

Demystifying the NIEHS Grant Process to Attract and Retain Diverse Talent for the Environmental Health Sciences

SPEAKER BIOS



Dr. Lauren Aleksunes is Professor of Pharmacology and Toxicology at Rutgers University. She received her Pharm.D. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Connecticut and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Kansas Medical Center. She joined Rutgers in 2009 where her research interests continued in the transport of toxicants in the placenta, kidneys, and brain. Lauren is an Outstanding New Environmental Scientist (ONES) Awardee from NIH/NIEHS. Her accomplishments include over 125 publications and continuous NIH funding since 2007. Lauren is trained as a Grant Writing Coach by the National Research Mentoring Network. At Rutgers, Lauren serves as Director of the Rutgers Toxicology Graduate Program and is the PI on their T32 training grant. As Lead of Workforce Development in the NJ CTSA, Lauren oversees two grant writing programs for trainees and early career scientists.



Dr. Andres Cardenas is an Assistant Professor in the Division of Environmental Health Sciences and faculty member in the Center for Computational Biology at the University of California, Berkeley. His research examines the impact of the environment on molecular and epigenetic biomarkers and the extent to which these alterations contribute to disease risk throughout the life course. He is a recipient of the Outstanding New Environmental Scientist (ONES) R01 award from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and co-investigator of the UC Berkeley Superfund Research Program. His research is funded by NIEHS, NIA and internal pilot grants. He has experience mentoring undergraduate and graduate students as well as postdoctoral scholars in his group.



Ms. Toccara Chamberlain is a Health Specialist with NIEHS' Population Health Branch. Ms. Chamberlain provides evaluative support to multiple programs including the Powering Research through Innovative Methods for Mixtures in Epidemiology (PRIME) and the Environmental Health Sciences Core Centers programs. In addition to evaluation activities, Toccara also manages the Keystone Science Lecture Seminar Series and is the program manager for the R13/U13 Conference Grant and Time-Sensitive Research programs. She also is the program contact for the Support for Research Excellence (SuRE) program.

Prior to coming to NIEHS, Toccara completed the Presidential Management Fellows program at NIH. She completed her MA in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from Webster University and a certificate in Clinical Addictions Counseling from East Carolina University.



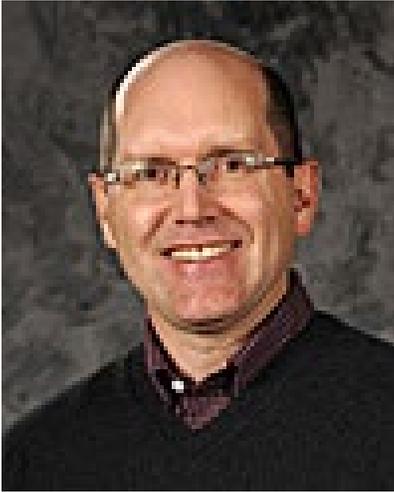
Dr. Simone Charles is a Clinical Associate Professor and Associate Chair (Curriculum) of Environmental Health Sciences at the University of Michigan, School of Public Health. Her research began in exposure science including risk assessment modeling for environmental contaminants in soils, air contaminant exposure assessments, tobacco smoke chemical tracer identification and efficacy determination in urban households with asthmatic children. Her work has transitioned to public health practice and research translation working with academic-community partnerships to address health impacts of environmental hazard exposures on underserved rural and urban communities including addressing health disparities around tobacco smoking, lead hazard exposure, migrant farmworker health, minority adolescent health, asthma reduction, and healthy housing. Her practice has also informed her contributions to state and local partnerships. Environmental health literacy, and workforce development and diversification is also a major focus of her practice. She was a 2013 NIH NIMHD Translational Health Disparities scholar and 2012 Health Equity Leadership Institute fellow.



Dr. Zeliann R. Craig earned her Bachelor's of Science in Industrial Microbiology (University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez, 2004) and her Ph.D. in Physiological Sciences (University of Arizona, 2009). She completed postdoctoral training in Reproductive Toxicology at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and joined The University of Arizona in 2013. She is currently an Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in the School of Animal and Comparative Biomedical Sciences (ACBS). Dr. Craig holds memberships in the BIO5 Institute and the Southwest Environmental Health Sciences Center where she serves as co-leader of the Adaptive Responses to Environmental Stress Research Focus Group. Dr. Craig's research is focused on understanding how environmental exposures influence reproductive health. Her work modeling and characterizing reproductive toxicities in mice is aimed at understanding how chemical exposures alter ovarian function and cause adverse reproductive outcomes such as infertility and early menopause. When describing her development as a scientist, Dr. Craig credits programs aimed at recruiting and supporting minority students, such as MARC, MHD, and IMSD, with supporting her discovery of research as a career and facilitating her journey towards her dream job.



Dr. Heather Henry is a Health Scientist Administrator for the NIEHS where she oversees Superfund Research Program (SRP) grants that spans human health toxicology, risk assessment, detection technologies and remediation approaches. She provides guidance to potential applicants for SRP's Multi-project Center Grants (P42s), Individual Research Grants (R01s), Small Business / Technology Transfer Grants (R41-44; SBIR/STTR), and Conference Grants (R13). Heather studied plant-based environmental remediation (phytoremediation) and ecological restoration as part of her doctoral work at the University of Cincinnati and as a Fulbright Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Melbourne and University of Adelaide in Australia. She has been with NIEHS since 2006.



