

F.E.F. FOCUS

Volume 8, Issue 1 Fall 2009

President's Message



Dr. Lawrence Morehouse

As this edition of the *Focus* illustrates, during the Florida Education Fund's 25-year history, we not only have achieved our mission to increase the number of African American and Hispanic students earning Ph.D.'s, we have

helped produce leaders in some of the most important institutions in America. Our graduates now are tenured professors and university administrators who conduct innovative research and train America's next generation of scholars, business leaders, engineers, actors and other professionals.

Despite the recent economic crisis, during the last three years, we have increased the number of Doctoral Fellowship awards, while improving and expanding support services. In 2009, we welcomed 41 new Fellows, offered our third Summer Research and Writing Institute, and provided financial assistance to a greater number of Fellows, enabling them to conduct dissertation research, participate in professional conferences, and

travel abroad. We also continued to help Fellows enhance their research and writing skills. In a nod to the ever increasing importance of, and competition for, dwindling grant funds to complete research and bolster chances for tenure and promotion, we have added intensive grant writing sessions to all conferences and the Summer Institute. The workshops help fill the gap in the doctoral curriculum, which offers only perfunctory training in these essential areas.

Program data shows that our efforts have paid off. Because of our support system, our Fellows earn their Ph.D.'s, on average, within 5.5 years, while nationally the average completion time is approximately 7 years, and our Doctoral Program maintains a retention rate of close to 85 percent, compared to the national average rate of 50 percent.

At the pre-college level, through our partnerships with The College Board, the Helios Foundation, and the State Board of Education, we have expanded our innovative summer programs, offering more students an opportunity to curtail summer learning loss and improve academic skills. Our summer students receive an average of 90 hours of intense instruction, as well as critical college and ca-

reer planning guidance. Program evaluations reflect that our model leads students to improve performance significantly, as close to 85 percent increased their scores on practice SAT's and FCAT's.

In addition, student surveys reveal that, at the beginning of the programs, most students knew little about the correlation between high school courses and college admission. Even worse, many indicated they were not planning to attend college, not because they didn't want to, but because they felt they couldn't afford to enroll. By the end of the summer, 92 percent reported that the programs' college planning sessions had succeeded in teaching them that they can obtain funding for college, and their course work will play a significant role in determining whether or not they gain admission.

Although we have realized much success throughout our 25-year history, we continue to face significant financial challenges that threaten to halt further progress. State budget cuts and a decline in investment returns require astute financial management. They also make clear that we must continue to innovate and use our imagination to create new ways to flourish in a forever changing world.

Inside this Issue:

McKnight Alumni Profiles	2
2009 New McKnight Fellows	3
New Fellows Orientation	4
McKnight Fellow Profiles	5
Early Junior Faculty Fellows	6
Summer Research & Writing Institute	7
Summer Research & Writing Institute	8
Pre-College Summer Camps	9
Pre-College Academic Competitions	10
Pre-College Laws of Life Essays	11
Contact Information	12

THE 2009 NEW FELLOWS ORIENTATION

For forty-one Fellows beginning their doctoral studies this fall, the 2009 New Fellows Orientation on June 19 and 20 served to introduce them to the McKnight Program, initiate the networking process, and identify best practices in pursuing a doctoral degree. The Orientation provided opportunities for Fellows to meet university deans, faculty, administrators, and each other; trade information about research interests; and hear successful scholars from universities throughout the State discuss the history, pitfalls, and promises of graduate education.

This year's featured Orientation speaker, Dr. Judy Genshaft, President of the University of South Florida, stands tall among the distinguished speakers who have advised incoming classes of McKnight Fellows. Under her lead-

ership, USF has achieved national recognition as a research university and is on track to become one of the top 50 research universities in the United States. The University enrolls over 46,000 students in more than 200 degree programs on its four campuses, has an annual operating budget of \$1.8 billion and 12,000 employees, and boasts an economic impact of \$3.2 billion in the Tampa Bay area.

"Why," asked Dr. Genshaft, "attend graduate school?" The doctorate, she answered, is the



Dr. Judy Genshaft

continues on page 4

Celebrating 25 Years: A Look at Our First McKnight Doctoral Fellows

Since its founding in 1984, the McKnight Doctoral Fellowship (MDF) Program has supported 700 McKnight Fellows. To date, 280 have graduated with Ph.D.'s, with over 300 still matriculating through doctoral programs. The first class of McKnights included 17 African American Fellows, 11 of whom earned Ph.D.'s. The graduates are Dr. Faith Berry (FSU, 1988), Dr. Linda Clemons (UF, 2003), Dr. Mark Dawkins (FSU, 1994), Dr. John DeCatrel (UCF, 1990), Dr. Michelle Dunlap (UF, 1993), Dr. Gerri Elie (UF, 1989), Dr. Vernetta Johnson-Sabb (UF, 1993), Dr. Gary Paul (UF, 1994), Dr. Anna Ramsey-Ewing (UF, 1992), Dr. Tommie Stewart (FSU, 1989), and Dr. Roberta Troy (UF, 1990).

To help commemorate the Florida Education Fund's 25th Anniversary, we profile six graduates from the inaugural class, highlighting their achievements over the past 25 years.



Dr. Israel Tribble, Jr., jackets Dr. Faith Berry in 1988 as a first MDF graduate.

Dr. Faith Berry earned her Ph.D. in English Literature from Florida State University in 1988, the first in the inaugural MDF class to graduate. During her studies, she along with five others founded the Langston Hughes Society (LHS), the first national organization dedicated to promoting the literary works of Langston Hughes. The LHS now is a

national association of scholars, teachers, creative

and performing artists, students, and lay persons who still today seek to increase awareness and appreciation of Hughes' work. After graduation, Dr. Berry accepted a position at Florida Atlantic University, where she also received the McKnight Junior Faculty Fellowship and, in 1992, earned promotion to Associate Professor in the Department of English. Dr. Berry later accepted a full-tenured Professor position in the University of California, Santa Barbara's Black Studies Department, where she taught Afro-American literature and gender studies until retiring in 2001.



