

The Department of War
Institutions of Higher Education

2026 OPPORTUNITIES WORKSHOP & INTERN SYMPOSIUM

Expanding the Competitiveness and Research Capacity at
Institutions of Higher Education



INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION
OPPORTUNITIES WORKSHOP
& INTERN SYMPOSIUM



U.S. Department of War

WORKSHOP AGENDA

CRYSTAL GATEWAY MARRIOTT
1700 Richmond Highway, Arlington, Virginia, 22202

July 30–31, 2026





Greetings Workshop and Intern Symposium Attendees,

On behalf of the Office of the Under Secretary of War for Research and Engineering (OUSW (R&E)), I am pleased to welcome you to the Department of War Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) Opportunities Workshop and Intern Symposium. This year, we have integrated these two premier events under a unified theme: "Expanding the Competitiveness and Research Capacity at IHEs." Our core focus areas for this year's event are: Awareness & Access, Strategic Alignment,

Capability Building, and Partnership & Collaboration.

The IHE community is a vital pillar of our defense research activities, particularly in our collective mission to advance Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education. The Department of War remains steadfast in expanding opportunities for IHEs and their STEM students. This combined workshop and symposium represent a direct investment of our resources toward that vital objective.

We have a robust agenda planned over the next two days. I encourage you to actively engage with our speakers, network with fellow attendees, and fully leverage this collaborative environment to build lasting partnerships.

Thank you for your dedication to scientific excellence and its critical role in supporting our national security.

