

PRIMARILY Caring

A PUBLICATION OF THE MOREHOUSE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

FALL 2020



OUR WEST SIDE STORY

How Morehouse School
of Medicine is building
health equity in Atlanta



COVID-19 ISSUE

12

CLINICAL MSM physicians share
experiences from the front lines

16

HEALTH INNOVATION The rapid
scaling up of MHC Telehealth

18

RESEARCH Studying the racial
impact of COVID-19

20

COMMUNITY The AUCC and the
future of the historic West End

Leading From the Center

Since its establishment in 1835, the West End has stood as a cultural and business epicenter in Atlanta. Adjacent to the Atlanta University Center (AUC), the world's oldest and largest association of historically Black colleges and universities, the streets, homes, parks and businesses of the West End sing a tale of growth, hope and resilience. Like many historic neighborhoods throughout this country, the West End has witnessed its fair share of vitality, but not without a great deal of challenging and uncertain times.

One of the capital city's oldest neighborhoods, the West End is inextricably linked to the history of Atlanta. From the Civil War to the civil rights movement, the neighborhood is connected to local, state and national leaders, playing a vital role in the development and advancement of both Atlanta and Georgia. Despite being listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the neighborhood is not exempt from the impact of suburbanization and urban decline of inner cities witnessed across the country.

Morehouse School of Medicine, as one of the preeminent institutions in the Atlanta University Center Consortium, has been on the front lines of revitalizing the West End. Founded to improve the health and well-being of individuals and communities, we remain committed to educational and economic advancement as a means to improved health outcomes. The environment in which a person lives, works and plays—what we refer to as the social determinants of health—directly impacts his or her ability to attain optimal health.

Our programs in research, education, patient care and service are tailored to remove barriers to health and bridge the gaps in our health care system that are often the underlying cause of disparities for minority populations. We believe this compels us to transcend the traditional role of a medical school and act as a partner and conduit for economic growth and empowerment.

The most recent and tangible evidence of this philosophy is what we refer to as our “west side story,” a \$52 million development of our Lee Street property. With construction of the Mercedes-Benz Stadium and Atlanta BeltLine, the historic West End once again serves as a bustling epicenter for growth and development. Preserving the rich history of this historic district while positioning



it for economic growth remains a delicate balance to achieve. Our role at Morehouse School of Medicine is to ensure that health equity remains at the forefront as we increase opportunities for individuals and families in the community.

One challenge to that role is the novel coronavirus, referred to as COVID-19. For the Morehouse School of Medicine, like many institutions across the country, COVID-19 has presented a new dynamic to the story. Amid the development and growth, our communities and families are grappling with a global pandemic that is devastating vulnerable and minority populations.

The continuing impact of COVID-19 requires us to seek solutions that will not only address the virus and global pandemic but also address the disparities and inequities in outcomes experienced by people of color. As a leading force in the advancement of health equity, Morehouse School of Medicine is on the front lines of COVID-19 research, patient care and public health policy. Through strategic and groundbreaking partnerships, as well as innovations in care delivery, our faculty and staff are working to safeguard the lives and livelihoods of not just Georgians but of individuals and families across the globe.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue about our “west side story” and the groundbreaking work we are doing to advance health equity.

Sincerely,
Valerie Montgomery Rice, M.D.
President and Dean, Morehouse School of Medicine

PRIMARILY Caring

A PUBLICATION OF THE MOREHOUSE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

FALL 2020

FEATURES



COMMUNITY
Our West Side Story

6



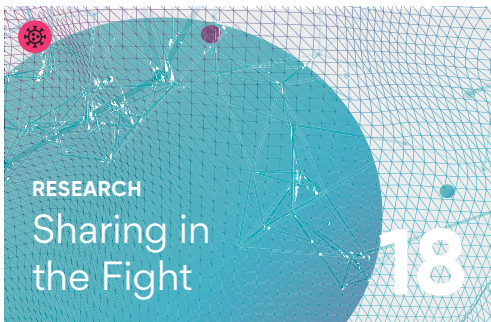
CLINICAL
Boots on
the Ground

12



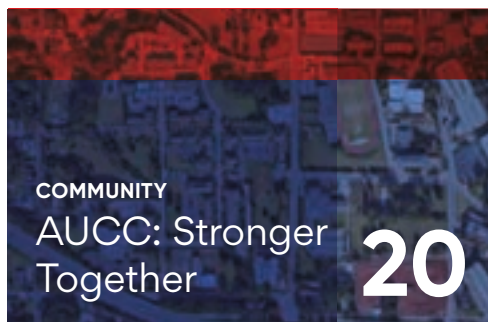
HEALTH INNOVATION
The Rapid
Scaling Up of
MHC Telehelath

16



RESEARCH
Sharing in
the Fight

18



COMMUNITY
AUCC: Stronger
Together

20

NEWS & NOTES

News Briefs 2

SPOTLIGHTS

Billye Suber Aaron 26
Brenton Powers 27
Keri Harp 28

COVID-19 ISSUE

PRIMARILY CARING

Fall 2020
Issue 2, Volume 2

PRESIDENT AND DEAN

Valerie Montgomery Rice, M.D.

EDITOR

David Hefner, Ed.D.

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Angela Wimes

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Christine Van Dusen

PUBLICATION/DESIGN CONSULTANT

Green Gate Marketing

WRITERS

Christine Van Dusen
Angela Wimes
Green Gate Marketing

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Julius Grimes
Richard Scott

Primarily Caring magazine is published by Morehouse School of Medicine, 720 Westview Drive S.W., Atlanta, GA 30310. ISSN 2690-098X. All submissions, letters to the editor and other editorial content should be emailed to PrimarilyCaring@msm.edu. This publication was funded in part by Title III.





News Briefs

OCTOBER 2020

MSM Shares in \$15M Gates Foundation Investment to Expand COVID-19 Testing at HBCUs

School is one of six institutions serving as diagnostic centers in The Just Project.

Morehouse School of Medicine is one of six historically Black colleges and universities to share in a three-year, \$15 million investment by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as part of its COVID-19 response, made in partnership with The Just Project, which aims to increase access to COVID-19 diagnostic testing for HBCU campuses and their communities.

The Just Project is ThermoFisher Scientific's ambitious and historic partnership with HBCUs involving a multipronged effort to help address the coronavirus, which has disproportionately impacted communities of color. The project is establishing diagnostic testing hubs at colleges and universities, including equipment, additional test kits and analytical labs to rapidly deploy and process COVID-19 tests. MSM is serving as one of those regional hub diagnostic centers, processing tests administered at multiple HBCUs.

The Gates Foundation investment, its largest donation to HBCUs to date, will support MSM

and up to 10 participating HBCU medical, veterinary, pharmacy and agriculture schools in this effort. The other initial institutions are Florida A&M University, Hampton University, Howard University, Meharry Medical College and Xavier University of Louisiana.



Dawn Tyus, LPC

OCTOBER 2020

SATTC Director Awarded \$3.5M Grant to Focus on Behavioral Health Disparities

Dawn Tyus, LPC, director and principal investigator of the Southeast Addiction Technology Transfer Center (SATTC) at MSM's National

Center for Primary Care, was recently awarded a five-year, \$3.5 million grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to develop a center of excellence focused on behavioral health disparities among Black people.

Building on the expertise of MSM and its large, diverse community of Black stakeholders, scientists and educators, the Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health Disparities seeks to increase the capacity of behavioral health systems to provide outreach, engage, retain and effectively care for Black people; provide current information and culturally appropriate, evidenced-based practices increase workforce development opportunities focused on implicit bias, social determinants of health, structural racism and other factors that impede high-quality care for Blacks.

The SATTC works to accelerate the adoption and implementation of evidence-based and promising addiction treatment and recovery-oriented practices. The center strives to be the premiere expert on faith-based communities and tailoring needs to special populations, such as people of color. In addition to Georgia, the SATTC includes Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.



SEPTEMBER 2020

Bloomberg Philanthropies Commits \$26.3M Gift to Morehouse School of Medicine

Nation's four historically Black medical schools are to receive \$100 million to fund medical student scholarships.

MSM has been awarded \$26.3 million from Bloomberg Philanthropies, the charitable organization founded by entrepreneur and former New York City mayor and presidential candidate Michael Bloomberg. The donation is part of a \$100 million fund for students attending the nation's four historically Black medical schools: Morehouse School of Medicine (Atlanta), Charles R. Drew University of Medicine (Los Angeles), Howard University College of Medicine (Washington, D.C.) and Meharry Medical College (Nashville).

At MSM, the funds will be used to reduce medical school loan debt for Black students currently enrolled and receiving student aid. Each student will receive approximately \$100,000.

This is the largest scholarship investment ever received by MSM, as well as the largest aggregate gift to date given to historically Black medical schools from a single source. This is the first investment from Bloomberg Philanthropies' Greenwood Initiative, which is named for the Tulsa, Oklahoma, community and historical site of "Black Wall Street" and the Tulsa Massacre of 1921. The Greenwood Initiative seeks to increase generational wealth among Black families and address systemic underinvestment in Black communities and institutions.

"This historic investment in the Morehouse School of Medicine will lift the crushing bur-

den of student debt and empower our graduates to take on the systemic racial inequities and injustice that have been exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic," said Morehouse School of Medicine President and Dean Valerie Montgomery Rice, M.D. "These dollars will help free up future doctors to immediately head to the front lines and save Black lives while also improving health care access, equity and quality for everyone. We appreciate Mayor Bloomberg's investment in health equity."

The country is becoming more and more diverse, but the diversity of its health care workforce still lags, with African Americans comprising just 5 percent of the physician workforce. This is due, in large part, to the high cost of completing a medical degree. The impact is significant, given that studies show that Black patients tend to have better outcomes when treated by Black physicians.

