

STUDENT DIRECTORY



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WELLESLEY

WIA cNAIR
SCHOLARS PROGRAM



FRANNIE ADAMS

Junior | Environmental Studies and Africana Studies

Hometown: Roxbury, MA

Research Interest/Area: Anthropogenic Global Climate Change Impact on Populations in the Global South, Human-environment Changes as a Result, and Public Health

“Hi! My name is Frannie Adams. I am a rising junior from Roxbury, MA majoring in Environmental Studies and Africana Studies. From a young age, I had a close relationship to the natural world. At Wellesley, I realized the immensity of Environmental Racism and Environmental Injustice issues nationally and globally. I hope to study Public Health in graduate school and to work with Small Island States suffering from climate change with the fewest resources and lowest contributions to climate change.”



DAPHKA ALIUS

Senior | Mathematics

Hometown: Miami, FL

Research Interest/Area: Application of Mathematics and Computer Science to Real World Problems

“I’m originally from Haiti where I lived for nine years before relocating to the US. Since my early school years, I’ve enjoyed STEM subjects, mathematics in particular. Having such a technical background has made it possible for me to explore various subjects and careers like computer science and data science. As a minority in STEM, I’ve recently become more engaged in programs that promote diversity and inclusivity in STEM.”



SHANIA BALDWIN

Junior | Neuroscience and Africana Studies

Hometown: Houston, TX

Research Interest/Area: Adult Neurogenesis

“As a product of the public school system in Texas, I’ve always known that I loved the complexity and diversity of science but did not have access to the best resources. I began my Wellesley career with the hopes of majoring in biochemistry but in my second semester, I fell in love with neuroscience and have since worked in Professor Beltz’s lab studying adult neurogenesis in crayfish. Though, this is not an area in which I wish to research in my career, this experience has confirmed my love for furthering our knowledge of the brain and its functions.”



CHANTELLE KATE BATACAN

Junior | Chemistry

Hometown: Honolulu, HI

Research Interest/Area: Antibiotic Resistance

“I am a junior from Honolulu, HI and plan to major in biochemistry. I am interested in the development of new antibiotics and vaccines to target drug-resistant bacteria. After graduate school, I would like to return to an educational setting to mentor students from backgrounds like my own.”



GORETTY CHAVEZ

Senior | Psychology

Hometown: Los Angeles, CA

Research Interest/Area: Mental disorders in children

“Growing up in Los Angeles as the eldest of four, I have always enjoyed caring for others. I took introductory psychology during my first semester at Wellesley and that is when I decided that I wanted to major in that field. Ever since then I have been exploring different areas of psychology in order to find what I am passionate about. Through my work as a teacher assistant at the Wellesley Community Children's Center, I discovered that I want to pursue a Ph.D. in school psychology.”



DAYNA DE LA CRUZ

Junior | Biological Sciences

Hometown: Houston, TX

Research Interest/Area: Use of White Ash by Birds in Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest

“I was born and raised in Houston, Texas and attended a public high school with more than 3,000 students. As a first-generation Latina and Posse Scholar recipient, I became the first student from my school to be admitted into Wellesley College. I am a current biology major with an interest in animal behavior and ecosystem ecology. After conducting research at both Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest and Harvard Forest, I have confirmed my passion for ecology and hope to eventually transfer my focus to tropical forests during graduate school. My goal is to inspire underrepresented women to further their education and confidently join the STEM field.”



BREANA DUPREE-JONES

Senior | Computer Science

Hometown: Houston, TX

Research Interest/Area: Coding for Social Impact

“Hi Everyone, My name is Breana, and I am a junior studying computer science at Wellesley College. I am from Houston, so the change in weather climate in Boston was enlightening. I am interested in doing projects for social impact. I studied abroad in Italy this past spring semester.”



