

Dr. Ruby Mendenhall: Renewal Portfolio

Cultivating Scientific and Community Impact (2021-2026)

Report on the Kathryn Lee Baynes Dallenbach Professorship

Executive Summary

Over the past five years, the Dallenbach Professorship has enabled Dr. Mendenhall to take on pivotal leadership roles that amplify the university's impact. In August 2024, she was named Associate Director for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the Cancer Center at Illinois, positioning the institution as a national leader in health equity research.

Key Accomplishments (2025-2026)

Awards & Recognition

- **Silver Anthem Award (2025):** Received for the documentary "What's Left Behind? Grief after Gun Violence" in the Health: Documentary or Film category.
- **Third I-Corp Certification (2026):** For the SASH Algorithm, using social determinants of health to predict health outcomes.

Grants & Funding

- **DREAM Communiversality for Youth and Families:** Pending \$849,191 grant from the Illinois Department of Human Services.
- **Geo-Infrastructure Resilience (GREEN):** Co-PI on a pending \$30 million NSF Science and Technology Center grant.
- **Legacies of Fathering and Loving in Photographs:** Awarded \$30,000 from the University of Illinois Research Board.

Community Impact & Outreach

- Created Wellness Spaces in Urbana Middle School, Booker T. Washington STEM Academy, and Champaign High School.
- Led the Ubuntu Project's Kufundisha Communiversity (completed 2nd cohort in 2025, initiated 3rd in 2026).
- Organized Emotional Emancipation Circles for Black Women.

Innovation & Technology

- Introduced N1CØLE and HARMØN1, emotional support robots designed to help youth manage anxiety while learning complex subjects.
- Founder and CEO of Ancestral Math (Not for Profit) and SASH Smart Homes (C Corp).

Future Vision (2026-2031)

The next five years will focus on scaling impact:

1. **Expand DREAM Communiversity:** Advancing the new frontier of education in Illinois.
2. **Geo-Infrastructure Resilience:** Developing smart sensing and sustainable solutions.
3. **The Black Women's Data Archive:** Completing the digitization and analysis of 800,000+ historical documents using advanced AI/ML techniques.