

# THE CHELLGREN CENTER FOR UNDERGRADUATE EXCELLENCE

Alumni Newsletter | Volume III | 2021



Chimene Ntakarutimana, Chellgren Fellow and 2021 Marshall Scholar

# A MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR



BY DR. PHILIPP KRAEMER

The world has just endured a most challenging year. The COVID-19 crisis brought tremendous stress to UK students, faculty, staff, and administrators. To keep the undergraduate mission functional during this period would have been a notable achievement; to have gone well beyond that is a tribute to our campus resilience, creativity, and commitment.

I have seen first-hand those attributes in operation within the Chellgren Center and the Office of Nationally Competitive Awards. We were able to complete the spring experience for the 2019 Chellgren Student Fellows, and we are about to complete the full academic year of programming for the 2020 cohort of Fellows. Although we long for the opportunity to return to the best practices of pre-COVID-19 days, I am impressed with what has been accomplished this year and how well the Fellows met the challenge. I am especially proud of the professional excellence exhibited by my colleagues: Dr. Pat Whitlow, Lynn Hiler, and Emily Sallee. Their dedication to student excellence has never been more conspicuous or consequential. Despite the challenges and obstacles, their determination and creativity have afforded Fellows the opportunity to reap the benefits of meaningful academic enrichment. Our students owe these professionals their deep gratitude. A similar debt of gratitude is owed to the many dedicated faculty who have been willing to serve as research mentors for the Fellows. Again, despite the profound challenges associated with the pandemic, our students have benefited from having had a meaningful research experience, which is a hallmark of the Fellows program.

Symbolic of the excellence of UK students, one of our Chellgren Student Fellows, Chimene Ntakarutimana, was able to win a highly prestigious Marshall Scholarship; an impressive accomplishment to be celebrated under any conditions but even more so during this last year.

In contemplating what we have accomplished this last year, and the opportunities that await us, I am reminded of the foundation upon which the success of the Chellgren Center itself is built: the generosity and creative vision of Mr. Paul Chellgren. His commitment to helping UK promote academic excellence has had a profound impact on our institution. Through his support we have been able to provide talented UK students experiences that extend, supplement, and embellish their undergraduate education.

## 2020 CHELLGREN FELLOWS



The creativity and adaptability of the 2020 Chellgren Fellows were on display this year as never before as our students and faculty mentors adapted to new research guidelines implemented during the pandemic. Agricultural and Medical Biotechnology major Rachael Snyder, at left, worked with Dr. Nicholas Teets and Dr. Melise Lecheta in the Department of Entomology to study thermal tolerance in *Drosophila melanogaster*. Through her research, she is exposing the organism to different temperatures in order to observe its thermal plasticity under various circumstances.

# ALUMNA SPOTLIGHT: CHIMENE NTAKARUTIMANA



BY WHITNEY HALE, UK PUBLIC RELATIONS

In December, Chellgren Fellow and UK alumna Chimene Ntakarutimana was named UK's sixth Marshall Scholar. The scholarship will finance two years of graduate study for her at an institution of her choice in the United Kingdom. A 2020 psychology, sociology and Lewis Honors College graduate, Chimene will pursue two master's degrees at the University College London, studying global migration and gender, society, and representation.

"The opportunity to work in a country that is at the forefront of migration policy will be life changing," she said. "Not only will I have access to professors with a breadth and depth of knowledge in the field of forced migration, I will be able to glean research skills that I can utilize in my own projects. Thus, being able to impact current migration policies, while creating new ones that fit the international climate."

From personal experience, Chimene understands how forced migration can change one's life. For six years, she lived in a refugee camp after fleeing genocide in her home country of Burundi. It was this constant moving and resettlement process that led to her interest in the field of migration, as well as her undergraduate research at UK and abroad as a participant in the National Science Foundation Research Experience for Undergraduates program in Rwanda. "Coming to the U.S. as a refugee was a difficult process," she said. "With the encouragement of my family, I was able to see that I could use my own personal experience to change the way the world views immigration."

