



ALABAMA

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Albert Schweitzer Fellowship of Alabama Announces Outstanding Mentor Honorees

Dr. Daniel L. Smith, Jr., Dr. Christine C. Ferguson, Dr. Bela Patel and Dr. Michele Talley Receive Awards

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Birmingham, AL, June 1, 2023 -----The Albert Schweitzer Fellowship (ASF) of Alabama announced today the recipients of its 2023 Outstanding Academic Mentor and Outstanding Community Site Mentor awards. A distinction of the Fellowship is the cross-sector collaboration between academics and the community, as seen in the recognition of outstanding mentors who played critical roles in the success of Schweitzer Fellows. Dr. Daniel L. Smith, Jr. and Dr. Christine C. Ferguson of the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) School of Health Professions and Dr. Bela Patel and Dr. Michele Talley of the PATH Clinic, received their awards in recognition of each honoree's exemplary commitment to their ASF Fellow mentees.

The Outstanding Mentor award recipients were honored at ASF's Celebration of Service event on April 15, 2023, where they were recognized alongside the graduating 2022-23 class of ASF Fellows, composed of 20 graduate students from Auburn University, the University of Montevallo, Samford University and UAB.

Drs. Smith and Ferguson, this year's Outstanding Academic Mentor Award recipients, worked collaboratively to mentor Leandra Durham, a 2022-23 ASF Fellow studying in the Department of Nutrition Sciences in the UAB School of Health Professions. Smith, an Associate Professor in the Department, said he was honored by the recognition.

"I have truly enjoyed working with Leandra and Dr. Ferguson during the Fellowship and learning more about the ASF program over the past year," he said.

"I value the support given to the trainee fellows through the program and the multiple levels of leadership development that are offered throughout the year."

Durham partnered with the Lakeshore Foundation where she helped to implement the Diabetes Empowerment Education Program for individuals with disabilities. Program components included in-person healthy meals cooking demonstrations in an accessible kitchen and a post-program support group to continue communication among the participants. Durham also collaborated with the National Center on Health, Physical Activity, and Disability to create an educational curriculum for an inclusive grocery store tour that is still in process.

“Both Dr. Ferguson and Dr. Smith went above and beyond to help me with every aspect of my project,” said Durham. “Both mentors showed great amounts of empathy in their leadership and offered advice that had my best interest in mind. Post docs and faculty have extremely busy schedules with multiple tasks and projects that need attention. Both Dr. Ferguson and Dr. Smith always made time for me and my questions and never once made me feel like I had to fight for their time or attention. They both showed me mentor styles that I appreciate and hope to adopt.”

Ferguson reflected on her experience as a mentor. “This was my first time being involved in the Albert Schweitzer Fellowship, and it has been such a positive experience working with Leandra and Dr. Smith,” said Ferguson. “It has also been wonderful seeing Leandra’s interests and enthusiasm grow while serving Lakeshore members with disabilities.”

This year’s Outstanding Community Site Mentor Award recipients, Drs. Michele Talley, and Bela Patel work for UAB School of Nursing’s PATH (Providing Access to Healthcare) Clinic. Dr Talley, an Associate Professor and Assistant Dean for Clinical and Community Programs in the School of Nursing, is the Director of the PATH Clinic. Dr. Bela Patel, is an Instructor in the School of Nursing and a Nurse Practitioner in the PATH Clinic. Drs. Talley and Patel provide clinical care and administrative guidance for PATH, which specializes in providing care for indigent patients with diagnoses of diabetes. Their mentee, 2022-23 ASF Fellow Jamie Davison, a medical student in the UAB Heersink School of Medicine, helped to improve the healthcare technology self-efficacy of patients at the PATH Clinic by raising awareness of the digital divide and technological inclusivity as it applies to healthcare.

		
<p>(L-R): Dr. Christine C. Ferguson, Kristin R. Boggs, MSW, and Dr. Daniel L. Smith, Jr.</p>	<p>Dr. Michele Talley PATH Clinic</p>	<p>Dr. Bela Patel PATH Clinic</p>

Davison reflected on the ways her site mentors welcomed her at the PATH Clinic by connecting her with its multidisciplinary, collaborative team of healthcare providers as well as with patients. “They have opened doors to me, literally and metaphorically, in the PATH Clinic, introduced me broadly to the staff, which includes PAs, NPs, physical therapists, nutritionists, social workers, administrators, medical residents, and physicians. They’ve offered flexible, meaningful support connecting to patients of the clinic and helped me reflect and grow through the process. They’ve given me literal and figurative space to experiment, adjust, and find the best way forward with the project.”

“Jamie’s project served the patients of the PATH Clinic in a tangible way that led to increased skill and self-efficacy in using technology to advocate for themselves,” said Patel, an Instructor in the School of Nursing and a Nurse Practitioner in the PATH Clinic. “On a larger scale, her project helped to increase awareness about the digital divide and its relevance as a social determinant of health, especially for underserved and under-resourced populations.”

Davison believes multidisciplinary collaboration is key to advancing health equity and gained appreciation for its emphasis in the Schweitzer Fellowship program. “By harnessing our collective knowledge, skills, and passion for improving health outcomes, we can create a world where everyone has access to the care and resources they need to thrive,” she said. “Looking back at the year, I find myself incredibly inspired by the PATH Across the Digital Divide project mentors and participants, peer ASF fellows, and ASF leaders, to stand together and fight for a more just and equitable healthcare system.”

About The Albert Schweitzer Fellowship of Alabama

The Albert Schweitzer Fellowship (ASF) of Alabama is developing the next generation of healthcare professionals to serve and empower vulnerable people to live healthier lives and create healthier communities in Alabama. Since 2016, ASF of Alabama has trained 104 students who have partnered with over 77 community organizations to provide approximately 26,000 hours of service at a value of more than \$650,000 to Alabama’s most vulnerable groups. Nationally, more than 4,000 U.S. Schweitzer Fellows have delivered nearly 750,000 hours of service to individuals and communities in need. Through its intensive one-year Fellowship program and the ongoing work of its 4,000+ Fellow for Life alumni, ASF perpetuates the legacy of physician-humanitarian and Nobel Peace laureate Dr. Albert Schweitzer.