

# STEM SISTAH NETWORK NEWSLETTER



## Our Mission

The mission of STEM Sistah Network is to advance identity and empowerment of Black female graduate students and postdoctoral scholars in STEM disciplines while promoting academic success and providing emotional support. The Vanderbilt University chapter of the STEM Sistah Network was launched in Spring 2018 to provide opportunities for mentoring, academic, professional development, and social support to Black women graduate students, staff, and faculty in STEM disciplines and departments at every level of the STEM pipeline.

## About Us

STEM SISTAH NETWORK is supported by Trans-Institutional Programs (TIPs), a centerpiece of the Vanderbilt University Academic Strategic Plan. The program is designed to support new ideas, cutting-edge research, and the development of infrastructure by supporting emerging and existing trans-institutional centers and institutes. The awards are meant to support organizations that facilitate research and teaching collaborations across disciplines, aim to address topics of critical academic and societal interest, embrace discovery and spark learning to position Vanderbilt as a world leader in a given area. The STEM SISTAH NETWORK Vanderbilt University chapter was organized based on the University of Denver model developed by Dr. Nicole M. Joseph.

### IN THIS ISSUE

**OUR MISSION** 1  
**ABOUT US**

**RECENT EVENTS** 2  
**BLACK GIRLS BECOMING**

**EXCELLENCE IN**  
**LEADERSHIP** 3

**STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS** 4

**SGLC & MINI RESEARCH**  
**GRANTS RECIPIENTS** 5

**LEADERSHIP TEAM** 6

# Recent Events

In response to the university's COVID-19 control and prevention practices, the STEM SISTAH NETWORK has continued to adopt a completely virtual model for the 2021 semester. This shift did not, however, prevent our group from creating spaces for Black womxn to share their stories and experiences in STEM-related industries. This semester we:

- Hosted 7 events for the Vanderbilt community and surrounding universities
- Continued our event series – Mingle and Mentor – to provide informal opportunities for students to connect with STEM practitioners
- Held a virtual march for Black Womxn in STEM, which attracted over 20 participants

Although unexpected, the STEM SISTAH team is proud of our ability to adapt and grateful for the volunteer speakers and workshop facilitators that helped make this year unforgettable.



## Black Girls Becoming

As part of our comprehensive program to advance scholarly research and training opportunities for the study of Black womxn and girls, the Intersectional Study for BlackWomen and Girls proudly introduces the Black Girls Becoming Summer Institute. Black Girls Becoming is the first research project of its kind, centered on understanding the impacts, both positive and negative, on Black students and helping to advance the life

outcomes of Black girls in larger society. Created and designed by Black women scholars at Vanderbilt from chemistry, education, and sociology, Black Girls Becoming engages rising 7th and 8th grade Black girls in a sequence of workshops to illuminate and promote Black girl joy, brilliance, and magic. As a part of this programming and research, we are offering:

- A two-week residential living and learning community experience model
- Opportunities for Black girls to learn about themselves and their peers through rigorous study of the self
- A holistic curriculum with workshops in science, critical consciousness, the arts, and financial literacy

If you would like to learn more about the Black Girls Becoming Summer Institute, or help us sponsor 25 students, please visit us here:

<https://www.vanderbilt.edu/ibwgs/blackgirlsbecomingsummerinstitute/>

**“For me, becoming isn’t about arriving somewhere or achieving a certain aim. I see it instead as forward motion, a means of evolving, a way to reach continuously toward a better self. The journey doesn’t end.”**  
— Michelle Obama, **Becoming**



**Black Girls  
Becoming**  
Summer Research Institute

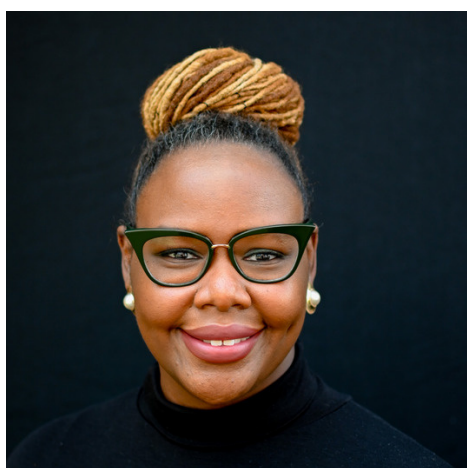
# Excellence in Leadership

**Dr. Breann Brown** received the 2021 National Institutes of Health Director's Awards for her research on understanding of the cell's metabolism from a step-to-step process to one that breaks down all of the different components and processes coming in at each of those steps. Dr. Brown will receive \$1.5 million during a period of five years for direct research costs with her project.



