



**Kemi Akintewe**

## **Olukemi “Kemi” Akintewe Receives UNCF/Merck Graduate Fellowship**

**TAMPA, Fla (April 10, 2013)** Olukemi “Kemi” Akintewe, a third-year doctoral student in Chemical Engineering has been awarded a prestigious 2013 United Negro College Fund (UNCF) Merck Graduate Science Research Dissertation Fellowship.

Kemi is one of 12 recipients chosen for the UNCF/Merck Graduate Fellowship award. The fellowship selection committee, composed of Merck scientists, and educators, chooses awardees based on academic achievement, record of accomplishment and the soundness of the proposed doctoral research plan. The goal of the UNCF/MERCK Science Initiative is to increase the numbers of minority students in the sciences and engineering. For 18 years, Merck has partnered with the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) to support scholarships in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, particularly biomedical and chemical disciplines, to promising students. Since 1995, over 600 African American students at the undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral levels have been supported by the UNCF/MERCK Science Initiative.

Kemi is advised by Nathan Gallant, assistant professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering and Ryan Toomey, associate professor in the Department of Chemical and Biomedical Engineering. Her long-term research goal is to improve survival rates of patients suffering myocardial infarction (MI), a leading cause of cardiovascular diseases (CVD). Specifically, she is investigating the viability of a thermally tunable platform for rapid fabrication of robust myocardial-like tissues to promote neovascularization, angiogenesis and consequently perfusion upon implantation for cardiac tissue regeneration. If this research is successful, it could also be tailored to other forms of CVD such as a tissue engineered vascular patch for congenital heart defects to potentially reduce the mortality rate of patients with impaired myocardium. This work could lead to translational change in the field of tissue engineering and regenerative medicine.

This UNCF/MERCK Graduate Fellowship will provide professional development activities with Merck, one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in the world. The program includes a “Fellows” day, visitations to Merck Research Laboratories, and one-on-one mentorship experiences with a Merck research scientist. The award provides up to a maximum of \$53,500, which includes a stipend of up to

\$43,500 and a research grant of \$10,000 to support the research needs (travel, equipment, supplies, publication costs) of the UNCF Merck Graduate Fellow.

Kemi has received a STAR (Student Travel Achievement Recognition) award to give an oral presentation at the 2013 Annual Meeting of the Society for Biomaterials in Boston. Last year, she presented at the Colloids and Nanomedicine Conference in Amsterdam, Netherlands. As a participant in the Florida Georgia LSAMP Bridge to the Doctorate and Sloan Minority PhD programs, Akintewe has mentored undergraduate and high school students. She earned her B.S. in Chemical Engineering from City College of New York (2002) and M.S. in Materials Science and Engineering at The Ohio State University (2005).

[UNCF MERCK Science Initiative](#)

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