

STUDENT DIRECTORY



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WELLESLEY

WIAcNAIR

SCHOLARS PROGRAM



ARIANNA AGUILAR

Senior | Psychology & Education

Hometown: Inglewood, CA

Research Interest/Area: Cognitive and Developmental Psychology

“I’m a psychology and education double major planning to pursue a PhD in Clinical Psychology. Through my research experience at Wellesley I’ve been able to learn more about children’s cognitive and language development. My research interests span beyond this and I would like to conduct research on children’s executive functioning, behavioral medicine interventions, and the role of culture in mental health interventions. Long term, I hope to complete a clinical psychology PhD program and work as a clinical researcher learning more about the role of culture in behavioral interventions for children with chronic illnesses.”



DULCE ALEMAN

Senior | 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!”



DANIELA BECERRIL

Senior | Biochemistry

Hometown: Houston, TX

Research Interest/Area: Pediatrics, Women's Health, Molecular & Cellular Biology, Cancer Research

“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

Senior | Psychology & Education
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. I am specifically interested in conducting research on racial and ethnic disparities in mental health care. My personal experiences in my family and community have influenced me to follow an educational path that can positively impact my own community and other underserved communities in the future. I aspire to identify and use research-based evidence to strategize effective interventions that help increase accessibility of mental health services among underserved communities.”



ANGELA DOUGLASS

Senior | Geoscience
Hometown: Houston, TX
Research Interest/Area: Environmental Geochemistry, Environmental Health, Wetland Science

“Hi everyone! My name is Angela Douglass and I am a geoscience major and Posse scholar from Houston, TX. I come from a biracial Mexican-American background and within the geosciences, I am drawn to the intersection of environmental health and environmental justice. Environmental injustice continues to target low-income communities of color and I aim to use my knowledge and research to address these inequities. I am particularly interested in how we can use geochemistry to better understand environmental processes and find new bioremediation methods for restoration. After graduation I plan to pursue a masters degree in the environmental and earth sciences.”



JIVONSHA FFRENCH

Senior | 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.”



BUANNA FRANCOIS

Senior | Biology & Classical Civilizations

Hometown: New Haven, CT

Research Interest/Area: Environmental and Human Microbiology

“Hi everyone! I was born in Boston and moved to Connecticut as a child, but all of my family is from Haiti. I enjoyed biology in high school and fell in love with microbial research while at Wellesley. On campus, I do research on how microbes utilize arsenic in Lake Waban and Paintshop Pond. Being raised by Haitian immigrant women plays a huge role in my research interests; My goal is to combine my love of microbes with serving my community, especially in water quality or women and infant’s health. More specifically, I am interested in water microbial ecology and the human microbiome. I hope to obtain my PhD to better understand the microbial composition of these environments and discover real-world, accessible solutions to growing issues in these fields.”



ALONDRA GALINDO

Senior | Physics

Hometown: South San Francisco, CA

Research Interest/Area: Bioinspired Robotics, Medical Devices

“I am passionate about brainstorming, designing, and fabrication. I am fascinated by the interdisciplinary nature of combining engineering and physics concepts in the research I do so I plan to get my Ph.D. in either electrical or mechanical engineering. My research interests include medically assistive electronics and bioinspired robotics. I hope to be on the forefront of improving people’s quality of living. Whether it is developing implantable devices for vision loss, or building a robot for sea exploration, thinking of the multitude of options I can dedicate my life to feels exhilarating.”



CHRISTELLE GILOT

Senior | Biochemistry & Africana Studies

Hometown: Newark, NJ

Research Interest/Area: Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering

“My full name is Christelle Rose Gilot. I am interested in biochemistry and chemical engineering research as well as intersections between race and gender 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. At Wellesley, I have done research on antimicrobial peptides focusing on the potential cytotoxicity in human cell lines in the Elmore/Darling Lab. Over the summer, I worked at Georgia Tech I worked with the optimization of a synthetic B cell germinal center in the Roy lab. I hope to do medicinal research but also use my knowledge from Africana studies and study gaps in research and healthcare. I hope to get a master's or Ph.D. within these fields.”

PAULA GONZALEZ

Senior | 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

Senior | Biological Science

Hometown: Los Angeles, CA

Research Interest/Area: Developmental & Regenerative Biology



"Research Interest/Area: Developmental & Regenerative Biology
Hi everyone! I'm from Los Angeles, California and my major is Biology. My research interests lie in developmental and regenerative biology. More specifically, I'm interested in the mechanisms by which stem cells become differentiated, especially during injury. I hope to get a PhD in my research interests and mentor students back in Los Angeles through their scientific journals."

NADIA LA MAR

Senior | Women's and Gender Studies (Concentration: Public Health)

Hometown: West Orange, NJ

Research Interest/Area: Public Health



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



NAUNET LEONHARDES-BARBOZA

Senior | Astrophysics

Hometown: Cornwall-On-Hudson, NY

Research Interest/Area: Stellar Astronomy, The Violent Universe, Computational Astrophysics, Spectroscopy

“I want to study extreme binary star systems through the means of computational modeling, observations, and machine learning applications through large astronomical surveys.”



