Center wide Alumni Report

**Funding Source:** NOAA Educational Partnership Program with Minority Serving Institutions (EPP/MSI)
Background

Through the years, Florida A&M University has served as the lead institution for a cooperative science center that partners with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The center is funded through the NOAA Educational Partnership Program with Minority Serving Institutions (EPP/MSI). The Environmental Cooperative Science Center (ECSC) was the founding center established in 2001. Other iterations of the award evolved into the Center for Coastal and Marine Ecosystems (CCME I) and current award (CCME II).

In 2018, the National Academies published a report on the tremendous and underutilized resource that minority serving institutions (MSIs) provide to our nation’s needs in the STEM workforce. The center continues its mission to recruit, educate, train, and graduate a new generation of scientists, particularly from underrepresented communities, in NOAA-mission aligned STEM disciplines. The result includes a cadre of graduates that strengthen the profession’s ability to explore and address the pressing environmental concerns of our time.

This document features some center alumni who are making positive contributions to society. They are employed in the NOAA workforce, other sectors of the federal government, academia, private industry, non-profit organizations and entrepreneurship. Along with students, the center provides an avenue for faculty and staff to participate in mentorship opportunities and research collaborations.
The NOAA EPP/MSI website documents the tremendous impact that CSCs provide in student training and graduates across the United States. This impact includes the following:

“2,514 post-secondary degrees have been supported by EPP/MSI programs.
240 undergraduate students have been supported by EPP/MSI Undergraduate Scholarship Program.
190 graduate students have completed NOAA Experiential Research and Training Opportunities.
Of the doctoral degrees awarded in the U.S. from 2003-2019, Cooperative Science Center Institutions have awarded:

- 54% earned by African Americans in atmospheric science.
- 35% earned by African Americans in marine science.
- 30% earned by African Americans in environmental sciences.
- 39% earned by Hispanics in marine science.
- 21% earned by Hispanics in atmospheric sciences.
- 19% earned by Hispanics in environmental science.”

Source: NOAA EPP/MSI, 2022
This report features a sample of center alumni, their current position, award iteration and academic institution. The following acronyms are used for some partner institutions throughout Center’s establishment:

FAMU: Florida A&M University
BCU: Bethune Cookman University
CSUMB: California State University at Monterey Bay
CU: Creighton University
DSU: Delaware State University
JSU: Jackson State University
MSU: Morgan State University
TAMUCC: Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi
UTB: University of Texas, Brownville
UTRGV: University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley
LaToya Myles, Ph.D.
Deputy Director of NOAA ARL; Supervisory Physical Scientist (ECSC/FAMU)

Diana Del Angel, Ph.D.
Assistant Research Scientist at the Harte Research Institute Community Resilience Lab (ECSC and CCME/TAMUCC)

Elizabeth Del Rosario, Ph.D.
Environmental Protection Specialist, FEMA (ECSC and CCME/TAMUCC)

Symone Johnson Barkley
Chief Learning Officer, Black in Marine Science and former Knauss Fellow (ECSC/DSU)

Monisha Sugla, M.S.
Research Coordinator, NOAA Contractor (CCME/TAMUCC)

Stacy G. Fallon, J.D.
Assistant City Attorney, City of Orlando (ECSC/FAMU)

Daryin Medley, M.S.
Research Oceanographer, NOAA AOML (ECSC/FAMU)

Ashlyn Ford, B.S.
Doctoral Candidate in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at UCLA (ECSC/FAMU)

Harrison Watson, B.S.
PhD student in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Princeton University (CCME/JSU)

Demarcus Turner, M.S.
Doctoral Student at Univ. of South Carolina (CCME II/FAMU)

Diana Del Angel, Ph.D.
Assistant Research Scientist at the Harte Research Institute Community Resilience Lab (ECSC and CCME/TAMUCC)

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Ashlyn Ford, B.S.
Doctoral Candidate in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at UCLA (ECSC/FAMU)

Harrison Watson, B.S.
PhD student in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Princeton University (CCME/JSU)

Demarcus Turner, M.S.
Doctoral Student at Univ. of South Carolina (CCME II/FAMU)
“Being apart of NOAA ECSC provided me the experience, resources, and connection to support me in becoming a strong student and environmental scientist. My experience led me to pursuing a PhD in Oceanography at UCLA and also becoming a 2023 Knauss Marine Policy Fellow.

The program supported my academic research and professional development such as my participation in several NOAA Biennial Conferences. These early experiences planted seeds to later apply to graduate school, the Knauss Fellowship as well as a career in marine science and environmental policy.

Being apart of the NOAA EPP/MSI Center at FAMU allowed me to foster connections with contacts that I still maintain today. It also inspires me to assist future marine scientists that are participating in similar NOAA programs.

Truly, without FAMU and the opportunity from NOAA EPP/MSI, I probably wouldn’t be the scientist that I am today.”