"More Black doctors will mean more Black lives saved and fewer health problems that limit economic opportunity," said Michael Bloomberg, founder of Bloomberg Philanthropies and Bloomberg LP and three-term mayor of New York City. "During my campaign for president, I proposed a bold set of policies—which we called the Greenwood Initiative—to shrink the racial wealth gap. Today's commitment by Bloomberg Philanthropies is just the first step we will take to bring that work to life."



Hadiyah-Nicole Green, Ph.D.

AUGUST 2020

Faculty Member Among Alabama's 'Women of the Century'

The USA Today Network recognized Hadiyah-Nicole Green, Ph.D., assistant professor of surgery, as one of Alabama's "Women of

the Century" alongside such luminaries as Rosa Parks, Harper Lee, Coretta Scott King and Condoleezza Rice.

In honor of August's 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment granting women the right to vote, the digital and print news outlet is naming 10 American women from all 50 states, plus the District of Columbia. Dr. Green was one of the first Black women in the country to earn a doctorate in physics. She created a cancer foundation in honor of her aunt and has received a \$1.1 million grant from the Department of Veteran Affairs to continue her research.



Herman Taylor, M.D.

AUGUST 2020

UnitedHealth Group Backs COVID-19, Sickle Cell Risk Study

Minnesota-based UnitedHealth Group is putting \$600,000 toward a new study with Morehouse School of Medicine to determine whether carrying the genetic trait that causes sickle cell disease could put a subset of Black Americans at greater risk from COVID-19. Mortality rates due to COVID-19 in the United States have disproportionately affected Black Americans and other communities of color.

Herman Taylor, M.D., director of MSM's Cardiovascular Research Institute, is principal investigator for the study, which will examine up to 300 adults admitted to Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta. Researchers will screen study participants for the sickle cell trait to determine if a disproportionate number of carriers are sickened by the pandemic virus and whether they have different health outcomes compared with noncarriers.



Calvin Smyre

AUGUST 2020

Synovus Makes \$1M Contribution to UNCF, Names Scholarship Fund in Honor of State Representative and MSM Trustee Calvin Smyre

Synovus announced a \$1 million contribution to UNCF (United Negro College Fund) for the establishment of The Synovus/Calvin Smyre Scholarship Fund. The fund will provide scholarships for African American students to attend historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and other institutions of higher education in Synovus's five-state footprint.

"Our country has been bluntly reminded of the work that remains to ensure equal opportunities and to address persistent racial and educational inequalities," said Kessel D. Stelling, Synovus chairman and CEO. "Synovus is deeply committed to taking action, and we're proud to support UNCF and its vital work to close these gaps through education."

"We also couldn't be more pleased to honor the legacy of our friend Calvin Smyre, who has dedicated his life to public service for the people of Columbus and the entire state of Georgia. Calvin represents the best of the banking industry, and Synovus and is the epitome of HBCU excellence."

Rep. Smyre is a member of the MSM board of trustees.

JULY 2020

Meet MSM's Inaugural 'Teachers of Distinction'

The new Teaching Academy at MSM recently named its first four "Teachers of Distinction,"

faculty members—including a husband-and-wife team—who demonstrate service, integrity and commitment to excellence in teaching. Nominated by their peers, these exemplary teachers also bring a proven record of accomplishment and commitment to the mastery of subject content and effective delivery, leading and supporting innovation in teaching and facilitating the exchange of ideas within and across disciplines. Here are MSM's first-ever "Teachers of Distinction":



Janice Herbert-Carter, M.D., MGA, FACA

Dr. Herbert-Carter is chair and professor of medical education. A Princeton University graduate, she earned her M.D. degree from Howard University College of Medicine and completed her internship and residency in internal medicine at Howard University Hospital in Washington, D.C. Among other things, Dr. Herbert-Carter directs and teaches the pathophysiology course for second-year medical students.



Marjorie M. Smith, M.D.

Dr. Smith is a professor in the Department of Pathology and Anatomy. She received her undergraduate degree from Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, where she was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society. She is a graduate of Howard University College of Medicine and completed a residency in anatomic and clinical pathology at Cleveland Clinic in Cleveland, Ohio. Dr. Smith is board certified in anatomic and clinical pathology and an American College of Pathologists fellow. In addition to her faculty position, during her MSM tenure, Dr. Smith has held several administrative positions, including interim chair and chairperson in the Department of Pathology (now the Department of Pathology and Anatomy), interim chairperson in the Department of Medical Education and interim dean and senior vice president for academic affairs.



Quentin Ted Smith, M.D.

Dr. Smith is professor of psychiatry, vice chair of psychiatric education and associate director of the psychiatry clerkship. He is a member of Phi Beta Kappa, a Woodrow Wilson fellow, National Medical fellow and member of Alpha Omega Alpha Medical Honorary Society. He is a graduate of Howard University College of Medicine and completed his child and ado-

lescent fellowship at University Hospitals of Cleveland. Dr. Smith has served as director of the Fulton County Mental Health Center, the Child and Adolescent Clinic at Grady and the Child and Adolescent Program at Ridgeview Institute. He has received numerous awards for teaching from national organizations, medical students and residents; the Dean's Award for Outstanding Teaching; and Teacher of the Year and Master Teacher Awards from the yearlong faculty development program.



Carey Roth Bayer, Ed.D., M.Ed., BSN, RN, CSE

Dr. Bayer is a professor in the departments of community health and preventive medicine as well as medical education. Her scholarship focuses on training health professionals to address human sexuality with patients across the life span; sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, safe space and inclusion training; and educational outcomes and impacts of leadership training programs.

She earned a B.S. in nursing from Xavier University and a master's in adult education and a doctorate in human sexuality education from Widener University.

Morehouse School of Medicine Welcomes Record Incoming Class of 105 M.D. Students

Black men represent nearly half of the class of 2024 as country struggles to increase number of physicians from underrepresented communities.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic and social unrest across the country, Morehouse School of Medicine welcomed its largest entering M.D. class ever as 105 future health leaders—including 51 Black/African American men—started their virtual orientation, the beginning of a journey that will lead them into a brave new world of health care.

"Despite everything taking place in this country and around the world—or perhaps in part because of it—we are delighted to welcome the largest incoming M.D. class in Morehouse School of Medicine's 45-year history," President and Dean Valerie Montgomery Rice said. "Three years ago we began our journey on the 'Road to 100.' We are pleased to achieve this benchmark for the third straight year and look forward to watching these students grow and develop as they prepare to join the fight for health equity."



Clockwise from top left: Dr. Mary Langley; Dr. Ronald Braithwaite; Dr. Tabia Akintobi; Dr. Daniel Blumenthal.

MAY 2020

New Book Authored by MSM Experts Provides Lessons Learned for Community Engagement

The Morehouse Model: How One School of Medicine Revolutionized Community Engagement and Health Equity

Among the 154 medical schools in the United States, Morehouse School of Medicine (MSM) stands out for its formidable success in improving its surrounding communities. Over its history, MSM has become known as an institution committed to community engagement, with an interest in closing the health equity gap between people of color and the white majority population.

How can the example of MSM help other health-oriented universities create ideal collaborations between faculty and community-based organizations? That was the question that drove well-respected MSM leaders to publish “The Morehouse Model” through Johns Hopkins University Press.

“Rooted in social action and social justice constructs, the book is a touchstone for anyone conducting community-based participatory research, as well as any institution that wants to have a positive effect on its local community,” says Ronald L. Braithwaite, professor of community health and preventative medicine at MSM.

In “The Morehouse Model,” Braithwaite and co-authors Tabia Henry Akintobi, Ph.D., M.P.H., Mary Langley, Ph.D., M.P.H., and the late Daniel S. Blumenthal reveal the lessons learned over the decades since the school’s founding—lessons that other medical schools and health systems will be eager to learn in the hope of replicating Morehouse’s success.

SEPTEMBER 2020

Joint Statement on the Integrity of Vaccine Trials and the Inclusion of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC)

By Drs. Wayne A.I. Frederick, David M. Carlisle, Valerie Montgomery Rice and James Hildreth

We, as representatives of the four historically Black medical schools in our nation, are committed to the inclusion of Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) as we engage in research initiatives focused on the novel coronavirus, SARS CoV-2. The virus, COVID-19, disproportionately impacts the number of infections, complications and deaths in our communities. Our research efforts will be governed by the basic principles of respect of persons, beneficence and justice.

Respect for persons demands that our communities enter into research voluntarily and with adequate information. Beneficence ensures that our communities will recognize the benefits and risks that may result from the improvement of knowledge through their participation in research. And finally, justice will be achieved by ensuring that no person is denied participation in research without good reason; nor will anyone be unduly burdened by their participation.

Our decisions to recommend participation in clinical studies, including vaccine trials, will always be informed by rigorous science carried out under international rules governing safe and ethical conduct of research. Our approach will be unbiased and not influenced by financial or nonfinancial conflicts. We will rely on peer-reviewed, transparent science, an important component in protecting the welfare of persons who volunteer to participate in clinical studies.

Specifically, we stand together to:

- Protect the members of our communities by maintaining the highest standard of integrity and respect, which have always been and will remain as cornerstones of our engagement.
- Listen to our communities and address concerns and fears surrounding research related to COVID-19—including clinical trials, vaccine candidate trials and therapeutic and diagnostic research—by providing accurate information based on scientific evidence.
- Ensure that the manner and context in which information regarding participation in research is conveyed is culturally and linguistically appropriate.
- Confirm that individuals enter into research voluntarily and that agreement to participate in research constitutes a valid consent.
- Uphold, no matter what, the fundamental guiding Hippocratic maxim to “do no harm.”
- Promote equity as it relates to access to opportunities to improve the quality of health and wellness, ensuring that each community we engage gets what they need, when they need it and in the amount that they need.