IZABELLE FERNANDEZ

Junior | Biochemistry

Hometown: Houston, TX

Research Interest/Area: Nanotechnology / Drug Development

“I am a proud Filipina, and I love my nanoparticle and cancer research that I have been able to do at Wellesley, MIT, and MD Anderson. I was able to integrate this love for STEM with leadership in business as I interned with the CEO of Eli Lilly and Co. and explored the world of drug development. One day, I will be a leader in a Biotechnology, hopefully encouraging young women and POC to pursue STEM and similar leadership roles.”



RACHEL FRAZER

Senior | Jazz & World Music

Hometown: San Antonio, TX

Research Interest/Area: Neuroscience, Sound Healing

“Because of the influence that music has had on my life, my overall goal is to increase awareness of the healing powers of music by conducting scientific research proving its efficacy. I plan to pursue an M.D./PhD in neuroscience to accomplish this. I am the Co-President of the Wellesley BlueJazz program in which I sing and play French horn. I’m a huge advocate for environmentalism, self care and sleep!



ANNIE GOMEZ

Sophomore | Physics

Hometown: Hyattsville, MD

Research Interest/Area: Renewable Technology

“As an undergraduate, I have followed a winding path through the seemingly unrelated research topics of dark matter, metamaterials, water sustainability, and spider web vibrations, before noticing that I have an affinity for engineering-based projects. I hope to attend graduate school and study biomimetic robotics, with the ultimate goal of becoming a professor. I want to be able to not only teach students, but also contribute to mindful mentorship, especially to first generation, minority, and low income students like myself.”



KIMBERLY HERNANDEZ

Junior | Physics

Hometown: Houston, TX

Research Interest/Area: Applied Physics / Engineering

“Howdy! I am a member of the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers at MIT, and I am the Equity and Inclusivity chair at the Society of Physics Students at Wellesley. I would like to pursue a PhD in meteorology or atmospheric sciences.”



KARINA HERRERA

Junior | Psychology

Hometown: Houston, TX

Research Interest/Area: Pathophysiology

“I've always been interested in helping others, volunteering from a very young age, so I became heavily involved in social advocacy as well as health care. I'm currently the Diversity Chair for Mezcla, Wellesley's Latine organization, and the CERE Representative for Latine students. I also work for the Admission's Office as a tour guide. I like to read, listen to music, and mentor my Mezcla little's in my spare time!”



KENSY JORDAN

Sophomore | Media Arts & Sciences

Hometown: New York City, NY

Research Interest/Area: Computer Science and Media

"I was raised in Harlem, New York City. Having grown up in the city, I was constantly surrounded by people who lived unique experiences and people who worked hard everyday to make a living. Wellesley has expanded my understanding of the world outside Harlem and has taught me that I can dream big. I am passionate about media, film, and computer science and believe that these have a huge impact on society today and will continue to do so in the future."



QIAO LI

Senior | Biochemistry

Hometown: Braintree, MA

Research Interest/Area: Computational Biochemistry

"I grew up in China and then immigrated to America in 2012. Before I transferred to Wellesley College, I went to Massasoit Community College where I worked on ecological-based research for one and a half years. The research experience I had inspired me major in biochemistry. I joined Prof. Radhakrishnanan's lab at Wellesley, which used computational techniques to study molecular recognition. It is a completely different type of study, yet I am excited about learning new things."



LYNANDREA MEJIA

Senior | Neuroscience

Hometown: Warwick, RI

Research Interest/Area: Neuroepidemiology, genetics, and mental health research and advocacy

"From a young age I took interest in anything biological that my brain could find, studying cells to later learning about DNA analysis through gel electrophoresis. Entering Wellesley College, I was able to narrow down my interests to neuroscience. Wellesley has given me the opportunity to look to my past and present to piece together my curiosity for the microscopic world of genetics and the macroscopic world of neurological diseases and mental health advocacy. While I am still deciding whether to pursue research, clinical practice, or teaching, I know that my desire to help others will remain the same, now comes the exciting part about how I choose to do that."



