Howdy AGEP students! The AGEP staff hopes you had a wonderful and relaxing spring break. Now it is over, you only have about 7 weeks remaining before the spring semester ends. During that time, AGEP wants to help you make the most of your remaining semester. We have several events planned which including piazza chats, seminars, and our rebranded peer writing group into Intensive Writing Sessions. Many of you are applying for jobs, internships, externships, fellowships, post-docs programs, and grants, as well as working on other writing projects such as your thesis/dissertation. With only a handful of weeks left in the semester you have a lot of work to do in a very short period of time. The intensive writing sessions are redesigned to give you dedicated writing time and editorial feedback by your peers and/or your writing support specialist in one place. Please schedule the dates in your calendars for all remaining AGEP activities.

NEW INTENSIVE WRITING SESSIONS

Writing and communicating with your peers and the public is an integral component to the scientific profession. Before you begin your career, graduate school is a critical time period to develop good writing habits and refine your writing skills. AGEP has the resources to help you with these skills and invites you to participate in the intensive writing sessions. Students not in College Station can still participate via Blackboard Collaborate.

There are many benefits to regularly attending the intensive writing sessions:

- Break writer’s block
- Improve and refine writing skills
- Develop productive writing habits
- Build relationships with your AGEP peers
- Finish writing projects in a timely manner
- Accountability and motivation to finish your work

(Intensive Writing Session continues on page 6)
There were many occasions throughout graduate school when I was ready to quit. I could do the coursework and research, but I did not see myself as an academic professional. Then one day I decided I was going to make it work and my decision to stay was strongly influenced by joining and participating in AGEP.

One day in my third year, my fellow peer invited me to an AGEP informational meeting in March 2015. I decided I did not have anything to lose and I was looking for further support and guidance, so I went to the seminar. The first observation I noticed was the community’s diversity. Next, I noticed the varied conversations such as balancing graduate responsibilities and family commitments, coursework, problems and solutions encountered with laboratory experiments, fellowships recently awarded, who had received a tenure track position, and the overall positive energy. It has not been an easy road but by joining AGEP it provided me with training, skills, and confidence to see myself as being a member of academia, i.e. junior faculty.

AGEP has a plethora of training opportunities. My success in securing external funding is associated with my participation in the summer AGEP National Fellowship Application Lab. During the summer lab sessions, I was exposed to the best practices on preparing and submitting grant applications by successful grant writers and reviewers. Since my participation in the lab, I secured the following funding: Ford Foundation 2016 Dissertation Fellowship and the American Association of University Women 2016 Dissertation Fellowship.

I also attended a lot of helpful AGEP-sponsored seminars. In particular, the, “Preparing for the Job Search” seminar with guest speakers Dr. Katie Stober and Dr. Ben Wu. I gained insights into the job search process and I was challenged to think about the type of position and university I wanted to work for. I reflected on what I learned and asked myself, my partner, my parents (I am the go-to kid when there is a health issue), and my siblings if we were all willing to support each other so that I could thrive at a R1 institution as a tenure-track assistant professor. These conversations were not easy, but in the end, everyone agreed I should apply to R1 positions.

Raymond and I finally made time to get married after six years in February 2017!
The topic luncheon, “Understanding and Overcoming the Special Obstacles of Being a Minority/Underrepresented Academician” with guest speakers Dr. Cesar Malavé, Dr. Corliss Outley, and Dr. Nicholas Perez showed me that people of color can be successful in academia. I am grateful the panel shared their personal experiences with us. I also encourage AGEP students to participate in the piazza chats if you have not done so already. From every chat, I learned techniques on how to be a more successful researcher and person.

After one year of being an AGEP member, I was asked to be an AGEP student ambassador. The leadership role has allowed me to interact with fellow students, faculty, administrators, and staff as an advocate for AGEP’s mission and values. During my on-campus job interviews, I was asked about my AGEP experiences and the overwhelming consensus was that it was obvious that I learned the importance of service and leadership. It was reaffirming to hear first-hand from other universities how well-regarded the AGEP program is at a national-level.

During my job search I was fortunate to be offered two tenure-track positions and one post-doc position. After much deliberation, I decided to join the Department of Human and Organizational Development at Vanderbilt University, as an assistant professor in the fall of 2017. I will be teaching Introduction to Human Services, Health Service Delivery to Diverse Populations, Introduction to Health Policy, Community Health Theory & Practice, Community Inquiry, and I will be developing GIS courses. My future research agenda will be in three areas: 1) cancer prevention and control; 2) quantitative approaches to biomedical big data; 3) climate change and human health; and 4) public water infrastructure in the United States. Vanderbilt also happens to be an AGEP institution which makes me extremely happy!