These fundamental principles are inherent to each of us as individual medical schools, and collectively we pledge to use our unified voice to advocate for all who consider and those who participate in COVID-related clinical and translational research.

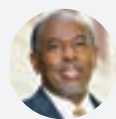
Signed: _____



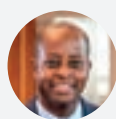
Dr. David M. Carlisle
President and CEO of Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science



Dr. Valerie Montgomery Rice
President and Dean of Morehouse School of Medicine



Dr. James E.K. Hildreth
President and CEO of Meharry Medical College



Dr. Wayne A.I. Frederick
President of Howard University





Our West Side Story

How Morehouse School
of Medicine Is Building
Health Equity in Atlanta





ABOVE
Location of MSM on a 1975 city planning map outlining the area within Atlanta Council District 4.

PREVIOUS SPREAD
Entra West End—which houses 187 apartments—and the MSM Community Health and Wellness Center offer student housing, ambulatory and student patient care and a YMCA fitness center for the AUC and the community.

When Morehouse School of Medicine President and Dean Valerie Montgomery Rice, M.D., looked across the street from campus in 2014, she didn't see just an empty patch of land. She saw possibility and an opportunity to address pressing needs, fulfill the institution's crucial mission and help west-side Atlanta to thrive. This was shortly after she took on her role as the sixth president of MSM, and, at the time, that span of red clay served little purpose.

Meanwhile, MSM had no on-campus housing for its students, who lost valuable hours each week while commuting in Atlanta's maddening traffic. Students at MSM, other students in the Atlanta University Center (AUC) and members of the surrounding community also lacked access to convenient, equitable health care. And the historic West End neighborhood, long central to Atlanta's civil rights movement, needed further revitalization.

So Dr. Montgomery Rice and her team set out to turn that patch of land into a vibrant mixed-use development that would bring housing, health and help to the long underserved West End

community. Their plans became reality this year with the opening of Entra, a \$25 million development led by Atlanta-based Carter and Atlantic American Partners at the corner of Lee and Park streets that includes 187 market-rate apartments, an ambulatory care center, a fitness center operated by the YMCA, 2,624 square feet of retail space and a four-level parking deck.

"This is a game changer," said Dr. Montgomery Rice.

It is a game changer, especially for Atlanta's historic West End, established in 1835. The beautiful tree-lined neighborhoods just southwest of downtown began a slow decline from affluence into blight and disrepair after World War II. The prominent African American academic institutions of Morehouse College, Clark College, Atlanta University and Spelman College were thriving while parts of the west side nearby succumbed to the abandonment of white flight. By 1976, the year after Morehouse School of Medicine was founded, the population of the West End was 86 percent African American.

MSM began as a two-year basic sciences medical program at Morehouse

College and became an independent institution six years later, dedicated to educating and training minority primary care physicians, health care professionals and researchers. The need in Atlanta and the rest of Georgia was especially acute—28 percent of the residents of the city were African American at that time, but just 2 percent of Georgia's doctors were Black.

Now the Lee Street development is the flagship entrance gateway to the AUC institutions and the West End as the area undergoes a renaissance of residential and commercial properties.

"We view ourselves as an anchor institution for our area," said Todd Greene, executive director of the Atlanta University Center Consortium (AUCC). "As anchors, we think about what will make our community better, whether it is in health and welfare, affordable and safe housing, helping to promote small businesses or even with respect to tourism and visitors."

DEVELOPING HEALTH EQUITY

The ambitious project highlights MSM's commitment to health equity. Students and staff will share access to the facil-



ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT
A hard hat rests during construction of the mixed-use development seen as a “game changer” for the historic West End; street signs at the corner of Hammond and Lee streets.

ities with residents of the West End neighborhood, including seniors and children, who will be welcomed as patients for urgent care and needed appointments.

Dr. Gregory Antoine, MSM’s senior associate dean of clinical affairs and chief medical officer, credits Dr. Montgomery Rice’s vision for the new facility. “She wanted to have a comprehensive health care center close to the school and also in this part of town,” he said.

The 9,000-square-foot YMCA-operated fitness facility on the first floor “will be open to all citizens,” Dr. Antoine said. “The second floor will be what we call our clinical enterprise and will offer primary and specialty care such as endocrinology, cardiology, neurology and OB-GYN services.” He said additional specialties, including pediatrics, would be added in months to come.

“The third floor will be the comprehensive student wellness and health care center,” Dr. Antoine said. “That floor is being designed with the Atlanta University Center schools in mind, as well as MSM.” The wellness center, he added, “will offer behavioral health,

primary care, counseling services and women’s health.”

Dr. Antoine said he hopes to see pediatric care in operation before the end of 2020. A large part of the MSM faculty already serves patients at the Children’s Hospital of Atlanta; additional faculty would have to be hired to expand pediatric services, he said.

STUDENT LIFE AND HEALTH

Dr. Montgomery Rice said much of the inspiration for the project came from student town hall meetings designed to explore “the real challenges” facing students. Focus groups on the four AUC campuses emphasized the need for attention to students’ mental health and well-being, to help them manage stress and anxiety—over academic tests, for instance—and for behavioral health. Out of these conversations, plans for the student wellness center were drawn.

“We wanted a state-of-the-art health care facility, offering integrated care and technology that was very student focused,” Dr. Montgomery Rice said.

The apartments, Entra West End, will help unify MSM with Morehouse College, Spelman College and Clark Atlanta

University, offering quality housing to students from all four institutions and to nonstudents alike.

“Our students and professional staff currently spend a great deal of time traveling to campus,” Dr. Montgomery Rice said. “This development offers our students the ability to live close to campus, reducing travel time and alleviating stresses as they study. The amenities have all been designed with the students in mind, so we are confident that current and prospective students alike will appreciate having it as an option as they complete their studies.”

The 187 residences—available furnished or unfurnished for a total of 345 occupants—offer market-rate rents competitive with other modern apartments in the Atlanta midtown-downtown area.

Andrea Hartville, property manager for Entra West End Ram Partners, said the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed leasing for 2020, keeping AUC students from returning to campus to attend classes in person. She said demand is steady, however, with 65 people on a 2021 waiting list for the remaining 97 vacancies.

Dr. Ngozi Anachebe, MSM associate dean of admissions and student affairs, said until now, MSM students, with no campus housing, were plagued by Atlanta's "notoriously clogged traffic."

"Our students currently live all over the Atlanta metropolitan area—some live 20 to 40-plus miles from our campus. With traffic, this means more than an hour driving one way," she said. Now, this new housing development "will enhance our students' ability to focus on their studies ... and enjoy the amenities of modern living with schoolmates. This enhances their sense of community."

A big bonus is that the Lee Street development is just minutes away from Grady Memorial Hospital, one of MSM's major clinical sites for student medical rotations, Dr. Anachebe said.

When Calbeth Alaribe enrolled in the MSM physician assistant studies program, she was immediately attracted to living in the new multiuse development. Alaribe, from Reno, Nevada, had received her master's degree in public health in 2016 from Emory University. All too familiar with Atlanta's notorious traffic, Alaribe was exactly the type of student for whom the project was designed.

"Being so close to campus definitely attracted me," said Alaribe, who shares a two-bedroom apartment with a roommate. "I really am not for the traffic and long commutes," she said.

Alaribe and her roommate moved into an unfurnished unit in June, with two bedrooms, two bathrooms, walk-in closets and a shared kitchen, living room and laundry. Each floor offers a study area. Residents enjoy a huge parklike courtyard with barbecue grills, seating among the landscaping and an adjacent clubhouse with a kitchen. Retail spaces include the 44th & 3rd Bookseller, a family-owned, multicultural book and culture enterprise, and Beauty Industry Suites, salons and business suites for independent beauty industry professionals.

Alaribe and her roommate will each pay \$833 a month after receiving \$200-per-month scholarships from Chick-fil-A to help students offset their Entra

living costs. Their rent includes a utility bonus, covering the first \$75 of each resident's costs of electricity, water, sewer, trash and pest control; residents are billed for any overage.

"It's very cozy," Alaribe said. "I really like it. The halls are quiet." She said she's looking forward to being able to access the health center, the YMCA fitness center and retail establishments.

A NEW ANCHOR FOR THE WEST SIDE

Officials throughout the Atlanta University Center are eager for the opening of the ambulatory health center, a collaboration among all four AUC schools that will be known as the MSM Community Health and Wellness Center.

"How exciting it is for our students," said Greene, "both in terms of their medical care and ultimately, for others in the community, a world-class health care facility."

Scott Taylor, president and CEO of Carter, said his development company is "thrilled" to partner with MSM. "We believe this project will anchor the southern gateway to the AU Center and the west side of Atlanta while catalyzing more activity in the area," he said. The ownership joint venture includes equity investments by MSM, Carter and Campus Life Fund, sponsored by Atlantic American Partners.

At the 2018 groundbreaking ceremony, Dr. Montgomery Rice said, Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms described the project as "the largest investment in public-private partnership in the West End in 40 years." Ultimately, the investment is expected to inspire millions of dollars in new housing, retail and office space in the area.

"We believe that as others see how to successfully partner with historic West End, we will see a ripple effect of not only further development but community-driven development that maintains the rich history and legacy of this area," Dr. Montgomery Rice said.

The new Lee Street development will help MSM attract and retain the students who will go on to benefit underserved communities throughout Georgia, Dr. Montgomery Rice said.

"For more than five years, about 66

percent of our resident graduates have elected to practice in Georgia, showing their commitment to our vision and the improvement of health care in our state," she said. "We are confident this new development will serve as a vibrant living and learning community that will attract and retain, particularly, students and our graduates to come and remain in Georgia."