ASHLEY MCCRAY

Senior | 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.”

MARYSABEL MORALES

Senior | Computer Science

Hometown: Yonkers, NY

Research Interest/Area: Human-Computer Interaction, Cybersecurity



“I was born and raised in Yonkers, NY and my family is from Guatemala. Coming into Wellesley I knew that I wanted to pursue computer science but wasn't sure about what specific field I wanted to concentrate on. After taking Human Computer Interaction (HCI) with Orit Shaer and conducting research with her, I knew my interest lay with learning about the interfaces between people and technology and how to creatively develop those technologies in a way that puts the users' needs first. I hope to further my skills in HCI with a Masters and learn how to combine HCI with Cybersecurity to better protect user's privacy and information. My goals also include creating these technologies in an ethical, accessible and inclusive manner.”

ALEXANDRA MOUANGUE

Senior | Psychology

Hometown: Ellicott City, MD

Research Interest/Area: Treatment Interventions, Trauma and Resilience; Sociocultural influences



“As a first-gen student, my interests have primarily lied at 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 like OCD and PTSD? Can certain neurodevelopmental trajectories predict onset and prognosis of these disorders? How can we integrate CBT with psychotherapy, mindfulness, and somatic-based interventions to optimize treatment outcomes for individuals struggling with anxiety? These are some of the questions I am most curious to answer. I believe research that approaches psychopathology and treatment intervention 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

Senior | Cognitive Sciences with a concentration in Computer Science

Hometown: San Marcos, CA

Research Interest/Area: Environmental Health Sciences



“My name is Jada Onwuta; I am a first-gen, low-income student from Boston, MA, San Marcos, CA, and Phoenix, AZ. Growing up, I gravitated towards science and looked for answers to any question I came across. In college, I’ve had the chance to dive deep into test tubes and code, and also spend lots of time outside. My ultimate goal is to improve the environment of marginalized communities through environmental surveys and biology/chem research. Now, I’ve had the opportunity to mentor and tutor students, and I want to be a source of support for high school and undergrad students. I come from a strong community of Nigerian immigrants and people from across the African diaspora, and I want to center my work around those parts of my identity!”

ISA OROZCO PIEDRAHITA

Senior | Psychology & Latin American Studies

Hometown: Cheshire, CT

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



“Isa is interested in the psychological mechanisms of conflict prevention, management, and resolution, which is rooted in her background as a Colombian and a Latina. More specifically, she is fascinated by how a focus on individual psychological healing can facilitate the resolution and management of small and large-scale conflict, as well as the overall wellness of communities. She is particularly interested in working with Latine and Latin-American communities. She hopes to become a mental health counselor down the line.”

KRISTIANNY RUELAS-VARGAS

Senior | 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."

STEPHANIE AMAYA

Junior | Biochemistry

Hometown: Miami, FL

Research Interest/Area: Biomedical Research



"Hi everyone! I was born and raised in Miami, FL by Salvadoran parents. I have always had an interest in Biology and after taking chemistry at Wellesley, I fell in love with the intersectionality between the two. I was able to start conducting research in my first-year undergrad focusing on the development of Tobacco Hornworms focusing on gene expression. I was able to conduct diverse projects within the lab that aided in my overall confidence in a lab setting. In the future, I hope to seek a PhD in biochemistry focusing on biomedical research."

GRACY ARISTIL

Junior | Biological Science

Hometown: New Jersey

Research Interest/Area: Cancer Research, Stem Cells



"I am a junior from Hillside, New Jersey. I migrated to the United States from Port-au-Prince, Haiti when I was an infant. I identify as a Haitian American who is a low income and FGLI student. Through the research experience I first gained at Wellesley College, I've realized that my research interests are still evolving as of current. My long-term goals are to apply to graduate school or enter the industry immediately after graduation."



KENNEDY BARNES

Junior | Chemistry

Hometown: Houston, TX

Research Interest/Area: Radiation Chemistry, Photochemistry, Astrochemistry

“My name is Kennedy Barnes, and I am a Chemistry Major at Wellesley! (Class of 2025). In addition to McNair, I am a part of the Posse 5 Cohort on campus. I fell in love with the research process during the Wellesley Summer Research Program the summer before my sophomore year. I love how research challenges me to think of alternate, novel solutions. While I currently investigate the chemical processes and mechanisms that occur in space using an ultrahigh vacuum system, I hope to work in organic chemistry synthesis to design new and improved drugs that will change the current treatment options for a variety of illnesses. My goal is to get my Ph.D. in organic chemistry.”

