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Transition at the Top

IN MARCH 2019 LISE D. KAYE stepped down as executive director of BSCP. Hollie DeSilva, former BSCP program manager, is the new executive director. “I planned for [this transition]. I trained her for it,” says Kaye. Knowing the position is now in the hands of such a trusted colleague “makes a big difference for me. I am so pleased that Hollie has succeeded me as executive director [because] she cares about the BSCP mission and its students as much as I do.”

In her 23 years as executive director, Kaye’s guiding presence made a lasting impact on hundreds of students-turned-professionals who passed through the program. A tribute at the 22nd annual Evening of Hope in late April included first-person accounts from BSCP students, mentors and other participants dating back to 1998 of their interactions with Lise.

When Kaye joined the organization in 1995, she never thought she would stay as long as she did. “But I did because it was so gratifying,” she says. “I did open some doors for students. That’s how I saw my role. But then they knew they had to be the ones to move forward, to succeed.” And, she notes, “There was always the expectation that students would give back.” At the 2018 Biomedical Science

Careers Conference, 45 advisors were former students — the highest number since the Conference began. They came from all over the country, each paying their own expenses. “Some had come to us as high school students,” Kaye marvels.



LISE D. KAYE



HOLLIE DESILVA

DeSilva joined BSCP full-time in 2006, after receiving a BS in communications from Northeastern. She had worked on the New England Science Symposium in 2005 when she was a co-op student, and as a consultant to the Conference the following year when she was a senior. “I feel very prepared,” she says about her new role. “Lise was very good about always bringing me into what she was doing. The longer I was here the more she brought me into the fold.”

While working full-time DeSilva earned an MBA at the University of Massachusetts Boston, which she says, “allowed me to grow in the position. Lise was very integral to that.”

Kaye points out that, though BSCP is rooted at Harvard Medical School, throughout her tenure, “I always felt very strongly that all New England medical schools should be represented.” Toward that end, when she assembled panels for BSCP events, she reached out to schools throughout the region.

It is important to DeSilva to maintain the organization’s core values. “The base that Lise and Dr. Reede have created is phenomenal,” she says, referring

to Joan Reede, MD, MS, MPH, MBA, president and chair of the Biomedical Science Careers Program. “BSCP is unique because of the caliber of students who come from across the country, the committed and caring volunteers who return again and again, and our great Board.” ■

22nd Annual Evening of Hope

THE 22ND ANNUAL EVENING OF Hope took place on Thursday, April 25, 2019, at the Westin Copley Place Boston. The event raises money to support BSCP programs, which are always offered at no cost to participants, and celebrates the organization's successes. Travis McCready, president and CEO of the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center, was the honoree and there was a special tribute to Lise D. Kaye, former executive director of BSCP (see cover story), highlighting her 23 years with the organization. Ria Roberts, MD, a resident physician in general internal medicine at Yale New Haven Hospital and co-president of Yale Minority House Staff Organization, offered a personal perspective on how BSCP has played an integral role in her journey to residency. Roberts is a former BSCP student and received a Hope Scholarship in 2014. Robert Coughlin, president and CEO of MassBio, was the event chair.

Three individuals who have contributed a great deal to BSCP over the years were named to the 2019 Honor Roll, established in 1998 to recognize the committed volunteers who share their time, expertise and

talent with BSCP students and who are responsible for the organization's success. They are:

Robert J. Blendon, ScD, MPH, MBA
Richard L. Menschel Professor and Senior Associate Dean for Policy Translation and Leadership Development

Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

Involved since 1992 as an advisor and panelist

Sarah Gheuens, MD, PhD, MMSc
Senior Medical Director

Late Stage Clinical Development
Biogen

Involved since 2016 as an advisor and judge

Charlotte M. McKee, MD
Vice President, Clinical Development for Cystic Fibrosis and AATD
Vertex

Involved since 2014 as an advisor and judge

Three students were awarded Hope Scholarships. Every year at Evening of Hope, the Hope Scholarships are awarded to underrepresented minority students enrolled in high school, college, medical, graduate or professional school for the

upcoming academic year who have demonstrated an interest in biomedical, biopharmaceutical or other science-related fields, and have had direct involvement in BSCP. Recipients are highly motivated, have recognized potential and seek opportunities for educational advancement.

