



Newsletter Editor: Rachel Baugh

## Summer 2020 Online Internship Program

This summer, Aspirnaut™ went virtual for the 2020 Summer Internship Program.



Fourteen high school students from nine states participated in the first Aspirnaut™ virtual STEM internship. The Aspirnaut™ team developed and implemented a virtual two-week experience that provided students with essential skills for competitive STEM careers. Anchored in science, the program's content focused on kidney disease, professional skills, and personal development. Below is an outline of this summer's virtual program curriculum.

Science- Hands On	Professional Skills Development	Self-Discovery
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renal Biology and Disease</li> <li>• Acid and Bases</li> <li>• Serial Dilutions</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Science Communication</li> <li>• Writing Workshops</li> <li>• Standardized Test Prep</li> <li>• Pre-Courses</li> <li>• Lab Skills Course</li> <li>• Long-term mentorship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychological Thriving Skills</li> <li>• 1-on-1 Career Mapping</li> <li>• College Planning</li> <li>• Virtual Interactive Activities</li> </ul>
<h3 style="text-align: center;">WELLNESS for LIFE</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic Nutrition</li> <li>• Lifestyle Choices</li> <li>• Domains of Wellness</li> <li>• Awareness/Mindfulness</li> </ul>		

## Impact: In Their Words:

- "Being in an environment surrounded by supportive peers and feeling acknowledged for my potential has increased my confidence in myself immensely. Being 'discovered,' Being pushed to use my potential, and being given the steps to reach my goals has made me more aware of my abilities and more eager to use them."
- "Participation solidified my interest in pursuing a career in STEM and introduced me to other teenagers interested in STEM."
- "My involvement with Aspirnauts created a true family feel. It is amazing how the program connected the students with so many high-level professionals."
- "This program has so many mentors who have generously gone out of their way to create an individualized experience for each student."
- "Aspirnaut has definitely helped me grow and become a deeper thinker. I am more confident in myself."
- "The Aspirnaut program time-traveled me four years into the future."

**Aspirnaut™ is dedicated to matching talented youth from rural and diverse backgrounds with STEM opportunities.**

**DONATE NOW**



### **Congratulations!**

**Isi Ero-Tolliver, Ph.D.**, Aspirnaut™ alum and mentor, has been named the **Interim Dean of the School of Science**, at Hampton University. Dr. Ero-Tolliver joined the faculty in 2015. One year later she became the PI and Director of the National Science Foundation Robert Noyce Hampton University Teacher Scholarship Program.

She earned a B.S. in biology and M.S. at Jackson State University. Her thesis research was performed in the Life Sciences Division at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. Dr. Ero-Tolliver attained her Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Studies in Biological Sciences and Science Education at Vanderbilt University. Afterward, she stayed at Vanderbilt University to complete her post-doctoral training in the Department of Medicine in Dr. Billy Hudson's lab.

Dr. Ero-Tolliver is not only a superb leader and scientist, but she has also mentored many Aspirnauts and students at Hampton. Congratulations, Dr. Ero-Tolliver, on this next phase of your rising star journey!!

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## **2021 Summer Internship Application is OPEN**

We are currently accepting applications from high school and undergraduate students interested in STEM fields for the **Summer 2021 Aspirnaut™ Research Internship Program**. High School students spend six weeks (June 6 -July 17, 2021), and Undergraduate students spend ten weeks (May 31- August 7, 2021) in a residential research experience as a member of a team of scientists,

with the opportunity to conduct their own research, gather results, and present their findings in poster and oral presentations.

To apply, High School applications can access the link [HERE](#).

To apply, Undergraduate and Berea College applicants can access the link [HERE](#).

\*Our first priority is the health and safety of the interns and staff members. Aspirnaut™ Summer Research Internship may be modified or canceled due to institutional, metro, state, or federal recommendations or mandates related to COVID-19.

