

ISSUE

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ASPIRNAUT™



Editor: Rachel Baugh
Smith

Photo Credit: Erin

2022 - What a Year!!!

Thank you...

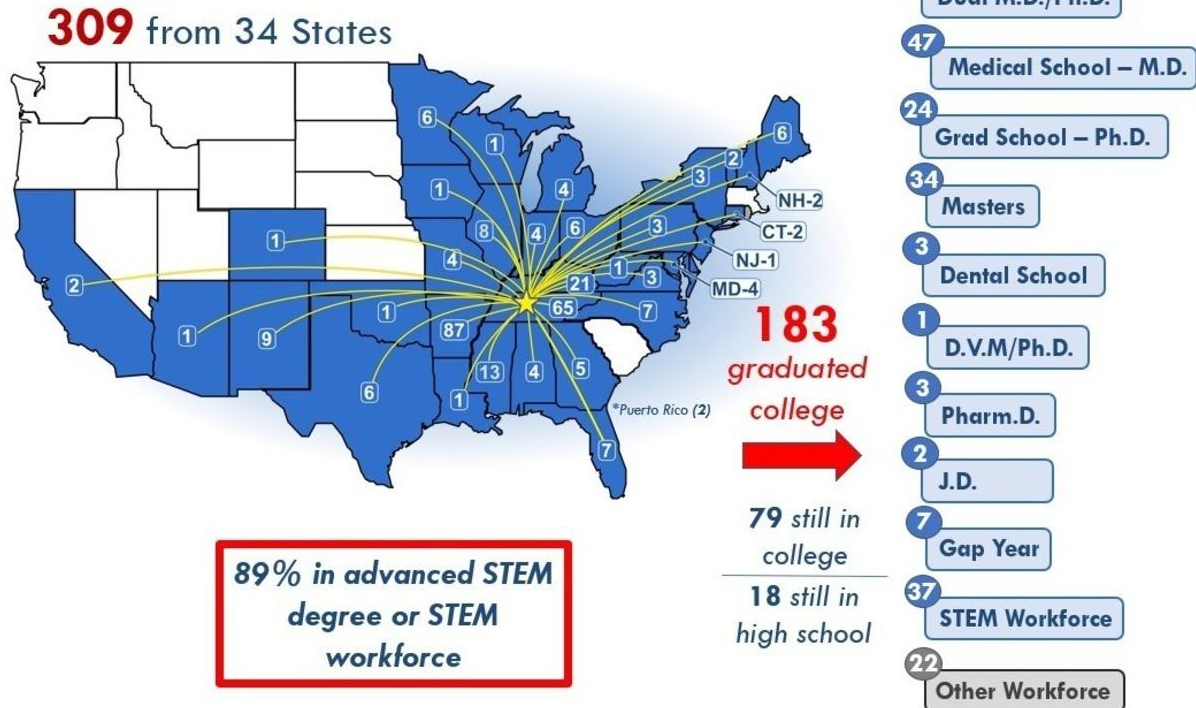
- for believing in talented youth with limited access to opportunity.
- for helping change lives for generations to come.
- for providing hope.

We couldn't do it without you!

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2022 Review : Updated Data

15 YEARS OF SUCCESS



Aspirnaut™ Featured on NBC Nightly News

We were on TV!

On August 2, 2022, Aspirnaut™ was featured on NBC Nightly News with Lester Holt. The story showcased the 15-year anniversary of the 2008 "Making a Difference" story about the Aspirnaut™ Initiative and WiFi on school buses.

2022 Nightly News video [HERE](#)

2008 Making A Difference video [HERE](#)



QuestBridge Finalists and Matches

Congratulations to **Sahra Hassan, Aalia Holt, Rocio Rosa, Ariana Samiha, and Shouana Yang** on being selected as QuestBridge National College Match finalists. QuestBridge is a college admission and scholarship process where talented students with limited financial

resources are admitted early decision with full, four-year scholarships to QuestBridge college partners.

