract insights using data science and data analytic approaches," added Valerie Montgomery Rice, Morehouse School of Medicine president. "I, along with the entire MSM team, look forward to what Dr. Washington's appointment will mean for the AUC collectively and for each institution individually as she coalesces the amazing faculty and student scholars who are engaging in this important work."

"At a time when data— its analysis, visualization, and its use to predict and model— has become even more critical to the global challenges we're facing, the entire Spelman community is pleased to welcome Dr. Washington as the AUCC Data Science Director," said Dr. Mary Schmidt Campbell, Spelman College president. "Dr. Washington's award-winning expertise in mathematics, strong leadership and innovation in higher education and at the National Science Foundation, and her decades of research and advocacy for inclusivity in STEM fields align with the mission of the AUCC's Data Science Initiative."

Dr. Washington is ready to begin her new role.

“The Atlanta University Center has always been a special place to me, encompassing some of the most respected institutions in our nation including two liberal arts colleges, a research university, and an academic medical center,” she said. “I look forward to working with the faculty, students, staff and alumni, along with our industry and governmental partners, so that collectively, we can provide data-driven solutions to our current and emerging societal problems.”

About Dr. Talitha Washington

Dr. Washington’s leadership includes service as a Convergence Accelerator (C-Accel) program director in the Office of Integrative Activities at the National Science Foundation. In that role, she managed use-inspired convergence research to solve complex societal challenges by integrating knowledge from different disciplines. Through partnerships between academia, industry, foundations, government, and nonprofits, she worked to connect workers with the jobs of the future using predictive artificial intelligence tools, economic and labor market analyses, and the development of educational technologies. At NSF, she also served as the principal program director overseeing review and funding of data science proposals within the Division of Undergraduate Education, focusing on proposals related to improving education for the future STEM workforce. In addition, she led the establishment of a \$40 million congressionally-mandated program to build undergraduate STEM capacity at the nation’s 539 Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), assuming responsibility for budgeting, proposal review, and awards.

An applied mathematician, she earned tenure as an associate professor and faculty member at Howard University. Her published authorship includes groundbreaking work on nonstandard finite difference (NSFD) methodologies developed for various systems of differential equations. She has also held academic positions in mathematics and research at Duke University, the College of New Rochelle, and the University of Evansville.

A graduate of Spelman College with a Bachelor of Science degree in mathematics and minor in Spanish, Dr. Washington received both a Master of Science degree in mathematics and a Ph.D. in mathematics from the University of Connecticut. She also earned certificates in executive leadership and fundraising from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, Georgetown University, the Association of Fundraising Professionals, and the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science. While a student in the Atlanta University Center, she tutored in Spelman’s math lab, played in the Morehouse College Marching Band, and conducted research at Clark Atlanta University.

About the AUCC Data Science Initiative

The Atlanta University Center Consortium Data Science Initiative (DSI) launched in 2019 with a bold vision for data science education and research. The DSI endeavors to dramatically increase the number of underrepresented minorities with credentials in data science and data analytics and to also advance research using data science methods, especially in areas impacting minority communities. Led by the AUCC Data Science Faculty Council and the AUCC Council of Chief Academic Officers, the DSI is closely aligned with industry, research institutes, and governmental agencies. DSI received initial seed funding from UnitedHealth Group.

About the Atlanta University Center Consortium, Inc.

Founded in 1929, the AUC Consortium is the nation's oldest and largest contiguous formal collaboration of historically black colleges and universities. Comprised of its four-member institutions – Clark Atlanta University, Morehouse College, Morehouse School of Medicine, and Spelman College – AUCC represents a social justice-oriented intellectual community with a tradition of scholarship, service, and community engagement. AUCC forges collaborative opportunities for its members in several areas including research, academics, business operations, community and economic development, and community engagement.

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