

Data and Dedication

By Brooklynn Banks

Hampton students bring the data and dedication, in hopes of being the change they wish to see. The Atlanta University Center Consortium partners with Mastercard to kick off their 2025 Mastercard x AUC Data Challenge at Hampton University's Harvey Library. Two teams of talented HU students utilized the skills learned in their classes to pitch real-world, innovative solutions to a panel of esteemed judges—the focus: bridging economic divisions within a community of their choosing.

Copernic Mensah, a second-year computer science major from Prince George's County, Maryland, is one of the brilliant students tasked with representing HU in the challenge. Mensah, joined by Sidney Cerami and Jonah Goodwine, make up *The Chipmunks*, focused on exposing the economic disparities between Montgomery County, Maryland, and Robeson County, North Carolina. Why did they choose these communities? Mensah says, “Simply put, they look like us. This work is important because, for far too long, underrepresented low-income families have had their numbers exploited and hidden. Our goal is to show the numbers.”

And the numbers were apparent. The Chipmunks tackled these disparities head-on by using inclusive growth score data, which measures the state of the economy, and Streamlit, which helps build an interactive data dashboard (in Python) to anticipate growth changes over time. But it is not all math and crunching numbers. These students also brought advocacy to the table. “The Python tool is built for economic offices, policy makers, and citizens alike to gauge their inclusive projected growth score over time, allowing them to determine and test the validity

of certain economic policies in place,” says Mensah. And they do not plan to stop here, as they aspire to demo their application in a Florida community, better supplementing their research.

Following the team's presentation, they were questioned by judges on research findings, the implementation of their data plan, and even given suggestions on how to strengthen their study. This insightful study left many questions answered, with thorough research, analytical data, and undeniable passion behind it. But, one question lingered: Why *The Chipmunks*? “There are only three of us in our Intro to Data Science class, so it’s a really tight-knit community, which is why we came up with Chipmunks, from the movie—Alvin and the Chipmunks. If you ask Sidney, she’ll tell you she’s Alvin, but she’s really not, according to Jonah,” says Mensah.

Devoted students, with a heart of service towards mending the very issues that plague the minority community – that is what Hampton University breeds.