The purpose of the NASA Astrobiology Institute Minority Institution Research Support (NAI-MIRS) Program is to support and train a new generation of researchers from Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) in astrobiology. The NAI-MIRS program provides sabbaticals, follow-up support, and travel opportunities for faculty and students from minority institutions. The purpose of this initiative is to increase the attendance and participation of underrepresented scientists in astrobiology research laboratories, at professional conferences, and as NAI Team members. As MSI's graduate a higher percent of students of color entering graduate schools in science and engineering than their majority counterparts, support to MSI's from the NAI-MIRS program will encourage the growth of astrobiology-related programs at these institutions. Identifying talented
researchers, and providing an avenue to foster astrobiology research, increases awareness of astrobiology within minority communities. Recent research achievements by MSI astrobiologists include astronomers from Tennessee State University providing the first direct detection of an extrasolar planet, and LaTasha Taylor, a graduate of a MSI, who was recently featured in the journal *Science*.

The NAI-MIRS program involves all MSIs: Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCU), Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and Hispanic Serving Institutions. The first TCU faculty member to receive a NAI-MIRS award, Michael Ceballos, established the largest basic research lab in any field of science at a Tribal College, allowing for strong and productive collaborations between Salish Kootenai College in Montana, Portland State University, NASA Ames Research Center, and San Diego State University. This work focused on viruses that infect hosts in extreme environments.