

# **Building Health and Climate Research Capacity in the U.S. Gulf Coast: Elevating Minority-Serving Institutions as Key Partners Workshop 1**

## **Panelist Biosketches**

### **Welcoming Remarks**

#### **Mr. Dan Burger**

Dan Burger is a Program Director for the National Academy of Sciences Gulf research Program (GRP) Division and leads the work of the Gulf Health and Resilience Board (GHRB). Dan's work focuses on improving community health and resilience through applied research, strategic partnerships and capacity building. Prior to joining the Academies, Dan held senior management and leadership positions for the South Carolina Coastal Zone Management Program, working in support of intergovernmental coastal resource management, hazard mitigation and resilience planning efforts. Dan is also a founder and former chair of the Charleston Resilience Network, a collaborative effort among public, private, academic and non-governmental organizations to enhance regional decision-making and improve the resilience of social, physical and economic systems. Dan has served on numerous regional and national advisory boards including an appointment to the NAS Resilient America Roundtable. Prior to his work in South Carolina, Dan worked to advance environmental public policy and build the capacity of nonprofit organizations and associations in Maryland. He is an honors graduate of Western Maryland (McDaniel) College and holds a Master of Public Administration in urban public affairs from the College of Charleston.

### **Workshop Purpose and Context**

#### **Dr. Francisca Flores**

Francisca Flores is a Program Officer for the National Academy of Sciences, Gulf Research Program (GRP) Division working with the Health and Resilience Board. Prior to joining the GRP, she worked in the Policy and Global Affairs Division with the Resilient America Program, where she engaged diverse stakeholders from communities in Georgia, Maryland, Mississippi, Texas, and Virginia to explore various aspects of community resilience to flood-related disasters in order to better understand risk perception, risk communication, and risk behaviors throughout the disaster cycle – before, during, and after flooding events. Before joining The Academies, Dr. Flores was as a consultant for the World Health Organization (WHO) in Washington, DC where she was involved in pioneering human security as a novel strategy for the public health efforts of WHO Member States in Central America and the Dominican Republic. Specifically, she focused on developing a methodology to enhance health and human security through the building of community resilience. She received her MPH and PhD degrees in behavioral and community health sciences, as well as completed certificate programs in community-based participatory research and global health, from the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health. For her dissertation research, she engaged a diverse group of stakeholders in exploring community resilience against gang violence and its harmful effects on adolescents, their families, and the community as a whole.

## **Keynote: MSI/HBCU Community-Engaged Climate and Health Research in U.S Gulf Coast: What's the current status?**

### **Dr. Robert Bullard**

Dr. Robert D. Bullard is a distinguished professor of urban planning and environmental policy and founding director of the Bullard Center for Environmental and Climate Justice at Texas Southern University. He is also co-founder of the HBCU Climate Change Consortium and the National Black Environmental Justice Network. He received his Ph.D. degree from Iowa State University. Professor Bullard is often called the “father of environmental justice.” Bullard is a proud Viet Nam Era U.S. Marine Corps Veteran. He has written 18 books. His latest book is *The Wrong Complexion for Protection: How the Government Response to Disaster Endangers African American Communities* (2023). In 2008, Newsweek named him one of “13 Environmental Leaders of the Century.” In 2019, *Apolitical* named him one of the world’s 100 Most Influential People in Climate Policy, and *Climate One* presented him the Stephen H. Schneider Award for Outstanding Climate Science Communication. In 2020, WebMD gave him its Health Heroes Trailblazer Award and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) honored him with its Champions of the Earth Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2021, he was appointed by President Biden to serve on the White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council. In 2022, he was awarded honorary doctorate degrees from Georgetown University and the University of Johannesburg. That same year he received the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2023, he was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, California Arts and Sciences, and he received Harvard Law School Environmental Law Society’s Horizon Award, which recognizes outstanding contributions to environmental law and policy, and the John E. Gould Medal from the American Geographical Society. And in 2024, he received the TIME Earth Award, Museum of Science (Boston) Bradford Washburn Award, Urban Land Institute Prize for Visionaries in Urban Development, and he was elected to the National Academy of Medicine.

