

# THE AWIMS ADVISOR

NEWS FROM THE ALLIANCE FOR WOMEN IN MEDICINE & SCIENCE

Dear Colleagues,

I trust that you are enjoying your summer and taking some time to rest, reflect, and reset priorities. For me, rest comes in the form of reading--everything from leadership books to mystery novels! I also find music healing, particularly when I hear my older son play the piano and my little guy the violin. A weekend where I have absolutely nothing planned and our family has an impromptu movie night at home is simply the best. What does rest look like to you? How are you prioritizing this?

In addition to honoring your right and duty to prioritize what brings you peace and happiness, I hope you continue to find inspiration in our work, highlighted in this edition of the AWIMS Advisor. Thanks to a phenomenal team including an amazing editorial board, AWIMS Advisory Board, and Executive Committee, and to each one of you who make it all possible. We are one.



Vidhya Prakash, MD, Director of SIU AWIMS

## The AWIMS Advisor Editorial Board



**Dr. Vidhya Prakash, Editor-In-Chief**

“As much as talent counts, effort counts twice.” Angela Duckworth



**Ms. Tyra Jones, Associate Editor**

“When women support each other incredible things happen. Empowered women empower women.” Unknown



**Dr. Ayame Takahashi, Associate Editor**

“When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.” Audre Lorde



**Dr. Oluwaseun Adeleke, Associate Editor**

“If you cannot do great things, do small things in a great way.” Napoleon Hill

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# Dr. Wendi El-Amin honored with IWIL Athena Award!



Picture by Ashlyn Yates Photography

Cherished leader and mentor, Dr. Wendi El-Amin (pictured), was awarded the Illinois Women in Leadership (IWIL) Athena Leadership Award on July 13<sup>th</sup>. The prestigious award is presented to an individual “who is honored for professional excellence, community service and for actively assisting women in their attainment of professional excellence and leadership skills.” Read more about the event and the award at [ATHENA AWARD \(iwil.biz\)](http://ATHENA_AWARD(iwil.biz)) and [Illinois Women in Leadership | Springfield IL | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/IllinoisWomenInLeadership). Our warmest congratulations to Dr. El-Amin for this well-deserved recognition!

# Southern View Elementary School

## Career Day



AWIMS members made a special visit to Southern View Elementary School to speak about careers in medicine during Women's History Month, March 2023. Third, fourth, and fifth grade students participated in interactive sessions with Ms. Areli Contreras (pictured above) and Dr. Vidhya Prakash. Activities included a special demonstration of what happens when a skin abscess forms and a special careers in medicine charades. What an honor to engage with bright, energetic students who teach us as much as we teach them!



# SIUSOM Statement: SCOTUS Ruling



On June 29<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a ruling that struck down college affirmative action programs. The Southern Illinois University School of Medicine released the statement below about this issue. AWIMS is proud to be a part of a system committed to equity, diversity, inclusion, and justice.

“We join our colleagues in academic medicine across the country in stating that today’s court ruling has the potential to decrease diversity in the health professions and is contrary to efforts to provide better health for all. The SIU School of Medicine remains committed to strengthening the diversity of the medical student body and will work within all legal limits to ensure racial and ethnic diversity in the health professions.

Our holistic admission review takes into account the many ways that each individual student’s story, regardless of race, contributes to the diversity of the class of medical students. This holistic review and AEDI programs (Anti-racism, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) are particularly important for medical schools that seek to increase diversity in the healthcare workforce, foster inclusion and advance health equity.

While there has been some progress in the diversity of medical school classes, there is still much work to do. African American or Black (“Black”) students make up a smaller percentage of matriculants to medical schools (11%) than the percentage of Black people in the general population (16%). While there has been an increase in the percentage of Black women in medical school, Black men have not fared so well. In 1979, 3.1% of U.S. medical students were Black men; forty years later in 2019, Black men made up only 2.9% of medical students. In 2019, only 4% of faculty members of medical schools were black. Similar statistical trends hold true for Latino and Native American populations.

AEDI work is not only important in medical school classrooms, but the work also must include intentional review of all factors related to the organizational culture of health professions educational institutions. Rules, regulations, procedures, curricula and other institutional policies are fraught with language and inherent intent that hinders inclusion and propagates overt and implicit bias. Intentional efforts to address these biases and create inclusive educational and clinical environments must also be protected and promoted.

