

WELLESLEY
WIAcNAIR
SCHOLARS PROGRAM



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**STUDENT
DIRECTORY**



FRANNIE ADAMS

Senior | Environmental Studies and Economics

Hometown: Roxbury, MA

Research Interest/Area: Marine and Coral Conservation Biology

“Hi everyone! I am an Environmental Studies major and an Economics minor. From a young age, I had a close relationship to the natural world and during my time at Wellesley, I put my passion into action. Environmental Racism and Environmental Injustice are national and global issues that must be confronted and remedied. I hope to continue my studies of and research around environmental sciences as they relate to public health and international relations, community education and involvement and coral reef conservation in graduate school. My goal is to work with island and coastal communities suffering the adverse effects of anthropogenic climate change with the fewest resources and bridge the gap between traditional scientific research communication and communities.”



OLIVIA AKINSUNMOYE

Senior | Biological Sciences

Hometown: Providence, RI

Research Interest/Area: Cancer Research

“I grew up in Providence, Rhode Island the capital of the smallest state in the United States. During the summer following my first year at Wellesley College I conducted research in Providence at Brown University under the STEP-UP program. My research topic featured small cell lung cancer. I then presented my research at the National Institutes of Health for the STEP-UP symposium. This experience began my passion for cancer research, and I have been pursuing research opportunities ever since!”



DANIELLE ALDRETT

Senior | Chemical Physics

Hometown: Houston, TX

Research Interest/Area: Environmental Chemistry

“I grew up in Houston, Texas, where my passions for addressing environmental injustices have stemmed. I currently attend Wellesley College, where I study Chemical physics and environmental studies. I have participated in research regarding gas-exchange with the ocean, which are processes that mitigate and impact the effects of climate change. Through my studies and research experience, I have a deeper passion for advocating for marginalized communities facing environmental injustices like those in my hometown.”



ANN-MARSHA ALEXIS

Junior | Physics & Philosophy

Hometown: Orange, NJ

Research Interest/Area: Computational Physics and Climate Science

“I spent the first five years of my life in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, after which I mostly grew up in a town outside of Newark, New Jersey. I have always been excited by the positive impact technology can have on people's lives. After graduating from Wellesley College, I hope to use my love of physics, and science in general, in creating computational models and other technologies that could lead to a more sustainable world as well as enable environmental justice.”



KATHERINE AVILA

Junior | Neuroscience

Hometown: Houston, TX

Research Interest/Area: Neuroscience and Computational Science

“As the second youngest of six daughters, I saw it all growing up- success and failure. I learned that it was hard to make my own path when I saw my older sisters create their own amazing paths. This led me to not to be afraid to leave the state to go to college, to take these risks, even if I hadn't seen it done before. As an undergraduate at Wellesley College, I hope to learn through different opportunities.”



SHANIA BALDWIN

Senior | 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

Senior | 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.”



EUNICE BEATO

Sophomore | Astrophysics

Hometown: Lynn, MA

Research Interest/Area: Astrophysics/Black Holes

“I grew up in Massachusetts, despite being born in Queens, NY. Starting in 5th grade, I entered the KIPP Academy system, which is a nationally based charter school. With the support of KIPP and the amazing STEM teachers I had in high school, I learned to love science and math. I aspire to get a PhD in astrophysics and research black holes. I also plan on working with STEM outreach, especially with young women of color.”



MELISA CAMPOS

Junior | Neuroscience

Hometown: Houston, TX

Research Interest/Area: Psychology and Behavioral Neuroscience

“I am from Houston, Texas and my family is from El Salvador. I am a Neuroscience major currently working in Professor Keane's Cognitive Psychology Lab. After joining this lab I began to think about Graduate School as a possibility in my life after undergrad. I hope to one day become a professor and encourage students who come from communities like mine to explore higher education even if it is something they are afraid of.”



DAYNA DE LA CRUZ

Senior | Biological Sciences

Hometown: Houston, TX

Research Interest/Area: Ecosystem Ecology & Animal Behavior

“I grew up in urban Houston yet fell in love with U.S. northeastern nature. I have conducted research through Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest, Harvard Forest and the School for Field Studies. I aspire to continue communicating science to wide audiences by working on a platform that allows me to present my research in a manner that promotes scientific inclusivity and action. For this reason, I am a member of the BISC Equity & Inclusion Subcommittee at Wellesley. As a first-generation Latina, I want to continue filling knowledge gaps within the science community while paving the road for underrepresented people in STEM!”



