



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **HBCU, Tech-Company, & Non-Profit Collaborate to Advance Tech for Aging-in-Place: Secure NIH Grant Award to Study Health Effects of Loneliness Using Artificial Intelligence**

**BALTIMORE, MARYLAND (January 6, 2017)** A proposal submission to Morgan State University's ASCEND Center for Biomedical Research began the collaborative research venture among Dr. Halaevalu Vakalahi, Associate Dean and Professor of Social Work at Morgan; Dr. Jayfus Tucker Doswell, President/CEO of Juxtopia, LLC; and Dr. Alice Delaney, Founder and Executive Director of the 501c3 non-profit, Pathways Institute for Crisis Intervention and Education.

A full review and approval process, conducted by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), ultimately lead to the award of \$20,000, which will allow research collaborators to measure the feasibility of the proposed health informatics intervention, **Assessing Loneliness Isolation Changing Emotions (ALICE)**. ALICE is an artificial intelligence (AI) prototype designed to be used in home environments of aging populations to detect their neurological responses and to decrease adverse health consequences resulting from sustained loneliness and isolation.

Dr. Delaney states, "Help readiness and early intervention are key components in maximizing the success of behavioral based interventions. For that reason, we started this project by gauging for acceptability. We want to know if the population is ready to 'accept help' in the form of technology. Secondly, as persons age they are at greater risk for loneliness and isolation due to changing family dynamics. By studying a pre-senior population (ages 45-60) we will have identified early on: patterns, attitudes, and health behaviors that will inform on best practices for developing "gerontechnology in promoting healthy aging. It's an exciting time."

Furthermore, Dr. Vakalahi indicated, "This is indeed exciting and can be transformative on so many levels. This collaboration reflects Morgan's ongoing commitment to resilience among individuals and families in our urban communities. The School of Social Work, in particular, has been a leader in urban social work practice across the life span, with aging in urban communities at the forefront of our curricula and programs. Certainly, engaging technological possibilities is timely and can transform the provision of health and mental health services toward healthy aging in our urban communities".

Dr. Doswell states, "I envision how artificial intelligence may assist individuals, who desire to remain in their homes, age in comfort with on-demand and personalized telehealth and health informatics services. The combination of today's technologies in wireless, Internet of things, telehealth, and artificial intelligence; integrated into the proposed ALICE intervention, has potential to measurably tailor telehealth services to mitigate loneliness for aging persons living, independently, at home. Furthermore, I am excited that the young Juxtopia® Engineers in Training (JET) Apprentices and ASCEND students, from underserved and disadvantaged backgrounds, will contribute to developing the proposed AI intervention."

### **About Pathways Institute for Crisis Intervention and Education**

The Pathways Institute for Crisis Intervention and Education is created to improve upon and advocate for mental health wellness education. We believe that it is our burden to help transform individual and

societal perspectives on what mental health wellness entails, especially in populations that are not benefactors of present traditional models. In promoting awareness/detection of early psychological distress, the vision for to serve as a model for accessible, informal, culturally sound, pre and early intervention programs.

#### **About ASCEND Center for Biomedical Research**

ASCEND ([www.morgan.edu/ASCEND](http://www.morgan.edu/ASCEND)) is "A Student-Centered, Entrepreneurship Development (ASCEND) Training Model to Increase Diversity in the Biomedical Research Workforce." The purpose of this 5-year (2014-2019) award from the National Institutes of Health is to strengthen Morgan State University's biomedical training and research infrastructure, with the ultimate goal of training undergraduate students to become outstanding biomedical researchers. The ASCEND program will create a new cadre of biomedical researchers who are both familiar with the root causes of health and health disparity problems and highly competent to address them.

#### **About Morgan State University's School of Social Work**

Morgan State University (Morgan) ([www.morgan.edu](http://www.morgan.edu)) is an Historically Black College and University (HBCU), designated as the premier urban research institution of the State of Maryland. It is home to a diverse faculty with research and clinical expertise and student body with a concerted commitment to urban resiliency. Through a comprehensive range of disciplines at the baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral degree levels, Morgan is an intellectual and creative resource that supports, empowers, and prepares high caliber diverse graduates who will grow the future and lead the world. Furthermore, the mission of the School of Social Work ([www.morgan.edu/ssw](http://www.morgan.edu/ssw)) is: "To fully prepare urban social work leaders who are committed to the alleviation of human suffering, social justice, and the improvement of the quality of life for diverse urban populations". The Morgan School of Social Work is a dynamic entity comprised of students seeking BSW, MSW and PhD degrees. Additionally, it has an innovative curricula including a concentration in Gerontology in the MSW program, field education, student organizations, community partnership and initiatives, faculty research and scholarship, and service focusing comprehensively on urban social work and social issues across the lifespan.

#### **About Juxtopia and its JUICE Network**

Juxtopia, LLC is a minority biomedical and information technology (BIO-IT) company, headquartered in Baltimore, Maryland, and with a trademarked mission for improving human performance®. Its non-profit affiliate 501c3 organization, The Juxtopia Group, Inc., ([www.juxtopia.org](http://www.juxtopia.org)) operates the Juxtopia® Urban Innovation and Cooperative Entrepreneurship (JUICE) Network in Baltimore. The JUICE Network's mission is to improve the performance of minority inventors and entrepreneurs to create high-tech and high-growth companies. From the JUICE Network, several minority high-tech companies have been created ranging from the first black owned spacecraft company in the United States, Phezu Space, to wearable and telehealth companies that, mostly, operate in Maryland. Juxtopia and its JUICE Lab operate out of Emerging Technology Centers (ETC) [etc.baltimore.com](http://etc.baltimore.com); the largest tech incubator in Baltimore.