

STUDENT DIRECTORY



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WELLESLEY

WIAcNAIR

SCHOLARS PROGRAM



MIKHAELA ANDERSONN

Senior | Psychology & Spanish

Hometown: Spring Hill, FL

Research Interest/Area: Political Psychology, Social Media Effects on Wellbeing/behavior

“I am a senior studying psychology and Spanish. Through my work at the Wellesley Centers for Women with the Youth, Media, and Wellbeing Lab, I have been able to work on research related to influencers and their effects; civic behavior in relation to identity and social media use; and creating/maintaining workshops on STEM identity and digital wellbeing for adolescents. Because the internet and social media are places for controversy, information-sharing (misinformation and actual information), and connection, I want to examine the effects of this change and map how the digital landscape is growing to affect our lives, specifically in politics. I hope to pursue a PhD in Political Science.”



JESSICA ANTHONY

Senior | Psychology

Hometown: Houston, TX

Research Interest/Area: General Psychology and Intersectionality, Human Factors

“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.”



AUDREY BALLARIN

Senior | Computer Science

Hometown: Miami Beach, FL

Research Interest/Area: Computer Graphics, Virtual Reality

“I’m a computer science major primarily interested in graphics, vision, virtual reality, and computational fabrication. I am particularly passionate about visual computing applications in archaeology and cultural heritage preservation. Many of the specific research questions in computer graphics that I plan to explore in graduate school are inspired by my past experience in digital archaeological fieldwork. After graduating from Wellesley, I will be pursuing a PhD in Computer Science focused on 3D graphics and fabrication.”

OLUWATOSIN BANJO

Senior | 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.



KIERA BARSTAD

Senior | Psychology & Spanish

Hometown: Phoenix, AZ

Research Interest/Area: Developmental Psychology

“I was born and raised in Phoenix, Arizona. I am majoring in Psychology and Spanish with a special interest in Education Studies. I am interested in Developmental Psychology because I am interested in child development in educational and familial settings. I hope to go to graduate school in Education Studies and become an elementary school teacher.”



EUNICE BEATO

Senior | 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.”





AALIYAH BECKFORD

Senior | Physics

Hometown: Hartford, CT

Research Interest/Area: Perovskites Solar Cells, Environmental Technology

"I am a physics major who is most fascinated by problems that sit in the intersection of technology and environmental science. The world is facing a plethora of environmental challenges (climate change, salinization, etc.) which means that the demand to resolve these issues is ever-growing. In furthering my studies in physics, I would like to use my expertise to assist in this discipline. I intend on becoming more knowledgeable about these challenges and ways we could use science to our advantage."



PATTY BENITEZ-LOMI

Senior | 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!"



INGRID BETANCOURT

Senior | Computer Science

Hometown: Phoenix, AZ

Research Interest/Area: Development & Design, Human-Computer Interaction

"Hello Everyone! My name is Ingrid and I am from Phoenix, AZ. During my time at Wellesley, I explored different disciplines but felt most drawn to Computer Science. Within this field, I have been able to channel my creativity and problem-solving skills, specifically within the area of VR development. Understanding how immersive technologies impact and transform society is something I am passionate about and hope to explore the social and cultural implications further."



ALEJANDRA CASTILLO CIEZA

Senior | Chemistry

Hometown: Chapel Hill, NC

Research Interest/Area: Biogeochemical cycling in Forestry incorporating Traditional Ecological Knowledge

“Hello! My family is from Peru but I grew up in North Carolina. I love nature because of it's beauty and intricacies but it's going through detrimental changes because of many harmful human practices and so I want to try to help out by using my knowledge in chemistry and working with local communities' traditional knowledge. I hope to eventually dedicate myself to the Amazon rainforest with this work.”



KAIYLA CHAVEZ

Senior | Psychology

Hometown: Houston, Texas

Research Interest/Area: Clinical Psychology

“I am a first-generation low-income Latina from Houston, Texas. I am pursuing a B.A. in Psychology and minoring in Biology. I am also a Posse Scholar. After college, I plan to achieve a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology focused on studying adverse childhood experiences in the BIPOC community. I am interested in exploring resilience and symptomatology to develop interventions and potential treatments.”



MAGGIE HAMILTON

Senior | Psychology

Hometown: Charlevoix, MI

Research Interest/Area: Occupational Therapy & Children on the Autism Spectrum

“I am from Charlevoix, MI and completed my associates degree in Tampa, FL before coming to Wellesley. I am a Psychology major with a particular interest in child development. I am planning to pursue a doctoral degree in occupational therapy, so instead of conducting research at Wellesley, I have spent some time job shadowing at an outpatient pediatric OT clinic. In the future I hope to work in a similar setting helping children meet their developmental milestones.”



