

# STUDENT DIRECTORY



Photo Credit: ELLENZWIEG

20  
22

WELLESLEY

WV cNAIR

SCHOLARS PROGRAM



## **AUGUST OWUSU AGYEMANG**

Senior | Neuroscience

Hometown: Chicago, IL

Research Interest/Area: Neural Development and Neural Stem Cells

“I was raised in Kumasi Ghana and immigrated to Chicago IL prior to high school. I have always liked science and throughout my Wellesley career, I have honed my interest in neuroscience research. I am continuing research in the development of new therapies/ treatments using neural stem cells for neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's. After graduate school, I want to continue in this line of research in an academic setting and mentor students through research and career assessment.”



## **ANN-MARSHA ALEXIS**

Senior | 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.”



## **JESSICA ANTHONY**

Junior | Psychology

Hometown: Houston, TX

Research Interest/Area: General Psychology and Intersectionality

“My name is Jess and I grew up in Houston, TX. Throughout my time at Wellesley, I have found identity formation and intersectionality interesting topics as it relates to mental health. My research interest is around how mental health helps for intersecting identities.”



## **KATHERINE AVILA**

Senior | 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.”

## **OLUWATOSIN BANJO**

Junior | Biochemistry

Hometown: Houston, TX

Research Interest/Area: Cellular and Molecular Biology, Cancer Research, Biochemistry

“My name is Oluwatosin Banjo and I am a junior, Biochemistry Major at Wellesley! (Class of 2023). In addition to McNair, I am a part of the Posse 3 Cohort on campus. I first got introduced to research through the WC Science Center Biochemistry Wintersession Research Week and fell in love with it! Through all my research experiences, both in and outside of Wellesley, I realized that I particularly enjoy the cellular/molecular biology, cancer, and biochemistry research fields. In the near future, I hope to obtain my MD-PhD and work as a physician-scientist in the intersection of healthcare and scientific research.”

## **CHANTELLE KATE BATAKAN**

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

Junior | 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

Senior | 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.”



## ANNIE GOMEZ

Senior | 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.”



## TIANNA GREEN

Senior | Physics

Hometown: Belleville, IL

Research Interest/Area: Photovoltaics, Sustainable Technology

“Studying physics inspires me to continue learning about the materials and technology that impact society. Pursuing a doctorate in materials science and engineering serves an interdisciplinary purpose for me. I will participate in research towards the development of clean energy and serve as a mentor to women and marginalized students. After completing my PhD in materials science and engineering, I aim to work at the Department of Energy (DOE), furthering my commitment to sustainable technology. In addition to a career in industry, I will continue working with marginalized students by seeking out opportunities to lecture, engage, and mentor these communities.”

## FAITH HERNANDEZ

Senior | Biological Sciences

Hometown: Houston, Texas

Research Interest/Area: Pediatric Oncology



“I am from Houston, Texas and I am majoring in Biological Sciences while minoring in Peace & Justice Studies. My research interests lay within the intersection of biology, medicine, and engineering. Specifically, I am interested in learning more about ways we can decrease, minimize, and eradicate tumor formation/progression through gene regulation and cell signaling pathways. I am also interested in finding ways to provide affordable and adequate cancer treatments and therapies to people from lower-income backgrounds and marginalized groups. Therefore, I hope to use my research skills to improve cancer medicine for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to improve their health and quality of life. Outside of research, I love to volunteer within my community, play basketball, collect sneakers, and try new foods!”

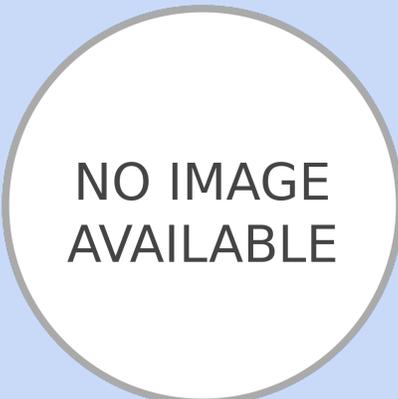
## HELENA HU

Senior | Biochemistry

Hometown: Corona, California

Research Interest/Area: Cellular Networks and Neural Pathways

“I am most interested in understanding and hacking cellular networks and neural pathways. This interest stems from my background living with my grandparents in a complex for veterans of war. I remember being surrounded by profound suffering there as I befriended elderly veterans who suffered from PTSD, Alzheimer’s dementia, and depression. It is my plan to take what I learn here at Wellesley and in graduate school at the interface of biology, chemistry, computer science, and engineering to further our understanding of biological systems and revolutionize medical treatment.”