- **Sahra Hassan** is a 2022 Aspirnaut™ participant from Burlington, Vermont, and matched with **Boston College**.
- **Aalia Holt** is a 2022 Aspirnaut™ participant from Hector, Arkansas, and was a **QuestBridge National Match Finalist**.
- **Rocio Rosa** is a two-time Aspirnaut™ participant from Mebane, North Carolina, and matched with **Vanderbilt University**.
- **Ariana Samiha** is a 2022 Aspirnaut™ participant from Deland, Florida, and matched with **Stanford University**.
- **Shouana Yang** is a 2022 Aspirnaut™ participant from Saint Paul, Minnesota, and matched with **Washington University in St. Louis**.



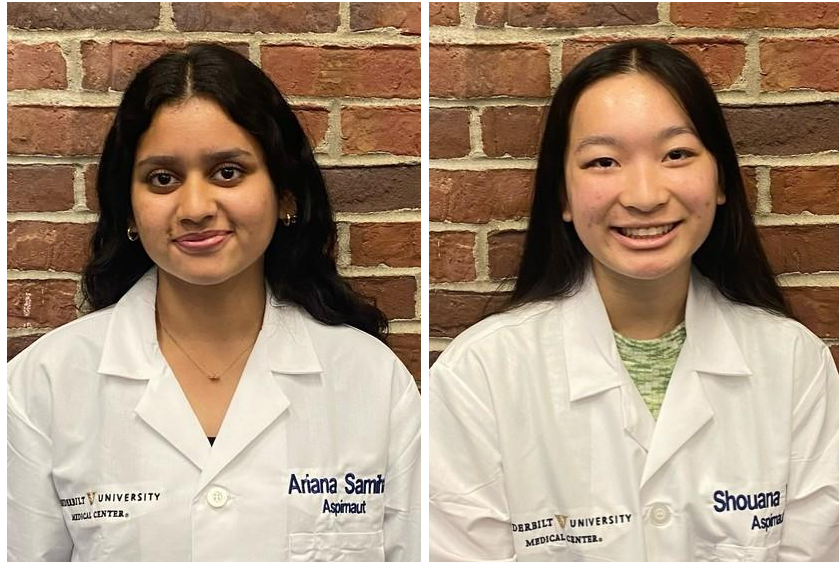
Sahra Hassan
Burlington High School
Boston College



Aalia Holt
Hector High School



Rocio Rosa
Eastern Alamance High School
Vanderbilt University



Ariana Samiha
Deland High School
Stanford University

Shouana Yang
Hmong College Prep Academy
Washington University St. Louis

New Sponsor Highlight

A big thank you for the generous gift from the **Ken and Jeanette Mann Gift Fund**. Retired chair of the Department of Biochemistry at the University of Vermont, Dr. Mann is known for his key discoveries in blood coagulation and received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Hemostasis and Thrombosis Research Society.

Drs. Mann and Billy Hudson were graduate students at the University of Iowa "back in the day" and have remained colleagues and friends for over 50 years.





New Ph.D. Graduate

Congratulations to **Haley Harrington Jordan, Ph.D.**, five-time Aspirnaut™ from Springfield, Tennessee. Haley completed her doctoral degree at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana, under the co-mentorship of Dr. Jonathan Schleich and Dr. Suchetana Mukhopadhyay. Her research project focused on merging the membrane protein field with a phenomenon in the virology field called programmed ribosomal frameshifting. Haley investigated unknown mechanistic details of -1 programmed ribosomal frameshifting in a group of viruses called alphaviruses and published in the *Journal of Biological Chemistry* (JBC) in 2020. Haley received her undergraduate degree in biochemistry from Harding University. So proud of you, Dr. Jordan!!



Featured Aspirnaut™: Mack Williams

Mack Williams is a four-time Aspirnaut™; three times at Vanderbilt University Medical Center and one summer with Aspirnaut™ at the University of Michigan Life Science Center as a resident counselor.

