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Virtual Career Fair

Wednesday, May 15, 2024

12:00 to 2:00 PM ET

[Register here!](#)

Alumni Conference

June 2024

Date and location announced soon!

Skills Workshops for College and High School Students

Fall 2024

Harvard Medical School

For more information, please visit the BSCP website at www.bscp.org.

REMINDER

Please remember to update your contact information at www.bscp.org.

Click on "Update Contact Information" and then "Current BSCP Students/Fellows and Alumni."

NESS KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Jose C. Florez, MD, PhD

Born to a physician-scientist, Jose C. Florez, MD, PhD, was raised in an environment where inspiration in the sciences was routine and passion for taking care of others was abundant.

"I think my interest in medicine and science, and genetics in particular, really got reinforced when my sister was born with Down syndrome," Florez considers. Upon entering Northwestern's MD-PhD program, it seemed certain to him that he would study the brain and its mysteries.

For Florez, "there was that interest of how DNA variation leads to human conditions, phenotypes and traits — the intellectual piece; and then the heart piece is about just growing up with" his siblings.

Today, Dr. Florez is the physician-in-chief and chair of the Department of Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School and an institute member at the Broad Institute. But above all, he's a father to his four daughters and a fierce advocate for vulnerable populations. "I grew up in a household where caring for the vulnerable was important and where there was a heart for people who have difficulties," he says.

Prior to joining the MD-PhD program at Northwestern, or even knowing that such a path could exist, Florez was a college freshman who needed to find a job to support his education. If he had to get a job, he thought it might as well be in the sciences. As a work-study student, he joined the lab of Aryeh Routtenberg, PhD, a lifelong professor of psychology at Northwestern with a reputation for giving undergraduates opportunities.



Jose C. Florez, MD, PhD

"That really introduced me to laboratory science and to pushing the frontiers of knowledge, and it was in that lab that I learned that I was able to develop a research project, which then became an honors master's thesis within the four years that I was there," recalls Florez. "And then, when I learned about the existence of MD-PhD programs, I realized that I could combine my twin desires to serve and give reign to the heart, but at the same time, the intellect to be able to advance the frontiers of knowledge."

Florez encountered several setbacks on his way to graduating from the MD-PhD program at Northwestern. The most notable occurred within the first two years, when the lab he had planned to join for his PhD after a rotation in his first summer was no longer a viable option.

"I had to scramble, essentially," Florez says. "And that's how I found Joe Takahashi, [PhD], who worked on a different area, circadian rhythms." While he hadn't considered this area of neuroscience for his PhD, he was moved by Dr. Takahashi's approach to science and his ability to communicate his findings to the scientific community.

After persevering through the long days of the PhD years and returning to his clinical

phase in medical school — both considered milestones for those who pursue an MD-PhD — Florez graduated from the MD-PhD program at Northwestern and matched to MGH for his preliminary medical internship as well as his residency in neurology. “First of all, I didn’t think that I was MGH material,” Florez recounts. “I was very encouraged by a mentor in medical school who suggested I apply to the place where I would be challenged, ‘where everybody around you is smarter than you are, that’s where you want to be, because they pull you up.’”

“What was unexpected,” says Florez, “is how much I would enjoy medical internship. I had a ball! You’re not supposed to enjoy internship, you’re supposed to suffer and work hard and not sleep, but I had a wonderful time. So then, when I started neurology the following year, I really missed medicine.”

Florez expands, saying he missed the chance to be a medical doctor in the more traditional sense. He found that the neuroscience he had adored in his PhD training did not, for him, equate to a future path in clinic. After a year of his neurology residency, Florez returned to internal medicine. “So, I think the big challenge there was the unexpected —

of finding things out about yourself that you didn’t know and then having to make a career change,” he takes a moment to consider. “Now not a full career change, but a specialty change, so that you can follow what really is your passion.”