FRANCELIS MORILLO SUAREZ

Junior | Environmental Studies, Italian Studies, Sustainability Certificate
Hometown: Lawrence, MA
Research Interest/Area: Sustainable Development and the way different communities in various countries adapt to and mitigate climate change

“I was born in the Dominican Republic, but have lived most of my life in Massachusetts. During my middle school summers, I attended a STEM Program for low-income students in the Greater Boston Area at MIT, which cultivated my eagerness to learn about the sciences. The Earth’s natural environment was something I found especially intriguing, so from then on I’ve nourished my curiosity by taking several environmental studies courses. Along the way, I became passionate about learning new languages. I hope to use my language skills and my devotion towards sustainable development to tackle the issues of climate change.”



SIMONE NEVILLS

Junior | Biological Sciences
Hometown: Westwood, MA
Research Interest/Area: Developmental Biology

“I study biology here at Wellesley, and I am interested in bone development and regeneration. I’m active in our Black Student Union, and I volunteer with Birthday Wishes and the Boston Health Care for the Homeless program. Upon graduation, I plan to pursue a Ph.D. in developmental biology with the ultimate goal of teaching.”



ALEXANDRA MARTINEZ LOPEZ

Sophomore | Neuroscience
Hometown: Durham, NC
Research Interest/Area: Neuroscience

“I am originally from El Salvador, but grew up in Durham, North Carolina since I was 7 years old. After my childhood friend was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) in 2014, I became deeply curious about the brain and have since been able to transfer this curiosity to my research interests in hopes of one day developing better treatment options for MS and other neurodegenerative diseases.”



CINDY PERAZA

Senior | Biological Sciences and Psychology

Hometown: Revere, MA

Research Interest/Area: Using *Bdellovibrio bacteriovorus* and Atomic Force Microscopy to Remove Biofilms

“When I was introduced to biology and psychology as a high school student, I was instantly enamored by the two subjects. My love for biology and psychology propelled me into taking more biology and psychology courses at Wellesley College, which further fueled my passion for the two subjects. My passion for biology made me realize that I wanted to participate in research. Currently, at Wellesley College, I work on a project that aims to eliminate biofilms with *Bdellovibrio bacteriovorus* and Atomic Force Microscopy.”



CAITLIN PHAM

Junior | Computer Science

Hometown: Orange County, CA

Research Interest/Area: Drug Delivery

“I was born and raised in southern California, but found myself trading warm, sunny days for frigid winters. As a third-year student at Wellesley, I have been able to pursue a myriad of disciplines before discovering the wonderful computer science department. While my passion also lies in healthcare, I found that computer science gives me the unique opportunity to use technology as a resource in the future of medicine. Furthermore, my studies recognize its potential in patient care, especially for those living in underserved, marginalized communities. My current research focuses on the development of novel drug delivery implants for local chemotherapy delivery to the abdomen to treat ovarian cancer metastases.”



MARIA PHAN

Senior | Chemistry

Hometown: Lowell, MA

Research Interest/Area: Organic Synthesis

“I grew up in a very diverse city with my father and brother. Because my dad worked a lot, my brother and I kept each other company by creating different games from anything we could find around the house. Seeing how tirelessly my dad works inspires me to do whatever it takes to have a better life for us in the future. I knew I wanted to study the sciences after 7th grade when we learned about how the cells in our body worked. My research focuses on synthesizing molecules and testing them for the treatment of pancreatic cancer. Outside of Wellesley, I enjoy watching movies, eating out with friends, and playing with anyone’s dog.”



TULANI REEVES-MILLER

Junior | Media Arts & Sciences

Hometown: Woodstock, GA

Research Interest/Area: Integration of Art and Technology

“I grew up in love with stories, whether they were video games, cartoons, or novels. While growing up in suburban Georgia, I discovered visual novels and webcomics. I became interested in the ways people use Computer Science to share stories and make an impact. I am passionate about creativity and how art and technology connect to each other and create new ways of communicating with and understanding others.”