De’Marcus Robinson
Doctoral Student at UCLA and 2023 Knauss Fellow at the White House Council on Environmental Quality (ECSC/FAMU Alumnus)
Mayra Lopez, M.S.
Regional Environmental Manager at WM (ECSC/TAMUCC)

Leticia Contreras, M.S.
Research Associate II and CCME II Education Liaison at UTRGV (ECSC/UTRGV)

Symphony Ovalles
Exploration Geologist, McGovCo, LTD (ECSC/TAMUCC)

Judson Curtis, Ph.D.
Quantitative Fishery Scientist at the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (ECSC/TAMUCC)

Krystal Pree Hepburn, Ph.D.
CEO/Founder at EnviroStewards Consulting, LLC (ECSC/FAMU)

April Croxton, Ph.D.
Research Fishery Biologist at NOAA and Past Second Vice President for the American Fisheries Society (ECSC/FAMU)

Devin Comba, M.S.
LSU AgCenter/USGS co-op unit (CCME/TAMUCC)

Maggie Seida, B.S.
Head of Science Media at Innoceana (CCME/CSUMB)

Daryl Sibble, Ph.D.
Environmental Program Supervisor at Broward County Government (ECSC/FAMU)

Judson Curtis, Ph.D.
Quantitative Fishery Scientist at the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (ECSC/TAMUCC)

April Croxton, Ph.D.
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Maggie Seida, B.S.
Head of Science Media at Innoceana (CCME/CSUMB)

Daryl Sibble, Ph.D.
Environmental Program Supervisor at Broward County Government (ECSC/FAMU)
Dennis Apeti, Ph.D.
Program Manager for the National Mussel Watch Program, NOAA NCCOS (ECSC/FAMU)

Mariamar Gutierrez, PhD
Wildlife Biologist, National Park Service (ECSC/DSU)

Jessica C. Webb
Graduate Research Assistant at University of California, Riverside (CCME/JSU)

Olivia Boisen, B.S.
Graduate Student in Fisheries Science at Oregon State University (CCME/CSUMB)

Queriah Simpson, M.S.
Doctoral Student in Environmental Science, Florida A&M University (CCME/FAMU)

Miranda White, M.S.
Doctoral Student in Coastal and Marine System Science at TAMUCC (CCME/BCU)

Taylor Eddy, M.S.
Biologist, U.S. Geological Survey (CCME/CSUMB)

Terrius Bruce, B.S.
Doctoral Student at the University of Arkansas (CCME/FAMU)

Jacqueline McComb, Ph.D.
Research Professor, Southern University (ECSC/JSU)

Alexandra Thomsen, M.S.
Environmental Planner at San Francisco Estuary Partnership (CCME/CSUMB)
“Participation as a scholar in the NOAA CCME program provided me with training and experience sought after by NOAA and seen as desirable by other federal agencies as well. The program supported my academic and career development through CCME/NOAA mentors and staff who always ensured I had what I needed to meet my goals early on. Participation in the program allowed me to successfully gain employment with the federal government from the opportunities to interact with NOAA staff, hands-on training, in-the-field research opportunities, and experiences working at NOAA facilities.”

- Elizabeth (DelRosario) Gomaa, Ph.D, Environmental Protection Specialist, Federal Emergency Management Agency

(CCME I/TAMUCC Alumna)
Phillip Bellamy, M.S.
GIS Specialist, National Geospatial – Intelligence Agency
(CCME/BCU)

Jordana Cutajar, M.S.
Resilience Planner IV, Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control
(CCME/TAMUCC)

Adrienne George, Ph.D
Assistant Professor, University of Tampa
(ECSC/DSU)

Mallory Brooks Tatum, M.S.
Environmental Scientist, Zev Cohen and Associates Inc.
(CCME/BCU)

Andria Miller, M.S.
Recent Graduate from the University of Rhode Island's School of Oceanography
(CCME/JSU)

Meghan Martinez, M.S.
Natural Resources Specialist, Texas General Land Office
(CCME/TAMUCC)

Nigel Lascelles, M.S.
CCME II Doctoral Student at TAMUCC
(CCME/FAMU)

Mark Dugo, Ph.D
Assistant Professor of Ecology and Center Director, Johnson C. Smith University
(ECSC/JSU)

Jeanna Dampier, Ph.D
Scientist and Laboratory Director Steep Mill Mississippi
(CCME/JSU)

Drew Seminara, M.S.
Senior Software Engineer, Scientific Computing
(ECSC/CU)
“The opportunity to be a CCME scholar at Jackson State University was instrumental in supporting my development and success in several key ways. The program’s emphasis on research and diverse projects under the NOAA’s mission exposed me to various challenges, enabling me to develop problem-solving skills that transcend disciplinary boundaries.

Additionally, the program played a pivotal role in nurturing my confidence as a scientist, especially in different environments. Throughout my research journey, I have developed a strong passion for promoting aquatic science research and communication across different groups. The diverse opportunities provided by the CCME program have solidified this passion, motivating me to contribute actively to the advancement of aquatic science and its management.”

