



# SUCCESS

EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

**COMPANY NAME:**  
Thurgood Marshall  
College Fund  
Washington, DC

**TECHNICAL  
PROJECT OFFICE:**  
Air Force Research  
Laboratory  
Information  
Directorate  
Rome Laboratory  
Rome, NY

**PUBLISHED:**  
May 2018

## AIR FORCE AGREEMENT Provides Hands-on Lab Experience for Thurgood Marshall College Fund Scholars

**ROME LABORATORY, New York** — The Information Directorate of the Air Force Research Laboratory partnered with the Thurgood Marshall College Fund to provide internship opportunities for students attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

The two organizations signed an educational partnership agreement in 2012 and are currently working to extend the agreement for another five years. The effort has been instrumental in providing advanced science, engineering, and technology and math internships for students every summer. Under the agreement, select HBCU students who apply for an internship with TCMF are placed at the Information Directorate to work on defense research projects.

“The interns have worked on a variety of programs from cyber to big data and beyond,” said Dr. Timothy Kroecker, the senior operations research analyst and enterprise learning officer. “Last summer the Information Directorate hosted 20 talented interns from a variety of HBCUs.”



*James Reede (right), an intern through the Thurgood Marshall College Fund, and Alex Blake (AFRL/RI) using a geospatial data collector to locate certain AFRL assets for both environmental and real property functions. (Air Force photo.)*

The internships have made a significant impact on the education and professional goals of many of the students.

At the time of his internship, Jordon Galloway was a student at Shaw University pursuing a bachelor's degree in chemistry. The experience had a profound effect on him.

"My time with the Information Directorate was critical to my educational development. My mentor, Dr. Tim Kroecker, was a key player in my deciding to attend graduate school. He guided my exposure to a high-level research environment. He trained me in how to be an effective researcher, and get things done," said Galloway. "Without the internship and my mentor I would not be in graduate school right now. I attribute a lot of my success in research and academics in general, to the effort put into making sure my internship was as impactful they could make it."

Galloway is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Chemistry and Chemical Biology at University of California, Merced. He was recently awarded the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, which will fund the rest of his Ph.D. program.

Another student, Philip Adebo, an electrical engineering major at Prairie View A&M University in Texas, served as an intern at the directorate while working towards his master's in electrical engineering. He was part of the team working on neuromorphic processing with a Cognimem chip.

"I got tremendous insight during the internship that helped me complete my master's in electrical engineering," said Adebo, who is currently working on his Ph.D. in electrical engineering.

The TMCF internships are also open to non-traditional students like Tanya Womble, a retired Air Force Chief who served as an outreach intern for the directorate. Womble retired from the Air Force after serving for 15 years before beginning her college education. After earning a bachelor's in organizational leadership, she began working towards a master's degree in cyber security at Norfolk State University.

"The internship was the best experience of my 62 years," said Womble. "I had a wonderful mentor that took the time to help me learn and empowered me ask questions."

Womble is returning as a summer intern in 2018.

Because of the success of the educational partnership agreement, Air Force scientists sought to strengthen collaboration between the Department of Defense and HBCUs. The group proposed the idea of creating DoD research centers at certain institutions.

"The Office of the Secretary of Defense responded positively to the idea and created a broad agency announcement to receive proposals from interested institutions," explained Kroecker. Evelyn Kent from the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering provided support and guidance.

As a result, centers were established at Prairie View A&M University, North Carolina A&T State University, and Norfolk State University. Each center is run by a faculty member and focuses on research of interest to the DoD. Throughout the school year each center hosts student interns, many go on to work at the Information Directorate during the summer with funding provided by the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

"In addition to learning about the research, the students get experience that they do not get from lectures alone," said Scott Lilly, the chief programs officer for TMCF. "They have a chance to gain the insight from an experienced researcher and establish a mentor/mentee relationship that will be beneficial in the future as they embark upon a career in their respective majors."

For more information about educational partnerships with the Air Force, please contact the Air Force Technology Transfer Program at 937-904-9830 or [af.techtransfer@us.af.mil](mailto:af.techtransfer@us.af.mil).

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