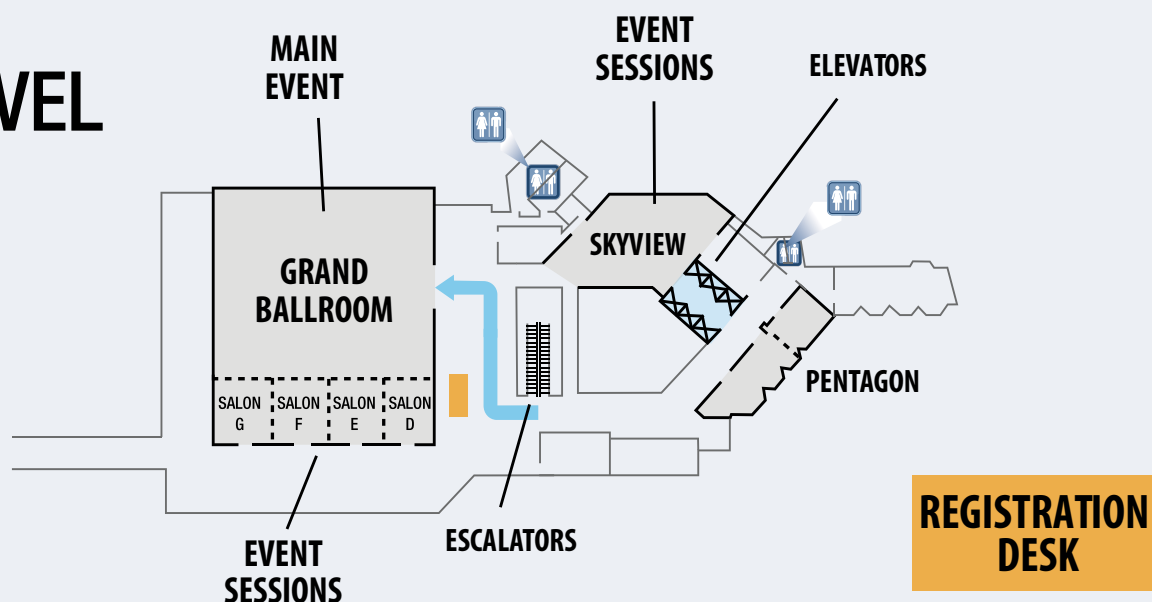
Sincerely,

Evelyn W. Kent

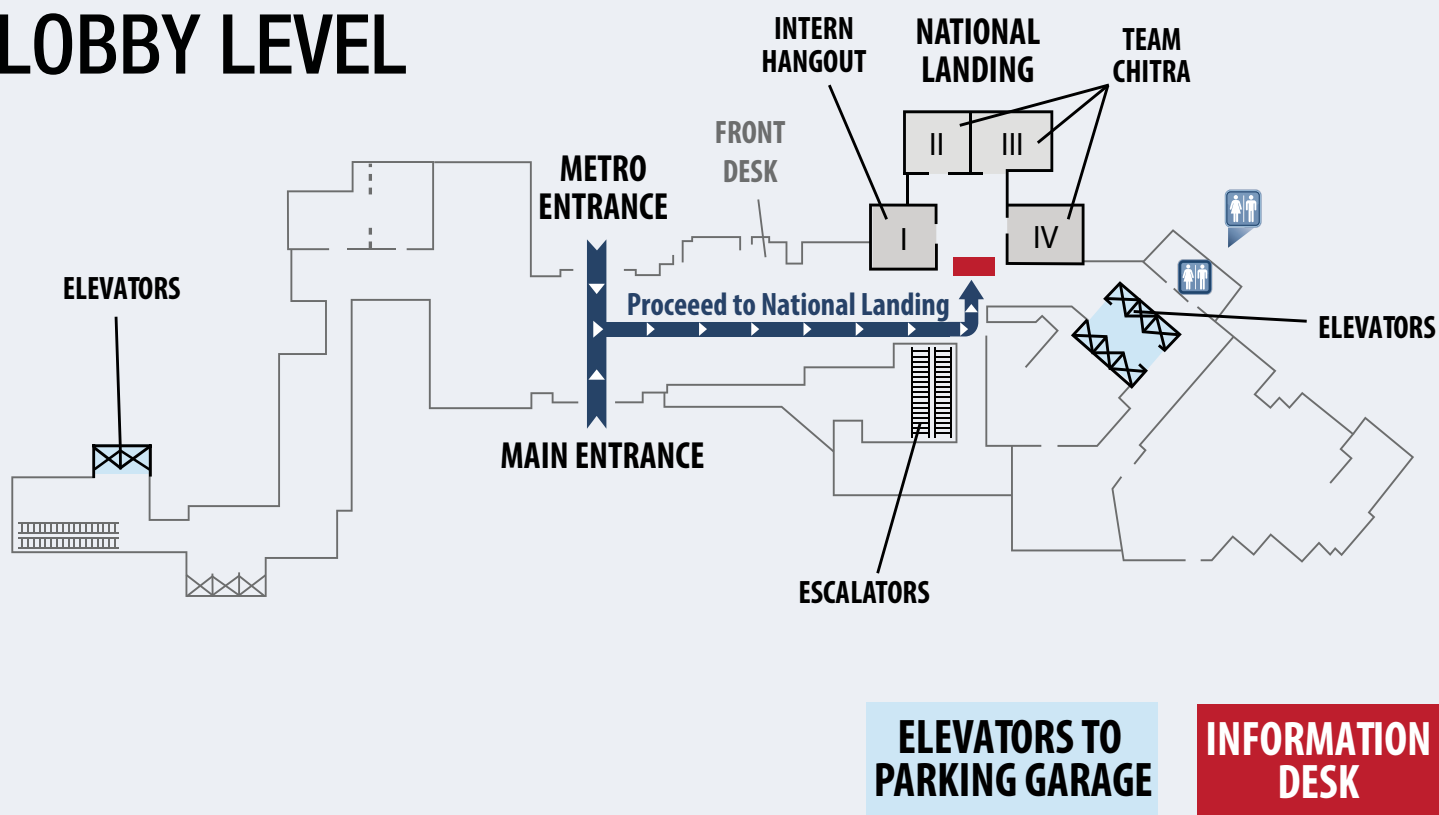
Director, HBCU/MI Program and Outreach,
Office of the Under Secretary of War for Research and Engineering



FIRST LEVEL



LOBBY LEVEL



8:00am – 8:50am	Registration/Check-In/Breakfast	Grand Ballroom Foyer
9:05am – 9:10am	Welcome/Introductions Ms. Evelyn Kent Director, HBCU/MI Program and Outreach, Office of the Under Secretary of War for Research and Engineering	Grand Ballroom
9:10am – 9:15am	Welcome/Remarks (Virtual) Honorable Dr. Joseph Jewell Assistant Secretary of War for Science and Technology, Office of the Under Secretary of War for Research and Engineering	Grand Ballroom
9:20am – 9:50am	Services' and Agency Funding Opportunities – Army, Navy, Air Force and Defense Threat Reduction Agency <i>Session will feature Program Managers from the Army, Navy, Air Force and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) presenting new initiatives and opportunities for research funding in novel and cutting-edge topics of interest to DoW.</i> Moderator: Dr. Patrice D. Collins Branch Chief, Educational Outreach, U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command, Army Research Laboratory Panelists: Dr. Travis King Director for Basic Research and STEM Outreach, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Research & Technology) Mr. Anthony C. Smith Sr. Director of the Navy's Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Minority Institutions Programs at the Office of Naval Research Dr. LaShauna Evans Program Manager, National Science Portal, Air Force Office of Scientific Research Dr. Treniece Terry Technical Engagements Program Manager, Defense Threat Reduction Agency	Grand Ballroom

9:55am – 10:25am SciTechCONNECT Overview

Grand Ballroom

An overview of SciTechCONNECT and the platform's features to help foster connections, simplify collaboration, expand access, and accelerate the path from awareness to action for innovators partnering with the DoW.

