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Institute of Diversity Sciences Announces 2023-2024 Faculty and Student SLOAN Fellows

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Researchers in computer science and engineering at UMass Amherst and UMass Boston teamed up to help diversify STEM culture across the UMass system with help from a $499,972 grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. The team, called the **SLOAN Fellows Program**, is led by the Institute of Diversity Sciences at UMass Amherst and recently selected the inaugural cohort of 14 faculty mentors and 15 undergraduate students.

"For students in science, engineering, and technology, academic success requires forging meaningful relationships with faculty

and peers in research labs, acquiring hands-on research skills and understanding the culture of science," says **Nilanjana Dasgupta**, professor of psychological and brain sciences and director of the **Institute of Diversity Sciences** (IDS) at UMass Amherst. But such relationship-forging doesn't happen in a vacuum, and students from historically marginalized background too-often find themselves at a disadvantage in STEM education and fields.

The SLOAN Fellows Program will take a three-pronged approach to expand pathways from undergraduate to graduate education for underrepresented students in STEM. First, the leadership team selected an inaugural cohort of faculty fellows who are keen on improving the culture of their labs and mentoring practices to meet the needs of students who are often been left behind when it comes to research training in science, engineering and technology. This faculty learning community that spans both campuses will work together to improve their research mentoring practices and learn from each other. Second, faculty fellows will expand and diversify onramps to graduate education by informing and engaging undergraduate students about the value of graduate education and encouraging them to consider applying to graduate school. Third, faculty fellows will be matched with student fellows from their discipline who will be their research mentees for an entire academic year.

"Our students at UMass Boston don't fit in traditional molds," says Kim Hamad Schifferli, associate professor of engineering at UMass Boston, who is a member of the grant's leadership team as well as one of this year's faculty fellows. "They often don't know about the many opportunities for graduate school, and how it can impact their career pathways. I'm really excited about how this program opens up new doors and gives them the tools to go after competitive programs that they hadn't considered before."

The Sloan Student Fellows Program is a research-mentoring program welcoming Black, Latine/Hispanic and Indigenous (BLI) undergraduate students at both UMass Amherst and UMass Boston. These undergraduate students are actively mentored by one of 14 faculty fellows and their graduate students as they conduct hands-on research in faculty labs for an entire academic year. They take part in small mentoring groups to learn about post-graduate career options and also participate in a six-week summer professional development program called the Leadership Academy. Student fellows receive a stipend of $5,000 for their dedicated work.

"I was very fortunate to have excellent mentors from high school to college to graduate school and beyond," says Shannon Roberts, another member of the grant's leadership team, faculty fellow and assistant professor in mechanical and industrial engineering at UMass Amherst. "With the Sloan program, I am able to pay it forward by mentoring students and exposing them to unparalleled opportunities in research and beyond that can set them up for prosperous and fulfilling careers."

Faculty fellows include:

- Lauren Andrews, Engineering, UMass Amherst

- Tiago Cogumbreiro, Computer Science, UMass Boston

- Joanna Dahl, Engineering, UMass Boston

- Funda Durupinar Babur, Computer Science, UMass Boston

- Hui Guan, Computer Science, UMass Amherst

- Christian Guzman, Engineering, UMass Amherst

- Daniel Haehn, Computer Science, UMass Boston

- Kimberly Hamad-Schifferli, Engineering, UMass Boston

- Kiersten C Kerby-Patel, Engineering, UMass Boston

- Donghyun Kim, Computer Science, UMass Amherst

- Michael Rahaim, Engineering, UMass Boston

- Shannon Roberts, Mechanical & Industrial Engineering, UMass Amherst

- Neena Thota, Computer Science, UMass Amherst

- Yair Zick, Computer Science, UMass Amherst

Student fellows include:

- Julie Audi, Computer Science, UMass Amherst

- Matheus Berbet, Computer Science, UMass Boston

- Demann Blaise, Computer Science, UMass Boston

- Santiago Franco, Engineering, UMass Boston

- Edward Gaibor, Computer Science, UMass Boston

- Luis Garcia Gomez, Computer Science, UMass Amherst

- Jordan Hendricks, Engineering, UMass Boston

- Silvana Mendoza Olarte, Computer Science, UMass Amherst

- Vanessa Namirembe, Engineering, UMass Amherst

- Teniola Ogundeko, Engineering, UMass Boston

- Emmanuel Okon, Engineering, UMass Boston

- Kevin Oliveira Downing, Computer Science, UMass Amherst

- Madison Perry, Engineering, UMass Amherst

- Samuel Pongnon, Engineering, UMass Amherst

- Joshua Transtamar, Engineering, UMass Boston

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