Dr. Mark Dawkins

Dr. Mark Dawkins obtained his Ph.D. in Accounting from Florida State University in 1994 and won an Assistant Professor position in the J.M. Tull School of Accounting at the University of Georgia (UGA). Since that time, he has published scores of peer reviewed articles and earned appointment as Associate Dean for Academic Programs and promotion to Associate Professor of Accounting in the Tull School at UGA. Professor Dawkins teaches undergraduate and graduate financial accounting, and his research interests include bankruptcy, market effects of information asymmetry, and market reactions to information disclosures. Professor Dawkins was a co-recipient of the 2003 and 2006 Beta Alpha Psi

Outstanding Teacher of the Year Awards at UGA and received the 2003 and 2006 Alpha Kappa Psi Accounting Teacher of the Year Awards. He is a member of the American Accounting Association, the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, the National Association of Accountants, the Georgia Society of CPA's Ph.D. Project, and the Accounting Doctoral Student Association. In August 2009, he won one of five inaugural Ernst & Young Inclusive Excellence Awards for Accounting and Business School Faculty.

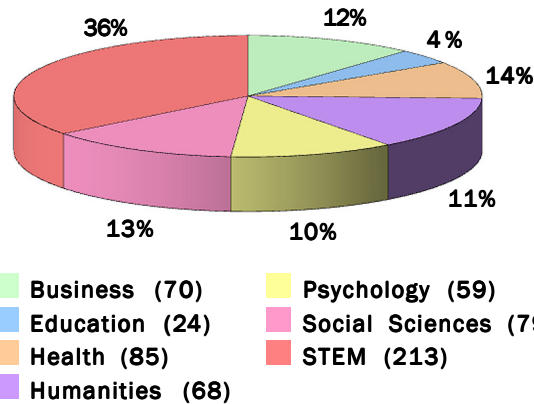


Dr. Michelle Dunlap

Dr. Michelle Dunlap received her Ph.D. in Social Psychology from the University of Florida in 1993 while working as a local Head Start counselor. In 1994, she began teaching as an Assistant Professor in the Human Development Department at Connecticut College. Since joining Connecticut College, Dr. Dunlap has been promoted to Associate Professor and also serves as faculty liaison to the Connecticut College Children's Program. She has written journal articles, book chapters, and essays about her research involving college students working in community service-learning settings; intergroup relations; and perceptions and misperceptions of African American child rearing. Professor Dunlap actively participates in several professional organizations, including the New England Psychological Association, the Association for Women in Psychology, the American Association of Higher Education, Campus Compact, Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, and United Community Family Services. On sabbatical for 2009-2010, Dr. Dunlap temporarily resides in Gainesville, Florida, where she researches, writes, and teaches at the University of Florida.

THE MDF PROGRAM TODAY

The MDF Program awards up to 50 Fellowships annually to both African American and Hispanic scholars. In 2009, the FEF awarded 41 Fellowships, while 25 Fellows graduated with their Ph.D.'s. The following chart indicates the disciplines of the Program's 280 graduates and 318 matriculates.



Dr. Gerri Elie earned her Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from the University of Florida in 1989. In 1990, she accepted her first faculty position as an Assistant

Professor in the Education Department at Xavier University in New Orleans. A year later, she moved to Dillard University, serving as Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs. During her tenure at Dillard, Dr. Elie sat on the Board of Chi Sigma Iota Honor Society and was a member of Kappa Delta Pi Honor Society in Education. Dr. Elie retired as a Professor of Psychology at Dillard in 2000. Since that time, she has remained active as a Board member of the Greater New Orleans Education Foundation, an organization dedicated to assuring an effective and quality education for all children in New Orleans' five-parish region.

A Look at the 1984 McKnight Doctoral Fellowship Class

continued from page 2



Dr. Roberta Troy

Dr. Roberta Troy obtained her Ph.D. in Biology from the University of Florida in 1990. Shortly thereafter, she was appointed Coordinator of the Biology Department at Paine College in Augusta, Georgia, and later moved to Lincoln University, where she led in restructuring the Biology curriculum. Dr. Troy moved to Tuskegee University (TU) in 1999, where she became an Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Biology. In her current role as Department Head, she has refined the curriculum, increased the Biology laboratory budget, improved research and student recruitment, and revised the Department's mission. She has served as Chair of the TU Faculty Senate and as lead investigator of the TU Cancer Research Training and Career Development Grant component. Her cancer research is used in animal models to study metastasis and the effects of antioxidants on metastasis in breast cancer cells in African Americans.



Dr. Tommie Stewart at the 1984 MDF Annual Meeting

Dr. Tonia "Tommie" Stewart received her Ph.D. in Theatre from Florida State University in 1989. In 1990, she joined the faculty of Alabama State University (ASU) as an Assistant Professor where she also took the reins as Director of the Theatre Arts Department, now one of the most well known and respected programs in the United States. Although Dr. Stewart has dozens of film, television, and theatre credits to her name, she remains best known for her roles as Aunt Etta on the television series *In the Heat of the Night* (earning an Emmy nomination) and opposite Samuel L. Jackson as his wife, Gwen Hailey, in the 1996 critically acclaimed film *A Time to Kill*. Now an Associate Professor and Chair of the Theatre Arts Department at ASU, Dr. Stewart teaches and directs students in theatrical productions ranging from *Jesus Christ Superstar* to *The Wiz*.

The 2009 McKnight Doctoral Fellowship Class



New Fellows at the 2009 Orientation

One of the more exciting phases of the McKnight Doctoral Fellowship Program recruitment process is the Selection and Review Committee Meeting, where members meticulously examine several hundred applications to determine who should receive Fellowships. The competition between universities is keen and

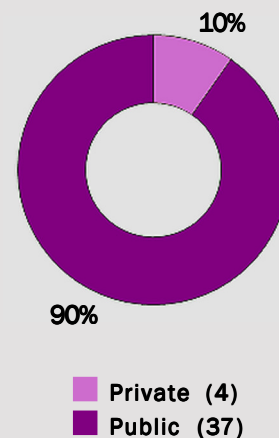
refreshing, as schools argue on behalf of students admitted into their graduate programs. The process attests to the genuine interest of universities in ensuring that their students will complete requirements for their degrees. At the end of the day, although institutions push diligently in support of students admitted into their programs, all Committee members, without exception, give primacy to student credentials over securing the most Fellowships for their schools.