ALISON DE LA CRUZ

Junior | Neuroscience

Hometown: Richmond, VA

Research Interest/Area: Pediatrics, Translational Neuroscience

“Hello! My name is Alison De La Cruz and I am a first-generation, low-income student and the daughter of a Mexican immigrant. My interest in medicine began when I was just a kid but as I grew older my interests grew to take into consideration enthusiasm for performing research. During the summer of 2023, I was fortunate enough to participate in a program that gave me both clinical and research experience. I worked on a retroactive chart study regarding how hyperglycemia affected extremely low birth weight infants. This experience made me realize how much I loved working in medicine specifically with children and how little research there is regarding how different ailments affect subjects of children, such as extremely low birth weight infants. I will also soon be starting a position at the Veteran Affairs Medical Center where I will be participating in research regarding their clinical trials in Parkinson's disease. I would love to continue to explore research with applications to pediatric medicine and neuroscience and eventually gain an MD or an MD/PhD.”



JASMINE LE

Junior | Data Science

Hometown: Minnetonka, MN

Research Interest/Area: Health Care, Social Determinants of Health, Economic Disparities and its Effects

I am interested in looking at the quantitative side of health care as well as economic disparities around the world by applying statistical methods in hopes of highlighting trends and finding correlations between the economic and social aspect of our lives on our health.



CAMILA LOPEZ

Junior | Biochemistry

Hometown: Los Angeles, CA

Research Interest/Area: Molecular and Cellular Biology, Biochemistry

“Hello everyone! My name is Emily Camila Lopez and I am from Los Angeles, CA. I am a junior (Class of 2025) and majoring in biochemistry. Although I didn’t know much about research before coming into Wellesley, I knew that I wanted to pursue a career in the science field and that I wanted to give back to my community. Now, through the research I have done at Wellesley, my research interests lie in the fields of biochemistry and molecular/cellular biology. For the future, I want to gain more knowledge and explore these fields further through graduate school.”



TRISHA LOPEZ

Junior | Biological Sciences

Hometown: Norwalk, CT

Research Interest/Area: Hematology, Pediatrics, Global Health

“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!”

ALEJANDRA RODRIGUEZ

Junior | Astrophysics

Hometown: Houston, TX

Research Interest/Area: Astrophysics, Cosmology, Galaxies & Stars

“Hello Everyone! I am a first-generation and low-income student from Houston, Texas. I'm currently a junior majoring in Astrophysics and plan on attending graduate school! I want to obtain a Ph.D. in Astrophysics or Astronomy after graduation. I hope to work at NASA in the future as it's been my dream career since elementary school. I am interested in the Cosmology field of Astronomy! I find it interesting to hear about theories and discoveries that can contribute to our understanding of how our Universe came about. Currently, I am conducting research with Professor Lamiya Mowla in the Astronomy and Physics department. This research involves taking data such as galaxy images from the James Webb Space Telescope database and using them to analyze their age, composition, etc.”





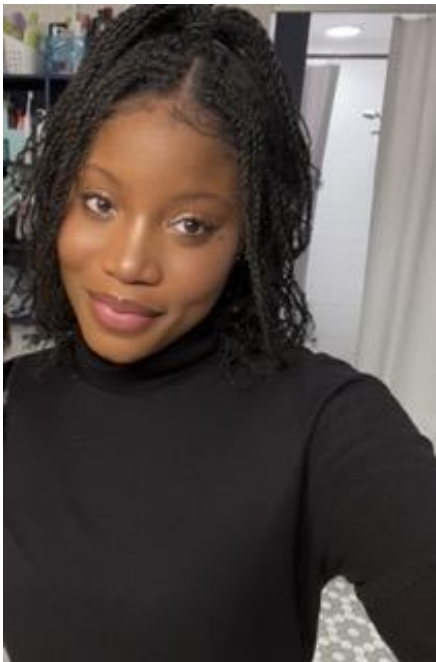
JULIA SHERMAN

Junior | Astrophysics

Hometown: Houston, TX

Research Interest/Area: Particle Physics, Cosmology

“My name is Julia Sherman and I am a junior Astrophysics major from Houston, TX. Throughout my time at Wellesley I have absolutely fallen in love with physics and have developed research interests in particle physics and cosmology. I plan on pursuing a Ph.D. after graduating, and hope to work with physics outreach to increase interest in astrophysics.”



SHENEIKA STEWART

Junior | Psychology

Hometown: Jamaica & The Bronx

Research Interest/Area: Social Psychology

“My name is Sheneika and I was raised in Jamaica, but I currently live in the Bronx, NY. Since my first year, I have been doing research in Dr. Gleason's Imaginary Lab where the main focus is social and developmental psychology. In combination with my research experience, my interests in prejudice, discrimination & racial inequality has led me to develop an enthusiasm for studies that intertwines both areas.”

Not pictured:

Levi Chavez: Junior | Studio Art

Hanna Harmon: Junior | Astrophysics

Jenna Meyers: Junior | Independent major

Rebeca Rodriguez: Junior | Biochemistry

Mahilet Tefera: Junior | Biochemistry

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.