

## Engineering Student Receives NASA MUST Scholarship



**Tampa, Fla. (October 22, 2009)** – Lauren Hunkins, a sophomore and honors college student, majoring in computer science and engineering, has been awarded a NASA MUST scholarship - MUST (Motivating Undergraduates in Science and Technology) awards student scholarships and internships to students pursuing degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

While African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans constitute roughly 30% of the overall undergraduate student population in the United States, they receive only about 12% of the degrees awarded in engineering (*Confronting the “New” American Dilemma*, NACME, 2008). Lauren is participating in a NASA program targeted at helping students historically underrepresented in STEM fields change statistics similar to this one.

Lauren has recently returned from a five-day symposium held in Orlando and on-site at the NASA Kennedy Space Center as a kick-off to year-round mentoring and tutoring support, as well as her receipt of an academic scholarship of up to \$10,000. The theme of the symposium was “21st Century Leadership Skills.” Events included workshops on technical and proposal writing by current engineering Deans, personal financial training from a CNN financial analyst, scholar presentations on NASA summer internships, and a GRE strategy session by the Princeton Review.

Three challenges faced by every undergraduate include finding the right summer internship, earning scholarships, and connecting with a faculty member or working professional willing to open doors for the student as a mentor and friend. Lauren benefits from all three of these opportunities as part of NASA’s MUST project.

*The University of South Florida is one of the nation's top 63 public research universities and one of only 25 public research universities nationwide with very high research activity that is designated as community engaged by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. USF was awarded \$380.4 million in research contracts and grants in FY 2008/2009. The university offers 232 degree programs at the undergraduate, graduate, specialist and doctoral levels, including the doctor of medicine. The USF System has a \$1.8 billion annual budget, an annual economic impact of \$3.2 billion, and serves more than 47,000 students on institutions/campuses in Tampa, St. Petersburg, Sarasota-Manatee and Lakeland. USF is a member of the Big East Athletic Conference.*