Alaribe, whose master's concentration is global health, will likely fulfill Dr. Montgomery Rice's desire for MSM students to remain in Georgia, at least for a time.

"We wanted a state-of-the-art health care facility, offering integrated care and technology that was very student focused."

— Dr. Montgomery Rice, MSM president and dean

"I'm first-generation Nigerian American," Alaribe said. "I see myself working in underserved populations in Georgia but also see myself traveling to other countries, especially in Africa, and helping improve health care infrastructure," she said.

The new Lee Street development, Dr. Montgomery Rice said, will allow MSM to fulfill its mission for community engagement and partnership.

"We believe it's important for us to be visible in the community, partnering to bring about needed and desired change," she said. **M**

OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP The strikingly modern and stylish kitchen in the Clubhouse, one of Entra's common areas; Alexander Martinek, on move-in day, carrying a box of belongings up to his new apartment; an outdoor space for gathering is outfitted with grills, a prep sink and seating in a parklike setting.



Boots on the Ground

MSM physicians share their experiences serving on the front lines of an emerging pandemic at Grady Memorial Hospital.

As the COVID-19 pandemic began to sweep the United States last spring, physicians from Morehouse School of Medicine quickly mobilized to treat hundreds of Georgia's sickest patients at Grady Memorial Hospital.

Dr. Eric Flenaugh, chief and director of pulmonary and critical care and interventional pulmonary medicine at Grady, said MSM physicians' familiarity with African Americans' COVID mortality risk factors like cardiovascular disease and diabetes has given them a higher awareness of patients' needs and vulnerabilities. That is helping them save lives.

Along with their Grady colleagues from the Emory University School of Medicine, MSM physicians hit the front lines, working brutal hours to treat and save many patients debilitated by high fever, their lungs struggling to take in oxygen, some of them with kidneys failing.

"We have a commitment to health equity here—we work in a hospital where we have a large population of African American patients," Dr. Flenaugh said. "We saw how a disproportionate number of African Americans are affected." ▶

Left to right: Dr. Gregory Antoine, senior associate dean of clinical affairs and chief medical officer at MSM; Dr. Yolanda Wimberly, associate dean of clinical affairs at MSM; Dr. Eric Flenaugh, chief and director of pulmonary and critical care and interventional pulmonary medicine at Grady.

The effect of the coronavirus on African Americans has been staggering. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that in the early weeks of the pandemic, COVID-19 killed twice as many people of color under age 65 as it did white people in the same age group.

“We took care of the sickest of the sick,” said Dr. Gregory Antoine, senior associate dean of clinical affairs and chief medical officer at MSM. “Our physicians worked tirelessly. They were sometimes in the hospital 24/7 providing acute care.”

Grady Memorial Hospital, founded in 1892, is one of the nation’s largest public hospitals. It is licensed for 950 beds, admitting nearly 30,000 patients in 2019. Ninety percent of Grady’s patients are African American. It is the largest hospital in Georgia and a major safety net for its patients—30 percent of them are uninsured.

“At our peak times, Grady utilized the Georgia World Congress Center temporary hospital provided by the state to care for some COVID-19 patients who did not require a high level of care,” said Denise Simpson, Grady spokeswoman.

CLINICAL RESPONSE

In the early spring, as infections increased around the country, Grady leadership foresaw the coming crisis and worked to put together what Dr. Flenaugh called “a biocontainment and bio-response team, particularly with the ICU.” The primary goal, he said, was “to contain within the hospital so you don’t get hospital spread of the virus.”

What they did not expect, he said, was a subsequent huge spike in very sick patients in late June, only weeks after it seemed the initial crush had seemed manageable.

“It hit us like a tidal wave,” Dr. Flenaugh said.

Unlike the initial patient population of elderly and already sick people, the new surge brought younger victims, many of them between 20 and 40 years old. Not as many of the younger patients died as did elderly patients in the

early days of the pandemic, but many who survived are suffering severe and chronic lung, renal and cardiovascular complications and blood clots.

“This virus doesn’t know an age limit,” Dr. Flenaugh said. “This is not like the flu; patients don’t just bounce back.”

Dr. Flenaugh said he and his colleagues decided to “cohort” the coronavirus patients into one area of the hospital. “Those requiring ICU level of care we put on the seventh floor at Grady,” he said. “We had a 20-bed unit that we set forth so that each attending would have 20 patients underneath their care.” Having that COVID ICU, he said, allowed the staff to keenly focus on their sickest patients.

“When we went into that COVID unit, that was all we did 24/7,” he said. The clinicians gained expertise in managing the disease. Their treatment strategy became “standardized” as a result.

While the environment he described was intense, MSM and Emory clinicians were able to stay on top of the demands to treat and save lives. “We didn’t get overwhelmed,” Dr. Flenaugh said.

Early on, he called on his network of colleagues from around the country for advice as the crush of COVID-19 patients staggered other hospitals. He reached out to doctors in New York, New Jersey, Texas and Shanghai.

“We planned ahead and kind of learned from other people’s mistakes,” he said. “I’d done a lot of researching and reaching out to other physicians in the country and internationally. We talked one-on-one about what worked and what didn’t, about strategies to implement this treatment and biocontainment plan.”

To fight COVID-19, Grady assembled a pool of designated physicians and a backup pool. MSM assigned four pool physicians, and Emory had six or seven. At the height of the initial patient surge, Dr. Flenaugh said he worked four and a half weeks straight. “It was pretty fatiguing,” he said, with workdays a grueling 13 to 15 hours long.

“Going into it, in the beginning, there was uncertainty because we didn’t know

exactly how the disease would behave,” he said.

He and his colleagues were concerned about whether they would have enough PPE (personal protective equipment) such as gowns, masks, face shields and gloves. They were well aware that health care workers around the country were getting sick, some even dying. But with much community support and donations in Atlanta, he said, MSM, Emory and Grady had “proper PPE for physicians to take care of patients. That took some of the concerns away.”

Despite that, he said several physicians and residents were sickened by the virus.

THE HUMAN ASPECT

The days and nights on the front lines at Grady were emotionally and physically exhausting. Upon arrival, Dr. Flenaugh said, he and his colleagues showered and changed into scrubs. “Once you go into the area with PPE, you don’t go in and out,” he said. “Then you shower at the hospital, change back into clean clothes, drive home, wipe everything down and shower again at home.”

Flenaugh, whose wife is also a physician, is the father of three daughters. He took extra measures to protect them from contracting the virus.

“I kept myself a little bit distanced from my family,” he said, using “gallons and gallons of hand sanitizer.”

He described as “mind-boggling” the emotional aspect of treating struggling patients, many of them with single or multiple organ failure, isolated for days and weeks from their loved ones. Those in respiratory failure were quickly put on ventilators; those whose kidneys started to fail were put on dialysis to prevent renal failure.

Dr. Flenaugh was especially concerned about the patients being kept from their relatives—and about the families kept from their hospitalized loved ones.

“I put myself in that situation,” he said, a realization that prompted him to call for a protocol requiring that families be updated on their patient’s



ABOVE
People entering and exiting the main entrance at Grady Memorial Hospital at the height of the COVID pandemic, early summer 2020.

condition and care twice a day—every morning after doctors made rounds and again in the evening after nurses changed their shifts.

Whenever a patient was successfully weaned off a ventilator, Dr. Flenaugh took his cellphone to the patient’s bedside.

“I’d go in with my phone and dial up and let them talk to their family member,” he said. Those were “very emotional times for everybody” as the patients softly whispered their first contact with family members in days and weeks.

LEARNING DURING A PANDEMIC

For Dr. Yolanda Wimberly, MSM associate dean of clinical affairs, the pandemic forced changes and challenges in the way she assigned the medical students

and residents she oversees at Grady. By mid-March, Dr. Wimberly said only residents were allowed to participate in the Grady response. Students were reassigned for their safety. That also limited foot traffic through the critical treatment areas. Several weeks later, Dr. Wimberly said, students returned to Grady but not to treat COVID patients.

“We saw the numbers (of infections) were steady and declining, and we had appropriate PPE available, so the students came back,” Dr. Wimberly said. “Students are doing patient care on non-COVID and non-OR procedures.”

Dr. Wimberly, who is recognized for developing a cutting-edge medical curriculum for the education of physicians, said MSM is quickly integrating experience from the COVID-19 pandemic into what medical students learn.

MSM already had a general pandemic response in its curriculum, she said. “We instituted a weekly webinar series at the end of March, and,” she added, “we are developing a specific COVID-19 pandemic curriculum.” As the pandemic unfolds, Dr. Wimberly and her colleagues will be able to follow and incorporate literature specific to COVID-19.

To Dr. Flenaugh, MSM’s ongoing experience with COVID-19—even as cases throughout Georgia spiked into the summer—will shape the medical school for the future.

“There’s a lot that we’ve learned from the experience, going forward, for educating for the future,” he said. “It’s not going away.” **M**



The Rapid Scaling Up of MHC Telehealth

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the United States in the spring of 2020 and the nation at large was asked to shelter at home, MSM was uniquely prepared to continue serving patients.

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN Morehouse Healthcare—the clinical arm of Morehouse School of Medicine—saw just 40 patients per month using teleconferencing technology at MHC Telehealth. Telemedicine proved to be a boon for people living in Georgia’s rural and underserved counties, nine of which had no doctors at all.

MHC Telehealth was a successful and helpful service. But it represented a sliver of the appointments taken at in-person clinics.

And then the coronavirus pandemic took hold, and everything changed.

In the first month, MHC Telehealth experienced a 700 percent increase in patients. “We were seeing 2,000 patients,” said Walkitria Smith, M.D., MSM’s medical director for telemedicine. “We had the program in place, but the surge was stressful.”