ALINE IRAFASHA

Senior | 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.”



HESPER KHONG

Senior | American Studies & Biological Sciences
Hometown: East Los Angeles, CA
Research Interest/Area: Biology, Cancer Research, and Equity

“Hi y’all! My name is Hesper (they/she) and I’m a fgli senior on the pre-med track, planning to pursue a MD-PhD post-graduation. My hometown is in CA but my family moved to TX a few years ago. Growing up in a low income community and being a queer child of Vietnamese refugees, my aspiration is to be a physician-scientist who focuses on the intersections present in working with underserved patients and developing novel treatments. Given the breadth of research out there, I’m uncertain where my roots will grow next. But I ruminate on the disproportionate impact of cancer on marginalized groups immensely, particularly the prevalence of lung cancer in Vietnamese communities, so I hope to be involved in a space that focuses on solving this issue. My current undergraduate research centers around genes regulating the development of cool insects such as red flour beetles, milkweed bugs, and tobacco hornworms. Some of my favorite pastimes include reading, crocheting, listening to podcasts, and basking in ethereal places in nature—like the riverbank at Wellesley with willow trees and frogs!”



KELSEY LIN

Senior | Physics & Cognitive and Linguistic Sciences
Hometown: Gurnee, IL
Research Interest/Area: Racialization and how it is created in education policy

“I am a senior from Gurnee, IL, a small town near Chicago, and I currently study physics and cognitive and linguistic sciences at Wellesley. Through the work I’ve done with the physics department and the research I’ve done in linguistics, I’ve become interested in studying educational policy. Specifically, I am interested in understanding the ways we racialize bodies and reify these ideas through the language used in educational policy. I hope to learn more about how we can create more equitable policy through the ways we deliver it!”

MARY MARTINEZ NUÑEZ

Senior | Chemistry and Latin American Studies

Hometown: Santiago, DR & NYC

Research Interest/Area: Drug Delivery, Public Health, Antimicrobial peptides, Cancer Research



“I was born in the Dominican Republic, half-raised in Puerto Rico and Bronx, NYC. I obtained an Associates degree in Chemistry from Bronx community college and transferred to Wellesley College Fall 2019. I'm interested in doing Biochemistry research focusing on public health issues affecting the African Diaspora in Latin America. “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 American Chemical Society and Kaplan Leadership Scholar. At Wellesley, I work in the Dr. Elmore's lab researching antimicrobial peptides as a pathway to fight antibiotic resistance. My plan is to obtain a PhD in Biological sciences in Public Health, and join the scientists fighting for cancer cures, to raise my voice for those behind me and to leave my mark as a first-gen Queer Black latina in STEM. ”

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.”

AIZAH RAO

Senior | Computer Science

Hometown: Sterling, VA

Research Interest/Area: Artificial Intelligence & Natural Language Processing



“Growing up in Northern Virginia, I was surrounded by a lot of family. My aunts, uncles, and cousins live right in my neighborhood! When I came to Wellesley, I was really unsure of what I wanted to pursue and it wasn't until I took my first Computer Science course that I realized how much I enjoyed programming and problem solving. Last year, I was a Clare Boothe Luce Scholar where I worked in Dr. Carolyn Anderson's EASEL Lab. My interests lie in exploring how bias manifests itself in technology, particularly in Artificial Intelligence, and aim to find ways to mitigate it. In my free time I enjoy riding my bike and taking walks in and around Wellesley's beautiful campus!”

NAFISA RASHID

Senior | Cognitive and Linguistic Sciences

Hometown: Poughkeepsie, NY

Research Interest/Area: Applied Linguistics, Language Acquisition and Use, Natural Language Processing



“Hello! My name is Nafisa Iyatunde Rashid, and I am a first generation Sierra-Leonean American and senior (class of 2023) majoring and thesising in Linguistics and minoring in Environmental Studies. Currently I am interested in pursuing a PhD. in Linguistics focusing on heritage and second language speakers of under-resourced languages and computationally modeling the acquisition and use of the languages they are learning. I am extremely interested in interdisciplinary research and enjoy seeing where the intersections of multiple subfields of linguistics and other scientific fields will lead me. Wherever my academic journey takes me next, I hope to eventually focus on language technology (applications and games) that implements linguistics research to improve people's language learning experience. Outside of research, I enjoy listening to music, drumming, drawing, playing recreational sports, trying new food around Boston and gardening and learning about plants!”

KYARALIND VASQUEZ-LIRIANO

Senior | 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 ocean educational resources in underserved communities. My end goal is to work for a non-profit organization to promote awareness about ocean climate change.