Panelists:

Mr. Jason Preisser

Senior Vice President, Federal Programs, Applied Research Institute

Ms. Grace Rhodes

Program Coordinator, Applied Research Institute

10:30am – 10:45am Break

10:50am – 11:35am Fueling Defense Innovation: SMART Scholarships, Innovation Awards, and Academic Partnerships

Grand Ballroom

The SMART Scholarship-for-Service Program provides funding to qualified individuals to pursue undergraduate or graduate education in STEM disciplines critical to DoW's mission and national security. Join the SMART Deputy Program Manager for a briefing on how the SMART Scholarship supports the next generation of scientists and engineers and keeps the DoW at the forefront of innovation. Then, hear from a panel of SMART Innovation Awardees about their journey from SMART scholars to DoW technical experts.

Moderator: Dr Marcus Smith

Deputy Program Manager, SMART Scholarship Program, Office of the Under Secretary of War for Research and Engineering

Panelists:

Dr. Ramanathan Nagarajan

Senior Research Scientist-Soldier Nanomaterials, U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command (DEVCOM) Soldier Center

Dr. Robyn Nadolny

Chief, Vector-Borne Disease Branch, Defense Centers for Public Health – Aberdeen

Ms. Joelle Westcott

Research Civil Engineer, U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC)

Ms. Megan Driggers

Program Officer, Naval Undersea Warfare Center Division Newport

Dr. Brandon Gusto

Computational Scientist, Naval Undersea Warfare Center Division Newport

11:40am – 12:25pm **Budget, Contracting, Grants and Agreements – Army Contracting Command**

Grand Ballroom

Session will lay the groundwork for developing applications with sound budgets and understanding how to successfully work with DoW contracting and grants officers (pre-award to post-award) and the impact.

Moderator: Mr. Jason Preisser

Senior Vice President, Federal Programs, Applied Research Institute

Ms. Evelyn Kent

Director, HBCU/MI Program and Outreach,
Office of the Under Secretary of War for Research and Engineering

Mr. William Creech

Team Leader, Army Contracting Command Aberdeen Proving Ground, Research Triangle Park Division

12:30pm – 1:30pm **Networking Lunch**

Grand Ballroom Foyer

1:35pm – 2:20pm **Research & Technology Protection and Institutions of Higher Education**

Grand Ballroom

Session will provide an overview of the DoW policy for risk-based security reviews of fundamental research. Attendees will gain insight into the Department's decision matrix used to inform fundamental research proposal mitigation decisions and hear feedback from university personnel on successful mitigation processes.

Moderator: Mr. Klint Snead

Staff Director, U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command, Army Research Office

Panelists:

Dr. Eric Mintz

Professor of Chemistry, Clark Atlanta University

Dr. Ikemefuna Uba

Assistant Professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering Department, Hampton University

Dr. Aswini Pradhan

Associate Professor, Department of Physics, Hampton University

Dr. Cristiano Rodrigues Reis

Assistant Professor, Department of Chemical Engineering, Howard University

Dr. Gulen Ozkula

Assistant Professor of Structural Engineering, University of the District of Columbia

2:25pm – 2:55pm

LinkedIn Live Demo

Grand Ballroom

Join us for an informative and interactive session that simplifies the Federal job application process and enhances your professional networking skills. In this workshop, you'll learn practical strategies for navigating USAJobs and how to create standout profiles and resumes tailored for federal positions. You'll also learn how to effectively use LinkedIn to build a valuable professional network, highlight your expertise, and develop your professional brand.

Mr. Michael Dennis

Senior Electrification & Automation Project Manager, PMO, Siemens Smart Infrastructure

3:00pm – 4:15pm

CONCURRENT BREAKOUT SESSIONS

**Networking Session– Army, Navy, Air Force
Defense Threat Reduction Agency, and
SciTechCONNECT**

Grand Ballroom

**The SMART Scholarship-for-Service Program,
DoW Innovation, and Academic Collaborations**

Salons D & E

Leadership & Performance Coaching

Salon F

LinkedIn Career Development

Salon G

Career and Graduate School Fair

Skyview

4:20pm – 4:30pm

Wrap-Up/Closing Remarks

Grand Ballroom

Ms. Evelyn Kent

Director, HBCU/MI Program and Outreach, Office of the
Under Secretary of War for Research and Engineering

End of Day 1

Session Feedback Evaluations

Please use the QR codes below to provide feedback on the sessions you attended today. You can also find these codes on the table tents in the Grand Ballroom.