## **Panel: MSI Perspectives on Climate Impacts on Communities and Health in the Gulf**

### **Moderator**

#### **Dr. Shamarial Roberson, Committee Co-Chair**

Dr. Shamarial Roberson is the Chief Executive Officer of the DSR Public Health Foundation, Incorporated, and President of Health and Human Services for Indelible Business Solutions. She previously served as Deputy Secretary of Health for the Florida Department of Health during Covid19, overseeing statewide public health and health equity efforts. Dr. Roberson specializes in public health strategy, epidemiology, and biostatistics, with a strong focus on improving health outcomes in communities. Her leadership and expertise have been instrumental in advancing public health initiatives in Florida by partnering with community partners including Historically Black Colleges and Universities. She has been recognized with numerous awards for her contributions to public health and is a member of several professional organizations dedicated to health and human services. Dr. Roberson earned a Doctor of Public Health in Epidemiology and Biostatistics from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, a Master of Public Health in Health Promotion and Health Policy from Florida State University, and dual Bachelor of Science degrees in Biological Science and Family and Child Science from Florida State University.

## **Speakers**

### **Mr. Curtis Brown**

Mr. Curtis Brown serves as a visiting professor at the Research Institute for Social Equity of the L. Douglass Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University. Curtis Brown is co-founder of the Institute for Diversity and Inclusion in Emergency Management (I-DIEM) a non-profit organization dedicated to increasing diversity in the field of emergency management and promoting the application of equitable practices to improve disaster outcomes for vulnerable communities. Brown serves as the first African American to become State Coordinator of Emergency Management for the Virginia Division of Emergency Management (VDEM). Prior to his roles as State Coordinator and Chief Deputy at VDEM, Brown served as Deputy Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security in Governor McAuliffe's administration, Regional Emergency Management Administrator for the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission, and professional staff on the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security.

Brown received a Bachelor of Science degree in Political Science from Radford University, a Master of Public Administration from Virginia Tech, and a Master of Arts in Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness from Virginia Commonwealth University. He is a graduate of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) National Emergency Management Executive Academy and the Executive Leaders Program through the Naval Postgraduate School's Center for Homeland Defense and Security. He is a Certified Emergency Manager through the International Association of Emergency Managers.

### **Dr. Philip Keiser**

Dr. Philip Keiser serves as Galveston County Local Health Authority (LHA). Dr. Keiser, an infectious disease expert, was appointed to the role in October 2016. Dr. Keiser is a professor of medicine at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston where his duties include clinical care, education and research. His primary interest involves the care and treatment of HIV and its related infections. He has been actively treating HIV infected individuals for more than 20 years, serving in various roles with local, state, national and global HIV and AIDS initiatives. Prior to joining UTMB, Dr. Keiser was a professor of medicine at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. His experience also includes roles with the Baltimore City Cancer Research Program, VA North Texas Health Care System and Parkland Hospital in Dallas. Dr. Keiser holds a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from Morgan State University in Baltimore and obtained a Doctor of Medicine from University of Maryland. He performed an internship and residency in internal medicine at Francis Scott Key Medical Center in Baltimore and his fellowship in infectious diseases from University of Maryland School of Medicine.

### **Mr. E. Benjamin Money**

Ben Money is the SVP for Population Health at NACHC where he is the executive lead for value-based care transformation, social drivers of health, and the environmental health initiatives. Prior to joining NACHC, Mr. Money was the Deputy Secretary for Health Services at the North Carolina Department of

Health and Human Services where he led the Divisions of Public Health, Health Services Regulation, and the Offices of Rural Health and Minority Health. Mr. Money served on Governor Roy Cooper's Climate Change Interagency Council and was directly involved in the COVID-19 response. Before this appointment, he served as the President & Chief Executive Officer North Carolina Community Health Center Association. Ben is a graduate of Springfield College and received his MPH from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a certificate in Health and Climate Change from the Yale University School of Public Health.

