



N.C. A&T PARTNERS WITH DUKE TO FILL A CRUCIAL GAP IN BIOINFORMATIC TRAINING

North Carolina A&T State University and Duke University have been awarded a \$3 million National Science Foundation (NSF) Research Traineeship grant to develop a program for graduate students who are interested in microbiome research.

Designed to transcend communication barriers between disciplines and promote team science, the five-year grant will enable project leaders across both institutions to create an interdisciplinary educational platform for biologists, engineers, computer scientists and biostatisticians. The new training program will address current training gaps by creating an educational model where microbiologists, engineers, statisticians and other empirical scientists will be cross-trained with theorists, model builders and computational scientists. They will also learn to engage with the community through outreach activities aimed at promoting science and engineering to the general public.

The project is a collaboration between N.C. A&T (nanoengineering, natural resources and environmental design, biology and computer science) and various entities of Duke's campus, including the Pratt School of Engineering, the Nicholas School of the Environment, Trinity College of Arts and Sciences and the School of Medicine.

The program will have an emphasis on the recruitment of minority students and women in fields in which they have been severely underrepresented. It presents an opportunity to bring students together who do not typically interact to open their eyes to other activities or careers that they might not have otherwise heard about. The desire is for the program to better prepare students to meet future research needs and accelerate research innovation.

"A unique feature of our team is the presence of women and underrepresented minority faculty in the core leadership of the project. This is usually not the case in these fields," said Joseph L. Graves Jr, associate dean for research at the Joint School of Nanoscience and Nanoengineering, A&T and UNC Greensboro, who is a co-principal investigator on the grant.