Florez went on to find his niche in diabetes research and care and has never looked back. Last year, he and his team published a research resource, called [SUGAR-MGH](#), for studying gene-drug interactions to “use people’s genetic background, but also other variables that might help us decide what is the right medication for you, what are the kind of complications you might develop, and how to take care of you,” he says. Mindful of the fact that this resource could address disparities in treatment for underserved groups, Florez says that “to the extent that genetic information should span all populations, not only European populations, but all populations, then it [SUGAR-MGH] is a way to advance equity, as long as it is deployed across all the groups.”

When Florez is not working in the lab or in clinic, he’s an award-winning father. In 2019, the local Boston chapter of the American Diabetes Association (ADA)

recognized his ability to manage his career while also being “the cook at home, for example,” he says. “I take care of a lot of other things at home, but mostly the food, the groceries and the cooking and the washing the dishes and so on. So, that’s very important to me — to come home, make dinner, and we’ll sit as a family,” explains Florez, whose wife is also “a physician-scientist, also a full professor at Harvard Medical School, and also a first-generation Cuban American. And we have four daughters together.” They met during her internship at MGH.

“I was nominated for this sort of fun award,” says Florez, speaking of the ADA’s 2019 Father of the Year. It’s “incredibly meaningful,” he says. “Probably the most meaningful award I have received.”

This past March, BSCP and the Harvard Medical School Office for Diversity Inclusion and Community Partnership were overjoyed to host Florez as the keynote speaker at the 2024 New England Science Symposium. As keynote, Florez’ passion for translational research, care for the vulnerable, and dedication to biomedicine will stand as a lasting inspiration for all in attendance. ■

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WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Leny Dias, MD

When Leny Dias, MD, was growing up, medicine and science were synonymous with service to her community and care for the most vulnerable populations. Her parents — her mother, a nurse, and her father, a primary care physician — showed her what could be accomplished for patients in resource-poor populations with passion and perseverance.

“I saw them working in these resource-poor areas and saw the impact that you could have in someone’s life for the better,” recalls Dias. “I wanted to be a part of that and to be able to contribute in that way. I was always fascinated by the science behind it, and I would always be asking questions about the underlying physiology of



Leny Dias, MD

diseases,” as she observed her parents’ practice when she was young. She wanted to know how medications and therapies could possibly provide

so much relief to the symptoms her parents' patients were managing.

"Seeing that affect their wellbeing and improve their lives was something that was powerful," says Dias. "That started the drive for me."

Today, Dias is a resident in internal medicine at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, currently in her second year after having graduated from the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth College.

Dias was born in Cabo Verde, on the island of Santiago. After graduating from high school, she made the decision that she would move to the United States to pursue a career in medicine. "I saw the challenges with the language and the fact that I'd be embarking on this journey by myself," she notes. During Dias's first years in the Boston area, she taught English as a second language.

"All of the barriers, financial issues, et cetera," she continues. "But I just saw that it would provide me with a wider net of possibilities, as far as being able to impact the change that I wanted to see."

The next step on Dias's educational journey in the United States was Bunker Hill Community College. It was there that her genetics professor introduced her to the Biomedical Science Careers Program (BSCP) Biennial Student Conference and encouraged her to attend after she expressed a passion for science and medicine.

At the BSCP Conference, she "found a place where I could finally start to make those connections and see the real people who had made that way too," she says, recalling the expansive room of students, mentors, and speakers. "That was really eye-opening. And it was so powerful, because I remember those meetings, and I remember even just going to sit at a table and networking. But even the fact that you'd be there in a room full of people who were invested in this work, and you saw that people cared — that in and of itself had its impact."

As she had planned, Dias transferred from Bunker Hill Community College to a four-year undergraduate institution, choosing Brandeis University to continue her educational path. For her, the

secret to success was grit, an incredible work ethic and "really being resilient in the process and believing in the process. And then certainly leveraging the mentorship along the way."

Soon after graduating from Brandeis with a bachelor's degree, she joined the lab of David Friedman, MD, at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC). Here, Dias took steps toward a passion for "really combining physiology and health outcomes" while preparing to apply to medical schools.

