



**Driving Research: An Interdisciplinary,
Vibrant, Engaged Network**

ANNUAL
REPORT

2023





GRATITUDE FOR 2023

Dear DRIVEN Community:

In 2019, DRIVEN (Driving Research: An Interdisciplinary, Vibrant, Engaged Network) was founded as a grassroots, university-wide program seeking to cultivate a community of interdisciplinary clinical and translational investigators and promote their individual and collective professional development, recognition, and advancement in order to foster an inclusive, equitable and diverse research workforce. Over the past four years, DRIVEN has grown to include 144 members from 8 schools at UAB and is making a meaningful impact on the professional and personal development of its members. We made monumental strides in DRIVEN programs and offerings in 2023, in large part due to the hard work and dedication of our new program manager, Naomi Duffort, MSW.

Under Naomi's leadership, we launched the first DRIVEN Writing Accountability Groups (WAGs) in April. The initial group meet biweekly for 2 hours and was comprised of 3 DRIVEN members from 3 different UAB Schools/Colleges. During their time together, the WAG participants finalized manuscripts and grant submissions. A new WAG has begun for 2024. We'd love to organize and host additional WAGs for our partners across campus this year. Please let us know how we can support you and your faculty.

A founding goal of DRIVEN was to increase and encourage NIH Diversity Supplement submissions at UAB. We re-visited this effort by offering an NIH Diversity Supplement Info Session in June 2023, where Madeline Gibson provided an introduction to this often underutilized mechanism. We have additional programming planned for 2024 to support both supplement candidates and parent grant PIs. Please stay tuned!

Naomi was also instrumental in bringing the inaugural DRIVEN Academy to life in September. Nearly 40 UAB faculty and instructors across 5 UAB Schools/Colleges attended this 1.5 day event where national leaders visited UAB to meet our DRIVEN members and community, share their career journeys, and offer advice for career development. Our sincere gratitude for Drs. Jessica Williams, Gregory Payne, and Frank Puga for serving on the 2023 planning committee. The resounding success of this year's event is a testament to the time and energy they generously shared with us. Planning for the 2024 Academy is already underway - we hope to see you and your faculty there!

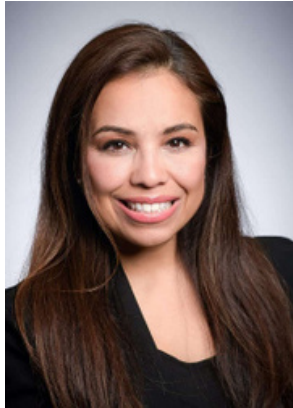
Each of our sponsors has played a part in DRIVEN's story. Their support enables the success of our members and fosters strong connections among a diverse network of scholars. In this annual report, we share the great momentum we have built over the past year and since 2019.

Thank you for being part of DRIVEN and for helping make the past year so successful. We invite you to join us in anticipating what we can accomplish in the year ahead.





OUR TEAM



Bertha Hidalgo
Director



Frank Puga
Co-Director



Michael Mugavero
Senior Advisor



Madeline Gibson
Advisor



Naomi Duffort
Program Manager

**THANK YOU, DRs. PAYNE AND WILLIAMS
FOR SERVING ON THE DRIVEN ACADEMY
PLANNING COMMITTEE**



Greg Payne



Jessica Williams



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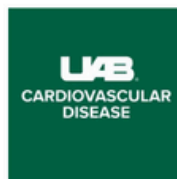
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THE DRIVEN ACADEMY

2023 was a year of “**firsts**” for DRIVEN. On September 22 and 23, we held our inaugural DRIVEN Academy, a Research and Coaching Symposium focused on supporting the growth of early-career, research-interested Black and Latinx faculty and instructors, although all were welcome to attend. Nearly 40 UAB faculty and instructors across five schools attended the DRIVEN Academy. Keynote speakers Dr. David Wilkes, National Director of the Harold Amos Faculty Development Program and Dean Emeritus of the University of Virginia Medical School, and Dr. April Carson, Principal Investigator of the Jackson Heart Study and Professor at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, and plenary speaker, Dr. Tiffany Carson, Associate Member, and George Edgecomb Scholar at the Moffitt Cancer Center shared their career journeys, tips for success, and career development with the attendees.