Dr. Michael Humble received his doctorate in toxicology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill performing his dissertation research in the intramural laboratories at NIEHS on a transgenic mouse model for skin cancer. Following a short postdoctoral training period, Humble began working in the Division of Extramural Research and Training at NIEHS, first as a Program Analyst, and currently as a Program Administrator. Humble oversees the extramural Fellowship program, the R25 Summer Research Education Experience Program, the R25 Undergraduate Research Education Program (UP) to Enhance Diversity in the Environmental Health Sciences, as well as the research portfolios in skin disease, immunotoxicology, and autoimmune disease. Humble was a high school chemistry teacher prior to returning to graduate school and receiving his Ph.D.



Dr. Marie O'Neill is a professor at University of Michigan School of Public Health. Her research interests include health effects of air pollution, temperature extremes and climate change (mortality, asthma, hospital admissions, cardiovascular endpoints and birth outcomes); environmental exposure assessment; and socio-economic influences on health. She has worked for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Pan American Health Organization, in Mexico at the National Institute of Public Health and the National Center for Environmental Health as a Fulbright Scholar. Her current projects include community-based and epidemiologic research on climate hazards, housing and health, and research on urban exposures and birth outcomes in Mexico City. She serves as a faculty lead on diversity, equity and inclusion at the School of Public Health.



Dr. Kristianna Pettibone has 20 years' experience managing, directing, and guiding public health policy research and evaluation projects. She holds a Ph.D. in Policy Sciences (health policy concentration) from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Prior to joining NIEHS, she served as director of the MayaTech Corporation's Center for Community Prevention and Treatment Research.

Kristi has worked on evaluations of several federal grant portfolios including CDC's Injury Control Research Centers and NIEHS's Environmental Health Core Centers Program. She led an NIEHS workgroup in the development of a new translational research framework and supports program staff in managing team science and interdisciplinary initiatives.



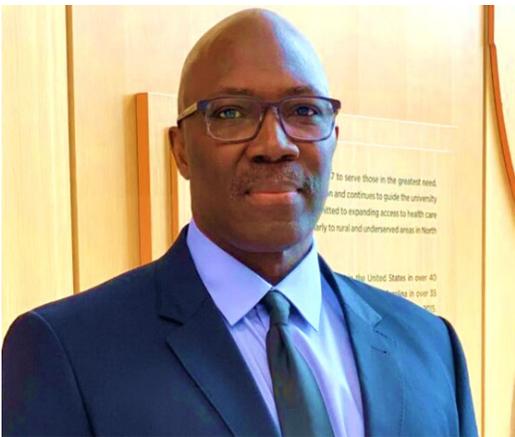
Dr. Ericka Reid directs the Office of Science Education & Diversity (OSD) at NIEHS; and leads many of the IC's DEI initiatives, including the NIEHS Scholars Connect Program, the Diversity Speaker Series, and the NC Women of Color Research Network (NC WoCRN) – a regional chapter of the NIH WoCRN. Ericka holds a doctorate in Educational Psychology from Georgia State University, as well as a Master's in Education and a Bachelor's in Psychology from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Her research has focused on career development, leadership, and people of color in historically non-traditional careers – particularly Black women in STEM. Dr. Reid completed the Christine Mirzayan Science & Technology Policy Fellowship Program at the National Academies in Washington DC. Additionally, she received a *Diversity & Inclusion* certificate from eCornell at Cornell University, and holds a certificate in *Personal Development Coaching* from the Coaching & Positive Psychology (CaPP) Institute in Atlanta, GA.



Dr. Tiffany Sanchez is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Environmental Health Sciences at Columbia University. Dr. Sanchez is a trained environmental and molecular epidemiologist. She employs a multi-disciplinary approach to investigate two main research themes: understanding metals and lung disease in general populations and identifying molecular signatures of environmental- and metal-related lung disease. Her long-term goals are to extend the knowledge of environmentally-related respiratory disease and identify prevention interventions.



Dr. Melissa Smarr is a Health Scientist Administrator in the Population Health Branch. Melissa joined NIEHS in July 2020 and her broad research portfolio includes reproductive health, metabolic health across the life course, environmental epidemiology, environmental health disparities and environmental justice. Melissa received her doctorate in Environmental Health Sciences from the University of Michigan School of Public Health. Prior to joining NIEHS, Melissa was a Tenure-Track Assistant Professor at Emory University. During her time at Emory, Melissa was a Co-Investigator with the P30 HERCULES Exposome Research Center and the P50 Center for Children's Health, the Environment, the Microbiome, and Metabolomics. As a Faculty Fellow in the Office of Sustainability Initiatives, Melissa developed and taught the Environmental Justice: Theory and Public Health Practice course and served as a mentor for the Break the Cycle of Children's Environmental Health Disparities program.



Dr. Kassim Traore completed his PhD degree in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at Howard University, Washington D.C., and post-doctoral studies in toxicology at Johns Hopkins University. In 2007, he joined the faculty of Elizabeth City State University School of Math, Science and Technology, where he rose through the ranks to become Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Pharmacy and Health Professions. In 2015, he moved to Campbell University as Professor and Chair of the Department of Biochemistry and Genetics at The School of Osteopathic Medicine. Dr. Traore has completed additional fellowships at Michigan State University and Johns Hopkins University. Dr. Traore has published numerous papers and received several research funding grants from NIH. The focus of Dr. Traore's research is in the area toxicology and aging related to altered steroid hormone synthesis, including endocrine pathologies, male reproductive disorders, and cancer. His work aims to better understanding of the mechanism phthalate induced inhibition of steroidogenesis in testis.