1. Tell me a little about growing up and your background.

I grew up in the small town of West Helena in eastern Arkansas. There wasn't much to do besides attending school and going to church. These two places molded me into the community-driven person I am today. I was challenged at a young age by educational inequity, so my parents took matters into their own hands to ensure I attended the schools that gave me the best education in our area. There was not much access to opportunities before starting school at KIPP Delta Public Schools. My parents also spent time outside of school finding access to educational resources that were not provided by the school. I would not be where I am today without them.

2. What are the major influences in your educational and career path?

Great question! My parents and family are one of the biggest influences on my educational and career paths. I feel honored to represent the family and do things that my parents, grandparents, and ancestors did not have the opportunity to do. They are what motivate me to keep doing what I do. My mother was an educator later in life and inspired me to pursue education as a career path. I currently teach AP Calculus and Precalculus in Houston, Texas.

3. What has been your biggest challenge during your educational journey?

The hardest thing I have experienced along my educational journey was adapting to the world with my speech disability. Prior to Aspirnaut™, I had not been given proper resources, guidance, or knowledge about speech therapy. Communication is one of the most important facets of life, and I had to learn how to navigate with a speech disability on top of self-ridicule and ridicule from others.

4. What made you apply to Aspirnaut™?

I applied to Aspirnaut™ because I believed that I possessed the knowledge and skills to complete a biomedical research internship. My college counselor, Amy Charpentier, told me about the program, and I knew of a few other students who had participated. Outside of that, I didn't have any plans for the summer and wanted to utilize my time and this opportunity to the best of my ability.

I participated in the Aspirnaut™ program for a combined four summers with the program! I was selected to be one of the resident counselors to help launch the program at the University of Michigan Life Sciences Institute.

5. How has Aspirnaut™ impacted you?

The Aspirnaut™ program has truly been a blessing. I recall a time when I had the opportunity to attend a lunch with my peers and our black science mentors. This was a special moment for me because we were able to have a sense of community and learn about the struggles and triumphs that occur in the industry. We were also exposed and introduced to people in the science community who looked like me. Aspirnaut™ has enabled me to accomplish things I could never dream of being an African American male from a small rural town. Because of the Aspirnaut™ program, I was able to find my love for mathematics and biology. Most recently, I obtained my bachelor's degree in Mathematics from Xavier University of Louisiana and my Masters of Science in Biostatistics from the University of Miami.



The pathway, opportunity, and network that the Aspirnaut™ program has given is something I am forever grateful for, and I would like to give back to the students I am currently serving.

6. What is your proudest achievement?

My proudest achievement outside academics is being trusted by the Hudsons to help pilot the Aspirnaut™ program at the University of Michigan. Being chosen for such an opportunity helped put into perspective the fact that all the arduous work I had done did not go unnoticed. Also, it made me further cherish the bond that we shared.

7. What motivates you?

My main motivation in life is personal growth. Whether it be academically, mentally, or spiritually, I wake up every day challenging myself to break out of my comfort zone and take risks to continually better myself.

8. What are your future goals and aspirations?

My goals are to obtain my doctoral degree and teach mathematics at the collegiate level. Also, I plan to encourage more students to participate in the life-changing program, Aspirnaut™!

2023 Application is OPEN! **Deadline: January 18, 2023**

We are accepting applications for High School and Undergraduate Aspirnaut™ Summer Research Internships. Recruitment is focused on individuals from diverse backgrounds underrepresented in STEM careers. We are looking for students who have achieved excellent grades and test scores in math and science and who have demonstrated a commitment to pursuing a career in a STEM field.

To learn more about the High School Program, Click [HERE](#)
To learn more about the Undergraduate Program, Click [HERE](#)

DONATE NOW

If you are interested in getting involved or sponsoring an Aspirnaut™ experience, please contact Rachel Baugh at rachel.baugh@aspirnaut.org.

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