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## [More 2020 Medical School Admissions](#)

**Davin Bryant**, a 2018 Aspirnaut™ and resident counselor, graduated from Vanderbilt University in 2019 with an undergraduate degree in neuroscience. He will attend Tulane University School of Medicine this fall. **Dominique Szymkiewicz**, a 2017 Aspirnaut™ intern and resident counselor, graduated from Vanderbilt University in 2019 with an undergraduate degree in Biomedical Engineering and Neuroscience. Dominique will attend The University of Florida College of Medicine this fall.



**Davin Bryant**  
Tulane University School of  
Medicine



**Dominique Szymkiewicz**  
The University of Florida College of  
Medicine

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## [2020 College Student Updates](#)

**Nyasha Gombami**, a two-time Aspirnaut™ participant, graduated from Berea College with a degree in chemistry and a minor in biology. **Kennedy Harris**, a high school Aspirnaut™ intern in 2015, graduated from Tuskegee University and has started a Masters in Multidisciplinary Biomedical Science at the University of Alabama Birmingham. **Carlise Lapé**, a 2012 high school Aspirnaut™ intern graduated from nursing school at East Carolina University College of Nursing. She is working as a registered nurse at Duke University Hospital. **Arnez Orr** graduated from Tuskegee University with a mechanical engineering degree and has started working at Textron Specialized Vehicle Careers. **Adwaya Sau**, a 2014 high school Aspirnaut™ intern, graduated from The Ohio State University with a degree in Electrical and Computer engineering. He has started working as a software engineer at Capital One. **Demetrius Sudduth**, a 2012 Aspirnaut™ intern, graduated from

Tennessee State University with a degree in Biology. He has started a master's degree program at the University of Illinois at Chicago for Management Information Systems.



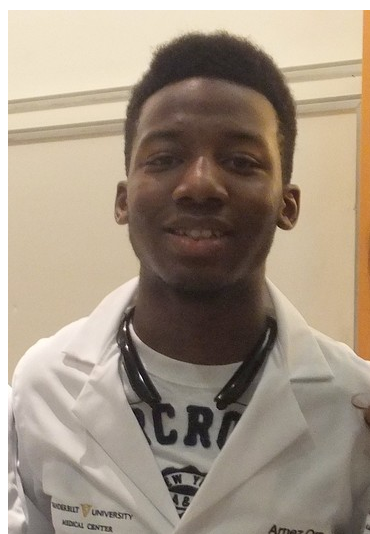
**Nyasha Gombami**



**Kennedy Harris**



**Carlie Lapé**



**Arnez Orr**



**Adwya Sau**



**Demetrius Sudduth**



## **Featured Aspirnaut™**

### **Tyrone Gamble**

**Tyrone Gamble** is a four-time Aspirnaut™ intern from Helena, Arkansas, and health sciences graduate of Hendrix College. He will begin the Master's of Public Health in Epidemiology at the University of Arkansas Medical School this fall.

#### **1. Tell us a little about your hometown.**

I grew up in Helena, Arkansas, which is a small, rural town located in southeastern Arkansas with a population of roughly 12,000 people. Growing up without my biological father in my life, I had to adjust socially and emotionally to his absence. Helena is often known for its high crime rates, poverty,

and low educational attainment, but it has a lot of great untapped potential, especially in the younger generations.

I attended KIPP Delta Collegiate High School and graduated as valedictorian of the Class of 2016. In retrospect, I could say that I had a fairly decent education--one that prepared me adequately for college. I also had some great teachers, one of which was Mr. Nathan Whitfield, who helped me score a five on the AP Calculus BC exam.

## **2. How did you hear about Aspirnaut™ and what made prompted you to apply?**

I heard about Aspirnaut™ through my high school counselor, at the time, Amy Charpentier. She told me about all the great things that Aspirnaut™ was doing and the experiences of two former students from my school who had previously attended. I was ultimately sold on the opportunity to do research, something that I previously had not considered.

## **3. How has Aspirnaut™ made a difference in your life?**

Aspirnaut™ opened my eyes to endless possibilities. Through the Distinguished Speaker sessions, I was able to meet a variety of individuals from different career paths. What I liked most about each person was that they each had a unique story about their life's journey and how their path was not always linear. The Aspirnaut™ program also made me fall in love with the kidney, which is why I want to become a nephrologist.