Though telemedicine first emerged in the United States in the late 1950s to transmit video, images and medical data from neurological examinations at the University of Nebraska, fine-tuning and widespread adoption of the technology took several more decades.

In 2018, Morehouse School of Medicine launched MHC Telehealth to bring health care to rural and other underserved areas of Georgia via videoconferencing technology. The first patients were seen in September of that year, and MSM’s medical students engaged in formal education in telemedicine soon after. In 2019, family medicine residents began seeing patients on the research rotation of telemedicine. Also in 2019, pharmacy students at the metro Atlanta campus of Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine (PCOM) began rotating in telemedicine and participating in interdisciplinary care.

Services now include family medicine, surgery, neurology, psychiatry, cardiology, obstetrics and gynecology, internal medicine, bariatrics, pediatrics, endocrinology, infertility and sleep medicine.

The program—which has been supported by Georgia’s \$35 million investment in MSM—reduces travel costs

and wait times, increases efficiencies and saves money for patients who in the past needed to secure child care or eldercare during appointments.

For patients who require specialized attention, MHC Telehealth can monitor them from their homes, gathering essential information to allow Morehouse Healthcare physicians to treat illnesses like diabetes, hypertension, heart failure and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

“When COVID-19 hit and we had to stop face-to-face visits in the office for safety reasons, we then began to shift focus to delivering care via our technical platform for telemedicine,” said Gregory Antoine, M.D., MSM’s chief medical officer.

“Things were changing rapidly. COVID-19 hit, and ‘telemed’ was the biggest buzzword ever.”

Walkitria Smith, M.D., MSM’s medical director for telemedicine

“We went from 1 percent of visits to now up to 74 percent of visits done for primary care in the community,” Dr. Antoine said this summer. He praised the medical school’s telemedicine leaders who had to rapidly push widespread usage of the technology as the pandemic unfolded.

So when COVID-19 emerged, MSM was not caught unprepared. But the program’s leaders needed to act quickly and thoughtfully to scale up. Providers were trained in how to conduct examinations and evaluations remotely, either with

audiovisual tools similar to FaceTime or in telephone conversations.

Federal rules changed and changed again governing reimbursement for remote treatment of Medicaid and Medicare patients. Throughout MSM and its clinics, staffers attended webinars, manuals were prepared and changes in billing codes and stipulations were studied as the medical school and health care operation navigated the process.

“Things were changing rapidly,” Dr. Smith said. “COVID-19 hit, and ‘telemed’ was the biggest buzzword ever.”

Patients were seen remotely by primary care physicians or by specialists, with appointments scheduled in advance. Once connected, they were

triaged and talked with a physician, either online or by telephone. If a patient needed to be seen in person or receive immediate treatment, the physicians would escalate their visit.

Overall, the technology has broadened access for many and has illuminated “gaps in health care and ways to bridge that gap,” she said.

Patients who previously would have avoided the doctor are often more receptive to telemedical services, she said. That’s particularly important now, as patients are quarantining or isolating. A report by the

American Telemed Association said that 32 percent of telemed patients “would not have sought care at all, would not have gone to urgent care, because they were afraid of COVID.”

The health equity benefits from telemedicine are significant, said Folorunshade Omole, M.D., chair of MSM’s Department of Family Medicine and director of the MSM Morehouse Healthcare Telehealth program. “No longer are some patients luckier than others simply because of where they live.” **M**

Sharing in the Fight

As COVID-19 rages on, MSM plays a leading role in addressing the inequities of a pandemic that disproportionately affects communities of color.

AS THE COUNTRY FACES DOWN the dual pandemics of coronavirus and racial injustice and grapples with their outsize impact on communities of color, Morehouse School of Medicine is leading the way toward solutions—and garnering significant financial support for the work.

MSM has attracted more than \$50 million in gifts and grants to support and expand the institution's work to create and advance health equity for communities of color and other vulnerable populations. That mission has taken on greater resonance in the current climate, as Black people are five times more likely to be hospitalized for COVID-19 than their white counterparts, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

MSM's own research bears out this disparity. Dominic Mack, M.D., director of the National Center for Primary Care, and Anne Gaglioti, M.D., associate professor of family medicine, analyzed infection rates at the county level throughout Georgia.

Using data from 135 of Georgia's 159 counties, the researchers found that for every 1 percent increase in the proportion of the county's Black population, there was a 2.3 percent increase in the county's confirmed case rate of COVID-19.

"This is not because race itself makes a person more vulnerable to coronavirus; some people think that means being Black increases risk. It's not because you are Black, but because of where you are Black," said MSM President and Dean Valerie Montgomery Rice, M.D.

"The disproportionate impact stems from systemic inequities in our economy and our health care system."

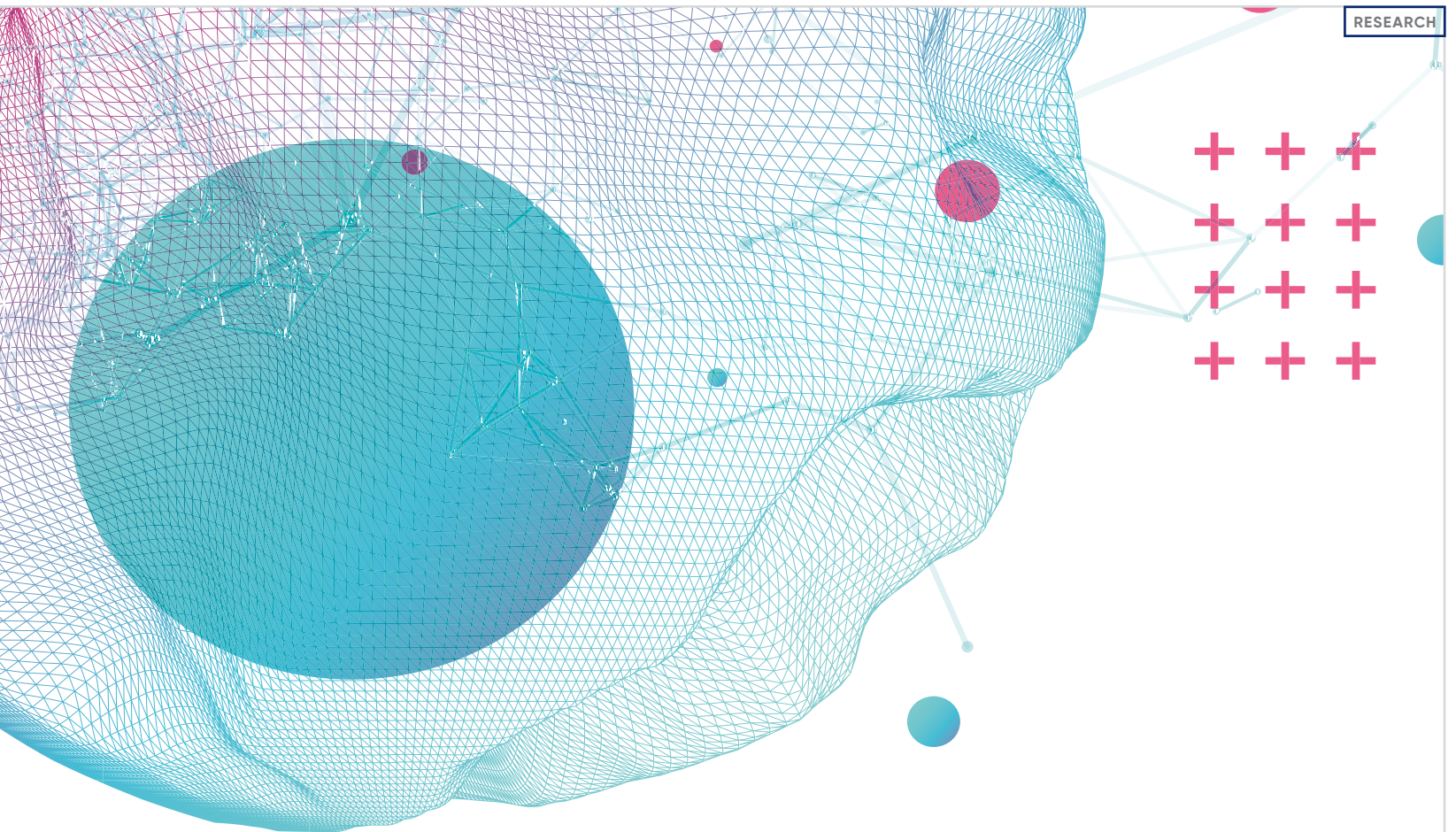
With the financial support of government agencies, foundations and corporations, MSM will embark on several new initiatives designed to address, measure and beat back the coronavirus pandemic.

The biggest grant came from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS's) Office of Minority Health (OMH), which awarded MSM \$40 million for a three-year initiative called the National Infrastructure for Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 Within Racial and Ethnic Minority Communities (NIMIC). The NIMIC will create a strategic network of national, state, territorial, tribal and local organizations to deliver COVID-19-related information to the communities hardest hit by the pandemic.

MSM also has received support from Google Inc. in the form of \$1 million to the Satcher Health Leadership Institute to study the racial impact of COVID-19. Google engineers and data scientists will work full time with SHLI to build a detailed, real-time demographic database with a breakdown of the virus's impact



Dominick Mack, M.D.



Daniel E.
Dawes, J.D.



by race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomics and other critical factors.

Joining this effort is the CDC, which has granted MSM \$540,000 to jointly establish a Health Equity Task Force (HETF) devoted to monitoring and assessing the virus's disparate impacts on vulnerable populations. The HETF will help develop standardized, evidence-based best practices to improve COVID-19 responses, data collection, reporting, planning, mitigation strategies, screening, jurisdictional policies and responses, and contact tracing.