Feedback on the DRIVEN Academy has been overwhelmingly positive, with 100 percent of participants agreeing that the information provided is useful in their future endeavors.

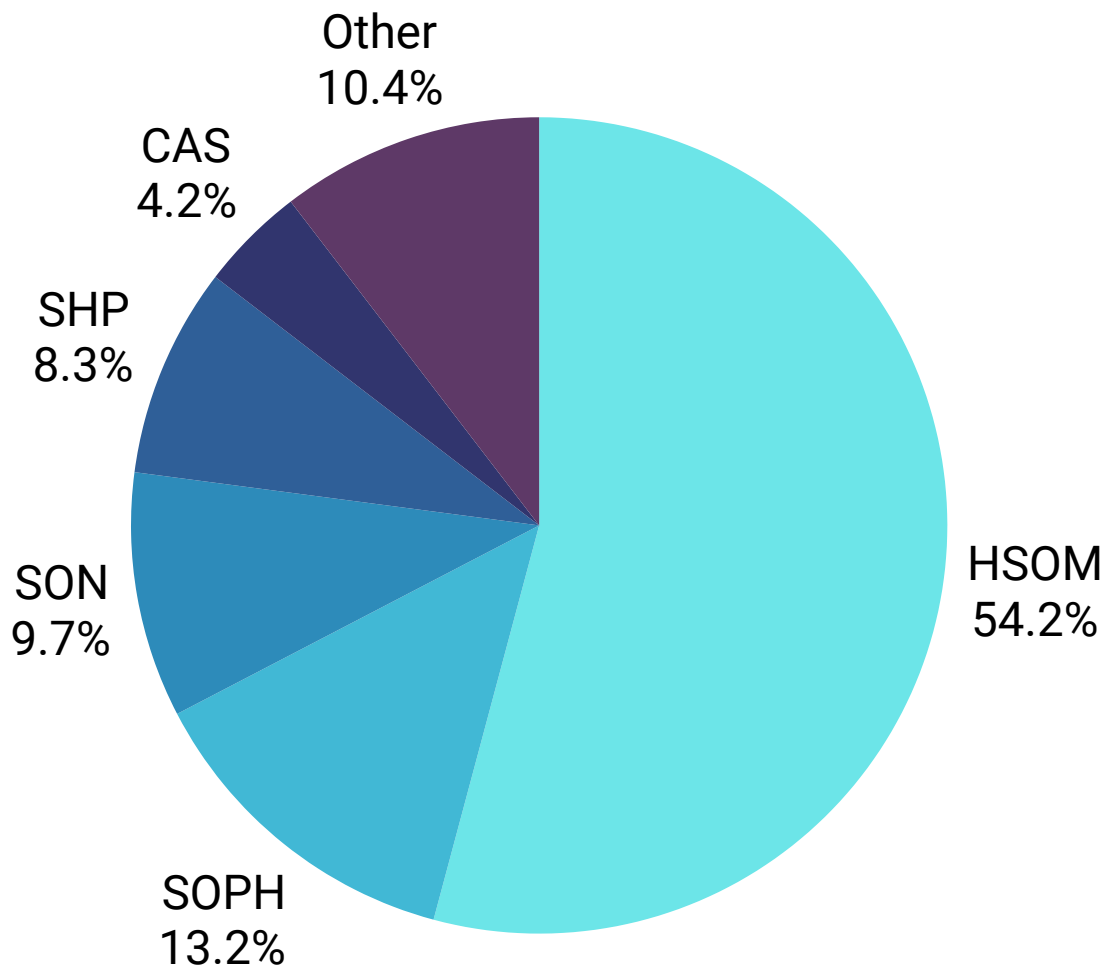
- *“The conversation around topics with folks who have similar shared experiences was most valuable.”*
- *“Getting to connect with other faculty members who have shared experiences and knowing I am not alone.”*
- *“It was really great! Connecting with minority investigators who have similar research interests was very useful.”*