SALLY WENG

Senior | 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.”



DULCE ALEMAN

Junior | Neuroscience

Hometown: Houston, TX

Research Interest/Area: Neuroimmunology, Glioblastoma Research, and Translational Neuroscience

“Hello! My name is Dulce Aleman, and I grew up in H-Town. Being one of the youngest of 6 children, I crafted all my goals, both personal and career-wise, on the experiences my siblings' had. Fortunately, my family has been extremely supportive in all that I do. My interest in research began quite early in my undergraduate career, my freshman year, where I began as an apprentice in a neuroscience lab that studied attention mechanisms. Later on, I was introduced to neuroendocrinology in the Tetel Lab where we studied the gut-brain axis. Summer 2022 sparked my passion in neuroimmunology and translational neuroscience. I hope to obtain an MD/PhD, specializing in neurosurgery, and working at the forefront of translational research!”

DANIELLA BECERRIL

Junior | Biochemistry

Hometown: Houston, TX

Research Interest/Area: Pediatrics/Gynecology/Women's Health/Oncology

“Hi everyone my name is Dani, I'm from Houston, TX and my family is from Mexico! I am majoring in Biochemistry while on the premed track and I am minoring in Latinx Studies. In addition to McNair, I am a part of the Posse 4 Cohort on campus <3 Growing up I knew I wanted to either be a pediatrician or an OBGYN but after indulging in work for research labs at Wellesley I began to look into the possibility of pursuing an MD-PhD. My research interests lay within the intersection of biology, medicine, and women's health. Specifically, I am interested in finding ways to provide affordable and adequate care to people from lower-income backgrounds and marginalized groups. In the future, I hope to obtain my MD-PhD and work as a physician-scientist while making an impact on the people around me and in the scientific research field.”

DAISY BENITEZ

Junior | Psychology

Hometown: Los Angeles, CA

Research Interest/Area: Developmental Psychology

“Hi, my name is Daisy Benitez. I am a first-gen low-income Latinx student from Los Angeles. I am double majoring in Psychology and Education studies. The experiences that I have had in my own family have influenced me to follow an educational path that can positively impact my own community in future. I am specifically interested in conducting research on the unique barriers that prevent Latinx communities from accessing mental health services. In the future, I hope that this research helps others understand the unique complexities and barriers that Latinx families face so that we can find ways to better support them.”





JIVONSHA FFRENCH

Junior | Psychology

Hometown: Bronx, NY

Research Interest/Area: Biology & Psychology

“Jivonsha was born in Kingston, Jamaica and raised in Portmore, Jamaica. She currently lives in Bronx, NY. She is majoring in psychology and minoring in biology. She is particularly interested in studying developmental psychology through a biological lens. She currently does research in both of her fields of study. In Psychology, her work focuses on the influence of media on the creation of imaginary friends in preschoolers. Her biology work focuses on the effects of climate change on eclosion timing of the tobacco hornworm. In the future she hopes to investigate the biological bases of different child psychiatric disorders and possibly becoming a clinical psychologist.”



CHRISTELLE GILOT

Junior | Biochemistry

Hometown: Newark, NJ

Research Interest/Area: Biochemistry

“My full name is Christelle Rose Gilot. My class year is (Junior) 2024. My major is Biochemistry and Africana Studies. My hometown is Newark, NJ. I am interested in biochemistry research as well as intersections between race and inadequacies in research. I was born in Jersey City but lived most of my life in Newark, NJ. I think I always knew I would be some form of a scientist but it was a matter of which one. When I came to Wellesley I wanted to do engineering but decided to leave my exploration of engineering for graduate school and start exploring elsewhere and I came to fall in love with biochemistry. I hope to do medicinal research but also use my knowledge from Africana studies and study gaps in research and healthcare.”



PAULA GONZALEZ

Junior | Chemistry

Hometown: Houston, TX

Research Interest: Biochemistry, Public Health

"Hello everyone! My family is from Colombia but I live in Houston, TX. I always knew I wanted to pursue a career in STEM and particularly in the medical field. Over my past years at Wellesley, I have found a love for chemistry in the classroom. I have also been working in a biochemistry lab since my first year and have found a passion for research. With my women and gender studies minor, I have also taken an interest in public health as it defines every aspect of our everyday lives. The world is filled with so many injustices and there is a lack of knowledge and resources to some of the most vulnerable people in society. I am specifically interested in the field of OBGYN's and would like to tackle issues such as the black maternal mortality rate. In the future, I would really like to work both in a hospital/lab and with the community. Therefore I would like to pursue either an MD/PhD or an MD/MPH so that I can try to understand the complex ways in which different communities are affected and then translate that into a direct impact.