All of this will "create the opportunity to measure the effectiveness of interventions being deployed to mitigate the impact of COVID-19," Dr. Montgomery Rice said. "Those results should lead to a newfound knowledge base that will better prepare the country to respond to future pandemics, especially in vulnerable communities."

MSM's national importance in the fight for health equity was hailed in Congress as the award was announced in late June.

The \$40 million HHS award will be led by Dr. Mack and Daniel E. Dawes, J.D., director of the Satcher Health Leadership Institute.

"This powerful public-private partnership comes at a critical time," Dr. Mack said. "Communities of color have been among the hardest hit. By working collaboratively at the community level to advance health equity, we can make a meaningful difference in health outcomes."

Dawes, an expert on health policy and the social determinants of health, said "there are specific social determinants and existing health disparities that contribute to the spread of the novel coronavirus."

Such social determinants, he said, include working conditions, unemployment and underemployment, access to clean water, affordable housing, transportation and quality health care. Those inequities require both community- and systems-level

responses, he said.

Researchers will also focus on such issues as equal access to COVID-19 pharmaceuticals remdesivir and dexamethasone and comparing patient admissions to hospitals and intensive care units by race and ethnicity.

Adm. Brett P. Giroir, M.D., assistant U.S. secretary for health, told Congress in June that MSM will "be the brains behind the operation, to really extend our network."

MSM is right for the job, Dr. Gaglioti said.

"You need trusted relationships with communities to get public health messaging out and to develop public health outreach in a culturally humble way," she said. "We are a source people trust." **M**

Stronger



Together

The Atlanta University Center Consortium collaborates to manifest a shared vision for the future of historic West End.

LIKE A QUARTET OF SINGERS who join in a harmonious sound greater than the individual parts, Atlanta's four historically Black colleges and universities have strengthened their collective and individual impact as the Atlanta University Center Consortium (AUCC).

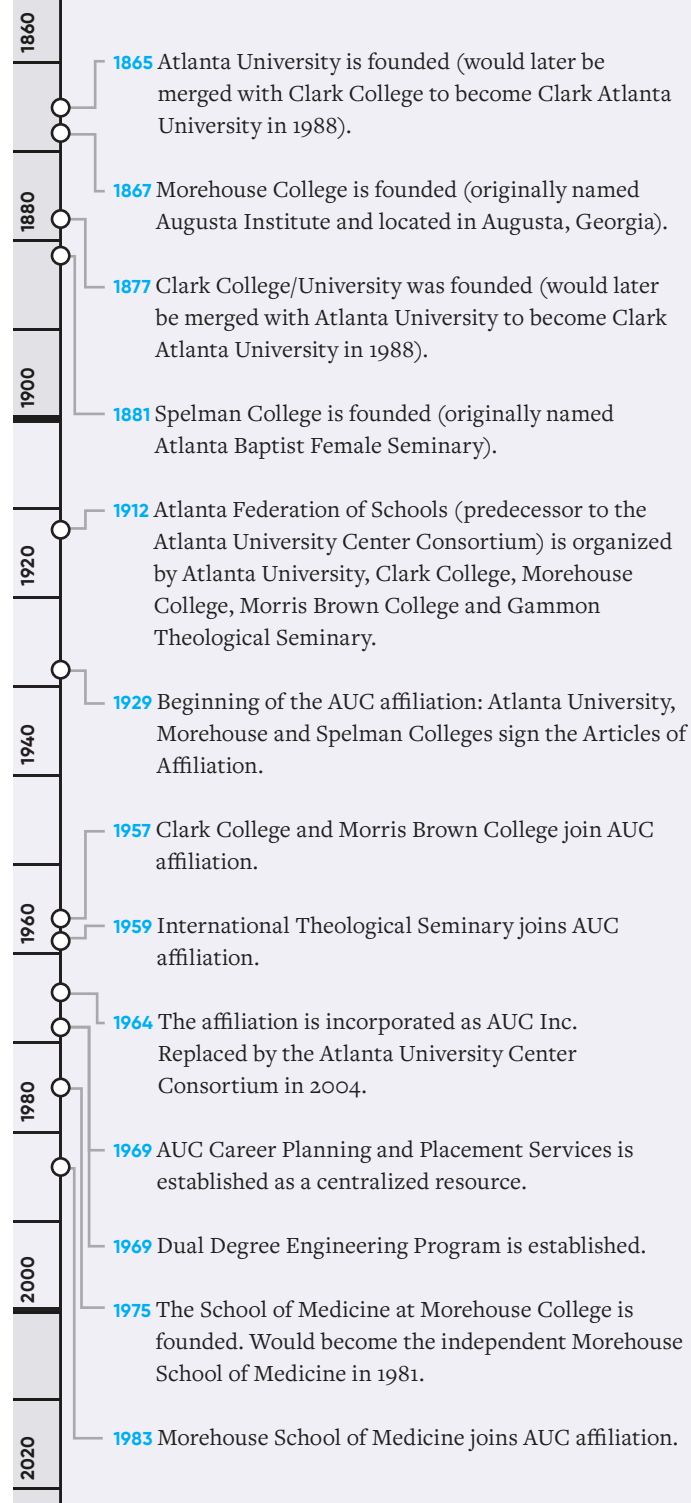
Through collaborative leadership and the pooling of resources, the AUCC—made up of Morehouse School of Medicine, Morehouse College, Spelman College and Clark Atlanta University—advances each school's civic goals and missions. The AUCC also works with surrounding neighborhoods, external partners and others, serving and advocating for the community.

Consortium leaders believe the area around the more-than-century-old institutions could be a vibrant “college town,” with retail, housing and public schools. This evolution, in turn, will benefit the surrounding community through educational opportunity, financial and economic stability, improvement of residents' health and wellness and safe and affordable housing.

By optimizing campus operations and bringing efficiencies to such areas as purchasing, the AUCC can leverage group strength to save money and improve environmental sustainability.

The AUCC is also becoming a catalyst for improving life for its neighbors in the historic West End community, downtown and the greater Atlanta area by encouraging engagement and volunteerism. Organizations such as the Atlanta Community Food Bank,

AUCC Timeline



Trees Atlanta and the Washington High School Cluster are reaping the benefits.

Primary beneficiaries of AUCC collaboration, however, are the 9,000 students and 3,000 staffers of the four institutions.

Dr. George T. French, president of Clark Atlanta University and chairman of the AUCC Council of Presidents, credits his predecessor in the office, Dr. Valerie Montgomery Rice, MSM president and dean, with unifying the four AUCC institutions and especially with bringing to fruition the new student health center at the Lee Street Development.

“She has brought all of the AUC schools together to embrace the idea of a single student health center,” he

With a state-of-the-art ambulatory health facility and MSM medical offices, a student wellness center, upscale residential apartments, YMCA and retail space, Dr. Montgomery Rice said the Lee Street facility serves neighborhood needs, gives the AUCC and MSM important community visibility and exemplifies “partnering to bring about needed and desired change.”

SUPPORT FOR THE CONSORTIUM

In addition to working together and benefiting as a group from the Lee Street project, the four presidents have collaborated on “powerful ideas and solutions” that have recently attracted millions of dollars in grants and investments, according to Todd Greene,

AUCC’s executive director. The result is a breathtaking array of projects across all campuses.

The Coca-Cola Foundation, which supports the AUC schools individually with scholarships, gave the consortium a \$4 million

ciplines, he added, the presidents “are able to bring imaginative thinking and creative solutions that would be unlikely to happen on their own.”

THE DATA SCIENCE INITIATIVE

Greene is enthusiastic about their new AUCC Data Science Initiative, a five-year, \$8.2 million partnership with UnitedHealth Group to bring technical classes to AUC students in data science and analysis. The advanced analytics research techniques will focus on disparities in minority communities.

“The type of skill sets that will be needed in today’s world but also the future, many of them are related to having the ability to extract value from data, data science and data analytics,” Greene said. Employer demand for these skills across business and industry is great, he added, but currently fewer than 2 percent of data scientists are African American.

He said AUC faculty, who are including data science in their teaching, “recognize the potential to make a dramatic difference in the number of African Americans who possess these skill sets.” Plans ultimately call for the initiative to become a data science institute, with undergraduate degrees and certificate programs in data science and data analytics.

Dr. French, president of Clark Atlanta University and chair of the AUCC Council of Presidents, sees great benefit to the collaboration of AUCC institutions in the Data Science Initiative.

“Only 1 percent of data scientists are of color,” Dr. French said. “So we have an obligation to increase that percentage of African Americans since data science informs our decisions all day with data analysis and predictive modeling.”

Morehouse College President David A. Thomas said more than 50 faculty from the four schools have been involved in the Data Science Initiative. Students of the 21st century will need skills in data gathering and analysis “to be viable as workers and intellectuals and entrepreneurs,” he added.

Thomas said he looks forward to working with Dr. Talitha M. Washing-

“It is the benefit of having four seasoned leaders who come together, who are all committed to advancing African Americans in higher education.”

— Todd Greene, AUCC executive director

said. “That just expands our ability to serve our student population in ways that none of us could do with our individual health facilities.” Among the benefits will be the ability to offer stronger health services after hours, justifying costs by sharing among 9,000 students, he said.

CROWN JEWEL OF THE WEST SIDE

Already, the new \$52 million Lee Street Development, a multiuse facility anchoring the entrance to what is sometimes called College Town, is seen as a significant boon to continued economic development in the West End. The development is dedicated not only to serving the health and well-being of students and staff but also off-campus neighborhoods in the West End and Atlanta at large.

collaboration grant in 2017.

“The purpose of the multiyear grant was to help the schools to collaborate on joint projects in order to achieve economies of scale and improve operating efficiencies,” said Fran Killeen, director of global community affairs for the Coca-Cola Company.