Health professions institutions, like the SIU School of Medicine, provide direct care to patient populations. Across the nation, inequities in health care access and inequities in the delivery of care lead to wide disparities in health outcomes. Health professions institutions should be leaders in reducing these inequities and disparities in access and outcomes. This starts with ensuring that trainees understand the importance of race and ethnicity and develop cultural competence for the care they deliver to patients.

AEDI programs are essential to improve opportunities for under-represented groups in medicine, to promote a more inclusive culture, to improve the sensitivity of all to the insidious effects of institutional bias, to foster fair and just policies, to train health leaders who will work to eliminate inequities in health care, and to promote better health for all. The SIU School of Medicine stands with the SIU System office and all SIU campuses in a unified commitment to promote diversity, equity and inclusion in all that we do.”

[20-1199 Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College \(06/29/2023\) \(supremecourt.gov\)](#)

[Read Dissents in the Supreme Court Affirmative Action Case | Time](#)

[Michelle Obama Reacts to SCOTUS Affirmative Action Ruling | HuffPost Latest News](#)

# Mentorship Committee Seeks Members!

Would you like to join the AWIMS Mentorship and Career Advancement Committee? Email co-chairs, Dr. Ayame Takahashi and Ms. Tracie Johnson ([atakahashi@siumed.edu](mailto:atakahashi@siumed.edu) and [tjohnson25@siumed.edu](mailto:tjohnson25@siumed.edu))

Are you a member of the SIU School of Medicine community and seeking a mentor? Check out a list of mentors through AWIMS!

**[AWIMS Mentor Spreadsheet - SIU Medicine Intranet](#)**

Are you seeking a coach? Please contact Dr. Susan Hingle ([shingle@siumed.edu](mailto:shingle@siumed.edu)) for more information through cHOP!

## Articles on Mentorship

[WOMENtorship: The #WomenInMedicine perspective](#)

[Supporting Midcareer Women Faculty in Academic Medicine Through Mentorship and Sponsorship](#)

[The red lipstick mentor](#)

[A Sense of Belonging](#)



# Habitat for Humanity Walk for Housing



Pictured from left to right: Kathryn Barnes, Rich Barnes, Nicol Moore, Vidhya Prakash

On April 23<sup>rd</sup>, AWIMS members participated in Habitat for Humanity's Walk for Housing! Kathryn Barnes, Rich Barnes, Nicol Moore, and Vidhya Prakash took a guided tour of built and renovated homes in the Enos Park Neighborhood. To learn more about this wonderful initiative and how you can contribute, visit <http://www.habitatsangamon.com/donate>.



# AWIMS Executive Leadership Program Graduates!



Pictured during graduation banquet, from left to right: front row-Dr. Vidhya Prakash, Dr. Myto Duong, Dr. Ayame Takahashi, Dr. Charmaine Mziray-Andrew, Dr. Haneme Idrizi, Dr. Katherine Hild-Mosley; second row-Dr. Erin Hascup, Dr. Wendi El-Amin, Dr. Nicole Sommer, Dr. Jody Lack, Dr. Lauri Lopp, Dr. Erica Nelson, Dr. Giovanna Capriolo

Twenty women faculty graduated from a year-long, intensive AWIMS Executive Leadership Program on April 28<sup>th</sup>. The inaugural cohort participated in interactive, monthly sessions on key topics including negotiation, strategic career planning, and coaching. The program included a mid-year retreat and culminated in a three day adaptive leadership retreat. Kudos to our phenomenal leaders! We look forward to seeing them shine and continue to make a tremendous impact at the local, regional, and national levels.

## **AWIMS Executive Leadership Program 2022-2023 Graduates**

Dr. Janet Albers

Dr. Careyana Brenham

Dr. Giovanna Capriolo

Dr. Myto Duong

Dr. Ruchika Goel

Dr. Erin Hascup

Dr. Anna Hickey

Dr. Katherine Hild-Mosley

Dr. Lillian Houston

Dr. Haneme Idrizi

Dr. Jody Lack

Dr. Lauri Lopp

Dr. Deedra McLain

Dr. Charmaine Mziray-Andrew

Dr. Erica Nelson

Dr. Susan Olivo-Marsten

Dr. Diana Sarko

Dr. Nicole Sommer

Dr. Vidya Sundareshan

Dr. Ayame Takahashi

# 6<sup>th</sup> Annual AWIMS Conference

**By Dr. Oluwaseun Adeleke**

The 6<sup>th</sup> annual Women in Medicine and Science Professional Development Conference was held virtually on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of May 2023. The conference, themed “Creating Inclusive Environments,” kicked off with a welcome by Dr. Jerry Kruse, Dean and Provost and CEO of SIU Medicine. Dr. Kruse urged participants to continue their advocacy for inclusive environments at all tiers of authority, including the national level.