The scholarships, in the amount of \$7,500, are given out over two years (\$5,000 year one and \$2,500 year two). BSCP retains the funds and distributes the money to the students upon receipt of proof of payment of expenses for educational purposes. This year's recipients are:

Alexander Jeremiah

Tufts University, 2017

NYU School of Medicine 2019–2023

Scholarship from Sanofi Genzyme

Senait Efreem

College Student

University of Massachusetts Boston

Scholarship from an anonymous sponsor

Ashley Matthew

MD/PhD Candidate

University of Massachusetts Medical School

Scholarship from Biogen Foundation ■

Where Are They Now

Amara Ezeamama, PhD

EARLY IN HER TENURE AS A PhD candidate in epidemiology at Brown University, Amara Ezeamama, PhD, recalls suffering what she refers to as “a crisis of confidence. PhD training was not like undergrad,” she says. “You have to produce unique sets of knowledge that when applied improve the human condition in some way. It felt very intimidating.” A student in Brown University's MD/PhD program told her about BSCP and she attended a New England Science Symposium (NESS). That was in 2003. Today Ezeamama is an assistant professor

of epidemiology in the psychiatry department at Michigan State University and encourages her students to be involved with BSCP and NESS.

Born in Nigeria, Ezeamama is a clinical epidemiologist with a focus on tropical diseases and functional survival with chronic HIV. She points out, “Ground zero for HIV burden is in sub-Saharan Africa.” Her appointment at Michigan State is more weighted toward research than teaching, but she does both.

At her first NESS, Ezeamama says, “I was shocked that many student attendees at some point felt just like me; that ‘imposter syndrome’ is a real thing. What BSCP did for me, that saved me, was to provide appropriate context to manage this experience and move forward.”



AMARA EZEAMAMA, PHD

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Conversation with the Board

Dennis A. Dean II, PhD

“A FEW YEARS AGO, I WOULD NEVER have said my skill set is about understanding people,” says Dennis A. Dean II, PhD, scientific site director at Seven Bridges Genomics in Cambridge. A computer scientist and biomedical engineer, Dean spent most of his career in academic medical settings, focused primarily on analytics. But in 2015 he made a leap, leaving his research fellowship at Brigham and Women’s Hospital (BWH) in Boston for a biotech startup.

After starting as a research scientist, Dean discovered that he was as effective working with people as with data — maybe even more so. He currently oversees a large consortium with a goal of developing cancer treatments. “Fostering collaboration in research is all about people,” he says, adding, “I still hold onto my analytical background.”

A former BSCP student, Dean has been a Biomedical Careers Student Conference panelist and student advisor, and a New England Science Symposium planning committee member. He joined the BSCP Board in 2014. Moving from academia to industry was a major adjustment, Dean admits. He struggled with the lack of steady contact with students. But he has compensated for that through his leadership roles at his company, mentoring relationships with George Washington University and the FDA, and at his church. “I take a mentoring approach to my team members,” he says. “At any given time, I have multiple students I talk to. If someone needs me, I talk to them.”

Dean grew up in a South Bronx neighborhood where, he says, young people were “more likely to go to jail than to graduate.” Following the example of parents who read a lot, he was a voracious reader and an excellent student. And he always knew he wanted to be a scientist. “I read every science book in the children’s section of my library by the time I was eight,” he says.

At St. Jerome’s Catholic school in the South Bronx, Dean recalls teachers who saw his promise and “really guided me.” Math teachers took him out of class and gave him extra work. His future was really sealed when he attended Bronx High School of Science. “Everyone there was exceptional at something, I learned from my classmates, [if there’s] something you love and enjoy, pursue it,” he says.

Coming from a low-income, ethnically diverse (Puerto Rican and African American) background, Dean says, “It was hard being the first in my family to go to college. I didn’t realize you needed money for books!” He attended Empire State College (part of the SUNY system), which emphasizes mentoring, graduating with a BS in computer science in 1997.

