

Minority  
**SURGE**  
 Capacity in Disasters



**SURGE KICK-OFF**  
 MARCH 3, 2018



**MENTORSHIP NETWORK**



**SURGE EVALUATION**

# WAVE

*Newsletter of the Minority SURGE Capacity in Disasters Initiative*

Diversity

STEM

Disasters



## *SURGE Scholars in Omaha!*

- by DeeDee Bennett, PI

The Minority SURGE Capacity in Disasters initiative is a new National Science Foundation-funded effort dedicated to increasing the diversity of next-generation disaster scholars and practitioners. Currently, there is a lack of representation of racial and ethnic minorities among disaster practitioners and researchers. However, in the U.S., racial and ethnic minority communities have long experienced disproportionate impacts from natural disasters. The SURGE stands for Scholars from Under-Represented Groups in Engineering and Social Sciences. The initiative is designed to develop interdisciplinary, collaborative teams interested in disaster reconnaissance missions.

Through the reconnaissance missions, SURGE takes unique steps to make the connection between underrepresented scholars' research efforts and the needs of underserved communities impacted by disaster.

The inaugural ten scholars will participate in professional and academic workshops, engage in a many-to-many mentorship network, and join in a boots-on-the-ground mission in the Caribbean. The newsletter, Wave, is designed to provide an update on the activities of SURGE scholars, describe recent workshop sessions, introduce the mentors, and inform others on our upcoming reconnaissance mission. Within our first 6 months, we held our inaugural kick-off meeting, launched the mentor network, and developed partnerships in hard-hit areas of the Caribbean. We encourage you to follow us on social media and keep up with SURGE on our website: [www.SURGEdisasters.com](http://www.SURGEdisasters.com).

## *Kick-off Highlights*

- by Terri Norton, Co-PI and workshop chair

The Minority SURGE Capacity in Disasters kickoff meeting was held on March 2-4, 2018 on the campus of the University of Nebraska at Omaha. The theme of the conference was "Transdisciplinary Approaches to Disaster Response and Recovery", which is appropriate since the meeting brought together scholars from many fields within disaster science including Engineering, Emergency Management, Sociology, Urban Planning, and more. The attendees included graduate students, academic faculty, practitioners, and representatives from government agencies.

The meeting began with a welcome dinner on Friday evening. This was the first face-to-face meeting for the first cohort of SURGE scholars. Therefore, the networking bingo activity helped to break the ice and initiate team building.

The symposium portion of the meeting took place throughout the day on Saturday. The sessions followed four tracks:

- Hazards & Disasters Landscape,
- Research vs. Community Engagement,
- Preparing for Field Reconnaissance, and
- Collaborative Projects.

During the morning sessions, speakers addressed system resilience by both nature-based and built infrastructure solutions. Brent Curtis, from the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA),

### *Highlights from the SURGE Kick-off*





gave the luncheon keynote where he shared his experience during the 2014 tornado outbreak in the Great Plains. During the afternoon, Dr. Lori Peek, SURGE team leader and Co-PI, spoke on the importance of cultural competence, while I gave a talk on conducting post-disaster reconnaissance. Invited speaker, Dr. Greg Guannel, from the University of the Virgin Islands (USVI), presented about the impact that the 2017 Hurricane season had on the islands.

The SURGE scholars also engaged in a focus group activity on the Collective Impact Approach, explained on page 5. During this activity, the graduate students were able to express their needs and expectations for this NSF INCLUDES funded program. In addition, during the afternoon breakout session the scholars were able to brainstorm about possible collaborative projects related to the planned boots-on-the-ground activity in USVI.

The meeting concluded on Saturday evening with a group dinner and team building activity. Participants worked in groups to find clues, solve puzzles and ‘escape’ from the room at The Escape Omaha game facility.

**SURGE Scholar meets with BAF Fellows in Washington, D.C.!**

*- by Muritala Adegoke*

The conference was organized by Kyoto University and the Inter-American Development Bank. SURGE Scholars and Bill Anderson Fund Fellows were invited by Otsuyama Kensuke, a PhD student from Kyoto University Japan, to discuss Experiences in Japan and the U.S. and implications for Asian, Latin American, and Caribbean Countries. Otsuyama’s research was the focus of the conference. He is researching a village in the Myanmar, the preventive measures that the local villagers adopted to reduce damage during flooding. He factored both economics and risks in his studies. Another guest speaker from world bank discussed the evaluation of aid after disasters and a FEMA representative presented on the history of government policies, how administrations and procedures have changed, and the effect of policy change as of today. Two other professors from Kyoto University presented on topics related to Kobe Earthquake Disaster, mitigation measures for future event, and economy in Kobe since the disaster.