Having completed the arduous process of medical school applications, Dias was accepted into the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. "I was able to embark on this dream; it was just two hours outside of Boston, so I was able to come [home] most weekends, which kept me connected with the [Cabo Verdean] community and kept me flourishing," she remembers. Since arriving in the Boston area, the Cabo Verdean community across New England, but specifically in the Boston area, has been a constant source of joy and strength.

Upon graduating from Dartmouth with her MD, Dias matched for internal medicine and returned to BIDMC. Now, many of the patients she cares for are, like Dias, immigrants from Cabo Verde. "Because of this shared experience, I am intimately aware of the challenges my patients go through, and I see this as an invaluable opportunity to impact positive change through my work," says Dias.

In moments between clinic and her numerous duties as a resident, Dias's one-year-old child "really fuels a lot of my energy." She also loves to cook recipes, new and old, as a creative outlet and writes poetry as often as she can.

To Dias, the most essential way she could use her time would be by continuing a legacy of caring for underserved populations in the Boston area. "All I want to do is be able to use my voice, my work, as ways to impact change in people's lives and those people being the ones that need it the most: vulnerable populations," she says. ■

LAUNCH OF BSCP ALUMNI NETWORK!

Spearheaded by the BSCP Board of Directors, the BSCP Alumni Network is officially being activated and is pursuing BSCP alumni of all prior years or program cohorts to join!

The BSCP Alumni Network will be guided by a committee of eight BSCP alumni and two members of BSCP's staff with one goal in mind: bring the plethora of personal networks created at BSCP events to the forefront and unify them.

"Leaders of color are facing particularly harsh headwinds with this most recent wave of anti-DEI activity, so this group

feels especially timely right now," says April Inniss, MD, MSc. Inniss is co-chair of the BSCP Alumni Network Committee and Senior Research Associate at James Bell Associates. "It's important that we build up a community, a network where there's safety and some common threads that connect us, where we can support each other and learn from one another," she says.

Rather than leave the effort of maintaining the BSCP network to alumni at large, the BSCP Alumni Committee is building the infrastructure necessary to bring together past students of BSCP in an engaging way

to facilitate community with like-minded individuals.

"BSCP opens a door to show you all these things behind the door that you might not have known were there. But then, I think the alumni network should help you figure out how to navigate between the things that are most interesting to you. It's hard figuring out how to navigate the professional work world, from corporate America to working in academia," says Lauren Powell, MPA, PhD, who's Head of Health Equity at Biogen. Powell is one of the eight BSCP alumni serving on the Alumni Network's committee.

“Getting to those places in the work world and making connections and creating networks and figuring out how to find your purpose in a sense. To be able to do the work you really are called to do,” says Powell. “That’s easier said than done.”

The group’s mission is to create a vibrant global network of leaders, where the synergy of its collective strength propels each member to new heights. Through initiatives like mentorship programs and collaborative projects, the network aims to cultivate a community that not only embraces individuality but also champions lifelong learning, all while magnifying the lasting impact of BSCP. Together, the group hopes to embark on a journey

of mutual growth, ensuring that the path forward is paved with opportunities for those who follow in Alumni footsteps. By designing virtual programs, in-person gatherings and other functions, the accessibility of the BSCP Alumni Network is poised to grow into a more public space.

In the last month, efforts from this committee have resulted in the growth of a LinkedIn group administered by the BSCP. In just a few weeks, the page has grown to host nearly 100 BSCP alumni and continues growing by the day. This community page is only the beginning. Presently, the BSCP Alumni Network is planning an in-person conference in June 2024 to celebrate the launch of this exciting new chapter for BSCP, sponsored by our friends at Vertex. The conference agenda will include career development/leadership workshops, a community town hall and



BSCP Alumni Network

On a mission to
reconnect!



multiple networking opportunities. Events like this will create further opportunity for expansion of the BSCP Alumni Network but will more importantly showcase the strength of the BSCP alumni community, the good being done by alumni globally and the capabilities to enact change and growth that our alumni are eager to share with one another. Conference details to come! Please direct all questions to khaliah_noel-gibson@hms.harvard.edu.