Thus, again this year, the forty-one new Fellows' academic credentials are absolutely superb, with an average GRE score of 1200 and GPA of 3.7., and with 70 percent

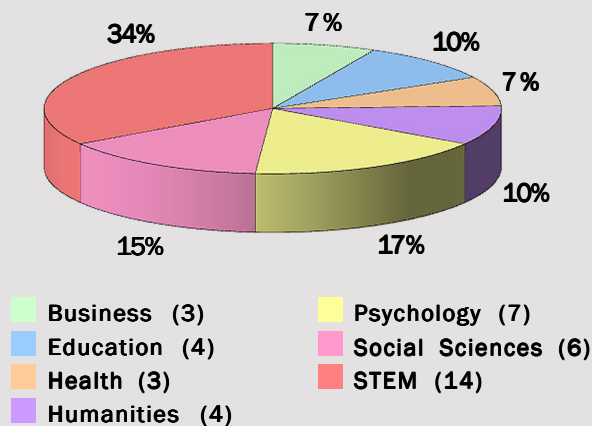
having earned master's degrees, while 30 percent come straight from undergraduate school.

All forty-one Fellows already have involved themselves in innovative, cutting edge research that will contribute significantly to their fields and address major issues confronting local, national, and international communities. They have demonstrated the ability and desire to provide leadership as university professors who will meet the challenges of our dynamic academic communities.

By Type of Institution



By Discipline



New Fellows take note as the Orientation student panel shares advice.

THE 2009 NEW FELLOWS ORIENTATION

continued from page 1

pinnacle of achievement in a field, opening doors to opportunities to travel internationally, view the world through one's own lens, estab-

"You must succeed because the United States can barely meet demands precipitated by technological growth, environmental challenges, and globalization, and because programs like McKnight have paved a way for its scholars to help their communities while helping themselves."

-- Dr. Judy Genshaft

lish collaborative networks, and contribute to the body of knowledge with first-hand, primary data. It is the means, she said, to pursue a passion rather than a job.

"You must succeed," she continued, "because the United States can barely meet demands precipitated by technological growth, environmental challenges, and globalization, and because programs like McKnight have paved a way for its scholars to help their communities while helping themselves."

Dr. Genshaft identified persistence as one of the most important traits necessary for students to succeed. Studies indicate that 45 to 60 percent of students who begin Ph.D. programs don't earn doctoral degrees, and most of this number is attributable to failure to move past the dreaded "all but dissertation (ABD)" phase. According to Dr. Genshaft, selecting a dissertation topic and mode of analysis will prove the most ambiguous time of the graduate education experience for many. "If your research doesn't work," she counseled, "you either didn't frame your question well, or your methodology is incorrect."

Genshaft encouraged the Fellows to begin the process of finding mentors early, by establishing connections with professors with whom they share research interests, goals, and styles. A good mentor relationship benefits professor and student mutually, she said, since the professor's success flows from that of the student.

She advised students to involve themselves in the academic life of their departments and universities, through volunteering if necessary.

Learn to collaborate early, she said, because scholarship in our current age of information is usually multi-disciplinary, with many issues requiring an interdisciplinary approach.

After Genshaft's speech, a panel of matriculating Fellows discussed their experiences and insights. Rachel André (UF, Clinical Psychology), Quenton Bonds (USF, Electrical Engineering), Lora Rose Hunter (FSU, Clinical Psychology), and Ray Rodriguez (UM, Educational Leadership) comprised the panel.



MDF Fellow Rachel André

In the first discussion, André elucidated the "Keys to Coping with Stress" while matriculating in a Ph.D. program. It is critical, according to André, to accept the inevitability of stress. "Expect it, embrace it, and learn from it," she said.

Coping with stress requires using techniques for problem solving and handling emotional upheavals.

André urged students to take care of themselves physically, by exercising, eating well, resting adequately, and participating in relaxation activities; communicate with others; control work loads by delegating and saying "no" when necessary; gather information before acting; and, finally, accept situations they can't change.



MDF Fellow Quenton Bonds

In a humorous, energetic discussion on "The Importance of Effective Time Management," Quenton Bonds provided a goal-task framework to assist Fellows in developing effective personal schedules. Bonds encouraged the audience to "take time to make time," to set realistic goals, and to carry out their objectives in a disciplined, consistent manner.

A few of his rules for effective time management include prioritizing tasks; creating a five-year plan; setting yearly, monthly, and weekly goals and objectives; making daily "to do" lists; and scheduling every hour.

Lora Rose Hunter's presentation, "Motivation and Procrastination: Strategies to Short-Circuit the Cycle of Procrastination," incorporated a theory of clinical psychology to explain the cycle of procrastination. She recommended strategies for understanding and avoiding harmful behaviors, which included effectively "operationalizing" goals in order to exhibit desired behaviors; avoiding thoughts that make it seem desirable or easier to postpone or avoid tasks; knowing that maladaptive behaviors, including procrastination, impede progress; accepting that "working better under pressure" and pulling "all-nighters" are not good practices; and using time management techniques (prioritizing, breaking tasks down, using "down" time, and thinking about the pros and cons of a task before acting).



MDF Fellow Lora Rose Hunter



FEF President Dr. Lawrence Morehouse, USF Dean Karen Liller and Dr. Genshaft pose with the McKnight USF family.

continues on page 5

continued from page 4

Ray Rodriguez's presentation on "Balancing Course Load and Family Commitments" offered the following advice to new Fellows: accept that the commitment to graduate education means sacrificing time with spouse, family and friends and acknowledge the impact on them; allow family and friends to help you; understand gender differences which may affect



MDF Fellow Ray Rodriguez

certain career choices; discuss commitments with professors who may be willing to accommodate schedule challenges; and learn to manage your time well.

