Title: Expanding the Minority Scholars from Underrepresented Groups in Engineering and Social Sciences (SURGE) Building Capacity in Disasters to the University at Albany community.

Responsible Unit: College of Emergency Preparedness, Homeland Security and Cybersecurity

Nationwide, both STEM and disaster fields have quantifiable underrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities in research and practice. Given the increasing intensity and frequency of disasters (natural and human-induced), in conjunction with the alarming disproportionate impacts of these events on marginalized minority communities, there is an urgent call to increase representation in hazards mitigation and disaster management. Furthermore, the interdisciplinary nature of disaster science is inextricably linked to STEM fields, while forcing creative, collaborative ways to develop solutions with social science and other disciplines, as well.

The Minority SURGE Capacity in Disasters program (SURGE) has had success in increasing the representation of racial and ethnic minorities in STEM and disaster-related fields at the graduate level. The program provides workshops, mentorship, and post-disaster boots on the ground experiences focused on student retention, career development, and collaborative work in interdisciplinary teams. Currently, SURGE is undergoing an expansion to include undergraduate students. This grant will leverage connections with SURGE to include University at Albany students at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. UAlbany students will benefit from the proven strategies implemented in the program over the past two years, which assist in the development of skills to positively influence students’ motivation to complete their academic studies.

In addition to providing support and professional development for minority scholars, SURGE fosters student success by enabling students to apply discipline-specific knowledge to real-world tangible problems. Students work in interdisciplinary teams to research and interpret actual post-disaster needs for marginalized populations. As an NSF Pilot program specific to increasing the representation of underrepresented minorities in STEM, diversity, and inclusion is at the core of SURGE’s mission. Furthermore, SURGE uses holistic strategies to appropriately engage impacted communities after disasters, intending to be a service and resource to those seeking to understand better, broaden participation strategies, disaster science, holistic community engagement, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

To realize the expansion of SURGE into the University at Albany community the following four tactics will be employed: (1) organize workshops to educate and recruit faculty across STEM and Social Science disciplines about the goals and mission of SURGE (2) organize workshops for students in STEM and social science fields to participate in SURGE (3) recruit students to join in boots-on-ground missions (4) recruit faculty and practitioners in disaster management and research to expand local mentorship.