



The Universities
AT SHADY GROVE

The Future Action Symposium

CONNECTING FOR IMPACT:

The 2023 Summit for
Diversity in STEM

JUNE 29, 2023

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Over the last year, the Board of Advisors of the Universities at Shady Grove has generated new conversations and connections among leaders from industry, higher education, community organizations and governments committed to creating a more diverse STEM workforce in Maryland. Addressing the lack of women and people of color in STEM professions is essential for meeting the state's surging need for qualified workers, while creating economic opportunities for Maryland's growing, yet often STEM-marginalized communities.



Maryland Lt. Governor Aruna Miller at the Summit on June 29, 2023, at USG.

Our 2022 Future Action symposium facilitated candid discussions that revealed many pathways for increasing diversity in STEM professions and degree programs. To maintain the momentum created by that forum, in June 2023, we convened a STEM Summit that we called "connecting for impact." Our goal was to bring together stakeholders from the public and private sector, academia and community organizations to facilitate connections that can deliver new support for existing efforts focused on STEM diversity—and generate new initiatives as well.

The discussions were led by three inspirational champions who already are actively involved in a number of activities that can help connect neglected communities with STEM professions. These leaders were instrumental in revealing opportunities to create a broader and more cohesive coalition of advocates that can work in concert to accelerate action-solving skills she learned as an engineer, propelled her into a career in public service.



Maryland Lt. Governor Aruna Miller, a transportation engineer, described how the problem-solving skills she learned as an engineer propelled her into a career in public service. “It’s about teamwork, problem solving, and collaboration—all things I was taught in engineering.” She signaled a willingness to be a strong advocate and point of contact for STEM diversity within Governor Wes Moore’s administration. She also discussed the potential for the Maryland Service Year Program to contribute to STEM diversity goals.



Bowie State University’s visionary president, Dr. Aminta Breaux, noted the potential of Maryland’s historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) to support STEM diversity by providing a focal point for training talent and stimulating partnerships. Dr. Breaux also outlined her interest in developing an “innovation district” around Bowie State to encourage public-private partnerships that would embed STEM opportunities within an already diverse community.



Maryland Tech Council CEO and former state Commerce Secretary Kelly Schulz highlighted opportunities to advance progress on STEM diversity through the Tech Council’s Biohub initiative, which is committed to creating new pathways to life science careers with Maryland biotech firms. Discussions at the summit focused on strengthening connections between the Tech Council and leaders of organizations that serve underrepresented communities.



Challenges to Progress in STEM Diversity: Funding and Fragmentation

Two issues emerged during Summit as key barriers to progress:

- **Funding:** People from underserved communities often come from low-income families. Several participants in the workshop noted that they were able to pursue a career in STEM only by joining the military. Others pointed out that even a full scholarship might not be sufficient for young people who are expected to contribute income to their household. Potential solutions include partnerships with government and industry to increase the availability of paid internships—along with stipends or fellowships for STEM students.
- **Fragmentation:** The effort to build diversity in STEM could benefit from an entity tasked with serving as a coordinator and clearing house for all of the disparate organizations and initiatives already working locally, regionally and nationally to address this challenge. For example, the state of Arkansas has created a STEM commission whose membership includes representatives from educational institutions, industry groups and community organizations—all supported by a paid staff that reports directly to the governor. As one participant noted, “we need to start acting like an ecosystem.”



Next Steps:

The BOA convenings on STEM diversity have revealed a previously hidden coalition eager to take action on this issue. We are committed to strengthening these connections by continuing to create a space for conversations. The Summit confirmed that there are many efforts already underway that can help expand the diversity of the region’s STEM workforce.

For example: USG recently launched a Teacher Academy with KID Museum, a Bethesda-based experiential museum and “maker” space, that includes efforts to advance STEM and maker expertise among women and underrepresented teachers. USG is also hosting a mentoring summit in Montgomery County with leaders in private STEM industries to explicitly focus on mentorship for Black males in STEM teaching.

The Summit also confirmed that Influential leaders in many areas—academia, industry, government and community organizations—are eager to ~~be involved~~ ^{be involved} particularly encouraged to have Lt. Gov. Miller serving as a champion for this work.

“The lack of minorities and women in our state STEM pipeline means that they are excluded from our best opportunities for economic mobility.”

– Maryland Lt. Gov. Aruna Miller

The USG BOA are committed to strengthening these connections by continuing to create a space for conversations. We also will provide regular updates on the activities that were discussed at the Summit and new initiatives as they emerge.



Diversity in STEM generates universal benefits. It’s about supporting the entire ecosystem and ensuring we all benefit. But if the intention is to ensure that we all collectively benefit, we need to be building these skills and capabilities in those that have been historically marginalized, because it can provide an opportunity for them to have upward mobility, to have transformational economic opportunities. STEM jobs offer wages that can take communities out of poverty. That’s the power of STEM.”

– Shanika Hope, Google