Among the projects is a new shared procurement system “to streamline purchasing processes to improve efficiency and harness collective purchasing power.” Another was environmentally focused, updating campus facilities to cut operating costs and improving water and electrical systems.

“It is the benefit of having four seasoned leaders who come together, who are all committed to advancing African Americans in higher education,” Greene said. With their range of academic dis-

Clark Atlanta University was born in the 1988 consolidation of two institutions, Atlanta University, founded by two former enslaved African Americans in 1865, and Clark College, founded in 1869. Atlanta University, established by the American Missionary Association, was the nation's first institution to award graduate degrees to African Americans.

CAU, the largest of the 37-member United Negro College Fund institutions, offers 38 different graduate and non-degree certificate programs through its four schools, arts and sciences, business administration, education and social work. The Center for Cancer Research and Therapeutic De-

velopment is the only research center at an HBCU in the United States that concentrates specifically on prostate cancer, which disproportionately affects African Americans and other minorities.

The Whitney M. Young Jr. School of Social Work prepares social work professionals, advancing the ideals of economic and social justice. Named in honor of its first dean, social reformer and civil rights leader Whitney M. Young Jr., the school is the nation's first accredited school of social work at an HBCU.

NOTABLE ALUMNI

JAMES WELDON JOHNSON (ATLANTA UNIVERSITY)

Wrote "Lift Every Voice and Sing," which has become the "Negro national anthem." First African American to pass the Florida Bar.

RALPH DAVID ABERNATHY SR. (ATLANTA UNIVERSITY)

Co-founder of the Montgomery Improvement Association (which led the Montgomery bus boycott) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

VALEISHA BUTTERFIELD JONES (CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY)

Chief diversity and inclusion officer at the Recording Academy (which produces the Grammy Awards).

HANK JOHNSON (CLARK COLLEGE)

Member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Georgia's Fourth Congressional District—which encompasses parts of DeKalb, Gwinnett and Newton counties and all of Rockdale County.

KENYA BARRIS (CLARK ATLANTA U.)

Hollywood writer and producer; creator/executive producer of "Black-ish" television show; writer of movies "Girls Trip" and "Shaft" (2019).

AUSTIN THOMAS WALDEN (CLARK COLLEGE)

Civil rights and voting rights lawyer in Georgia, first African American judge appointed in Georgia since Reconstruction.

Morehouse College, a key influence in the birth of the civil rights movement, was founded in response to the liberation of enslaved African Americans following the Civil War. Created as the Augusta Institute in 1867 by William Jefferson White, it moved to Atlanta in 1879, known first as the Atlanta Baptist Seminary, later as Atlanta Baptist College.

It was renamed Morehouse College in 1913 after Henry Lyman Morehouse, an official of the American Baptist Home Mission Society.

Morehouse is home to The King Collection, a 10,000-piece collection of original documents written by Morehouse

alum Martin Luther King Jr., including King's 1964 Nobel Prize acceptance speech.

The nation's largest men's liberal arts institution, Morehouse produces more Black men who go on to receive doctorates than any college in the nation. It is also recognized as a top producer of Rhodes Scholars among HBCUs.

The Morehouse College Glee Club, founded in 1911, has brought much fame to Morehouse, performing at the funeral of MLK Jr. and the inauguration of President Jimmy Carter.

NOTABLE ALUMNI

MAYNARD JACKSON

First African American mayor of Atlanta, Georgia; namesake for Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, the busiest airport in the world.

JEH JOHNSON

Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (2013-2017), third-largest department in the U.S. government.

THE REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

Leader of the Montgomery bus boycott; youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner; president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; keynote speaker at the 1963 March on Washington; only African American recognized with named national holiday.

SPIKE LEE

Trailblazing Oscar-, Emmy Award-, and Peabody Award-winning writer/producer/director of *Black KKKlansman*, *Do the Right Thing*, *School Daze*, *Malcolm X*, *Jungle Fever* and *Da 5 Bloods*, among others.

DR. DAVID SATCHER

16th surgeon general of the United States.

DR. LOUIS SULLIVAN

U.S. secretary of health and human services; founding president/dean, Morehouse School of Medicine.



ABOVE L-R
Gordon Street in
West End (looking
west), 1952; the Sears
store at West End
was a landmark for
decades.

ton, a Spelman graduate and former program director at the National Science Foundation. She will direct the Data Science Initiative “to address the disparity of minorities in tech and other fields,” he said.

“Our campuses will soon produce hundreds of students annually who will be well equipped to compete internationally for lucrative careers in data science,” Thomas said.

Dr. Mary Schmidt Campbell, president of Spelman College, said the AUC institutions “have been in the vanguard of educating African Americans” who succeed in science, technology, engineering and math. The UnitedHealth Group grant will make the AUC a “center of excellence for the study of data science across a range of disciplines in medicine and the liberal arts.”

Dr. Campbell said Washington’s decades of research and advocacy for inclusivity in STEM fields align with the mission of the AUC’s Data Science Initiative.

“The Data Science Initiative has the potential to make the Atlanta University Center Consortium a national resource for experts in data analytics,” Dr. Montgomery Rice said. The ambitious data science program will “produce talented data scientists who will be leaders

in their fields” and increase minority diversification in their career fields, she added.

AUC executive director Greene cites the potential medical benefits from the interdisciplinary application of data science and analytics. Consider the medical outcomes from hypertension—a chronic health condition that disproportionately affects African Americans, he said.

“That is a place where Morehouse School of Medicine certainly has paramount expertise,” he said. But many factors contribute to health outcomes. “The social determinants of health, where a person was born, for instance, really play a role in how diseases manifest themselves in individuals.”

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says such social determinants that affect health risks and outcomes include where people live, learn, work and play. Poverty, unsafe neighborhoods, unstable housing and substandard education all play a role. Knowing those social determinants helps improve the health of individuals and communities and advance health equity, according to the CDC.

OF AND FOR THE COMMUNITY

The consortium has envisioned a thriving

future for the AUC, one in which students, residents and businesses will all benefit.

Kimberly Scott, an Atlanta real estate agent and chair of the city’s Neighborhood Planning Unit-T, which includes the AUC, said the citizens’ advisory panel and the AUC “partner on community engagement and community involvement.”

The NPU, which advises Atlanta’s mayor and city council, has hosted a public safety forum with the AUC for faculty, staff and community residents. Education is a key focus, she said, with her NPU and AUC partnering to develop remote learning opportunities for Brown Middle School and reading mentors for two elementary schools in the area.

Scott said MSM is the planning unit’s “go-to institution when it comes to health concerns. ... They are our leader in this community.” The NPU advisers communicated the need for the new wellness center, and she said the neighbors are especially excited about the planned mental health facilities.

Terry Ross, who preceded Scott as chair of NPU-T, is “optimistic about the future.” “Some of the ideas coming out of the consortium are some of the best I’ve heard.” **M**

Morehouse School of Medicine was founded in 1975 at Morehouse College as the Medical Education Program—the first medical school established at a historically Black college and university in the 20th century. Six years later, MSM was independently chartered, offering seven residency programs of patient care and clinical training at Grady Memorial Hospital.

MSM, dedicated to creating and advancing health equity among underserved populations, has twice been named by a national study as the top medical school for social mission. Now MSM is garnering attention for its response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Already deeply familiar with the chronic health issues that made its focal populations so

vulnerable to the ravaging virus, MSM physicians and researchers were ready to hit the front lines to care for hundreds of pandemic victims in greater Atlanta. Thanks to a prescient telemedicine program, MSM physicians were able to broaden their primary and specialty care for patients throughout rural Georgia.

Amid the pandemic, the expertise of physicians and researchers has attracted millions of dollars in federal and corporate grant funding to ensure adequate testing and to deliver critical information to communities hardest hit by the pandemic. Millions more dollars are also earmarked for critical data gathering and analysis in real-time research aimed at advancing health equity in communities of color.

NOTABLE ALUMNI

JOY BAKER

Board-certified OB-GYN physician who completed a HRSA fellowship in Transformational Healthcare Leadership.

DR. REGINA BENJAMIN

Eighteenth surgeon general of the United States.

KRISTEN DAUSS

Chief medical officer for the Indiana Department of Correction.

ANNE H. GAGLIOTI

Associate professor at MSM in the Department of Family Medicine.

JENNIFER HARPER

Stage, television, and film actress.

CARL HILL

Senior vice president of scientific engagement for the Alzheimer's Association.

TERRANCE JONES

Commander in the U.S. Public Health Service.

HEVAL MOHAMED KELLI

Katz Foundation Fellow in Preventive Cardiology at Emory University.

JAMES D. LOCK

Associate chairman in the Dept. of Psychiatry at Stanford University.

BONNIE SIMPSON-MASON

VP of diversity and inclusion for the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME).

MONIQUE C. SURLES-ZEIGLER

Researcher who completed a post-doctoral fellowship at Yale University.

Founded in 1881 as the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary for Black freedwomen, Spelman College is the nation's oldest private historically Black liberal arts college for women. Hundreds of distinguished women have graduated to have successful careers in the arts, literature, medicine and science, economics and government.

Spelman educates more Gates Millennium Scholars than any college or university in the nation and is a leading producer of Fulbright Fellowship winners. It is one of the nation's leading producers of Black female medical students and doctoral candidates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

It also leads the nation in the number of Black women who go on to earn doctorates in the sciences.

Spelman is also widely known for its Museum of Fine Art, the nation's only museum that emphasizes art created by and about women of the African diaspora. Its collection includes photography, paintings, wood carvings and pottery from throughout Africa as well as works by celebrated African American artists.

