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# Duke Professor Recognized for Launching Mentoring Programs That Drive Student Success

***Among Her Many Contributions, Nicki Washington Started the Google-in-Residence Program at Howard University***

**New York, NY, May 6, 2026** – ACM, the Association for Computing Machinery, today named Nicki Washington the recipient of the 2025 ACM Frances E. Allen Award for Outstanding Mentoring. Washington is recognized for exceptional commitment to diversifying the computing community at all education levels, demonstrating creativity and breadth in her approaches.

The ACM Frances E. Allen Award is presented biennially to an individual who has exemplified excellence and/or innovation in mentoring, with particular attention to recognition of individuals who have shown outstanding leadership in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in computing. The award is accompanied by a prize of $25,000 to the awardee and an additional $10,000 cash contribution to an approved charity of the awardee's choice. Financial support is provided by Microsoft Research.

Washington became a role model to students from groups that are historically underrepresented in computing early on. Upon joining Howard University, a Historically Black College and University (HBCU), she became the first Black woman to serve on the computing faculty. She immediately saw a need to connect classroom learning to real-world applications. This led her to launch Howard's Google-in-Residence program. The original idea was to have Black Google software engineers serve as guest lecturers in introductory computer science (CS) courses. However, after discussions with Google leadership, the program was expanded to hire a Google staffer as a full-time instructor in the department for one semester. Undergraduates benefited from the new arrangement by receiving additional career and technical training.

While the Google-in-Residence program was piloted at Howard, it extended to other HBCUs in subsequent years and ultimately led to the development of the Google Tech Exchange program. Under this new framework, students from HBCUs and Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) spent one semester at Google working on applied problems and fostering connections among fellow students as well as Google staff members. Launched in 2012, the Google-in-Residence program continues to this day.

In her current role at Duke University, Washington's impact on the greater CS community is evident by her leading the Alliance for Interdisciplinary Innovation in Computing Education (AiiCE). AiiCE aims to broaden participation in K-16 computing through interventions that target people, policies, and practices. Through this work, AiiCE targets three areas for broadening participation: students, educators, and scholarship.

Building upon in-person mentoring opportunities, Washington has also leveraged online technologies to create an impactful national network. She created and co-directs the Cultural Competence in Computing (3C) Fellows program, a two-year, cohort-based, virtual professional development program for computing educators that examines postsecondary computing policies and practices from a humanities and social sciences lens to understand how they impact student and faculty recruitment, retention, and success. Computing faculty, post-doctoral researchers, and graduate students are encouraged to reflect on their own roles within the educational landscape, learn practices for making computing more inclusive, and develop and lead sustainable projects (e.g., courses, modules, and other activities) that further embed these topics into their home departments. To date, over 200 3C Fellows across the U.S., Canada, Nigeria, and Austria completed the program, developing over 120 identity-inclusive projects that have impacted over 13,000 undergraduates, 600 graduate students, 500 faculty, and 70 staff. In addition to these activities, Washington has informally mentored countless students and early-career faculty across her twenty-year career in the academy.

"Broadening involvement in computing remains a tough challenge," said ACM President Yannis Ioannidis. "But our field is known for overcoming challenges with new innovations. Nicki Washington has been an outstanding innovator in finding new ways to attract and retain students from underrepresented communities. She fits perfectly the ACM Frances E. Allen Award's guidelines of 'a sustained record of contributions over many years.' The countless students she has mentored are succeeding in academia, major corporations, and startups. Most importantly, they, in turn, are mentoring the next generation. Washington has imbued the idea that mentorship is a professional responsibility."

"When we look back on our careers, many of us can recall influential advisors, whether a supportive professor or an insightful mentor outside the university, who had a defining influence on our professional journeys," said Eric Horvitz, Technical Fellow and Chief Scientific Officer of Microsoft. "Yet when people are considered for a job, tenure, or promotion, selfless mentorship is rarely recognized. This is one reason Microsoft is enthusiastic about sponsoring the ACM Frances E. Allen Award for Outstanding Mentoring. Through her direct efforts and national initiatives, Nicki Washington has fostered a culture of mentorship. Her work has opened doors for people from traditionally underrepresented groups and for anyone who may have felt excluded from pursuing the wonders of computer science."

**Biographical Background**

Alicia Nicki Washington is the Cue Family Professor of the Practice of Computer Science and Professor of the Practice of Gender, Sexuality, & Feminist Studies at Duke University, with a secondary appointment

in African & African-American Studies. She is the author of the book *Unapologetically Dope: Lessons for Black Women and Girls on Surviving and Thriving in the Tech Field*.

A graduate of Johnson C. Smith University, Washington earned MS and PhD degrees in Computer Science from North Carolina State University. Among her honors, Washington is a Distinguished Member of ACM, and she received the ACM Karl V. Karlstrom Outstanding Educator Award (with Shaundra Daily).

Washington will be formally presented with the ACM Frances E. Allen Award for Outstanding Mentoring at the annual ACM Awards Banquet, which will be held this year on Saturday, June 13 at the Palace Hotel in San Francisco.

**About the ACM Frances E. Allen Award for Outstanding Mentoring**

The ACM Frances E. Allen Award for Outstanding Mentoring is presented biennially to an individual who has exemplified excellence and/or innovation in mentoring with particular attention to recognition of individuals who have shown outstanding leadership in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in computing. The award is named for Frances E. Allen, an American computer scientist and pioneer in optimizing compilers. Allen, who was the first woman to receive the ACM A.M. Turing Award, was especially known for her mentorship of younger colleagues. The award is presented at the ACM Award Banquet and is accompanied by a prize of $25,000 to the awardee, with an additional $10,000 cash contribution to an approved charity of the awardee's choice. Financial support is provided by Microsoft Research.

**About ACM**

ACM, the Association for Computing Machinery, is the world's largest educational and scientific computing society, uniting computing educators, researchers, and professionals to inspire dialogue, share resources, and address the field's challenges. ACM strengthens the computing profession's collective voice through strong leadership, promotion of the highest standards, and recognition of technical excellence. ACM supports the professional growth of its members by providing opportunities for life-long learning, career development, and professional networking.

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