## **Panel: MSI and HBCU Institutional Research Expertise, Capacities, and Infrastructure**

### **Moderator**

#### **Dr. Paul Tchounwou, Committee Member**

Dr. Paul Tchounwou serves as Dean of the School of Computer, Mathematical, and Natural Sciences (SCMNS) at Morgan State University (MSU) where he oversees and guides the progressive development of SCMNS' research, education, and training programs. He is the PI/PD of RCMI Center for Urban Health Disparities Research and Innovation at MSU, and MPI of RCMI Coordinating Center, leading its Research Capacity Core domain. Prior to joining MSU in January 2023, he served as Presidential Distinguished Professor, CSET Associate Dean, Interim Dean, and PI/PD of RCMI Center for Environmental Health at Jackson State University. Dr. Tchounwou is a biomedical scientist with strong research interests in environmental health and disease. He is an elected 2023 AAAS Fellow based on his seminal contributions to identifying the molecular targets for cancer therapy, and supporting the U. S. Government in policy decisions regarding the management of toxic and hazardous materials. He is author of 317 peer-reviewed publications. He received the 2013 AAAS Mentor Award, and the 2018 Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring, for his outstanding mentorship of early career scientists. Dr. Tchounwou earned both ScD, and MSPH from Tulane University.

### **Speakers**

#### **Mr. Ashley Davis**

Ashley Davis has nearly two decades of experience in emergency management and currently serves as the Emergency Management Director and Assistant Vice President at Florida A&M University (FAMU). Since joining FAMU in 2021, he has spearheaded establishing and growing the university's first emergency management department, overseeing a team of dedicated emergency managers. Throughout his tenure, Ashley has navigated numerous natural and man-made disasters, ensuring FAMU remains resilient. Before joining FAMU, Ashley was Bureau Chief of Response for the Florida Division of Emergency Management, overseeing responses to hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, oil spills, wildfires, mass casualty incidents, and pandemics. He has responded or deployed to over 60 disasters, including 37 major declared disasters that impacted Florida or the nation. During the fall semester of 2022, Ashley began his doctoral studies in educational leadership at FAMU.

### **Dr. Abigail Newsome**

Dr. Abigail S. Newsome is the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs at Mississippi State Valley University. Dr. Newsome, a native of Itta Bena, Miss., attended Leflore County High School. After her graduation, she studied biology at Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU) and later attended the University of Southern Mississippi where she obtained her Doctorate of Philosophy in Biology with a concentration in Molecular Biology. She then began her professional tenure at Mississippi Valley State University in August of 1997 where she began teaching Biology and Microbiology in the Department of Natural Sciences and Environmental Health. During this time, she worked closely with the MVSU Football Team serving as Film/Video Coordinator.

Dr. Newsome has also served as a visiting professor of biology at the University of the Virgin Islands in St. Thomas, USVI as well as engaged in various collaborations and partnerships at universities across the country and abroad. Dr. Newsome presently serves as Mississippi Valley State University's Faculty Athletics Representative. Her academic position at MVSU is the Director of Bioinformatics where her efforts are focused on graduate education and research in genomics. Dr. Newsome and her husband, Dr. Albert L. Love, have 3 adult children and 2 grandsons.

### **Dr. ConSandra McNeil**

Dr. ConSandra McNeil oversees Research, Sponsored Programs, Research Compliance, Technology Transfer and Commercialization, Federal Relations and JSU Global. McNeil is an action-oriented researcher, grant writer and scholar whose work brings together scholarship, engagement, and community. Most recently, she served Jackson State University as assistant provost, focusing on research engagement; activity director of the Institute for Social Justice & Race Relations; and professor of sociology. From 2018-2020, she served as an American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Science & Technology Policy Fellow with the National Science Foundation. As part of her fellowship, McNeil worked with a team on evaluating NSF Sexual Harassment Term and Condition, Office of Diversity and Inclusion. She also has experience in policy oversight and implementation, compliance with laws and regulations that govern federal-sector EEO and civil rights in the grantee community.