In addition to the student panel, the New Fellows attended Orientation sessions by university professors who delineated steps for linking coursework to potential dis-

sertation ideas, organizing research articles, taking notes analytically, developing relationships with faculty, selecting a major professor, and more.

In evaluations of the Orientation, most Fellows indicated they benefited greatly from all sessions. One commented that "each speaker motivated me and eased some of my fears about negotiating the Ph.D. environment." Another said "it was an inspirational weekend that has fueled me with a renewed passion to master my field and complete my degree."

Fellows Horacio Sierra and Sylvia Mitchell Seek to Connect Research to Teaching

Three years ago, Silvia Mitchell and Horacio Sierra entered the McKnight Doctoral Fellowship Program, Mitchell in History at the University of Miami (UM) and Sierra in English at the University of Florida. Since then, each of these budding scholars has flourished, bringing a unique perspective and a desire to impact the education system. Through their dedication to research and teaching, Mitchell and Sierra promise significant contributions to our understanding of historical developments that have shaped society.

They share a fascination with the European Renaissance (roughly the 1400's to the 1600's), particularly in Spain, as well as gender and cultural studies. Sierra attributes interest in this time period (also called Early Modern) to its parallels with the present: a rapidly changing society, with the printing press, like today's Internet, as a contributing factor; an emphasis on individual accomplishment in contrast to the Middle Ages culture of anonymity, similar to our current preoccupation with celebrity; and new, disparate influences on religion and popular culture. His dissertation will dissect the portrayal of nuns by a number of Early Modern writers for a multi-faceted examination of women's roles, power, sexuality, and religion in England and Spain during that time.

Mitchell's dissertation will discuss matriarchy in the Spanish monarchy as exemplified by Mariana of Austria, queen regent, during the years 1665-1680. Mitchell's scholarship, revisionist in approach, promises a fresh look at the influence of this monarch and her court on the political landscape of Spain and Europe.

Though Sierra and Mitchell share similar research interests, their paths to the McKnight Doctoral Program differed markedly.

Silvia Mitchell was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where she attended primary and secondary school. Despite an inclination toward the intellectual, she eschewed higher education to work in theater and in several dance companies. She came to Florida as a young adult, where she entered an English program for non-native speakers at Miami-Dade Community College. She went on to earn bachelor's and master's degrees at Florida International University. During those years, she married, had chil-



MDF Fellow Sylvia Mitchell

dren, and worked in the public school system as a substitute teacher and parent volunteer.

Horacio Sierra's family migrated from Cuba in the '60s. About the time Mitchell came to Florida in her twenties, Sierra was a youngster growing up in West Kendall, a suburb of Miami. While still in high school, Sierra published numerous articles as an intern for the *Miami Herald* and edited and published the *Florida Foreign Language Association Newsletter*. He has followed a fast track in education, completing his undergraduate degree at UM in three years. While pursuing his master's at UM, he developed and taught three writing courses and published several scholarly articles. Like Mitchell, Sierra has worked as a substitute teacher in the Miami-Dade public schools.



MDF Fellow Horacio Sierra

For both Mitchell and Sierra, experiences working in schools have strengthened their commitment to the public school system and its students. "Having had to learn a new language has made me understand the needs and experiences of so many of the students here in South Florida," says Mitchell. Sierra likewise sees numerous students whose vision of the future is limited because their parents, many of them immigrants, lack ability to show them how to reach their goals. He recognizes the study of English as one way to improve their skills and broaden their horizons.

Dedicated to connecting his research to teaching, Sierra believes many of his students will feel more engaged when Spain's literary and historic influences on mainstream culture become part of the curriculum. Mitchell agrees. She finds it encouraging that the American Historical Association now places more emphasis on teaching history at all levels, and hopes this portends more collaboration between educators and researchers.

Both scholars want their research to enhance their skills as academics who network with teachers in secondary education. They intend for their research to inform and transform the secondary curriculum, which will touch the lives of thousands more students than either can as a college professor.

Celebrating 25 Years: A Look at Early McKnight Junior Faculty Fellows

Established in 1984, the McKnight Junior Faculty Fellowship (JFF) Program aims to help underrepresented junior faculty advance in Florida educational institutions by enabling them to take a one-year sabbatical with full salary and benefits. During their sabbaticals, Fellows engage in research and training projects directly related to their efforts to secure tenure and promotion.

Of the 190 Fellows awarded to date, at least 53 percent, 100, either have received tenure or promotion or completed a doctoral degree. In addition, notably, the JFF Program has enabled Fellows to publish a substantial number of scholarly books and articles. With the support of the Program, Fellows have submitted more than 135 manuscripts for publication and published at least ten books.

The first thirteen JFF Fellows, awarded in 1984, taught at institutions ranging from community colleges, historically Black colleges and universities, and other four-year institutions. We highlight the careers of three of those Fellows below.

Dawn Bennett-Alexander, Esq., earned her Juris Doctorate specializing in employment law from Howard University School of Law in 1975. In 1976, she worked with the White House Domestic Counsel, serving as assistant to the Associate Director and General Counsel. She then moved on to the U.S. Federal Trade Commission's Antitrust Division where she served as a law clerk in 1977.



Dawn Bennett-Alexander, Esq.

Trying her hand at academia, Bennett-Alexander accepted an Instructor position at the Antioch School of Law Institute for Law and Justice in 1979. In 1982, she accepted a tenured position as Associate Professor of Business and Employment Law at the University of North Florida, where she also received the JFF in 1984. During her sabbatical, Professor Bennett-Alexander focused on publishing articles in employment law with an emphasis on discrimination. In 1988, she joined the University of Georgia (UGA) Terry College of Business as a tenured Associate Professor of Employment Law and Legal Studies. She remains at UGA, where she teaches business law.