# SURGE Scholars



**Muritala Adegoke**  
Morgan State University



**Lililan Bui**  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology



**Isaiah Higgs**  
Eastern Carolina University



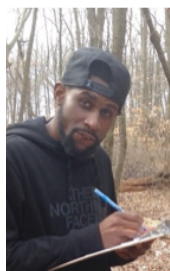
**Rashon L. Lane**  
University of California San Francisco



**Sahar Derakhshan**  
University of South Carolina



**Miriam Commodore-Mensah**  
University of Nebraska at Omaha



**Covell McDermott**  
University of Delaware



**Farah Nibbs**  
The State University of New York



**Génesis Álvarez Rosario**  
University of Puerto Rico-Río Piedras



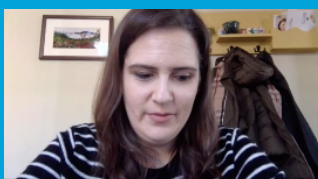
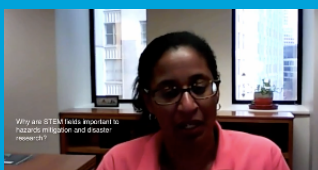
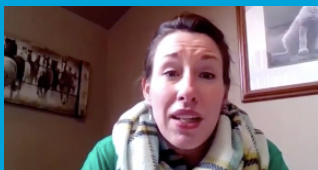
**Shanasia Sylman**  
Harvard University

# Mentorship Network

- by DeeDee Bennett, PI

The SURGE project uses a multi-dimensional many-to-many group mentorship program initiated by the mentees with a hybrid online and in-person component. Several academics and practitioners in the emergency management and disaster-related community have volunteered their time to become mentors for SURGE Scholars. Mentors were asked to record a video explaining in their own words why they felt STEM fields were important to hazards and disasters research and the importance of diversity in the scholarship and practice of disaster management.

## *SURGE Mentors*



Our mentor web portal allows students to pair themselves with up to 5 mentors in a many-to-many mentor network

Current SURGE mentors:

**Lonnie Booker, Ph.D.** - Assistant Professor, Kansas Wesleyan University

**Henry Burton, Ph.D.** - Assistant Professor, University of California, Los Angeles

**Christopher Emrich, Ph.D.** - Associate Professor, University of Central Florida

**Ann-Margaret Esnard, Ph.D.** - Professor, Georgia State University

**Jill Gambill** - Public Service Faculty, University of Georgia

**Kay Goss** - Former Associate FEMA Director

**Jessica Jensen, Ph.D.** - Associate Professor, North Dakota State University

**Betty Lai, Ph.D.** - Assistant Professor, Georgia State University

**William Lovekamp, Ph.D.** - Professor, Eastern Illinois University

**Sarah Lowe, Ph.D.** - Assistant Professor, Montclair State University

**Jacqueline McBride, Ph.D.** - Director, FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance Branch

**Brenda Phillips, Ph.D.** - Professor, Ohio University

**Joseph Trainor, Ph.D.** - Associate Professor, University of Delaware

**Ken Walsh, Ph.D.** - Associate Professor, Ohio University

**Gary Webb, Ph.D.** - Professor, University of North Texas

*And still more to come...*

If you or someone you know is interested in becoming a mentor, please direct them to our website, [www.surgedisasters.com](http://www.surgedisasters.com).



# Recruiting the Next Generation

- Hans Louis-Charles, co-PI and scholar engagement

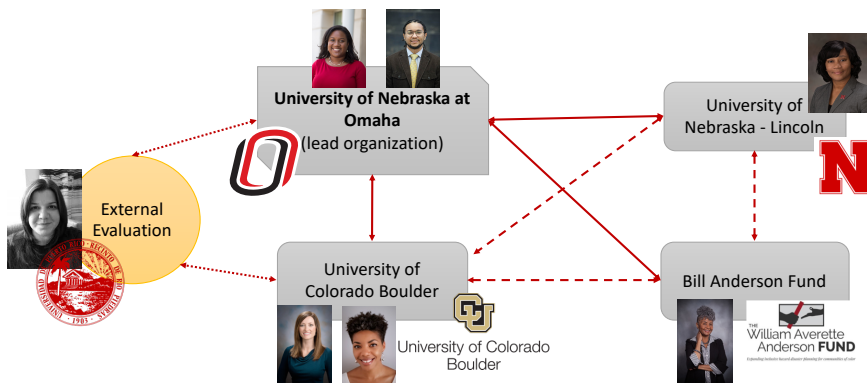
Congratulations to our 10 selected SURGE Scholars! Our scholars are currently preparing for their reconnaissance and service mission helping communities recover from the 2017 Atlantic hurricane season.

The competitive application pool opened in October 2017 and within two months, we received over 50 applications that were both demographically diverse and from of a wide spectrum of academic disciplines. Graduate students representing 20 universities located in 16 states and U.S. territories submitted applications.

Our recruitment success is due to our aggressive, but strategic publicity through professional networks, academic societies, civil societies, and social media. This success is also due to our ability to *stand on the shoulders of giants* and the path created by organizations like the Bill Anderson Fund. The unprecedented interest we received in such a short time is a positive sign for the future diversity of disaster scholars and practitioners.