PAULA DEANDA

Senior | Astrophysics

Hometown: Houston, TX

Research Interest/Area: Astronomy and Astrophysics

“I grew up in Houston, TX where I developed a love for science and astronomy. There were few opportunities to explore astronomy, so when I was accepted to Wellesley College as a Posse scholar I decided to study Astrophysics. At Wellesley, I’ve worked on inclusivity initiatives in residential life as an RA and OM, in WESI as a peer mentor, in ASTRO Club and SPS as inclusivity and equity chair.”



IZABELLE FERNANDEZ

Senior | 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.”



ANNIE GOMEZ

Junior | Physics and Latin American Studies
Hometown: Hyattsville, MD
Research Interest/Area: Materials Science

“Growing up I noticed I have an affinity for renewable energy engineered-based projects. As an undergraduate, I've worked in a lab focused on a specific type of solar cell called Perovskite solar cells and hope to focus my thesis in this area of solar technology. While in graduate school, I want to study material science with a focus in photovoltaics and/or nanotechnology, with the ultimate goal of becoming a researcher and 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

Senior | Applied Physics
Hometown: Houston, TX
Research Interest/Area: Semiconductors and Electronics

“Hello! My interests have shifted to the tech industry from the perspective of research and development. This past summer I interned at ASML as a remote troubleshooting and failure analysis intern which reaffirmed my passions. Last year, I created the Equity and Inclusivity chair at the Society of Physics Students (SPS) in order to make physics places more inclusive for all students. This year I am the President SPS at Wellesley and an active member at the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers at MIT. Since it my last year, I hope to improve the environment in physics even more for the years to come. After Wellesley, I plan to pursue a graduate program in Applied Physics or Material Science and Engineering. At the end of the day, I want to obtain a leadership position in a tech company that I can contribute to with my technical background. Aside from that, I will also aspire to encourage more underrepresented students into tech through outreach or a program.”



KARINA HERRERA

Senior | Psychology
Hometown: Houston, TX
Research Interest/Area: Pathophysiology

“I’m a rising senior from Houston, TX majoring in Psychology on the pre-med track. During my time at Wellesley (and through difficult conversations with my peers), I’ve come to realize just how interconnected psychology and health really are. I hope to study race based inequities within psychology and health in graduate school and eventually work in areas with limited access to both resources.”



ALINE IRAFASHA

Sophomore | Chemistry

Hometown: Houston, TX

Research Interest/Area: Chemistry/Biochemistry

“My family is from Congo(DRC), but I grew up in Rwanda and currently live in Houston, TX. In 2019, I graduated from Wisdom High school. Although I didn’t know much about research coming into Wellesley, I knew that I liked science and wanted to give back to my community. As a Posse scholar, opportunities such as the First Year Apprentice Program have given me skills that will help me succeed in my future career. I plan to major in Chemistry and pursue research in public health. My goal is to design studies on how to effectively offer healthcare to disadvantaged communities. During my free time, I like to sing with the Harambee Singers.”



KENSY JORDAN

Junior | Media Arts and Sciences

Hometown: New York, NY

Research Interest/Area: Human-Computer Interaction and A.I. Education

“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 every day to make a living. Wellesley has expanded my understanding of the world outside of 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.”



ALEXANDRA MARTINEZ LOPEZ

Junior | Neuroscience

Hometown: Durham, NC

Research Interest/Area: Neuroscience, Neuroimmunology; neurodegenerative and autoimmune diseases.

“I am originally from El Salvador, but have spent most of my life in Durham, North Carolina. I became deeply curious about the brain after my childhood friend was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and have since been able to transfer this curiosity to my research interests. Currently, I’m a member of the Wu Lab at Washington University in St. Louis where we study the regulation of adaptive immune responses during inflammation and the pathogenesis of MS in animal models. Aside from research, I am passionate about science outreach through brain awareness programs and DanceSport.”



MARY MARTINEZ NUÑEZ

Senior | Chemistry and Latin American Studies
Hometown: Santiago, Dominican Republic
Research Interest/Area: Cancer Cures

“While participating at the ACS Project-SEED in PR, my interest for oncology-related research awoke, as I worked alongside scientists to create a titanium drug that only attacked cancer cells. I'm an ACS and Kaplan Scholar, and a transfer student from Bronx Community College. It's my calling to join the scientists fighting for cancer cures, to raise my voice for those behind me and to leave my mark as a first-gen afro-latina in STEM.”



FRANCELIS MORILLO SUAREZ

Senior | Environmental Studies, Italian Studies and Sustainability Certificate
Hometown: Lawrence, MA
Research Interest/Area: Environmental & Social Sustainability and Degrowth

“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. Along the way, I became passionate about learning new languages. Recently, I've become interested in the concept of the pluriverse and degrowth. I hope to use my language skills and my devotion to sustainability, both social and environmental, to tackle the issues of climate change.”



