

5th March 2021



## Meet the inaugural class of S<sup>4</sup>Capital Fellows

We understand that the power of creativity is amplified by diversity of background and thought. Yet the advertising and marketing industry continues to lack the diversity needed for true innovation—diversity of thought that will allow us to not only inject our work with fresh and unique ideas, but also help us produce work that resonates with the world around us.

That's why we're passionate about our S<sup>4</sup>Capital Fellowship Program, which aims to empower exceptional young students from traditionally underrepresented communities as they make their mark in shaping the path of technological innovation in advertising and marketing. Over the four-year immersive, accelerator program, Fellows will gain hands-on experience working in the industry as co-workers and apprentices to senior leaders, with front-row seats to the inner workings of executive staff and world-class production teams at the forefront of advanced marketing and advertising technologies. Importantly, we and our partners will benefit from the fresh perspectives they bring.

The S<sup>4</sup> Fellowship was originally conceived to give graduates a strong start that gets them excited about our industry. With the murder of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement, we pivoted our entire approach by taking steps to address the imbalance in employment and future opportunities for underrepresented groups, with a focus on inviting graduates from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) being a first, small step.

“As a business, we aim to represent the communities we live in and encourage a diverse approach in everything we do,” said S<sup>4</sup>Capital Founder and Executive Chairman Sir Martin Sorrell. “This Fellowship program is us doing our part to chip away at the diversity issue in our industry.”

This week we welcomed our inaugural class of S<sup>4</sup>Capital Fellows, three graduates from HBCUs in the US, who are commencing full-time employment across our organization. “We want to be an open door for more diverse talent to join an industry that has historically been exclusive to so many,” says MediaMonks Founder & S<sup>4</sup>Capital Executive Director, Wesley ter Haar. “We have some very impressive

Fellows joining the team, and I'm excited to see how they will influence our work as well as our ways of working."

After months of meeting with numerous, extremely talented candidates, we're honored to introduce you to our inaugural class of distinguished Fellows to hear what they have to say about beginning their four years in the field with S<sup>4</sup>.

**Arion Kidd-Weeks, [Morehouse College](#)**

Bachelor of Arts, Cinema Television and Emerging Media studies

*"I love media and content creation, so the mission of S<sup>4</sup> aligns with my passions. It's amazing to see such a progressive Fellowship and it excites me about the future. I look forward to bringing my perspective, using my skills, and growing my skills and knowledge around media so that I can contribute to the company and the industry."*

**Alfred Mohammed, Morehouse College**

Bachelor of Arts, History

*"The intersection between creativity, business and technology is what drew me to S<sup>4</sup>. Plus it was very obvious that throughout the application and interview process [leadership] wanted to get to know me as a person. And when they asked me about social issues I'm passionate about, they had me hook, line and sinker."*

**Erena Reese, [Spelman College](#)**

Bachelor of Science, Health Science

*"From the very start, David [Lang Levitt, Program Director] made it clear that we're going to be integrated right into the workflow. We're not interns, we're not assistants, this Fellowship is for us, they really want us to learn. Most of my background is STEM related, so I'm starting off in data analytics but looking forward to working on the creative side as well."*

"Erena, Al, and Arion have the kind of confidence and ambition that I wish I'd had as a recent college graduate," says Kamron Hack, Senior Director, Global DEI & Culture. "They've achieved so much in life already, and they remain curious, eager to learn, and excited to contribute. I was inspired by each of their stories and grateful they chose to join us."

## The Fellows share their thoughts on the process

The Fellowship application and interview process was, in a word, rigorous. Candidates were asked to submit a resume, give their insights, knowledge, and opinions on relevant social issues, complete a broad-scope questionnaire, and submit a one-minute video expressing their interest in the Fellowship. But that was just the beginning. An expansive get-to-know-you meeting with Program Director David Lang Levitt kicked off a series of panel meetings with senior leadership at S<sup>4</sup>. And the final step was a one-on-one meeting with Sir Martin.

**Erena:** When I first heard about the Fellowship, I wanted to learn more about the company and I came across [MightyHive Chief Operating Officer and Co-Founder] Chris Martin on LinkedIn, so I reached out.

I didn't know him, but he met with me in October, I submitted in November, and the interview process started from there. There were a lot of interviews, but they weren't too intense. The crazy thing is that things have come full circle - I'm working on Chris's team right now.

**Arion:** The interviews and panel discussions were very comfortable. The way things were structured was very conducive to relationship building. Everybody can be professional. But being able to connect with people, that's something that you can't replicate. The process gave us the platform to make connections to see if we were interested in being part of the culture and the family of S<sup>4</sup>. I loved it.

**Alfred:** I've been through interviews with some pretty big companies, but at S<sup>4</sup> (versus some other companies I've spoken with) they got to know me. And it was obvious throughout the questionnaire and the interviews that understanding who I am is important.

## On being part of the inaugural class

The 2021 Fellows are the first class, but they won't be the last. And they understand the significance of leading the way.

**Alfred:** I know this Fellowship means a lot to Sir Martin. So for him to choose us, and specifically me as an individual, is huge. As he put it, it shows that he places a lot of trust in us and that [MightyHive CEO and Founder] Peter Kim, Wesley and the rest of the team has faith in us. And from our side as Fellows, I believe it's incredibly important for us to set a good precedent for whoever comes after us.

**Erena:** It's an honor, and it means something to me that David [Lang Levitt], Sir Martin and everyone else that I interviewed with saw something in me that they wanted me to be part of their first class of this Fellowship. It's really important that S<sup>4</sup> recognizes the lack of diversity and they're trying to fix it, and it really means something to me that they're starting this Fellowship off with HBCU graduates.

**Arion:** The growth that S<sup>4</sup> has had thus far is exponential, and it's apparent that this is the future and this is the new age and new era. And that's something that I'm really, really excited to be a part of and extend into my community.

## On Sir Martin

No doubt the advertising icon had some interesting conversations with the Fellows. Here we get their impressions of their one-on-ones with him.

**Arion:** When I met with Sir Martin, one question I asked him was how he identifies what's to come in the future and repeatedly positions companies for success. He talked about looking for top-line growth—go with a market that's growing, he said, find the growth—and look at the core values of the company. That really stuck with me.

**Alfred:** Sir Martin could have gone to any universities with his Fellowship, but with the advent of everything that has happened in this country and around the world, S<sup>4</sup> is making a big statement by having the first class from HBCUs.

**Erena:** I really enjoyed talking with Sir Martin. He's started two amazing companies and it's incredible to see how much S<sup>4</sup> has grown in just a short time. It will be even more interesting to see what it looks like at the end of my Fellowship. Sir Martin said he wants S<sup>4</sup> to be the Amazon of marketing and I think that's the way the company is going to go.

"Our hope and intent is to challenge assumptions. For people to experience how great the Fellows are, through working with them, seeing the value they bring and discovering how preconceptions can change for the good," says S<sup>4</sup>Capital Fellowship Program Director David Lang Levitt.