BRITANY HANSTEN MONTERROZO

Junior | Biology

Hometown: Los Angeles, CA

Research Interest/Area: Developmental & Regenerative Biology

“I’m from Los Angeles, California and my major is Biology. I’ve kind of always gravitated towards the science I was learning throughout school and eventually tried research out and immediately loved it. I do research in the area of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) when I go home in the summer. I hope to get my PhD in one of my interest areas and develop drug therapies that make people's lifestyles better. I also want to become a mentor that students like me can go to for anything and introduce niches of science that people might not know but are interested in.”



NADIA LA MAR

Junior | Women’s and Gender Studies (Concentration: Public Health)

Hometown: West Orange, NJ

Research Interest/Area: Public Health, Epidemiology

“Hi everyone! I’m from West Orange, NJ, and my major is Women’s and Gender Studies with a Concentration in Public Health. My research interests lie in public health and specifically epidemiology. In the future, I hope to obtain my Master of Public Health and either Doctor of Public Health or PhD in Public Health. My career goal is to provide solutions to health disparities facing marginalized communities.”



ASHLEY MCCRAY

Junior | Neuroscience

Hometown: Orlando (Motown), FL

Research Interest/Area: Behavioral Neuroscience

“Currently, my research interests range from behavioral neuroscience to interdisciplinary topics such as computational neuroscience, neuroengineering, and neuropharmacology. More specifically, I am interested in studying new treatment options for psychiatric and neurologic conditions.”



ALEXANDRA MOUANGUE

Junior | Psychology

Hometown: Ellicott City, MD

Research Interest/Area: Cultural & Clinical Psychology

“As a first-gen student, my interests have primarily lied in the intersection of cultural and clinical psychology; I aim to understand how sociocultural factors contribute to the development, presentation, and treatment of various psychological disorders. I am particularly interested in anxiety disorders and their interaction with the nervous system, as well as their long-term impact on physical and cognitive well-being. What is the functional neuroanatomy of anxiety disorders? Can certain neurodevelopmental trajectories predict onset and prognosis of these disorders? These are some of the questions I am most curious to answer. I believe research that approaches psychopathology from a sociocultural lens will not only expand the knowledge on these disorders but increase access to mental health care for all communities. I am deeply passionate about establishing equitable mental health care and it is my hope to utilize cross-cultural clinical research to better understand the psychological underpinnings of anxiety disorders and work directly with low-income, marginalized communities.”



JADA ONWUTA

Junior | Cognitive Sciences with a concentration in Computer

Hometown: San Marcos, CA

Research Interest/Area: Medical Technology

“I am a first-generation student who was born in Boston, MA, but moved to California a few years ago. I've been in love with science and medicine since I was little, but I've also discovered that I love community-centered work. Right now, I hope to pursue a PhD in Medical Tech. I want to make people's lives a bit easier, wherever I find myself in the medical field.”



KRISTIANNY RUELAS-VARGAS

Junior | Data Science & Women’s and Gender Studies

Hometown: Las Vegas, NV

Research Interest/Area: Public Health Data Science, Data & Social Justice, Feminist Data

“Hi! My name is Kristianny Ruelas-Vargas ‘24. I am a first-gen low-income Mexican-American from Las Vegas, Nevada. I am double majoring in Women’s & Gender Studies and Data Science with a concentration in Social Justice. Growing up in East Las Vegas, I was surrounded by a lot of social injustice that has fueled my passion for exploring how data science can be used to close the gap between health disparities that impact marginalized communities. I am interested in using an intersectional feminist approach to research to ensure that the voices of those who are marginalized are being represented and heard through data. In the future I hope to get my Master’s in Public Health Data Science.”

Jocelyne L. Dolce, M.S.

Director | Biological Sciences

Hometown: Rahway, NJ

Research Interest/Area: Biomechanics and Evolution of Ventilation in Sharks



My primary focus at Wellesley is managing the day to day operations and meeting the overall objectives of the McNair Scholars Program, housed in the Science Center under the Office of the Provost. In this role, I work collaboratively with other student support programs in the Science Center and with faculty and staff to support McNair Scholars on campus in the academics and research. I am a graduate of the University of Rhode Island in Kingston, RI, where I earned a Bachelor of Science in Marine Biology and a Master's of Science in Biological Sciences. Prior to McNair, I was a lab instructor in the Dept. of Biological Sciences and was the faculty mentor for the first cohorts of the Posse and Clare Boothe Luce Scholars Programs. My professional interests include exploring the many issues that impact student success in STEM disciplines, particularly for traditionally underrepresented and first-generation, low income students 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.