NO IMAGE  
AVAILABLE



## ALINE IRAFASHA

Junior | 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

Senior | 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.”



## KYARALIND VASQUEZ-LIRIANO

Junior | Environmental Studies  
Hometown: Boston, MA  
Research Interest/Area: Marine Science/Conservation

“Hello everyone! My name is Kyaralind. I am from Boston, MA. My research interests are climate change/conservation and marine science. I am passionate about addressing climate change and developing research skills in analyzing climate risks in coastal communities and marine ecosystems. In pursuing a career in marine biology research, I aim to create marine educational resources in underserved communities. My end goal is to run a research lab after grad school and engage youth in STEM studies and creating positive environmental change.”



## PATTY BENITEZ-LOMI

Junior | Biology and Art History

Hometown: Plainsboro, NJ

Research Interest/Area: Genetics and Developmental Biology

“I am a Biology and Art History major from central New Jersey, but I was born in Puerto Rico. During my time at Wellesley, I have had the opportunity to explore a variety of biology subfields, but my passion lies in genetics. My most recent research project focused on a potential new method for exchanging genetic material that has been observed in various marine microbes. In the future, I hope to examine genetic mechanisms controlling important developmental processes, as well as investigate how interactions between organisms and their environment can influence genetic pathways. I am also highly passionate about the visual arts and learning about how we can better incorporate art into STEM education!”



## ALEXANDRA MARTINEZ LOPEZ

Senior | 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.”



## AMADI MITCHELL

Junior | Physics

Hometown: New Haven, CT

Research Interest/Area: Engineering, Optics, Lasers, Particles

“Hello everyone, I am from the city of New Haven, CT. From a young age, I always knew that I wanted to be a part of the STEM field in some capacity. I was always fascinated by lasers and even just building things and watching my creations grow in complexity. During my first year of college I took my first physics class and fell in love with the field. The class was challenging yet interactive and extremely engaging. During the summer following my second year, I participated in the Wellesley College Summer Research Program in the physics department. It was during this time, where I truly knew that I wanted to fully pursue a career in physics and more specifically, engineering. I aspire to receive a PhD in either particle physics or electrical engineering.”



## 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.”



## MARGLUCY OMWEGA

Senior | Anthropology  
Hometown: Glenn Dale, MD  
Research Interest/Area: Globalization & Public health

“I am from Kenya, but I have been living in PG County, Maryland for the past 11 years. Anthropology has allowed me to follow my passion for human connection and find ways to connect it to public health research. I am currently investigating the impact of globalization on Kenyan immigrants, more specifically, what are its effects on culture and its correlation to the introduction of diabetes amongst the group? After graduate school, I hope to work in global health policy with East Africa as my focal point.”



## LIZETTE ORTEGA

Senior | 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).”



## SOPHIA PEÑA

Senior | Biochemistry  
Hometown: Mooresville, North Carolina  
Research Interest/Area: Virology and Entomology

“My mother is from Mexico City and I am proud to be from North Carolina. My research includes viral analysis of honey bees which was conducted at North Carolina State University. Currently, I do research on the Nasonov gland in the eastern honey bee, *Apis cerana*, with professor Heather Mattila at Wellesley. I hope to continue learning about virology abroad and conduct further research in graduate school in Mexico. During my free time, I enjoy watching foreign films and practicing my Karate.”