Dean first became involved with BSCP during graduate school at the University of Massachusetts (UMass) Lowell, where he received an MS in computer science. He then received a PhD from the UMass Biomedical Engineering and Biotechnology Program, offered jointly by the campuses at Boston, Dartmouth, Lowell and Worcester. He was working full-time in the BWH Division of Sleep and Circadian Disorders while in graduate school. He says it really hit him that he was a scientist the first time he presented a poster at the New England Science Symposium (NESS) — and nearly won. That “really drove me,” Dean recalls. “It was the first time I presented my own science. BSCP was integral in putting those things in place.” In 2011 he was a third-place Ruth and William Silen, MD award winner for his oral presentation at the NESS.

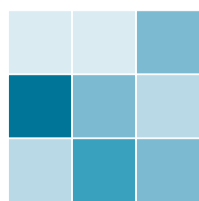
He also credits BSCP — in particular, Lise D. Kaye and Joan Y. Reede, MD, MPH, MS, MBA, and fellow Board member J. Keith Motley, PhD — with helping



DENNIS A. DEAN II, PHD

him make the difficult decision to shift from academia to industry. Dean had done a post-doc in sleep epidemiology at BWH. After 15 years at the hospital he felt he was not going to grow if he stayed, but making such a big change felt monumental. “Although I was confident I had to make the move to industry, one of the first people I spoke to was Lise [Kaye],” Dean says. “She set me up with multiple informational interviews. That set me on the path. It made me realize there could be a place for me in industry.” He notes that Reede and Motley were equally supportive.

“Here I had this whole group of people supporting me,” he says. “When people tell you they expect you to do well because of who you are it’s pretty powerful. It’s what I try to do for my students.” And he encourages everyone to take chances when they believe in something. “One of the things I learned from Joan is you say yes if it’s important and then you find a way to make it happen.” ■



BSCP

Biomedical Science Careers Program

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AMARA EZEAMAMA, PHD

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She continued to attend conferences through her post-doctoral training. She was awarded a Hope Scholarship in 2005 and currently serves as a student advisor.

Ezeamama came to the US in 1994, when she was 18. She had already begun to attend university in Nigeria, but she explains, “The education system was grinding to a halt because of incessant strikes by university lecturers.” During one of those extended strikes, she moved to California with her family and restarted undergraduate education in the Los Angeles Community College System. She planned to return to Nigeria to finish college as soon as school resumed. But the strike dragged on. Eventually, she transferred to UCLA as a Regents scholar and an alumni scholar, majoring in neuroscience.

Ezeamama says, “In Nigeria, everybody I knew from my part of the country went into business.” When she began university in her native country she was an economics major. But she always wanted to be different. So she switched to sociology and anthropology. When she was at community college she thought she wanted to become a physician and took a lot of biology classes. By the time she got to UCLA, her interests had shifted to neuroscience.

“I got lucky to be engaged in research consistently,” Ezeamama says. “I distinctly remember the excitement and celebration of a publication in the lab team I worked with in my first summer at UCLA. I thought, ‘I want some of that’ — to be surrounded by people who are passionately involved with what they were doing.”

When she applied to PhD programs, Ezeamama sought out schools in the

northeast. “I was very deliberate about wanting to see a lot of the US,” she says. “I wanted to see snow.” She also wanted to keep her options open in case she decided to go to medical school.

Ultimately, Ezeamama says she chose to focus on epidemiology because, “I wasn’t very coordinated at wet labs. I was always very confident on the calculation side of things. Epidemiology is a real science; it’s quantitative. I can work closely with doctors but not be a doctor.”

Now a wife and a mother of a nine-year-old daughter and a six-year-old son, Ezeamama says, “People can mentor sooner than they think they can.” She also “highly recommend[s] BSCP. Its magic for me remains, whether I am presenting, advising or just attending.” ■

Save the Dates

Biomedical Science Careers Student Conference

The Westin Copley Place Boston
Friday, April 3, and Saturday, April 4, 2020

New England Science Symposium

The Joseph B. Martin Conference Center at Harvard Medical School
Sunday, April 5, 2020

REMINDER

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

Click on “Contact Information/Submit Resume” and enter your information in the appropriate window. ■

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