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**I WANT TO GIVE BACK. THAT'S SOMETHING THAT BEING HERE AT UK HAS TAUGHT ME - YOU HAVE TO PASS IT FORWARD.**

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: MICHAEL DI GIROLAMO

Fellow Michael Di Girolamo was awarded not one, but two Critical Language Scholarships (CLS) this year. During the fall semester, he studied Chinese virtually for six weeks with Shaanxi Normal University in Xi'an, China. This summer, he will study Chinese virtually through Changchun Humanities and Sciences College in Changchun, China.

The CLS program provides funding to participate in intensive language and cultural immersion programs for American students enrolled at U.S. universities.

"Whether I decide to work for the American government under the Department of State or choose to pursue a path in the private sector working for a nongovernmental organization or financial institution, an advanced understanding of the Chinese language and culture will prepare me for a world in which the United States and China are the dominant political and economic forces," he said.



**CHELLOWS IN THE NEWS:** Alumna Tiffany Ge was recently promoted to legislative director of the personal office of U.S. Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell. Ge joined the senator's office in 2017 as legal counsel and manages an extensive legislative portfolio. In her new role, she will oversee all Kentucky-focused legislative matters for the senator and manage the policy staff.

# STAFF SPOTLIGHT: Q&A WITH DR. PAT WHITLOW

Our very own Dr. Whitlow was featured in a March edition of UK's daily newsletter. Here is an excerpt from the article "Giving Wildcats That Winning Edge: Q&A with Pat Whitlow of UK's Nationally Competitive Awards Office."

**Q: What made you interested in directing the Office of Nationally Competitive Awards?**

A: While working in the Graduate School, I served on the campus Fulbright review committee for several years as I was interested in encouraging more graduate students to apply for external opportunities. When this role was expanded to full time, it allowed me the change of positions. I've loved having the chance to work with undergraduates, graduates and alumni who are interested in competitive awards.

**Q: If you had one piece of advice for students in relation to scholarships and other award opportunities, what would it be?**

A: My advice is to be willing to take the risk of applying for one of these major awards. Not every application results in an award, but all students who apply are successful because they learn how to better explain their academic interests and achievements and to improve their writing and communication skills throughout the process. This results in a stronger application for the next opportunity, which may be an award application or a graduate program or a job.

**Q: What is your favorite part about working with students visiting the Office of Nationally Competitive Awards?**

A: They teach me so much! I first heard about Bitcoin from a student, they've recommended books for me to read, they've helped me understand so many issues from the perspective of a different generation, I've seen the world through their travels, they've given me recipes to make my own probiotic foods, they've brought me refrigerator magnets from around the world. Just about every day brings some new bit of knowledge or fun or connection. It's very satisfying to be a part of a student's career while they are at UK, and I'm so delighted to keep up with so many as they move on to their post-UK lives.



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## ALUMNI SURVEY

We love to hear from our former Chellows.  
What have you been up to since graduation?  
How did the program set you up for success in your career?  
Scan the QR code and let us know through a short survey!



# CONGRATULATIONS 2020 COMPETITIVE AWARD RECIPIENTS!

Hannah Cleary - Alpha Lambda Delta Jo Anne J. Trow Undergraduate Scholarship  
Hailey Combs - English-Speaking Union Scholarship  
Michael Di Girolamo - Critical Language Scholarship  
Tsage Douglas - Teaching Assistant Program in France  
Zoe Hert - Explorers Club Youth Activity Fund Rising Explorer Grant  
Angela Jones - NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program (Honorable Mention)  
Mikayla Mitchell - Gilman Scholarship  
Stephen Parsons - NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program  
Esther Putman - NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program  
Hannah Thomas - Fulbright Canada-Mitacs Globalink Research Internship  
Maya Woolfolk - NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program

 Nationally  
Competitive Awards



Though we were not able to gather together in person, we are thankful for Program Coordinator Lynn Hiler's Photoshop skills, which allowed us to have a group picture of the 2020 Chellgren Fellows. This year's cohort of 29 students represented 7 colleges and 22 majors across campus.

**CONTACT US:**

**[chellgrencenter@uky.edu](mailto:chellgrencenter@uky.edu)**

**<http://www.uky.edu/chellgren>**



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