NATALIA REYNOSO

Senior | Psychology and Women & Gender Studies

Hometown: Rancho Cucamonga, CA

Research Interest/Area: Social Epidemiology & Clinical Psychology

“Since high-school, I have actively worked on issues related to community public health through my city's Healthy RC Youth Leaders initiative. As a student at Wellesley, I built upon this work and also discovered my passion for behavioral public health. I aspire to minimize existing mental health disparities and investigate better solutions for supporting the mental health of marginalized communities of color and LGBTQ+ individuals, since quality, compassionate care should never be contingent upon your identity.”



CASEY SMITH

Senior | Neuroscience

Hometown: San Leandro, CA

Research Interest/Area: C. Elegans longevity and metabolism

“I began my research endeavor at my local children's hospital where I worked two summers performing both clinical and basic science research. My clinical work involved understanding the development of acute chest syndrome in sickle cell patients, and my lab research observed cancer cell surface expression during adhesion and migration. Additionally I have studied lifespan and metabolism in the model organism C. Elegans in the Bauer Lab at Wellesley. Currently I work in the Bear Lab at MIT studying developmental differences in visual plasticity in mouse models of autism. I hope to continue research as a career in the biomedical sciences.”



CASSANDRA SMITH

Senior | Neuroscience

Hometown: Worthington, IL

Research Interest/Area: Developmental Neuroscience & Regenerative Medicine

"I never imagined I would end up studying life sciences. I have been fortunate to work in the Tharin lab at Stanford Medical School for the past two summers, where I learned to appreciate how important some of my strengths, like resoluteness and aptitude to persevere, are. I will pursue a PhD in research and hope to one day be in a position where I can encourage young students to realize their full potential while doing cool science."



DESIRAE THORNE

Junior | Geosciences

Hometown: Houston, TX

Research Interest/Area: Environmental Geochemistry

"I was born into a family with a history of alcoholism and drug abuse, a path I chose not to follow. I decided I would work hard to continue my education and have a stable career and future. Now, I am a first-generation college student at Wellesley and a McNair Scholar. Summer 2019 I completed my first research internship at Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory of Columbia University, and I hope to continue pursuing my interests in geosciences through doing academic-year research."



CHANTALY VILLALONA

Sophomore | Mathematics and Geoscience

Hometown: Atlanta, GA

Research Interest/Area: Geo-hydrology

"I'm originally from Newark, NJ where I concentrated on engineering in high school. At Wellesley College my main focus is diversifying my research and academic portfolio through interdisciplinary research projects. I am extremely passionate about hydrology and implications of urban runoff water. My dream is to become a STEM professor in order to inspire and mentor other minority women in underserved communities throughout their scientific careers."



DR. VALDEZ

Director | Biological Chemistry & Molecular Pharmacology

Hometown: Enid, OK

Research Interest/Area: Vascular Biology & Diabetic Retinopathy

“As a Latina woman scientist, I am a strong advocate for empowering and advancing women, people of color, and first generation students in STEM. As an educator in this area, I promote this work through the McNair Scholars Program at Wellesley and on national stages as an invited speaker at conferences. I am passionate about changing the landscape and the make up of the people within higher education at all levels - students, faculty, and staff - to become more diverse, inclusive, and representative of the people in our society. Together we can make this a reality!

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ADRIAN ESTRADA

Coordinator | Sociology/Anthropology, Comparative Language & Linguistics, and French and Francophone Studies

Hometown: San Francisco, CA

Research Interest/Area: Communication, the many facets that inform human behavior and the human experience

“I was born and raised in San Francisco, CA and attended a small liberal arts college in the midwest: Earlham College. I was fortunate enough to be a McNair Scholar myself and had the opportunity to conduct research in a living history museum as well as a foray into the hybrid-language *Spanglish*. After moving to Boston I found a home in higher education, and as fate has it, I have come full circle. I am excited to be working with students from diverse backgrounds in hopes of encouraging them to pursue and achieve their academic and personal goals.”