One of the guest speakers, Dr. Pamela Chen, walked us through the journey of using her artistic talents as a tool in the advocacy of more women on the walls of our medical environments. This was further buttressed by seasoned panelists including Dr. Susan Hingle, Dr. Heeyoung Han, Dr. Wendi Wills-El-Amin, and Dr. Harini Rathinamanickam, who evaluated the portraits on the walls of SIU SOM and highlighted the need for more inclusiveness even on our “walls.” The story slam, led by Dr. Vidya Sundareshan, featured the experiences of International Medical Graduates in the field of sciences and medicine and highlighted the implicit biases that influence workplace belonging for colleagues from different cultures. Additionally, we enjoyed inspiring discussions on national and global efforts to foster equity and inclusion, featuring distinguished panelists Dr. Padmini Murthy, and Dr. Katherine Sharkey, and ably led by Dr. Vidhya Prakash. Further outstanding presentations were given by Dr. Bonnie Mason and representatives of the SIU Medicine Marginalized Students Network.

Dr. Christine Todd received the well-deserved AWIMS founders award and accolades were also presented to recipients of the 2023 AWIMS award, Dr. Katherine Hild-Mosley, Dr. Nichole Mirocha, Dr. Michael Neumeister, and Dr. Robert Robinson, who have done exceptional work in fostering inclusive environments. The annual event wrapped up with the creation of a beautiful, collaborative piece of artwork to celebrate “Women on the Walls” at the Springfield Art Association.

Gratitude to our sponsors for making this event possible: cHOP, Memorial Health, SIU Medicine Departments of Emergency Medicine, Family and Community Medicine, Internal Medicine, Medical Education, Neurology, Psychiatry, Population Science and Policy, Surgery, and the Simmons Cancer Institute.





Conference attendees gathered at the Springfield Art Association to create an enduring piece of art together.





# Colors of Health Fashion Show

AWIMS hosted its inaugural Colors of Health Fashion Show on June 2<sup>nd</sup>. Ms. Erica Austin and Mr. Stephen Newman, co-chairs of the AWIMS Community Engagement Committee, led this meaningful event. Featuring our own SIU faculty and members of the community (Ms. Erika Austin, Dr. Priyanka Bandhari, Ms. Jessica Derhake, Dr. Ruchika Goel, Ms. Khalyn Pheloan and Dr. Amit Sapra), the show brought awareness to key health issues including cancer, mental health, child abuse, and firearm violence.

Ms. LaMyiah Harvel of WICS-TV hosted the fabulous show which featured our models, poet laureate, Ms. Shatriya Smith, and a special dance by KUUMBA 2.0. Ms. Tammy Lackland, manager of Growth and Community Engagement at Molina Healthcare of Illinois, was honored with the AWIMS Community Engagement award. All proceeds went to [LavenderLife Cancer and Lupus Foundation](#), whose purpose is to bring awareness to all cancers and lupus through the arts. The foundation promotes physical, emotional, and mental wellness for cancer and lupus survivors and financial assistance in their initial diagnosis.





Left to right: Ms. Kimberly Moore, founder of LavenderLife, Dr. Vidhya Prakash, Ms. Tammy Lackland, and Ms. Erica Austin.



Left to right: Ms. Erica Austin, Ms. Jessica Derhake, Dr. Ruchika Goel, Ms. Khalyn Pheloan, Dr. Priyanka Bhandari, Dr. Amit Sapra, and Dr. Vidhya Prakash.



# SIU AMWA Spring Cleaning and Clothing Drive

SIU School of Medicine's American Medical Women's Association (AMWA) chapter held its first 'Spring Cleaning' Clothing and Donation drive for Springfield's Sojourn Shelter and Services and Salvation Army at the beginning of this month. The women at Sojourn were extremely thankful for the donations and said that all the supplies would be put to good use right away. AMWA also received an overwhelming amount of clothing donations, and happily had to take several extra trips to the Salvation Army to drop everything off! AMWA would like to thank everyone for their contributions and participation, and hopes to have just as great of a turnout next year!



Left to right: Ms. Reise Malone of AMWA and Ms. Reilly Tebrugge, Prevention and Outreach Specialist with Sojourn.