## **4. Is there a particular moment or memory that stands out for you?**

I enjoyed the daily interactions with my peers, lab members, and mentor. It was so much fun being with them, and I learned so much about myself and life. I also remember meeting the Hudsons for the first time during move-in day for the high school students. They were so warm and welcoming, which made me enthusiastic about the program. I love how dedicated and committed they are to the program, which is something that I genuinely admire about them.

## **5. What is your proudest achievement or contribution to science? In life?**

My proudest contribution to science would have to be me being a mentor for the Increasing Retention and Inclusion in STEM (IRIS) program at Hendrix. Being a mentor taught me what it truly means to pay it forward, which was instilled in me during the Aspirnaut™ program. I love helping people realize their potential and reach their goals, especially younger people interested in STEM.

## **6. What was the hardest thing you've experienced along your educational journey? What is the best thing?**

Coming into college as a STEM major was a huge adjustment. I did not have as much of a science background as some of my peers, but I had to adjust to the pace. Luckily, I had a great advisor and support system that enabled me to succeed and do well in my studies. Also, the Aspirnaut™ program gave me a head start when it came to lab experiments.

The best thing that I've experienced along my educational journey has been graduating with my Bachelor of Arts in Health Science with a minor in Chemistry. It feels good to see all your hard work come to fruition.

## **7. What are your future goals and aspirations?**

My ultimate goal is to become a nephrologist, serving rural communities like my hometown of Helena, where there are few options for accessible, quality renal care. Currently, I am pursuing a Master's of Public Health in Epidemiology at UAMS, which will enhance my career as a nephrologist by providing necessary background and training to promote preventive care and help target populations suffering from kidney disease and other illnesses to adopt healthy lifestyles.



# AMAZING JOURNEY

## COLLEGE COUNSELING®

### The Path to College: An Amazing Journey for the Entire Family.

by Cynthia Nash, Founder, Amazing Journey College Counseling.

The path to college involves the entire family, not just the student! It is an exhilarating journey full of many emotions: joy, anxiety, frustration, expectation, excitement, fear, and most importantly, HOPE. This is a once-in-a-lifetime journey with outcomes that affect a student's life from the moment the first possession is put in the dorm room until graduation and beyond. This is also an enormous gateway to opportunity that will change the student's - and family's - future for generations to come!

**Aspironauts™ are audacious** by nature - they believe they can do anything they put their minds to, and this is true! Their families also believe that, or they would not have allowed their children to join this program. It is a courageous act by parents to allow their children to have this opportunity, just as it is a courageous act for them to allow their children to go to college. We raise our children to fly, and this is where the rubber meets the road! These students are the brightest and best, and they have worked for years to achieve this level of success. To parents, I say, "These students are a tremendous testament to your life's work - congratulations - you have done an amazing job! Now is the time to truly let them fly."

For the students, this is also a time of tremendous angst, pressure, and anticipation. For Juniors, this is THE year! It is time to study like never before - this year's grades determine your future success in the college-application process. For seniors, it is all about organization! Use a large calendar over your desk - not just your phone - to write down all the deadlines you must meet for applications, financial aid, and test dates. Get those recommendation-letter requests in NOW. Work diligently to narrow down your college list and get essay written so you are ready to submit your applications well in advance of the deadlines.

Most importantly have family meetings about realistic expectations regarding how far a student can go for college, financial realities, and allow students to voice their dreams and goals so everyone is on the same page. This is an amazing journey, and one the entire family should take together!

**\*\*Coach Cindy is available, free of charge, for all Aspironaut™ interns during their college application process.**  
[amazingjourneycc@gmail.com](mailto:amazingjourneycc@gmail.com)

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**DONATE NOW**

If you are interested in getting involved or sponsoring an Aspironaut™ high school experience, please contact Rachel Baugh at [rachel.baugh@aspironaut.org](mailto:rachel.baugh@aspironaut.org)



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