Professor Bennett-Alexander publishes extensively in employment law, particularly on gender and race relations. She has published in the *American Business Law Journal*, *Labor Law Journal*, *Women's Rights Law Reporter*, *Personnel Administrator*, and numerous other periodicals. Her 1994 book *Employment Law for Business*, now in its fifth edition, remains the best selling text of its kind in America. Book projects due for release in 2009 and 2010 include works on diversity in the legal environment and ethics in business law.

Dr. Navita James received her Ph.D. in Communications from Ohio State University in 1981. Prior to accepting an Assistant Professor position at the University of South Florida (USF) in 1981, Dr. James taught as an Adjunct Instructor at Rutgers University from 1977 to 1981. Her research interests include mass communication and the impact of media on human behavior, specifically childhood behavior, and, more recently, issues of motherhood and religion and spirituality.

In 1984, Dr. James won a JFF as an Assistant Professor in USF's Department of Communications. Since then, she has earned promo-

tion to Associate Professor and served as Director of African American Studies. She also has chaired Florida's Commission on the Status of Women. Currently, Dr. James serves as a member of USF's College of Arts and Sciences Faculty and the Program Development Diversity Committee and as the Communications Department's Undergraduate Director.

Dr. James teaches courses in interpersonal communication, communication and diversity, women and communication, communicating race and racism, social construction of race and class, and media studies. She has published widely in the *Journalism Quarterly*, *Journal of Broadcasting*, *Journal of Special and Ethnic Studies*, and *Small Group Communication: Selected Readings*. In addition to her academic commitments, Dr. James volunteers throughout the community, recently serving in capacities including reviewer for the Religious Communication Division of the National Communication Association and program planner for "Traces of Trade," a dialogue on race at the Episcopal Diocese of Southwest Florida 2009 Diocesan Annual Convention.



Dr. Navita James

Dr. Charles Wright earned his Ph.D. in Civil Engineering from Vanderbilt University in 1985. While completing his Ph.D., he worked as an Assistant Professor in the College of Science and Technology at Florida A & M University (FAMU). In 1984, he received the JFF, which not only enabled him to complete his Ph.D., but also played an important role in helping him earn tenure and promotion. In 1991, Dr. Wright was promoted to Associate Professor at FAMU.

Dr. Wright has taught courses on land surveying; engineering economy; contracts, specifications and law for engineers; transportation and engineering materials; and municipal sanitation. Dr. Wright has participated in numerous transportation-related projects and organizations, including the National Urban Transit Institute, the Center for Urban Transportation Research, the National Summer Transportation Institute, the National Resource Center, and the African American Mobility Issues Symposium.

When Dr. Wright submitted his JFF application, he pledged to "...stay at FAMU to make the engineering program one of the best in the country." Twenty-five years later, Dr. Wright still fulfills that promise. Now a full-tenured Professor at FAMU in the College of Engineering Sciences, Technology and Agriculture, Dr. Wright leads the Engineering Department to continue striving to advance FAMU's mission.

Dr. Maria Larrondo Petrie Passes It On



Early JFF Dr. Maria Petrie, pictured above, left at the 1988 Annual Fellows Meeting, 20 years later advises a Fellow at the FEF Summer Research and Writing Institute and speaks at the Annual Fellows Meeting about publishing, tenure, and promotion in the academy.

FEF's 2009 Summer Research and Writing Institute Advances Fellows' Projects

"Publish or perish." This axiom for those who aspire to academic careers forms the basis for the FEF Summer Research and Writing Institute (SRWI), now in its third year. From July 26 to August 1, through interactive workshops, presentations, and one-on-one consultations, 32 McKnight Fellows and other scholars immersed themselves in research and writing exercises designed simultaneously to sharpen skills and usher research and writing projects closer to completion.

Participants brought draft dissertations, proposals, prospectuses, and grant proposals, while FEF provided the experts—experienced professors, editors, publishers, and administrators—to coach them on refining their work and converting it into journal articles, book chapters, and competitive grant proposals.

Elements of the Institute—editing assistance, writing workshops, and personal consultations—have been integrated into other FEF meetings, resulting in progressive, year round opportunities for Fellows to advance their projects. The success of this approach is evident in the latest graduating class, as almost all of this year's 25 graduates attended an FEF meeting or the Institute.

One reason the Institute works is that it provides information often not provided by the graduate

curriculum. A sampling of questions answered during the week indicates the many issues scholars must tackle. How do you find the ideal target publication for your article? How important is journal impact factor, and where can you find it for a particular journal? How do you balance teaching obligations with the need to publish? What is unique about publishing in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math)? When should you send letters of inquiry or proposals to a publisher? Is it ethical to send a manuscript to more than one publisher? Do conference presentations count toward tenure?

Some answers were specific to a discipline or university, but, in ev-



Dr. Thomas Joiner offers tips on increasing productivity and getting published.

ery discipline and every presentation, a consistent message emerged: you must persevere to succeed. In that regard, Dr. Thomas Joiner of Florida State University urged participants to recognize themselves as the experts of their own work, accept rejection

ON INCREASING PRODUCTIVITY

Set a goal to write at least 15 minutes everyday. It will generate material and improve your writing. Know that a successful writing session may consist of producing one true sentence. Keep unused material for possible later use.

Write during the peak time of your day, and eliminate distractions when you write by turning off email, cell phones, and social networking sites.

Don't let perfectionism stop you from completing your projects. Just do the best you can.

Writing is hard work, and routine practice is better than waiting for inspiration.

ON GETTING PUBLISHED

Establish a clear thesis and discuss all points adequately and evenly.

Shift gears from student to authority on your subject. Your literature review should contain essential resources but it doesn't have to be exhaustive. Avoid too much repetition. You don't have to announce and summarize each point as in a dissertation. Include recent, relevant research; state your insights; and accept responsibility for your assertions.

Start the process of acquiring permissions to reprint early, since it is the author's responsibility and can take a long time.

Ask for and follow publications' submission guidelines.

as part of the process, and use criticism constructively. "Keep sending it in," he said; "you spent 100 hours on an article, reviewers spent two, maybe."