**Services' and Agency
Funding Opportunities**
– Army, Navy, Air Force,
and Defense Threat
Reduction Agency



**Research & Technology
Protection and
Institutions of Higher
Education**



**SciTechCONNECT
Overview**



LinkedIn Live Demo



**Fueling Defense
Innovation: SMART
Scholarships, Innovation
Awards, and Academic
Partnerships**



**Concurrent Breakout
Sessions**



**Budget, Contracting,
Grants and Agreements**
– Army Contracting
Command



8:00am – 8:50am **Registration/Check-In/Breakfast** *Grand Ballroom Foyer*

9:00am – 9:10am **Opening Remarks** *Grand Ballroom*

Ms. Evelyn Kent

Director, HBCU/MI Program and Outreach, Office of the
Under Secretary of War for Research and Engineering

9:15am – 10:00am **Keynote Speaker** *Grand Ballroom*

Mr. R. Maurice Civers-Davis

CEO, Founder and Leadership Coach, Civers-Davis
Development, LLC

10:05am – 10:50am **Innovations in Action: 5-Minute Thesis & 90-Second Lab Spotlights** *Grand Ballroom*

A dynamic session featuring 5-minute research pitches and 90-second lab spotlights. Interns share innovative ideas, showcase research perspectives, and demonstrate real-world impact.

Air Force, Warner Robins Air Logistics Center

Organization Video

Intern Organization Representative: Ms. LaVonne Wilson-Taylor
Fort Valley State University

Poster Title: Visualizing Cybersecurity Workforce Performance Metrics in the 402nd EMXG

Army, DEVCOM Army Research Laboratory

Organization Videos

Intern Organization Representative: Ms. Avvai Chandrasekaran
Georgia State University

Poster Title: Learning Heteroscedastic Uncertainty in Deterministic Simulations for Probabilistic Abductive Reasoning

Army, Engineer Research and Development Center

Organization Videos

Intern Organization Representative: Mr. Fernando Sepulveda
The University of Texas at El Paso

Poster Title: Automated Road Network Characterization for Enhanced Chokepoint Analysis

Navy, Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division

Organization Video

Intern Organization Representative: Ms. Nia Richard
University of Maryland, Baltimore County

Poster Title: FALCON-UI

Air Force, Air Force Research Laboratory Information Directorate

Organization Video

Intern Organization Representative: **Mr. Bryan Tuck**

University of Houston

Poster Title: MIRAGE: Multimodal Integrity via Representation, Attribution, Grounding & Explanation

Army, DEVCOM Soldier Center

Organization Videos

Intern Organization Representative: **Ms. Naima Fagon**

Virginia State University

Poster Title: Evaluating Automated Recognition of Combat Medical Interventions Using Ground-Truth Annotations

10:55am – 11:10am	Break	Grand Ballroom Foyer
11:15am – 12:25pm	Poster Session I	Salons D, E, F, G and Skyview
12:30pm – 1:30pm	Networking Lunch	Grand Ballroom
1:35pm – 2:45pm	Poster Session II	Salons D, E, F, G and Skyview
2:45pm – 2:55pm	Break	
3:00pm – 3:45pm	Innovations in Action: 5-Minute Thesis & 90-Second Lab Spotlights	Grand Ballroom

A dynamic session featuring 5-minute research pitches and 90-second lab spotlights. Interns share innovative ideas, showcase research perspectives, and demonstrate real-world impact.

Army, DEVCOM Armaments Center

Organization Videos

Intern Organization Representative: **Mr. Daniel Shin**

University of Maryland, Baltimore County

Poster Title: Packaging Optimization for Small Interceptor Counter Air (SICA)

Army, Army Space and Missile Defense Command Technical Center

Organization Video

Intern Organization Representative: **Mr. Thomas Riddick**

North Carolina A&T University

Poster Title: Signal Analysis

3:00pm – 3:45pm

Innovations in Action: 5-Minute Thesis & 90-Second Lab Spotlights (Continued)

Grand Ballroom

Air Force, Air Force Research Laboratory Materials and Manufacturing

Organization Video

Intern Organization Representative: Ms. Jaye Wilson

University of Houston

Poster Title: *Investigation of 2D Piezoelectric Polymer Nanocomposites*

Army, DEVCOM Chemical Biological Center

Organization Video

Intern Organization Representative: Mr. Thomas Linden

University of Houston

Poster Title: *Testing Multi-to-One Bluetooth Hubs in Contested Environments*

DoW, Defense Threat Reduction Agency

Organization Videos

Intern Organization Representative: Ms. Jayda Hankins

Xavier University of Louisiana

Poster Title: *Postbiotics to Modulate Gut-Microbiome for Gut-Brain Axis After Radiation Exposure*

3:50pm – 4:00pm

Closing Remarks/Wrap-Up

Grand Ballroom

Ms. Evelyn Kent

Director, HBCU/MI Program and Outreach, Office of the Under Secretary of War for Research and Engineering

End of Day 2

SESSION FEEDBACK EVALUATIONS

Please use the QR codes below to provide feedback on the sessions you attended today. You can also find these codes on the table tents in the Grand Ballroom.

Innovations in Action: 5-Min Thesis & 90-Second Lab Spotlights



Poster Sessions



Workshop Event