McNeil has received numerous awards and accolades for her academic and community outreach accomplishments, including the IHL Diversity Leadership Award in 2021. She was selected to participate in the Higher Education Resource Services (HERS) Leadership Institute at Wellesley College. McNeil earned her master's degree in sociology, alcohol and drug studies from Jackson State University and a graduate certificate in homeland security-disaster management from Texas A&M University. She received her doctoral degree in sociology at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

### **Dr. Briana Hauff Salas, Committee Member**

Dr. Briana Hauff Salas is an Associate Professor of Environmental Science at Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio, Texas. Dr. Hauff Salas is a marine scientist whose research looks at acclimatization potential of coral through assessing variability in the stress response of their symbiotic

algae, zooxanthellae. Dr. Hauff Salas is the project director of the TExAS FAST program, funded by USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA; \$5 million), co-project director of the EcoJEDI program, also funded by NIFA (\$1 million), and a member of the International Coral Reef Society. Dr. Hauff Salas holds a BS in Environmental Studies from Binghamton University, a MS in Environmental Science from Pace University, and a Ph.D. in Integrative Biology from Michigan State University. Postdoctoral training was completed at the University of Texas Health Science Center San Antonio in the Department of Immunology, Microbiology, and Molecular Genetics.

## **Panel: Exploring Opportunities for Building Research Capacity in Climate, Health, and Resilience in Gulf**

### **Moderator**

#### **Dr. Erin Lynch, Committee Member**

Dr. Erin Lynch, CRA currently serves as President of Quality Education for Minorities (QEM) Network, an educational research non-profit that serves Minority Serving Institutions through technical assistance and capacity development support as well as research. Prior to QEM, she served as Associate Provost of Research, Scholarship, and Innovation/Dean of Graduate School/ Endowed Professor of Education at Winston-Salem State University, a public HBCU in North Carolina. She is a trained social scientist in intervention and organizational development with expertise in strategic planning, program evaluation, and equity-centered research design. She serves as a speaker on MSI and HBCU Research & Development ecosystem development. She was recently selected as the Alumni Innovator of the Year for the Higher Education Leadership Foundation (H.E.L.F), the leading leadership program for the placement of HBCU presidents. She has also served as Co-Chair to the NASEM committee for the Development of a Plan to Promote Defense Research at HBCUs, TCUs, HSIs, & Other Minority Institutions; Governance Board Member to the EDUCAUSE CourseGateway Platform program in digital learning equity; member of the American Council of Education, Social & Economic Mobility Index Development Technical Review Panel; and former member of the Complete College America HBCU Digital Learning Advisory Board.

### **Speakers**

#### **Dr. Rebecca Efroymsen**

Rebecca Efroymsen is a Distinguished Scientist in the Environmental Sciences Division at Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL). She is the lead scientist for stakeholder engagement for the ORNL Climate Change Science Institute's Science and Technology for Applied Regional Solutions program. She is a coauthor of the energy chapter of the 5th National Climate Assessment. She led a workshop on Climate and Energy Justice in the South. Rebecca is the PI of a US Department of Energy (DOE)-funded project investigating social acceptability of siting biorefineries in repurposed oil refineries and elsewhere. With a diverse stakeholder advisory committee, the project developed indicators of procedural and distributional energy and environmental justice for siting bioenergy facilities. Her team is working with DOE to hold listening sessions in California, Louisiana, and in the Midwest to better understand social

acceptability of these large industrial facilities, including pipelines for carbon capture and storage. She is the new PI of a DOE-funded project to develop a social risk evaluation framework (including social impact and social acceptability) to inform decisions about advancement of clean energy demonstration projects. Rebecca is a just transitions coordinator for the multi-agency and philanthropy-funded Net Zero World initiative. Rebecca was Editor in Chief of Environmental Management and has a long history of studying environmental effects of energy. She has a PhD in environmental toxicology (Cornell); BA in biology/English (La Salle).