By the close of the Institute, presenters and participants alike had benefited in some way. Some

made progress on their research or writing, others learned more about challenges and opportunities in publishing, and all were part of the unique McKnight learning community.



Fellows and other students advance writing projects at the 2009 Summer Research and Writing Institute.

FEF Presents NSF Grant Workshops

Recognizing the critical need for students to secure funding to complete their dissertations, the FEF continued its National Science Foundation (NSF) Doctoral Research Improvement Grant Workshop series at the 2009 Summer Research and Writing Institute (SRWI). NSF provides dissertation research funding for doctoral students across a wide range of fields, including social, behavioral, and economic sciences, along with the more traditional engineering and physical sciences. NSF chooses proposals to fund based on scientific merit, importance of the research questions and selected methodology, and suitability of the data presented.



NSF's Dr. Lenell Allen

Dr. Lenell Allen, Program Director for the Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate in the Human Resource Development Division of the NSF, presented the two-part workshop. Part I overviewed NSF's mission and culture, grant submission requirements, review processes, and available funding sources. Dr. Allen shared best practices, which included closely following submission guidelines, strictly adhering to format and deadlines, becoming the

grant's principal investigator, synchronizing grant proposals with NSF program objectives, and building relationships with program officers.

For Part II, in addition to consulting with students individually on current grant projects, Dr. Allen outlined discipline-specific guidance for securing available funding. She also grouped attendees with similar research fields together and discussed abstracts from successful NSF grant proposals. These abstracts underscored effective word usage, sentence structure, and grant presentation techniques, helping demystify NSF's grant writing process.

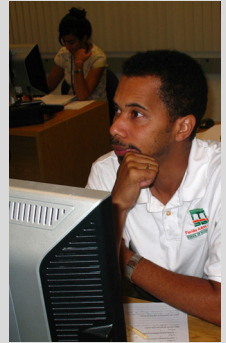
Overall, the sessions received positive feedback from attendees. More than three-fourths found Part I well organized, entailing extremely effective content. Over two-thirds indicated they benefited from reviewing specific language used and detailed information from the sample proposals. Additionally, Dr. Allen's likability, insights, and one-on-one guidance helped bolster ratings for both sessions.



Fellows attend the NSF workshop series.

Experts Demonstrate SPSS and Stata

It goes without saying that effective, successful 21st Century scholars must prove adept at using the computer to aid their research. Thus, this year, at the SRWI, experts provided hands-on instruction on two software packages that are among the most widely used in academic and business research. Dr. Patrick L. Mason, Associate Professor of Economics and Director of African American Studies at Florida State University, introduced Stata (the name is a blend of "statistical" and "data"), and Dr. Marvin P. Dawkins, Professor of Sociology at the University of Miami, taught students how to get started with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).



A Fellow analyzes SPSS.

Scholars use both of these general purpose software packages for data management, analysis, and graphing. They have used Stata for research in the fields of economics, sociology, political science, and epidemiology since its development in 1985. They have worked with SPSS even longer; it was developed in 1968 by a young Ph.D. candidate to analyze thousands of survey responses and is used extensively within the social sciences.



Dr. Patrick Mason discusses Stata.

As Drs. Mason and Dawkins explained, a researcher's decision as to which data management software to choose constitutes one of the more critical planning aspects of a project. Often, a new scholar will choose Stata, SPSS or another software package because his or her department, colleagues, or friends use it, or because it's easier to learn. These are certainly important and valid

rationales, particularly since they may help reduce anxiety as a young scholar undertakes doctoral coursework or engages in collaborative research.

In the long term, however, experienced scholars recommend learning a "toolkit" of both general and specific purpose packages to avoid the common predicament of using less optimal software that causes a project to progress more slowly or problematically. To select the best analytical software for a project, Drs. Mason and Dawkins advise the following:

- Consider not only the strengths of the software, but also the breadth of coverage and how the package can combine with other software to achieve a desired goal;
- Realize that the long-term strategic usefulness of a package may be more important than its initial ease of use;
- Make sure the software allows the researcher to use the most appropriate statistical model;
- Choose a package that makes it easier to interpret results and illustrate them through graphs or tables;
- Be aware that specific-purpose software will cost more.

College Board and Helios Foundation Fund 2009 Pre-College Summer Camps

Students who don't engage in quality enrichment activities over the summer lose some knowledge gained in the prior academic year. Even worse, research shows that this summer learning loss, when compounded year after year, accounts for the "achievement gap" between poor and more affluent students. That is, during the regular academic year, most students learn and advance at the same rate. In the summer, however, poorer students with no opportunities for academic stimulation, fall further behind each year and rarely catch up, negatively impacting both their graduation and college admission rates.

Since 2004, with funding from The College Board Florida Partnership, the FEF has sought to address this dilemma, offering summer programs or camps for middle and high school students around the State. The programs follow an FEF model that integrates course work in reading, writing and/or mathematics with applied projects that exemplify skills in action, along with intensive standardized test preparation and pre-college and career counseling.

Each year the programs demonstrate best practices for partnerships between community-based organizations and local school districts to provide supplemental learning opportunities in communities that need them most. The FEF routinely prepares, distributes, and collects student and teacher applications; reviews applications and accepts students; interviews, hires and trains certified teachers; purchases teaching supplies; prepares standardized test preparation

curriculum and materials, as well as program testing, assessment and evaluation instruments; develops each program's daily schedule; schedules thrice weekly college and career speakers; coordinates field excursions; and collects and analyzes daily attendance records and testing, assessment, and evaluation results.

The local school districts typically approve the programs for school credit at the high school level; help advertise the programs to teachers and students; provide classrooms, computer labs, and facilities support; allow teachers to use projectors, copiers, and computers; offer daily lunch or snacks (sometimes free of charge to students); sometimes provide student transportation; and record student grades and/or attendance in district systems.

The camps served a total of 378 students, with close to 200 enrolled in three programs that focused exclusively on STEM through pure and applied mathematics. Two of those camps, in the Tampa Bay area, were funded by the Helios Foundation.