We are now accepting applications for our 2018-2019 SURGE cohort! The application deadline is September 1, 2018 and available at [www.surgedisasters.com](http://www.surgedisasters.com).

## Leadership of SURGE



The SURGE is organized as a lead-organization network with University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) as the lead. This structure enhances SURGE outreach and program goals. Each partner organization shares the same vision for increasing the number of racial and ethnic minorities in the hazards mitigation, disaster management, and STEM fields. While project management resides with UNO, each lead institution has a dedicated role and responsibility connected to each objective of the initiative.

## UPCOMING EVENTS ONWARD TO U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

June 2018

SURGE Team Leaders are diligently working with the U.S.V.I. Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (VI-EPSCoR) and the Supporting Emerging Aquatic Scientists (SEAS) Your Tomorrow NSF INCLUDES pilot to connect with community leaders and develop a workshop and interactive boots-on-the-ground experience for SURGE Scholars. Following Greg Guannel’s presentation during the SURGE Kickoff in March, Scholars discussed possible collaborative projects for reconnaissance missions. Given the availability of students, team leaders and on-site collaborators we are gearing up for June field study.

# Evaluation of SURGE

- by Nnenia Campbell, co-PI and internal evaluator

As a key feature of its membership in the National Science Foundation’s Inclusion Across the Nation of Communities of Learners (INCLUDES) initiative, SURGE operates under a Collective Impact (CI) framework. CI is a structured approach that brings together organizations and stakeholders from diverse sectors under a unified plan to accomplish a common goal for social change. It prescribes evidence-based procedures that maximize the effectiveness of collaborative action. I oversee mentoring activities and serve as SURGE’s internal evaluator, to help support the implementation of SURGE’s CI strategy. My evaluation activities involve coordinating with the other members of the SURGE leadership to establish metrics, monitor progress, and provide real-time feedback that they can use to ensure that the projects they oversee are operating in ways that are consistent with the overarching CI framework. Additionally, my internal evaluation and technical assistance helps to ensure that as the various components of its programming come online, data about these efforts enable SURGE’s external evaluator, Dr. Jenniffer Santos-Hernández, to assess how the program measures up against peer programs that are also funded under the INCLUDES initiative. Cohort 1 students recently completed a survey instrument designed to collect baseline information about their academic standing and professional development needs. Measurement and engagement activities will continue with students, key personnel, and external stakeholders as the program develops.



## SURGE Scholars on the MOVE...

- by Lilian Bui



The 11.381 course called "Infrastructure Systems in Theory and Practice" at MIT's Department of Urban Studies and Planning aims to teach students about the history of infrastructure and its regulation using the specific context of Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. The course is led by Professor David Hsu and TA-ed by myself, Lily Bui. Given the extensive damage to the electrical grid after the hurricane and second- and third-order effects of disrupted services such as communications, water filtration, and transportation, the course takes a deep dive into the electrical utility and its recovery after the storms. We have designed the workshop to divide students into three working groups: energy systems planning, regulation, and finance. This approach offers three distinct (but not at all exhaustive) lenses through which to view the current regulatory and planning environment around energy, particularly with regard to privatization of the utility. The end work product of the course is to produce something (as yet to be determined) that adds capacity to ongoing local efforts around energy infrastructure in Puerto Rico. Our class traveled to Puerto Rico over MIT's spring break to meet with potential collaborators in government and civil society.



## What's next?

- by DeeDee Bennett, PI

Following our transdisciplinary reconnaissance mission to the U.S. Virgin Islands, scholars will prepare for the 43rd Annual Natural Hazards Research and Applications Workshop (NHW) July 8-11, 2018. This year the theme is Twenty Questions: Looking for Answers to Reduce Disaster Risk, where I proposed question #4: *To what extent, and under what conditions, do culturally competent initiatives increase representation of and reduce disaster vulnerability among underserved communities?* At the Natural Hazards Workshop, SURGE scholars will have the opportunity to meet and interact with disaster researchers from several disciplines and potentially share findings from their reconnaissance experience via panels, poster sessions, and a researchers add-on meeting.



During the NHW, SURGE Scholars will have the opportunity to meet with fellows from the Bill Anderson Fund (BAF), another partner of the SURGE initiative. The Bill Anderson Fund was created in honor of the legacy of William “Bill” Averette Anderson who passed away in 2013. His vision, and the vision of the fund is that diversity of the hazard and disaster field be reflective of American society. The mission of the BAF is to expand the number of minority professionals in the field of disaster and hazards research and practice. The SURGE initiative shares this vision. The BAF is currently in transition to being housed and the University of Delaware reporting into the Disaster Research Center.



**We are now accepting applications for additional SURGE Scholars!**

Keep up with our ongoing activities:

[www.surgedisasters.com](http://www.surgedisasters.com)  
[surgedisasters@gmail.com](mailto:surgedisasters@gmail.com)  
[www.facebook.com/surgedisasters](https://www.facebook.com/surgedisasters)  
[www.twitter.com/surgedisasters](https://www.twitter.com/surgedisasters)



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