DRIVEN MEMBERSHIP

DRIVEN saw its greatest growth in membership in 2023. During the year, the number of DRIVEN members grew from 89 to 144. DRIVEN members represent 8 UAB Schools and Colleges. Most of the members identify as women (70%), and nearly half (45 percent) belong to underrepresented minority groups.

DRIVEN Membership by UAB School/College



HSOM - Heersink School of Medicine

SOPH - School of Public Health

SON - School of Nursing

SHP - School of Health Professions

CAS - College of Arts and Sciences

DRIVEN PROGRAMING

DRIVEN microgrants are small grants of \$2,000 or less that support the career development and/or research productivity of early-career researchers. DRIVEN members have used microgrants to support graduate students, purchase lab equipment, offset publication fees, hire scientific writers for manuscripts, and enlist translation and interpretation services. Since 2019, DRIVEN has awarded 14 microgrants totaling \$26,930. In 2023, four members received \$8,000 in funding.

- For an **Assistant Professor in HSOM**, the microgrant *“helped to generate pilot data for grants and papers.”*
- For a **T32 Postdoctoral trainee in Nursing**, the microgrant paid for open access fees which will make the paper’s findings more accessible *“to persons in settings with limited access to peer-reviewed publications, especially pediatric oncology nurses practicing in resource-limited countries for which this publication is highly relevant.”*



Azar Abadi, Hope Amm and Harshvardhan Singh

Writing Accountability Groups (WAGs), are another “first” for DRIVEN in 2023. WAGs are small groups who meet regularly to move writing projects along. Currently, 7 DRIVEN members participate in a WAG, representing the Schools of Dentistry, Health Professions and Public Health.

- For an **Assistant Professor in SHP** the WAG *“allowed me to block off time to write major sections of an R grant.”*

Other programming: DRIVEN can draft nomination materials and serve as the nominator when members are eligible for honors and awards. DRIVEN has also hosted NIH diversity supplement webinars to provide members with information about the purpose of these supplements as well as how to find and apply for a supplement.



UAB Caregiving Affected Research Early-career Scientists (CARES) Retention Program

The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) COVID-19 Caregiving Affected Early Career Research Scientists (CARES) Retention Program was established in 2021. Its purpose is to support early-career researchers who experienced a decline in their scholarship and research output due to caregiving responsibilities during the peak of the pandemic. CARES aims to provide awardees with support to hire "extra hands" to assist them with regaining momentum and productivity, with the ultimate goal of retaining these scientists in academia. Over the last two years, CARES at UAB has distributed nearly \$1 million to 28 assistant and associate professors from the schools of **Medicine, Health Professions, Nursing, and Public Health**. These grants serve as a means to assist caregiving-affected investigators in restoring their research productivity. Preliminary data show that the awardees produced 116 manuscripts using their CARES funding in their first year as awardees

- *“CARES funding has allowed me to finish analyses, manuscripts and disseminate results that I would otherwise not have been able to accomplish.” Assistant Professor, **Heersink School of Medicine***
- *“I am grateful for the extra support CARES has provided to me. I’ve been able to achieve a better balance with my caregiving responsibilities and getting my research started at UAB. The funding allowed me to hire a part-time research coordinator and a biostatistician, and this has helped me get enough data for an R01 submission.” Assistant Professor, **School of Public Health***
- *“The CARES program has been fantastic – I really appreciate the “extra hands” that has allowed me to make progress without making undo sacrifices in other arenas. In particular, the medical writer to review manuscripts and the qualitative analysis support has been fantastic.” Assistant Professor, **Heersink School of Medicine***



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