## 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.”



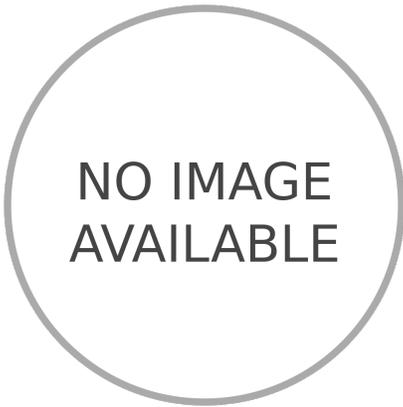
## AMY QUINTANILLA

Senior | 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."



## LEVI CHAVEZ VALENCIA

Junior | Astrophysics

Hometown: Mexico City, Mexico

Research Interest/Area:

"Hi Everyone, I don't think I can talk about my career goals without talking mentioning where I got those goals. I am a Mexican-American immigrant that moved to the United States when I was young. Being from a poor country my family didn't think we could succeed in academics. My oldest brother and I changed those beliefs. I plan to do research at an observatory in Latin America to explore astrophysics in the southern hemisphere and get back to my roots. "

## BRIANA VIGIL

Senior | Data Science: Social Justice Concentration

Hometown: Santa Clarita, CA

Research Interest: Algorithmic Bias, Data Justice, Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning

"Hi everyone! I am from Santa Clarita, CA, and I am a proud first-gen, low-income, Mexican-American student. I found my passion for the intersections of technology and social justice during my first year at Wellesley, and have since then developed my own skills and goals since then. I hope to have a technical lens on the biases that are programmed into algorithms and actively work to reify them or abolish them, with the knowledge that improving an algorithm without improving our societal structures will only bring further harm to communities. My ultimate dream is to become a Data and Algorithm Ethics professor so I can help bring awareness to other students as well."





## CHANTALY VILLALONA

Senior | 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.”



## SALLY WENG

Junior | Biological Sciences  
Hometown: Livingston, NJ  
Research Interest/Area: Cancer Immunology and Public Health

“I am a first-generation college student and the daughter of Fuzhounese immigrants. Ever since I was a kid, I always wanted to go into medicine, but I was never sure how to reconcile the differences with my desire to conduct research. In the Krogsgaard Lab at NYU Langone, I discovered the rapidly evolving field of translational medicine in cancer immunology, where the intersections of medicine and academic research collide. My training to become a physician-scientist continues in the Spranger Lab at the Koch Institute, where I am studying the tumor microenvironment's response to non-small cell lung cancer and novel immunotherapies. Aside from research, I am highly passionate about closing gaps in health disparities, especially in immigrant communities like mine.”



## MELISSA ZEPEDA

Senior | 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.”



## **Ms. Charlana Simmons, M.S.**

Director | Higher Education

Hometown: Rochester, NY

Research Interest/Area: Opportunity and Access Programs in Higher Ed

My primary focus at Wellesley is on managing the day to day operations of the McNair program, housed in the Science Center under the Provost Office. In this role, I also work collaboratively with other student support programs in the Science Center such as the Clare Boothe Luce Scholars and Science Center Summer Research Program. I am a graduate of the University of Rochester in Rochester, New York, and have a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature and a Masters of Science Degree in Secondary English Education. My professional interests include exploring the issues of race and racism and its impacts on the student success of traditionally underserved students in higher education. I have over a decade of experience managing grant funded opportunity and access programs for undergraduate students from diverse backgrounds and have been a constant champion for students who are traditionally underserved in higher education.

# WELLESLEY WIA McNAIR SCHOLARS PROGRAM



## **Teofilo Barbalho, M.Ed.**

Assistant Director | Student Success

Hometown: Framingham, MA

Research Interest/Area: Metacognition & Student Debt

I was born and raised in Framingham, MA and received my Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminology from Framingham State University and a Master of Education degree in Student Success from Regis College. I am particularly interested in helping students think about how they learn best and develop strategies they can utilize. Additionally, strategizing how to tackle student debt with students to ensure they understand their student loans is a passion of mine. My goal is to help first generation and low-income students develop academic strategies and financial literacy skills that will later translate in their personal lives.