Andria Miller, M.S.
Recent Master’s Graduate from the University of Rhode Island’s School of Oceanography

(CCME I/JSU Alumna)
Erik Davenport, PhD.
Ecologist, NOAA NCCOS
(ECSC/MSU)

Katia Sanchez, B.S.
City Planner, City of McAllen
(CCME/UTRGV)

Miya Pavlock-McAuliffe
External Source Data Team Lead,
NOAA Coast Survey
(CCME/CSUMB)

Maya McWilliams, B.S.
CCME II Graduate Student in
Environmental Science at FAMU
(CCME/ISU)

Ashley Murphy, M.S.
Biological Scientist IV,
Florida Fish and Wildlife
Conservation Commission

(ECCME/UTRGV)

Asael Rodriguez, B.S.
Graduate Student at University of
Kent (United Kingdom) as a
Fulbright Scholar

(CCME/UTRGV)

Jamal Burey, B.S.
Masters student in
Engineering at FAMU

(CCME II /BCU)

Molly McBride, M.S
Biological Scientist III, Florida
Department of Health

(CCME/TAMUCC)

Caroline Rodriguez, M.S.
2022 Knauss Fellow and currently a Budget
Analyst with the NOAA Office of Marine and
Aviation Operations

(CCME /CSUMB)

Maya McWilliams, B.S.
CCME II Graduate Student in
Environmental Science at FAMU
(CCME/ISU)

Elena Flores
Natural Resource Specialist II,
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

(CCME /UTRGV)
"The CCME Program has played a pivotal role in shaping my scientific growth throughout my early collegiate journey. I am extremely grateful to my institutional advisors at Bethune-Cookman University (B-CU) and external mentors, who are a part of and collaborate closely with the CCME, for equipping me with the tools that helped to reinforce my confidence as an integrated environmental scientist.

As I pursue my PhD journey at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, I stand as the sole interdisciplinary scientist amidst a diverse group of AI researchers within the Coastal Dynamics lab (AI2ES — Coastal Dynamics Lab). Using my knowledge acquired through my experiences within the CCME and B-CU, I am motivated to be one of the primary voices on how to effectively communicate our AI research across diverse agencies, organizations, and the general public in order to enhance the understanding and fortify healthy relationships between natural and human systems."

Miranda White (CCME I/BCU Alumna),
Doctoral Student in Coastal and Marine System Science at TAMUCC
Latrincy Bates, M.S.
Physical Scientist, U.S. Department of Energy
(ECSC/FAMU)

Zakiya Hoyett, Ph.D., MPH
Vice President of Culture and Compliance, Eggleston
(ECSC/FAMU)

Taylor Trivino, B.S.
Doctoral Student at the University of Washington
(CCME II/CSUMB)

Edward Gniffke, M.S.
Senior Research Associate (Molecular Engineering) at Shape Therapeutics
(CCME II/UTRGV)

Felipe Urrutia, B.S.
Masters Student in Marine Biology at TAMUCC
(CCME/TAMUCC)

Jasmine Caillier, M.S.,
Doctoral Student at the University of South Carolina
(CCME II/TAMUCC)

Judith Sarkodee-Adoo, M.S.
Associate Chemist, New York Department of Environmental Protection
(ECSC/FAMU)

Mariana Leon Perez, Ph.D.
Researcher at the Institute for Socio-Ecological Research
(CCME/TAMUCC)

Natasha Magee Woods, Ph.D., J.D.
Former Honors Judicial Law Clerk at the U.S EPA and current Municipal Court Judge
(ECSC/JSU)

Summer Martinez Crescent, B.S.
CCME II Graduate Student in Environmental Science at FAMU and transitioned to ORISE Fellow with NOAA
(CCME/FAMU)

Felipe Urrutia, B.S.
Masters Student in Marine Biology at TAMUCC
(CCME/TAMUCC)

Edward Gniffke, M.S.
Senior Research Associate (Molecular Engineering) at Shape Therapeutics
(CCME II/UTRGV)

Latriney Bates, M.S.
Physical Scientist, U.S. Department of Energy
(ECSC/FAMU)
“The education and training I received while completing my master's program at UTRGV and being selected as an Environmental Cooperative Science Center (ECSC) scholar was fundamental to me as an early career scientist. The support, skills and mentorship received from UTRGV faculty, CCME partner Institutions, and NOAA research scientists have been beneficial to my development as a researcher and student program coordinator. I have the opportunity to provide mentorship and training to students in my institution and the CCME program.”

Leticia Contreras, M.S
Research Associate II and CCME II Education Liaison at UTRGV
(ECSC/UTRGV)
Conclusion

Alumni and current students from CSCs play a critical role for NOAA aligned fields to support a healthy workforce. This report highlights how funding from NOAA EPP/MSI supports the training, graduation and long term contributions of CCME graduates to the nation’s competitiveness. The center has a profound impact and rich legacy that continues.