Students in the STEM programs examined real world math through a number of fascinating, engaging final projects, ranging from building and operating solar-powered cars; constructing, programming and competing with robots; crafting and launching hot air balloons; and investigating mock crime scenes.

At the end of the summer, all students evaluated the programs, with 61% reporting improved reading skills, 64% noting better writing skills, and 84% acknowledging better math skills. Also, 84% indicated they learned new standardized test-taking strategies, and 82% noted they felt less nervous about or better prepared for standardized tests. In response to our college and career preparation efforts, 92% felt they learned more about how to prepare for college and possible careers.

As to the goal of stemming summer learning loss, overall, close to 85% of the students who took both pre- and post-tests showed they at least retained prior knowledge by maintaining or increasing scores. Notably, the percentage of students improving practice test scores was highest in programs where students spent the greatest number of days in camp.



Pinellas students race their robot.



A student tests her solar-powered car.



Hillsborough students launch their hot air balloon.



Lake City Middle students work the computers.

In 2009, for high school students, in addition to our sixth annual camp at Hillsborough's Middleton High, the FEF formed new partnerships with a number of districts in Florida. We offered for-credit day programs in Brevard County at Cocoa High, Osceola County at Osceola High, and St. Lucie County at Fort Pierce Central High. We also partnered with the Florida Gulf Coast University to offer a residential program that served students from the Lee, Glades, and Henry County school districts.

For middle schoolers, we offered our fourth FCAT preparation camp at Columbia County's Lake City Middle School as well as a program in Pinellas County at the Thurgood Marshall Fundamental Middle School.



Florida Gulf Coast students present their engineering research.

HISTORY & CULTURE BRAIN BOWL VICTORS TAKE FOURTH WINNING TITLE

Allusion. Anaphora. Assonance. Caricature. Epiphany. Hyperbole. Onomatopoeia. Oxymoron. Paradox. Synecdoche. These are just some of the literary techniques students must recognize and analyze as rising college admission standards require them to display solid critical reading skills. Students solidify these skills by exercising them every chance they get.

That's where the FEF's 25-year-old History & Culture Competition comes in. In addition to exposing students to facts they may not learn in school, the Competition chiefly aims to enhance critical reading and thinking skills.

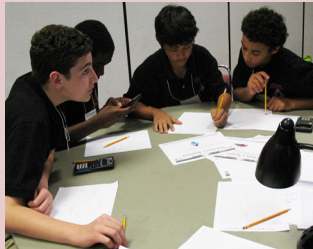
It achieves this goal by challenging students to study college-level texts and prepare to answer questions that test literal comprehension, knowledge of vocabulary in context, and extended reasoning.

On April 17, 2009, for the fourth time since 1985, the Tallahassee Coalition Center of Excellence Lincoln High School Trojans proved masters of the game, besting nine other regional winning teams to capture the 2009 History & Culture Competition State Championship title. As winners,



2009 Competition Victors: The Lincoln High School Trojans

members of the team will choose from \$4,300,000 in 4-year scholarships contributed by Florida colleges and universities and receive cash awards once they enroll in college.



6th-8th Grade Champs: SYZYGY

Although high-level math-related jobs are growing at three times the rate of other occupations, according to the latest Program for International Student Assessment, U.S. students rank 25th out of students from 30 industrialized nations in math literacy and problem solving.

At the same time, the Nation's Report Card indicates almost half U.S. 17-year-olds leave high school without having learned the basic math skills needed to work on the production line of a modern auto plant.

To help stem this crisis, the FEF's Mathematics Brain Bowl Competitions for students in grades 6 through 12 aim to improve skills by testing teams of students, after months of study, on challenging mathematics problem questions written in FCAT and SAT formats.



9th-10th Grade Champs: Chargers 2

MATH BRAIN BOWL CHAMPIONS EMERGE

The testing occurs each spring in an annual double elimination State Competition. On April 17, 2009, in a seven-hour day of matches, the Palm Beach County COE SYZYGY team outwitted other regional teams in the 6th-8th Grade state championship; the Palm Beach County

COE Chargers 2 trounced all rivals in the 9th-10th Grade Competition; and the Atlantic Coast COE Phenomenal to the Fifth won the 11th-12th Grade Competition. Winning 6th through 10th grade team members received prizes including



11th-12th Grade Champs: Phenomenal to the Fifth

trophies and gift certificates. 11th-12th Grade winners will choose from 4-year tuition scholarships contributed by Florida colleges and universities and receive cash scholarship awards.

WORD WIZARDS CROWNED

Can a third grader reason analogically? Can an 8-year-old learn vocabulary well enough to correctly answer SAT-type sentence completion questions? "Yes" is the answer to both queries, as we have witnessed time and again in our annual Word Wizard Competition for students in grades 3 through 5.

Designed in 2002 to enhance spelling and later vocabulary and reading skills, the Competition requires students to spell and answer analogy, sentence completion, and synonym/antonym questions on words taken from 5th grade FCAT lists and the National Spelling Bee Word List. We developed a similar contest for middle schoolers in 2006.

In 2009, Michai Franks from the Atlantic Coast COE triumphed in the elementary Competition, and Thomas Coates from the Palm Beach COE captured the middle school title in matchups that took place during the Annual NAS Pre-College Summit and aired on Bright House Sports Network on Saturday, April 18, 2009.

University of South Florida MDF Fellows Brandon Henry and Monica Wilson, Palm Beach County COE Directors James Green and Marie Sanches, and the FEF's Monica Olivera officiated. Bright House sports- and newscasters, along with FEF Vice President Lyra Logan, Esq., offered on-air play-by-play commentary and game analysis.



3rd-5th Grade Word Wizard Winner Michai Franks



6th-8th Grade Word Wizard Winner Thomas Coates



MDF Fellows Monica Wilson and Brandon Henry moderate and judge the 2009 Competitions.



Bright House's Scott Fais and the FEF's Lyra Logan, Esq., provide on-air game analysis.