SIMONE NEVILLS

Senior | Biological Sciences
Hometown: Westwood, MA
Research Interest/Area: Developmental Genetics & Bioinformatics

“My research and career interests lie at the nexus of bioinformatics and regenerative biology, and my ultimate goal is to become a full-time researcher and professor. I care deeply about equity and accessibility in the sciences, and I want to dedicate my time and talents to fostering a more inclusive scientific community. Here at Wellesley, I am heavily involved in the Black Student Union as well as STEMKit, a start-up responsible for designing biology curriculum and experiment kits for primary and middle school students in Ghana, Nigeria, and rural Alaska. I also sit on the Committee on Educational Research & Development, for which I review faculty grant applications in support of course development and pedagogical training. I currently study COVID-19 transmission dynamics and the impact of the pandemic on daily life through the Computational Health Informatics Program at Boston Children's Hospital.



LIZETTE ORTEGA

Junior | Physics

Hometown: Houston, TX

Research Interest/Area: Physics Education Research, Particle Physics, and Optical Physics

“I am fascinated by physics and how it seeks to explain our world. I not only want to play a role in finding answers to fundamental physics questions, but I also want to pave the way for others to join the scientific exploration. As a result, I am passionate about making STEM fields more accessible to students from traditionally underserved backgrounds. I hope to study and improve how physics is taught to students by engaging in physics education research (PER).”



MELIZA PEREZ

Senior | Chemistry

Hometown: Houston, TX

Research Interest/Area: Pharmacology

“I am originally from Houston, TX and moved to Wellesley in 2018 for college. I plan to continue onto graduate school after Wellesley and obtain a PhD in Biochemistry. After graduate school, I would like to work in the pharmaceutical industry to try and develop inexpensive cancer medicine that is more affordable to low income families, something that I am hoping would benefit families in Central America.”



CAITLIN PHAM

Senior | 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 fourth-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.”



GUADALUPE PORTILLO DERAS

Senior | Mathematics

Hometown: Los Angeles, CA

Research Interest/Area: Algebraic mapping in curves and Mathematics

Education

“I am a mathematics major (and soon to be Education Minor) from sunny Los Angeles, CA. Coming from an under resourced neighborhood to Wellesley, I noticed the large disparity in mathematics education between students. Some of my greatest ambitions are to fix this issue in higher education and make mathematics more accessible for low-income students of color. On campus, I serve as Co-President of Cielito Lindo, the only Latin American dance organization on campus, where we display the diverse cultures of Latin America to the Wellesley community through dance!”



AMY QUINTANILLA

Junior | Environmental Physics

Hometown: Panorama City, CA

Research Interest/Area: Environmental Engineering, Conservation, and Public Health

“I am a first-generation college student and a child of Salvadoran immigrants. I was born and raised in Southern California and hope to earn a PhD in Environmental Engineering. I plan to dedicate myself to research that improves environmental conditions in urban areas and develop solutions to combat the effects of climate change.”



TULANI REEVES-MILLER

Senior | 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.”



DESIRAE THORNE

Senior | Geosciences

Hometown: Houston, TX

Research Interest/Area: Environmental Geochemistry

“I am a proud Houstonian, McNair Scholar, and first-generation student at Wellesley College pursuing an undergraduate degree in Geosciences with a minor in Environmental Studies. Summer 2020 I worked with Dr. Sylvia Dee from Rice University to study changes in Sea Surface Temperature (SST) in the Gulf of Mexico and the impacts such changes would have on coral reef communities in the region. I hope to pursue a graduate degree to explore a topic within geosciences with an environmental lens.”



CHANTALY VILLALONA

Junior | 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.”



MELISSA ZEPEDA

Junior | Environmental Studies

Hometown: Inglewood, CA

Research Interest/Area: Marine Science

“I was born and raised in Inglewood, California by Mexican and Guatemalan immigrant parents. In high school, I was part of the marine biology club which helped grow my interest in marine science. Participating in summer research programs has cemented my desire to continue growing my research skills. Wanting to expand my experiences and knowledge, I chose to go to Wellesley College. Now, as a sophomore I have gained amazing friends, have met wonderful professors, and have learned numerous things.”



DR. McCOY

Interim Director | Higher Education

Hometown: Baltimore, MD

Research Interest/Area: Education

“Throughout my educational career, I went from being one of many students of color to one of a few, particularly during my experience of attending a historically Black university (Savannah State University) where I earned my bachelors to earning my masters from the University of Florida. This influenced my decision to study the socialization of graduate students and faculty members of color in STEM fields for my doctoral research at the University of Mississippi. In my current roles as the Assistant Director of the Science Center and the interim McNair Director, I’m excited to bring my experiences and knowledge to mentor and assist students from diverse backgrounds so that they can fulfill their dreams to enter and remain in STEM-related fields.”

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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.”