Yolanda is a geography major with a research focus on medical and health geography, GISHealth, and spatial epidemiology. Her dissertation research, “An Intersectionality Approach to Assessing the Landscape across the Cervical Cancer Continuum of Care: Geographic and Sociodemographic Inequalities in New Mexico,” situates spatial factors (e.g. geographic accessibility and rural versus non-rural residence) at the forefront of health inequalities research in the examination of cervical cancer prevention and control in New Mexico.

If you’d like to contact Yolanda, please e-mail her at: ymcdonald77@tamu.edu
1. Pay it forward. For example, a colleague shared with me his personal statement that he submitted to the Ford Foundation for a Pre-Doctoral Fellowship (he was awarded the fellowship). I was so appreciative that every time I am asked for samples of successful grant fellowship applications I share my documents.

2. Others will take notice if you are easily frustrated or face challenges with grit. For example, do you give up easily, ask for help without troubleshooting the problem first, and complain about colleagues, or do you face challenges with a can-do attitude and put time and effort into your research? Everyone needs room to complain and assistance from time-to-time. However, research requires tenacity, persistence, and being willing to fail and learn from failures – grit!

3. Write everyday – even if it is 20 minutes.

4. Collaboration is a strength, not a weakness.

5. Show appreciation – say thank you.

6. Be confident – you are a superstar.

7. Be gracious – everyone around you is also a superstar.

8. Handwritten thank you cards are a treat to receive.

9. Exercise, eat healthy, get massages, and sleep.

10. Expect to work early mornings, evenings, weekends, and breaks so that you can have quality time when you really need it with those that matter most to you (see pictures)!

I was an instructor at the University of Texas at El Paso for a month in the summer of 2016. I took one day off and enjoyed it with my parents. Here I am with my 84-year-old father, José McDonald.
Abner Mendoza—College Station

I am a fourth year Ph.D. student in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering. My current research falls under the umbrella of cybersecurity and mainly focuses on web and mobile application security and browser security for both desktop and mobile devices. I work in the SUCCESS Lab under the guidance of Dr. Guofei Gu.

In the past, I worked as a software developer (for over 11 years), where I developed web and windows-based software including development and administration of Sql Server databases. I also did some work on Crestron control system programming and GUI design.

I am married, with 3 kids and one dog. In my free time at home, I enjoy spending time with my family. In my free time at school, I enjoy being a mentor to younger students and providing advice and sharing my experiences about school, life, work, family, and anything else they find useful or interesting.

I have a personal website at http://students.cse.tamu.edu/mendoza or you can contact me at abmendoza@tamu.edu

Adam Orendain—College Station

Adam is a masters student majoring in biomedical engineering. He received a BS in biomedical engineering from the University of Arizona. The focus of his research is the design and development of an embolic device to seal off vasculature. This could be useful to treat aneurysms, blood loss, and prevent stroke. Outside of lab Adam cooking, working out, and tinkering with electronics for fun.

AGEP has been a tremendous support for Adam. He has taken advantage of many professional development seminars, networking opportunities, and financial support AGEP provides! After graduate school, Adam intends to go into industry as R&D engineer for a biomedical company.

You can contact me at orendain@tamu.edu or via LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/adam-orendain-6a15a787
Patricia Cockett—Corpus Christi

I am a second year doctoral student enrolled in the coastal marine system science program. In Spring 2015, I graduated with my masters in marine biology at TAMUCC. My research focuses on the genomics and population genetics of an exploited Hawaiian fishery, 'Opihi (*Cellana spp.*). My dissertation research consists of assembling the 'Opihi genome and assessing the genetic diversity and population connectivity of *C. exarata* throughout the Hawaiian Archipelago.

I was born and raised on the island of Kauai in Hawaii. My strong cultural ties to the environment have lead me to graduate school in Corpus Christi where I plan to earn my PhD so I can return to Hawaii and perpetuate my culture through science as a professor. When I'm not doing research, I enjoy long walks on a moonlit beach.

AGEP has provided me with the opportunity to attend national conferences, build a community for underrepresented groups within the TAMUCC campus, network with other graduate students within the TAMU Alliance, and build relationships with faculty. Furthermore, AGEP has given me access to resources for professional development. AGEP is my home base and the AGEP staff and scholars are the people I look to for support.

You can contact me at pcockett@islander.tamucc.edu

Andrea Kealoha—College Station

I am a third year PhD student in the Department of Oceanography. My research focuses on ocean acidification in coral reef ecosystems. I am also interested in understanding how climate change impacts indigenous cultures, particularly Pacific Island communities, who depend on ocean resources for survival. AGEP has been an enormous help throughout my pursuit of a PhD by providing professional development activities, participation bonuses, and writing support. AGEP has also provided travel awards for me to attend two conferences, one in Hawaii and one in San Francisco.

This summer, and with AGEP’s support, I will be attending a science and policy immersion program in Washington D.C. I am extremely excited for this opportunity because in the future, I plan return home and serve Hawaii through political leadership. I believe that resource management would benefit from better communication between scientists, policy professionals and the community and I would like to facilitate the flow of knowledge and communication between these two groups.