Achievers Share Their Laws of Life

Each year, hundreds of Florida students submit applications to join the FEF's National Achievers Society (NAS), an honor society established in 1985 to develop a group achievement modality among members and encourage students in grades 3 through 12 to excel academically. The application process requires each student to submit an essay on character principles.

In the spring, judges in the FEF's annual Laws of Life Essay Contest review NAS applicant essays as Contest entries at one of three levels, 4th-5th grade, 6th-8th grade or 9th-12th grade. For 2009, based on content, presentation, grammar and spelling, judges chose Briana Lewis from the South Florida Center of Excellence (COE) (4th-5th grade), De'Vontae Levy from the North Florida COE (6th-8th grade), and Ashley Van Heel from the Atlantic Coast COE (9th-12th grade) as first place winners.



Briana Lewis

In her essay, Briana Lewis, the 4th-5th grade winner from South Florida, chose to respond to a quotation by former United States Secretary of State Dr. Condoleezza Rice who said, "In America, with education and hard work, it really does not matter where you came from; it matters only where you are going." An excerpt from Briana's piece follows.

Education is skills, it is knowledge, and it is power. Earning a good education allows you to have control over your life. When you have a desire to learn, your possibilities are endless. You can use your skills to accomplish great success.

Where you come from should not affect the outcome of your life. You can choose to be successful. There are many success stories of wealthy people who came from struggling families or no family at all. Yet they followed their dreams and didn't give up. Through hard work and dedication, they kept moving forward.

A person's education is not only what he or she learns in the classroom, it's also the knowledge he or she gains simply by living. Knowledge gives you the power to open doors to opportunities. Using your skills, you do not need to wait for opportunities to come your way, you can go after them.

In his essay, De'Vontae Levy, the 6th-8th grade winner from North Florida, described the laws of life that guide him. A portion of his essay follows.



De'Vontae Levy

My education, my reputation and my compassion for others are important elements that make me who I am today. I have always been taught that education can help you gain status and prestige but that status and prestige are nothing if you don't have a good reputation and compassion for others.

First, education is the key to gaining all that I want in this life, freedom, prosperity and success. A great educator and motivator Dr. Joseph Bondi once said that adolescents are a "canvas to be filled and a field to be tilled by God." I value my

education and will strive to do well in my studies and be all that I can for God, and myself and my community.

Secondly, character is developed from the inside, and I know I must build upon it daily and exemplify it in my actions. Having a good reputation can take an individual a long way in this life. Therefore, I protect mine by respecting others and treating them how I want to be treated according to the Golden Rule.

Thirdly, I am a compassionate individual and have a knack for helping others. This is a quality I have found is lacking in today's society because we live in a time when individuals are more concerned with themselves. I plan to break this trend and always show concern for others and their feelings.

Ashley Van Heel, the 9th-12th grade winner from Atlantic Coast, responded to the following quotation by the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

Up until a few years ago, growing up for me had always been easy. But, during the fall of 2004, tragedy struck when my mother suffered catastrophic trauma in a terrible car accident that caused a disk in her back to slip, leaving her temporarily immobile. Due to the severity of her injury, she was left unable to work, cook, clean, etc., for over two years.

Being the eldest, I had to step in as the caretaker of my mother and sister, and, after years of not working, my mother was forced to file for bankruptcy. The three of us ended up sharing a room in a crowded home. It was only through our strength as a family, and the grace of God, that we were able to persevere.

Through it all, I have learned a great deal. I have learned that, in life, a person gains the greatest strength from hardship, not success. And because I never gave up when my plate seemed far too full for any normal 13-year-old, I matured significantly and become a stronger and more independent person. I have realized that it is necessary to support others when the road gets rough, and I've learned that it is selflessness that, ironically, gives you a stronger sense of self.

Upcoming FEF Events

February 26-27, 2010	MDF Mid-Year Research and Writing Conference, Tampa
April 16-17, 2010	25 th Annual Brain Bowl Competition and Florida National Achievers Society Pre-College Summit, Orlando
June 2010	MDF New Fellows Orientation, Tampa

FEF Board of Directors

Dr. Hayward J. Benson, Jr., Chair
 Dr. Robert L. Nixon, Vice Chair
 Mr. Elliott L. Carr, Treasurer
 Dr. Sylvia Carley
 Ms. Cristal Cole
 Dr. Carl M. Crawford
 Dr. Robert Friedman
 Dr. Dovie J. Gamble
 Ms. Magda R. Orta
 Dr. Robert L. Thomas
 Dr. Sylvia W. Thomas
 Mr. Philippe L. Villain

FEF Staff

Dr. Lawrence Morehouse
President and Chief Executive Officer
 Lyra Logan, Esquire
Vice President and General Counsel
 Mr. Charles Jackson
MDF Program Manager
 Ms. Mindy Lai
Finance Manager
 Ms. Rachael Nickie
*Pre-College Programs Coordinator/
 Publications Manager*
 Ms. Monica Olivera
Executive Assistant
 Ms. Phyllis Reddick
*Executive Assistant/
 Communications Specialist*
 Ms. Khahnlong Sengsoulya
Administrative Assistant

FEF Focus is a semi-annual publication of the Florida Education Fund.
 ©2009, All Rights Reserved.

Volume 8, Issue 1 Fall 2009

Layout & Design: Lyra Logan, Monica Olivera
 Editing: Lyra Logan, Rachael Nickie, Monica Olivera, Phyllis Reddick
 Staff Writing: Charles Jackson, Lawrence Morehouse, Lyra Logan, Phyllis Reddick
 Staff Photography: Charles Jackson, Lyra Logan, Rachael Nickie
 Word Wizard
 Photography: Courtesy of Bright House Sports Network

The FEF's mission is to strengthen the larger community by creating and implementing programs and services that lead to greater educational advancement for historically underrepresented groups.

For information on how you may support FEF programs, please call 813-272-2772.

FEF

201 East Kennedy Boulevard
 Suite 1525
 Tampa, Florida 33602

Phone: 813-272-2772
 Fax: 813-272-2784

Visit Our Web Site at

www.fefonline.org