**Dr. Phillis Sheppard** has been named the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Endowed Chair in the Department of Religion, Psychology, and Culture at Vanderbilt University. As a practical theologian, Dr. Sheppard is recognized for her contributions to practical theology, psychology and religion, womanist methodology, cultural studies, pastoral theology, and spiritual practices.

**Dr. Lillian J. Brady** has been named a 2021 MOSAIC K99/R00 Awardee. The objective of the MOSAIC Postdoctoral Career Transition Award to Promote Diversity (K99/R00) is to enhance workforce diversity by facilitating a timely transition of promising postdoctoral researchers from diverse backgrounds from their mentored, postdoctoral research positions to independent, tenure-track or equivalent research-intensive faculty positions.



**Dr. ReAnna S Roby** has been named a 2021 Vanderbilt University Post-Doc Service Awardee. The Postdoc Service Award goes to a postdoctoral scholar who has demonstrated sustained service to Vanderbilt through service to the community at large—through professional societies, scholarly work outside regular lab responsibilities, or by leading within and promoting the postdoc experience at Vanderbilt.



# Student Spotlight

**Carcia Carson** won first place at the 21st annual Nanoscience/Nanotechnology Forum “NanoDay!” Carcia is a doctoral student and NSF graduate fellow in the Department of Biomedical Engineering at Vanderbilt University. You can see more about the forum and her research using the link below

<https://my.vanderbilt.edu/vinsenews/2021/11/nanoday2021-poster-winners/>



**Mariah Deans Harmon**, a Doctoral candidate in the Department of Teaching and Learning, has been named a 2021 NAEd/Spencer Dissertation Fellow. These \$27,500 fellowships support individuals whose dissertations show potential for bringing fresh and constructive perspectives to the history, theory, analysis, or practice of formal or informal education anywhere in the world. She was also named a 2021 Ford Foundation Dissertation Fellow for her research on how teacher education programs can better center the developmental needs of minoritized teachers.



**Kimberlyn Ellis** has been accepted as a Christine Mirzayan Science and Technology Policy Graduate Fellow. This is a full-time hands-on training and educational program where fellows spend 12 weeks at the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine in Washington, DC learning about science and technology policy and the role that scientists and engineers play in advising the nation. She will be placed under the Health and Medicine Division’s Board on Health Care Services and advised by Dr. Sharyl Nass, Director of the Board on Health Care Services and Director of the National Cancer Policy Forum.



# SGLC Grant Recipients

SGLC A Black Girl's Community Care Network  
Grantee: Taqiyyah Elliott



SGLC: Women Navigating Blackness in Athletics  
(WNBA)

Grantees: Syndee Collins, Whitley Ferguson, Dawnyell Fletcher



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## Mini Research Grant Recipients



SGLC: Ain't I a Math Teacher: Student-Teacher Perceptions of Policies and Practices that Support Black Women Mathematics Teacher Candidates' Recruitment and Retention

Grantee: Micaela Y. Harris



Proposal Title: Uncovering COVID-19: How the Perception of Vaccine Sponsorship Affects the Vaccination Rate among Black Women  
Grantee: Victoria King



# LEADERSHIP TEAM



**DR. RENĀ A. S. ROBINSON**  
ASSOC. PROFESSOR OF  
CHEMISTRY &  
NEUROLOGY  
VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

**DR. NICOLE M. JOSEPH, FOUNDER**  
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VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

**DR. CHRISTY L. ERVING**  
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VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

**DR. REANNA S. ROBY**  
POSTDOCTORAL SCHOLAR  
FISK-VANDERBILT  
REGIONAL CENTER FOR  
EXCELLENCE

**DR. PHILLIS SHEPPARD, ADVISOR**  
ASSOC. PROFESSOR OF RELIGION,  
PSYCHOLOGY AND CULTURE  
VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

**DR. EMILIE TOWNS,**  
ADVISOR  
DEAN OF DIVINITY SCHOOL  
VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

**DR. STACEY FLOYD-THOMAS,**  
ADVISOR  
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## STUDENT CONTRIBUTORS:

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