NOTABLE ALUMNI

STACEY ABRAMS

Politician, lawyer, author and voting rights activist.

ROSALIND BREWER

Chief operating officer and group president at Starbucks.

PEARL CLEAGE

Acclaimed writer and novelist.

DR. LISA COOK

Professor and member of the Biden-Harris transition team.

MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

Founder and president emerita of the Children's Defense Fund.

LATANYA RICHARDSON JACKSON

Actress and producer.

JANINA JEFF

Human geneticist, educator and minority STEM activist.

TAYARI JONES

Author of *An American Marriage*, *Silver Sparrow*, and others.

BERNICE KING

Minister and youngest child of civil rights leaders Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King.

DR. AUDREY FORBES MANLEY

Acting U.S. surgeon general (1995-1997) and Spelman's first alumna president.



Billye Suber Aaron

A force for good at MSM,
west side Atlanta

She was busy with her own work as a teacher, preparing lessons and lectures and such, but still she caught bits and pieces of the conversations her then-husband was having in the living room of their small home on the Morehouse College campus.

It was the 1970s, and Samuel W. Williams, Ph.D.—a Morehouse College professor of philosophy and religion, the pastor of Friendship Baptist Church in Atlanta and a civil rights leader—was talking with friends and colleagues about the need for a medical school in Atlanta that focused on training and graduating Black doctors.

Dr. Williams would pass away before the Medical Education Program at Morehouse College could be founded in 1975 and later become the independently chartered institution known as Morehouse School of Medicine. But the woman who heard his inspiring words in the living room would go on to become an avid supporter of the institution and its crucial mission.

She is Billye Suber Aaron, a force for education, opportunity and philanthropy at Morehouse School of Medicine and its home on the west side of Atlanta.

Born in the small rural town of Mound Prairie, Texas, the girl who was then known as Billye Jewel Suber saw there were only two Black doctors to care for the many Black patients in her community and in the surrounding area.

“They took care of everyone,” she remembers.

“That made me want to give back.”

She went on to receive her bachelor’s degree in English from Texas College in Tyler, Texas, and planned to move to San Francisco, California, but changed her mind after receiving a fellowship in Atlanta through Lilly Endowment Inc. She became a teaching assistant at Morris Brown College and earned a master’s degree in English and reading from Atlanta University. She then went on to work at Spelman College, Morehouse College and Turner High School.

In 1968, she became the first African-American woman in the Southeast to co-host a daily talk show on television. She interviewed many luminaries, including Sidney Poitier, Harry Belafonte, Jane Fonda, Pearl Bailey—and baseball legend Henry “Hank” Aaron, whom she would go on to marry in 1973.

Together, the Aarons would become business, civic and philanthropic leaders in Atlanta, focusing a great deal of their time and treasure on helping struggling students succeed.

“When you grow up knowing how important an education is to your dreams, your hopes and your aspirations, you want to try to help somebody else,” she says now. “You know that but for the grace of God, you could have been in that situation or worse.”

She served as vice president of the southern region for the United Negro College Fund and on numerous boards before founding with her husband the Hank Aaron Chasing the Dream Foundation in 1994. The foundation has far

surpassed its initial goal of 755 grants and has given about 28 scholarships of \$104,000 each to students primarily at historically Black colleges and universities.

The Aarons also kept their eye on MSM, with Mrs. Aaron making her first gift of \$2,500 to the institution in 2008. She went on to give to such MSM initiatives as Women With Heart, the Hugh M. Gloster Society, the MSM Presidential Scholarship and the Academic Facilities Expansion Program. She also assembled a “kitchen cabinet” of dear friends and advisers to create Phenomenal Women, a group that would raise more than \$500,000 leading up to the 2014 inauguration of MSM President and Dean Valerie Montgomery Rice, M.D.

Mrs. Aaron’s biggest gift to MSM was made with her husband, when the couple gave a historic \$3 million in 2015 to expand the Hugh Gloster Medical Education building and create the Billye Suber Aaron Student Pavilion. The gift was presented during the school’s 40th anniversary and 31st fall convocation, white coat and pinning ceremony.

Given that the couple lives just a few miles from the MSM campus and owns businesses nearby, Mr. and Mrs. Aaron routinely pass by the Billye Suber Aaron Student Pavilion and see her name emblazoned on its side.

“The West End is our home. We are invested in it,” she says. “And we are very, very proud of what we’ve done at MSM.” **M**



Brenton Powers, M.P.H. '10

M.P.H. alum finds purpose, passion
as MSM public health administrator.

Look it up. You can figure it out.”

This was a familiar response to the barrage of questions that a young Brenton Powers, M.P.H. '10, would ask his grandparents at their home in northwestern Alabama. Any time Powers inquired about the life cycle of a butterfly or what it takes to become a pilot, his grandparents would remind him of his own ingenuity and point him to their volumes of the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

Powers didn't mind.

“I always loved taking the question of why and finding the answer,” he says. “That's why I was drawn to science—the answers are almost always concrete.”

His grandparents' words would gently guide Powers as he majored in biology at Tennessee State University and considered his career choices. Like so many science-minded students, he was drawn to medicine. He researched this option and spent the summer of his junior year shadowing doctors and working with cadavers before determining it wasn't the right path.

“A lot of us think about health care and a life of service, and medicine is thrown out there as the first and sometimes only choice,” Powers says. “So we don't realize there are other avenues outside of that, where we can serve others. That stayed in the back of my head. So I went back and started researching, trying to figure out what to do if I didn't want to do medicine.”

He tried the natural sciences, working as an

aquatic toxicologist for two years, testing to see how the levels of waste in river systems impacted aquatic life.

“I quickly figured out I didn't want to be in the lab,” Powers says. “My family told me: ‘You can figure it out. Find something you love. Don't worry about the money; the money will come. Find your passion.’”

He took a close look at the work he was doing and recognized that the river pollution wasn't just hurting animal life—humans were being affected too.

“That got the wheels turning again,” Powers says. “So I started researching that. And I realized that I wanted to be in the health professions, where I could serve and make positive change in people's lives, but not do clinical care.”

As he delved into this, a memory rushed to mind. Powers remembered when he was 10 years old, in the mid-1990s, and his uncle was sick with AIDS. Powers didn't know what that was, so he went to the encyclopedia, but there was no entry for the disease. He went to the library, and he couldn't find much information there either.

“When he passed away, we struggled to find a funeral home that would take his body,” Powers remembers. “I was trying to wrap my 10-year-old brain around why that was so difficult. That was a public health moment, and it stayed with me—all of the populations affected and the different interventions, or lack thereof.

I realized I wanted to go into public health.”

In pursuit of his newly discovered career choice, Powers chose Morehouse School of Medicine, impressed by the institution's focus on serving the underserved and increasing minority representation in public health. He also worked part time on projects with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and, after graduating, parlayed that role into a full-time position. All the while he stayed connected to MSM and his thesis chair, Stephanie Miles-Richardson, D.V.M., Ph.D.

One day in 2013, while hanging balloons in his garage for his daughter's birthday party, Powers received a call from Dr. Miles-Richardson, offering him the position of program manager for the Division of Graduate Education in Public Health at MSM. And for the first time, Powers didn't need to look anything up or figure anything out—he knew he wanted the job.

“It was like coming back home,” Powers says. “It gave me the feeling I was always looking for. MSM is where my purpose and passion aligned. I'm able to affect lives, directly through my students but also secondarily by creating the public health leaders who will go out and change the world.” **M**



Keri Harp

Dual-degree doctoral student making contributions one small step at a time

Keri Harp, a doctoral student at Morehouse School of Medicine, doesn't like to talk about herself. But ask her about her dogs, and she'll happily chat away. Besides her husband, Nick, Harp's furry friends—11-year-old husky-border collie mix Jack and two Great Dane siblings named Layla Sora—are the loves of her life.

Harp hails from the village of Carol Stream, Illinois, which is 34 miles west of Chicago and dubbed one of the best places to live in the United States. Though she loved her hometown, Harp considered undergraduate schools in warmer climes.

After touring several colleges and universities, Harp settled on Mars Hill University, the oldest college in western North Carolina, known for its beautiful Appalachian Mountain vistas. Harp was strong in the sciences, so she majored in biology. After receiving her bache-

lor's degree, her next destination also had to have similar criteria. Since her husband, Nick, was born and raised in Atlanta, they packed up the pups and headed to Georgia, with Harp enrolling in MSM's dual Ph.D./Master of Clinical Research degree program. MSM more than satisfied her criteria of a small school with a nurturing, familylike environment and being mission driven to lead the creation and advancement of health equity.

"That is what Morehouse School of Medicine is," Harp says. "We are very much a family. I've liked my time here, and if I had to do it all over again, I would choose MSM again—and you gotta love the mission."

Currently a fifth-year student in the program, Harp focuses her research on malaria and sickle cell disease. Specifically, she investigates the role of the exosomal, small extracellular vesicles known as microRNA,

which endogenously regulate gene expression in sickle cell disease and malaria. Said another way, individuals who carry the sickle cell trait are protected against malaria. Harp and her team want to understand what it is that protects these individuals and determine how this can be translated to others in the same or a similar way.

Harp goes on to candidly proclaim that she does not have a grand dream of curing cancer or even malaria. What she does have is the grand dream of ensuring that people understand that often small discoveries lead to big innovations.

"The great many small steps that lead to those major leaps are just as important as the big breakthroughs," she says. "And if I can contribute some of the small steps, then I'll know that I have done something." **M**



A state-of-the art imaging machine in the MSM Community Health and Wellness Center. The new center, which opened in November, offers primary and specialty care such as endocrinology, cardiology, neurology and OB-GYN services. See story on Page 6.



Morehouse School of Medicine
720 Westview Drive S.W.
Atlanta, GA 30310