My hobbies include surfing, spearfishing and yoga, but I love basically any type of ocean activity.

You can contact me at andreake@tamu.edu
**Jessica Aviles—College Station**

Jessica is a second year Ph.D. student in the biomedical engineering department. The focus of her research is on the biomechanics and implementation of on-site balance recovery training for residents of a retirement community. In her free time, Jessica enjoys hiking, playing with her dog, and eating tacos.

You can contact Jessica at javiles@tamu.edu

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**Nebechi Osia—Kingsville**

Nebechi is a PhD candidate in environmental engineering under the mentorship of Dr. Lee Clapp. Nebechi graduated with a masters in both environmental chemistry/MEES and environmental engineering from University of Maryland Eastern Shore and University of Maryland Baltimore County respectively. Her interest in the environment stems from her experiences in her homeland of Nigeria. Her main research interests are nuclear remediation, wastewater treatment, geochemical modeling, and the fate and transport of heavy metals.

With her leisure time she enjoys working out, trying new recipes, and traveling. AGEP has helped her immensely, by ensuring that through grants, there are no financial limitations to completing her PhD. After graduate school she hopes to purse a career in research development, where she hopes to further pursue her passion for research.

You can contact Nebechi at nebechi.osia@students.tamuk.edu

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**Donna Gilbert—Prairie View**

Donna is a chemistry graduate student attending one of the greatest HBCU institutions. She was born in Tacoma, Washington and raised in Killeen, Texas for most of her life. She began her academic career at Prairie View A&M University by receiving a bachelor’s degree in biology. During her undergraduate career, Donna was an active cross country/track and field runner, cheerleader, and freshman mentor.

As a chemistry master’s student, Donna gets to focus on research and the skills she needs to successfully strive in the STEM field. Her research focus is to observe the possibilities of using nanoparticles along with photo-thermal therapy as a possible cancer treatment option. In her free time, Donna likes to practice yoga, spend time with her friends and family, and DIY projects. The AGEP program has been a blessing in disguise. This program has given her the confidence she needs to believe in herself and give her insight on what to expect in her career.

You can contact Donna at Dgilbert1@pvamu.edu
PIAZZA APP

Piazza is a free, online Q&A and discussion platform. AGEP piazza café chats allow students the freedom to discuss topics and ask questions in a peer-supportive environment. It is a community to share ideas and learn from one another so all students may reach their academic career goals.

Each session occurs twice a month on Mondays and now on Wednesdays from 6pm-7pm. They are hosted and moderated by an AGEP student ambassador with a new topic each session.

If you do not have access to a computer during the session do not worry because Piazza has a free app so you can still log-in and participate. Do not forget that you receive bonuses for your participation.

INTENSIVE WRITING SESSION CONTINUED...

What can you expect?

Dates: April 4th, April 20th, and May 2nd

Time: 5:30-7pm

Location: Evans 612: OGAPS Consultation Annex or Blackboard Collaborate (please contact Gina at gmw104@tamu.edu for link to join)

Refreshments: Light refreshments will be provided to keep you alert as you power through your writing.

Time: You have 1.5 hours of uninterrupted time to work on your writing project individually, in groups, and one-on-one with Gina, your writing specialist.

Resources: Gina is formally trained in scientific communications. She can help you with any project starting from your outline to proofreading your final manuscript. She also provides book and web resources each session.

ADD THESE AGEP SPONSORED EVENTS TO YOUR CALENDARS SO YOU NEVER MISS AN EVENT

March

03/27/2017 - Piazza Chat: What to expect from preliminary exams and how to prepare for success

03/29/2017 - Webinar: Self-Editing Techniques

* 03/30/2017 - AGEP Evening Seminar: Preparing for Oral Presentations—Guest speaker Dr. Barbara Gastel, Coordinator, MS Program in Science and Technology Journalism, Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences

April

04/04/2017 - Intensive Writing Session (2/4)

04/05/2017 - Piazza Chat: Building and maintaining a community for diversity at your home institution

04/10/2017 - Piazza Chat: How To Find a Job

4/12/2017 - Piazza Chat: Too Shy? Too Quite? Muscling up the courage to ask for help!

04/19/2017 - Webinar: Scientific Writing Resources: Resources to Help You Communicate Effectively

04/20/2017 - Intensive Writing Session (3/4)

04/24/2017 - Piazza Chat: Life after your degree. How are you preparing for the future?

May

05/02/2017 - Intensive Writing Session (4/4)

* 05/05/2017 - TAMUS AGEP End of the Year Dinner Celebration (College Station Campus)

* Registration is required. Please visit tamus-agep.tamu.edu for event details and registration links.

Food will be provided at AGEP Luncheons, AGEP Evening Seminars, and AGEP/BTD Co-Led events