# Reducing Bias in Letters of Recommendation and Learner Evaluations

On July 6<sup>th</sup>, Dr. Robert Robinson and Dr. Aysha Rafaquat moderated a panel discussion on mitigating bias in letters of recommendation and learner evaluations. Featured panelists included Dr. Marti Hlafka and Ms. Carolyn Pointer. The group discussed the importance of focusing on actions/specific examples of how students are performing in letters and evaluations. What did you observe? Observations of skills are more important than labeling skills as “excellent” or “competent.” Generalized comments are not helpful. Documenting a student has responded and improved to feedback is useful documentation to include in a Dean’s letter, based on “on-the-fly” evaluations. More resources on this important topic are below and, for those with access to SIU’s HIVE, a link to the recording.

[Gender Bias Calculator \(tomforth.co.uk\)](http://tomforth.co.uk)

[Bias-Free Letters of Recommendation: MD Education: Feinberg School of Medicine: Northwestern University](#)

[Avoiding Bias in Letters of Recommendation | UCSF Medical Education](#)

[How to Avoid Racial Bias in Reference Letters | The Muse](#)

[Recording: AWIMS Panel, Reducing Bias in Letters of Recommendation and Learner Evaluations \(HIVE\)](#)

# AWIMS Spotlight: Kanicia Green, MS

By Ms. Tyra Jones

Kanicia Green is an upcoming 4<sup>th</sup> year medical student here at SIUSOM. Although she is crushing it in her studies, her journey was not an easy one. However, she has persevered. I like to believe that every road that we take is impactful. I believe that with every turn you either learn a lesson, you discover yourself in the process, or you meet people that help move you in the right direction. As I spoke with Kanicia, I could tell that she has encompassed all three.

Kanicia Green is an only child and a first generational college student. She attended Lanphier High School in Springfield, IL, where she met Ms. Sharon Williams. Ms. Williams was Kanicia's Pom Coach and the first Black woman Kanicia met that had a master's degree. This meeting changed her life and put her on the trajectory of becoming a MD. In our interview, Kanicia states that what was most impactful was the confidence that Ms. Williams instilled in her. She wasn't the best dancer, but Ms. Williams continued to work with her. Ms. Williams took a chance on Kanicia and in return, Kanicia took a chance on herself. Kanicia went on to say that Ms. Williams also instilled leadership skills in her; skills that she still uses today. Ms. Williams then became Kanicia's mentor and suggested that she attend Howard University, one of the most prominent Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU).

In 2016, after graduating from high school, Kanicia took off to become a Howard University Bison. Kanicia says it was one of the best decisions that she made. Like her mentor, Kanicia also pledged Zeta Phi Beta when she was in college. She says that Ms. Williams told her to find the group that resonates with her. Kanicia mentioned that the women in her sorority were serviced-based, down to earth, and supportive.

Kanicia defied many odds before she came to SIUSOM. Most of them were words that tried to discourage her. She states that people told her she couldn't go to a HBCU because of the money it would take and that her test scores weren't good enough to get into medical school. But here she is. Kanicia started attending SIUSOM during one of the most chaotic times in history- the pandemic. Kanicia expressed how she would love to do her residency at SIUSOM, because it is community-based. She would like to go into the field of OB/GYN, as she is passionate about helping lower income women take care of their bodies and get the care they deserve. I believe that she will really make a difference in the world.

When asked what words of encouragement she would want to leave future medical students, Kanicia replied "Take the word 'can't' out of your vocabulary." I agree. Kanicia is proof of what one can do when "I Can't" turns into "I Can". In May, she received the SIU School of Medicine *Outstanding Student Medical Educator* of the year award where she gave a moving speech. To receive the award, one must be exemplary in the following areas:

- Contributions to medical education by educating the community
- Contribution to Service/volunteer work
- Research

This award was well deserved.





Ms. Kanicia Green (right) pictured with her mentor, Ms. Sharon Williams (left)

## AWIMS Advisory Board



*Left to right:*  
Wendi El-Amin, MD  
John Flack, MD  
Susan Hingle, MD  
Kari Wolf, MD



Debra Klamen, MD  
David Steward, MD  
Douglas Carlson, MD  
Jody Lack, MD



Donald Torry, PhD  
Diane Hillard-Sembell, MD

## AWIMS Executive Committee



Education:  
Dr. Aysha Rafaquat and  
Dr. Robert Robinson



Research/RISE WIMS Program:  
Dr. Heeyoung Han and Dr. Shruti Hegde



Research/Journal Club:  
Dr. Georgia Luckey and Dr. Akshay  
Kohli



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Mr. Stephen Newman and Ms. Erica  
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