

Contact Information

Willencia Louis-Charles
847-915-2113
willencialc@gmail.com

Education

Marquette University | May 2021 | Bachelor of Science in Biomechanics
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign | May 2023 | Master of Science in Bioengineering
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign | May 2025 | Master of Science in Community Health

Research Experience

Effect of Acesulfame Potassium on the Vascular Endothelium | June 2019-May 2021

Dr. Brian Hoffmann at Medical College of Wisconsin focuses on the cardiovascular system, specifically on how artificial sweeteners have an effect on the cardiovascular system. I worked on his project that looked at how acesulfame potassium can affect the cell viability and effectiveness of vascular endothelial cells. I personally cultured cells, and performed test such as BSAs, western blots, gel electrophoresis and tube formation assays. I presented this research at the 2020 Biomedical Engineering Society Convention.

Developing a Scaffold Mesh Implant for traumatic Cranial Maxillofacial injuries | August 2021-December 2022

Dr. Brendan Harley at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign is working on creating a collagen-based scaffold mesh that can be implanted to support the cranium while it undergoes healing from traumatic cranial injuries. My role in his project includes investigating how this scaffold will be effective for diabetic patients and optimizing the materials and structures under these conditions.

CREATE P5 Virtual Reality | March 2023-Present

CREATE is the Center for Research and Education of Aging and Technology Enhancement. Dr. Wendy Rogers at the College of Applied Health Sciences at University of Illinois is currently studying how virtual reality can be applied as a tool to engage older adults both cognitively and socially. The lab is conducting a study where we give older adults the opportunity to experience virtual reality and ask them about how this can be something that could potentially better their livelihood. I interview older adults from various technology, education and class backgrounds to learn how they feel about virtual reality and find out if there is the potential for virtual reality to be a tool to promote social connectedness.

CREATE P5 Decision Support | May 2023-Present

Dr. Wendy Rogers has an interest in how technology can be used as a tool to support health decision-making for older adults. This project specifically focuses on the Medicare website and investigating the user experience. I work to gain more information about how older adults and people who support these individuals feel about the current state of Medicare and what they would like to see in the future. The goal is to then create a tool that a diverse group of older adults can use to make the best decisions when managing their health insurance.

Employment History

SURF Fellowship | June 2019-October 2019

A research program offered by the Opus College of Engineering at Marquette University allows students to work with faculty over the summer and assist them on the work and present the work that they have completed to other students. Through this project, I was able to work with Dr. Brian Hoffmann on his paper on Acesulfame Potassium.

McNair Scholars Program | November 2019-May 2021

A research program offered by the Educational Opportunity Program at Marquette University that allows members from underrepresented groups to complete a research project over the summer with a faculty mentor. Through this program, I worked with Dr. Brian Hoffmann and helped him complete his paper on acesulfame potassium.

Research Assistant | August 2021-December 2022

Worked with Dr. Brendan Harley and the collection of graduate students, post-doctoral students, and professors on the various projects that took place in the lab. Investigated the effect of the scaffold in pigs for both short-term and long-term healing and assisted in multiple other experiments. Participated in conversations that surrounded how to make the world of STEM academia more diverse and inclusive.

Graduate Assistant | January 2023-May 2023

In the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for the University of Illinois Graduate College, I was responsible for participating in conversation about how to make academia more of a welcoming space. Collaborated with others in the office to create programming that was informative, engaging, and influential. I have gained an understanding of the responsibilities of administrative academia, including interfacing with students, teamwork and working with people from different educational backgrounds from me.

Research Assistant | May 2023-Present

Worked with Dr. Wendy Rogers in the Human Factors and Aging Laboratory on the CREATE projects. CREATE works with the purpose of supporting the diverse needs of older adults using technology. I interview older adults and subject matter experts, compile information on the current status of technology, and evaluate the usability of different technologies.

Teaching Assistant | August 2023-December 2023

Assisted with the course, Contemporary Health with Dr. Shannon Mejia. This course is an introductory course for those who are interested in studying how health functions in society. I led discussion sections, where I encouraged students to think critically about the messaging that is presented to them and how our current systems work and how this can have an impact on the health of people. I also graded the assignments and provided feedback on how the students organized and expressed their thoughts and opinions.

Teaching Assistant | January 2024-Present

Assisted with the course, Health Services Financing with Dr. Cezar Brian Mamaril. The course teaches students the methodology to analyze financing for various health services. My role is to evaluate how the students are learning this material and provide feedback for their improvement.

SAGE | August 2023-Present

SAGE is the Student Advisory for Graduate Education. It is a committee of graduate students who work in cooperation with leaders in the graduate college at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign to criticize the graduate student experience and formulate solutions to these issues. I work on the "Transparency of Processes and Procedures" team which works to create accessible tools for graduate students to learn about the different opportunities and resources that are available to them from the graduate college.

Professional Memberships

Biomedical Engineering Society at Marquette University | September 2018-May 2021

The main objective of this club is to enrich the Marquette community and the Milwaukee community that surrounds with the skills that are given to us through biomedical engineering. As VP of Service, I was responsible for external outreach and would reach out to schools in the area and create programming that teaches students about some of the topics that relate to biomedical engineering. This was done in an effort to encourage young

people to eventually choose biomedical engineering as a future career path, but we found success in those that decided college was in the future because of us.

National Society of Black Engineers | September 2017-May 2021

This is an organization that works towards the goal of having over 10,000 young black students graduate with a bachelor's in science in Engineering. We work to create programming that creates environments for high school and current college students that creates confidence in their intelligence and skills.

Biomedical Engineering Honor Society | January 2020-Current

This is a selective organization that picks its members based on academic merits and leadership potential. The organization prides itself on creating leaders who are not only intelligent but also serve those around them.

National Organization of Black Chemist and Chemical Engineers | May 2022-May 2023

Served as Vice President during the rejuvenation of the organization at University of Illinois' campus. Met with faculty from across the department and staff from throughout the school to come up with programming that be of interest to black students in order to create a support system for these students as they make their way through academia.