The BSCP Alumni Committee invites all alumni of BSCP, from any year or program, to join this new Network and realize the full extent of the BSCP alumni community. With over 16,000 individuals engaging in BSCP since its inception, we know our collective reach is far and wide. If you’re an alum and haven’t yet joined the group’s LinkedIn page, please do so and spread the word! By committing to a mission that

will create global leaders in the biomedical space, the BSCP Alumni Network invites you to share your successes and plan for the collective strength of alumni to propel us to new heights.

“I really do hope that the alumni network becomes a space of leaders who will purposely hold the door open for the next generation, because I feel like that’s what Dr. Reede has done for all of us since the 90s,” says Powell. “I really think that we are well poised to pick up the baton. That’s really what this is. It’s a relay; it is a marathon. It is not a sprint.”

The BSCP Alumni Network LinkedIn page can be joined via this [link](#). The LinkedIn group will serve as the primary vehicle for connection and communication regarding other Alumni Network programs and events. ■

ANNOUNCING BSCP/CYTIVA SCHOLARSHIP TO SUPPORT STUDENT TRANSITIONS!



The Biomedical Science Careers Program and Cytiva are incredibly excited to announce a Scholarship to Support Student Transitions. This inaugural scholarship is sponsored by Cytiva, and each student recipient will receive \$25,000 over the course of two years.

“There are critical transition points where students can truly benefit from extra support and guidance that help them to stay the course, achieve their academic and career goals and to realize their potential,” says Joan Reede, MD, MPH, MS, MBA, President and Chair of BSCP. “We are thrilled that our partner, Cytiva, understands these needs and joins us as we launch this pivotal scholarship together.”

BSCP and Cytiva recognize that times of transition can be the hardest to navigate for students as they do not always have the support systems to navigate the transition successfully. This scholarship is designed to aid students at critical transition junctures as they progress throughout their academic careers. The 2024 pilot

scholarship will focus on community college to college transitions.

Cytiva’s Vice President of Marketing and Executive Sponsor of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Conor McKechnie, knows the gravity of this scholarship. “This investment is more than just a commitment to education,” he says. “It’s an investment in the future of our industry and a testament to our belief that talent, drive, and a thirst for knowledge should be nurtured irrespective of an individual’s starting point. We look forward to welcoming our first cohort of scholars in August 2024 and hope this is just the beginning for a larger initiative to strengthen and diversify the pipeline of future leaders in our field.”

While funding is a major concern for those planning to transition to a four-year undergraduate institution, Cytiva and BSCP recognize that other forms of support besides funding are likewise essential. Scholarship recipients will also be matched with a financial professional who will consult with the student for two advising sessions — upon being accepted for the scholarship and again prior to its culmination.

Beyond this, BSCP will provide an advisor for each recipient for the entirety of the two-year scholarship. During their scholarship years, the recipient will commit to attending all BSCP programming, ensuring the aid of additional support, resources, and networking opportunities.

With attention paid to career growth, Cytiva will host recipients of this scholarship at Cytiva and Danaher sites, where they will be exposed to opportunities in the biomedical science industry. Recipients of this scholarship will also be supported in their search for summer internships.

The BSCP Scholarship to Support Student Transition, sponsored by Cytiva, will launch in April 2024, and the recipients will be announced in June 2024. The first cohort will begin in August 2024, depending upon the recipients’ exact timeline for transitioning into a four-year institution.

Interested students currently enrolled at a community college or an institution conferring an associate’s degree should complete the online application form. Application instructions and eligibility criteria can be found [here](#). ■

BSCP HAS JOINED INSTAGRAM!

The Biomedical Science Careers Program aims, in all ways, to keep our community together and share stories of the successes and advancements of our students, alumni and volunteers.



Following [@bscp_now](#) on Instagram will keep you up to date with opportunities to join us for programming, will let you be the first to hear announcements, and will keep you connected to BSCP participants far and wide. ■