#### **Dr. Kenya Goodson**

Dr. Kenya Goodson currently serves as a research consultant in the Minority Health and Health Equity Research Center at Dillard University. Dr. Goodson holds a Ph.D. in Civil Engineering specializing in Environmental Engineering and Water Resources, but her expertise extends beyond disciplinary boundaries. Dr. Goodson's professional journey encompasses environmental engineering, public health, and interdisciplinary research. She is deeply involved in advocating for water conservation within the Black Warrior River and Cahaba River watersheds, utilizing a blend of education, outreach, and activism. Her research focuses on diverse water quality issues, spanning stormwater and wastewater management. Recognizing the pervasive impact of climate change, particularly on agricultural regions like the South, Dr. Goodson actively contributes to climate policy initiatives at both state and national levels. In addition to her academic pursuits, Dr. Goodson has shared her knowledge through teaching environmental science and STEM subjects at various educational levels. By fostering real-world connections and opportunities for learning, she aims to inspire the next generation of environmental stewards.

#### **Dr. Jean Shin**

Jean H. Shin, Ph.D., is Deputy Director in the office of the NIH's Chief Officer for Scientific Workforce Diversity (COSWD), where he provides administrative oversight and subject matter expertise for data-related projects, communication tools, scientific programs, virtual conferences and events, and DEIA-oriented committees and working groups. Prior to NIH, he served as Director of Diversity and Inclusion at the American Sociological Association (ASA). He joined the ASA Executive Office from McDaniel College, where he was Associate Dean for First Year Students and an Associate Professor of Sociology. He has been a co-PI for NSF-funded research projects on the links between teaching innovation and social networks as well as the impact of mentoring on the trajectories of early-career faculty in STEM. Dr. Shin received a B.A. from the University of Virginia and an M.A. and Ph.D. from Indiana University, all in sociology.

#### **Closing Remarks**

##### **Dr. Shamarial Roberson, Committee Co-Chair**

Dr. Shamarial Roberson is the Chief Executive Officer of the DSR Public Health Foundation, Incorporated, and President of Health and Human Services for Indelible Business Solutions. She previously served as Deputy Secretary of Health for the Florida Department of Health during Covid19, overseeing statewide public health and health equity efforts. Dr. Roberson specializes in public health strategy, epidemiology, and biostatistics, with a strong focus on improving health outcomes in communities. Her leadership and

expertise have been instrumental in advancing public health initiatives in Florida by partnering with community partners including Historically Black Colleges and Universities. She has been recognized with numerous awards for her contributions to public health and is a member of several professional organizations dedicated to health and human services. Dr. Roberson earned a Doctor of Public Health in Epidemiology and Biostatistics from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, a Master of Public Health in Health Promotion and Health Policy from Florida State University, and dual Bachelor of Science degrees in Biological Science and Family and Child Science from Florida State University.

**Dr. Bernece Herbert, Committee Co-Chair**

Dr. Bernece Herbert is the chair of the Department of Urban & Regional Planning at Jackson State University in Jackson, Mississippi. She has a doctoral degree in natural resource management and a master's in urban & Regional Planning. Dr. Herbert is a results-oriented and people-centered professional with over 20 years of practice, academic, and research experience in higher education and training, community development, strategic planning and management, public sector investment planning, and policy formulation. Her research areas include urban health indicators, sustainable development, and social equity, with a specific focus on food security, poverty and hunger, climate change, energy, and public perception. Her technical skills include spatial analysis, vulnerability analyses, and resiliency mapping. Her recent grants have focused on advancing solar energy, green infrastructure, heat mitigation, energy burdens, and community empowerment in underserved and under-represented communities. She has led projects sponsored by agencies such as FEMA, USDS, INROADS, Clean Energy States Alliance, and Jobs to Move America. Her ultimate goal at JSU is to educate and train students to be highly knowledgeable, competent, and innovative thinkers and leaders who will utilize and leverage their knowledge and skills to build healthy, resilient, and sustainable communities.