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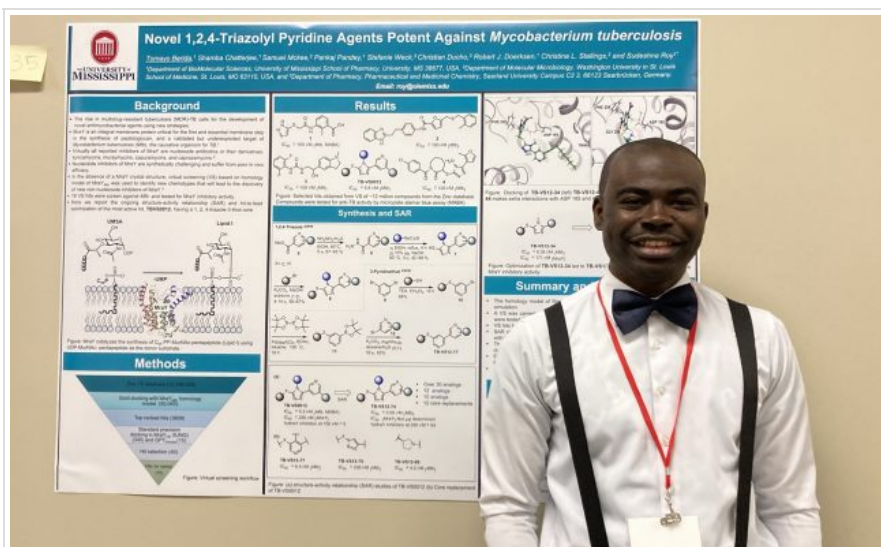
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University Hosts Regional Conference for Chemists, Chemical Engineers

More than 120 participate in two-day event designed to promote minority STEM careers

JUNE 17, 2022 BY EDWIN B. SMITH



Tomayo Berida, a UM pharmacognosy research assistant, won first place in the poster presentation competition during the National Organization of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers Conference. His study of 'Novel 1,2,4-Triazolyl Pyridine Agent's Potent Against Mycobacterium tuberculosis' focuses on ongoing efforts to develop a new class of agents that are potent against the organism that causes tuberculosis. Submitted photo

OXFORD, Miss. – Chemistry and chemical engineering students from across the Southeast and Southwest gathered recently at the **University of Mississippi** for a two-day conference designed to promote STEM careers for people of color.

Some 120 students and researchers, including 95 in-person participants, attended the joint Southeast and Southwest regional conference of the **National Organization for the Professional Advancement of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers**, or NOBCCHE on the Ole Miss campus. Students represented 70% of the total participants for the hybrid event.

"The conference showcased the research excellence of Black chemists and engineers regarded as top experts in their respective fields," said Murrell Godfrey, professor of **chemistry** and NOBCCHE immediate past president. "It also provided young researchers with a platform to present original research and receive valuable feedback."

More than 75 students from underrepresented backgrounds in chemistry, chemical engineering and related STEM fields took part in networking and professional development opportunities. Milcah Jackson and Joerg Schlatterer, both of the American Chemical Society, presented professional development workshops on creating effective resumes and curriculum vitae and on making personal connection that matter.

Former NOBCCHE presidents Emanuel Waddell and Marquita "Dr. Q" Qualls presented on "Opportunities with the National Science Foundation" and "Establishing Your Brand," respectively.

Students also participated in oral and poster presentation competitions, with prize money at stake. First-, second and third-place winners in each category split \$1,650 in prize money.

Tomayo Berida, a pharmacognosy research assistant at UM, won first place in the poster presentation competition. The native Nigerian's poster, "Novel 1,2,4-Triazolyl Pyridine Agent's Potent Against Mycobacterium tuberculosis," deals with ongoing efforts to develop a new class of agents that are potent against the organism that causes tuberculosis.

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Campus Briefs

Donations Sought for 25th Annual Books and Bears Program

OXFORD, Miss. – The University of Mississippi is asking the community to help spread a little joy this holiday season by donating to the 25th annual Books and Bears program. Donations such as toys, books, dolls, bicycles and other children's play items are being accepted through Dec. 14. All donations will be collected and sorted

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Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship Aims to Build Leaders

OXFORD, Miss. – Twenty-five inaugural recipients of the Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship – a program hosted by the University of Mississippi School of Education in partnership with the Mississippi Association of Coaches and the Mississippi High School Activities Association – are expected to increase their impact on student-athletes and their communities. The coaching fellowship

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Ole Miss In the News

Clarion-Ledger: New Essay Collection Tells the Story of Meredith's Enrollment

Essays celebrate 60th anniversary of James Meredith's enrollment at University of Mississippi By Lauren Rhoades Oct. 1 marks the 60th anniversary of James Meredith's 1962 enrollment at the University of Mississippi as the school's first African-American student.

"I was more than excited (about winning)," Berida said. "It was gratifying to note that my poster presentation was well received by students, faculty and judges at the conference."

Davita Watkins, UM associate professor of chemistry and biochemistry, was among the keynote speakers. She recently won a prestigious National Science Foundation CAREER Award for her work on elucidating the role of sigma-hole interactions in advanced functional materials that she develops in her labs on campus.

Others who delivered keynote addresses included LSU professor Isaiah Warner, and Philip W. West, emeritus professor of analytical and environmental chemistry at LSU; Montray Leavy, deputy chief technology officer at Entegris in Singapore; and LaRico Treadwell, R&D chemist and material scientist at Sandia National Laboratories.



Attendees at the National Organization of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers regional conference at the university include (from left) Montray Leavy, the first African American to earn his doctorate in chemistry from UM, in 1999; Margo Montgomery-Richardson, who received her doctorate in 2012; and Murrell Godfrey, who earned his doctorate in 2003. Formerly director of the Ole Miss forensic chemistry program, Godfrey is assistant graduate dean for diversity, equity and inclusion. Submitted photo

Students also participated in a graduate exposition that allowed the undergraduate students to learn about top academic graduate programs and job opportunities. Schools and organizations represented included:

- Auburn University
- Texas A&M University
- LS-PAC MODELS Center
- Jackson State University
- Entegris
- the UM departments of **BioMolecular Sciences** and Chemistry and Biochemistry and **School of Engineering**
- Emory University Department of Chemistry
- Louisiana State University
- the American Chemical Society

The Ole Miss academic units provided undergraduate students with information on various doctoral programs and tours of their departments. Both professionals and students had an opportunity to visit the School of Pharmacy's marijuana and medicinal plant gardens.

"The conference provided a space for discussion to foster partnerships and collaborations that can lead to new research, innovations and solutions to global challenges," Godfrey said. "It also allowed members of the NOBCChE student chapters to give back to the community by performing a chemistry magic show for approximately 30 9th-to-12th-grade Coffeeville, Mississippi, Upward Bound students during the conference-ending cookout."

The National Science Board recently bestowed its 2022 Public Service Award to NOBCChE. The award honors exemplary public service in promoting public understanding of science and engineering.

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"James Meredith: Breaking the Barrier," a collection of essays edited by UM professor of journalism Kathleen Wickham, honors this historic milestone with

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