



SROP

2020 Virtual Summer Research Opportunity Program

June 22-July 31, 2020





A Message from the **Interim Dean**

The Summer Research Opportunity Program (SROP) is a signature activity hosted by The Graduate School at Northwestern University. SROP was launched at Big Ten Academic Alliance universities in 1986 as a gateway to graduate education for underrepresented students. Over the past three and a half decades, it has grown into a supervised research-intensive experience, complemented by academic enrichment activities and exposure to graduate school as a post-baccalaureate option.

The Graduate School is proud to advocate for a diverse graduate student and postdoctoral trainee population, as well as an equitable graduate student experience across Northwestern. The recruitment and retention of a diverse graduate student and postdoctoral community is central to our mission, and programs such as SROP are vital in these efforts. I have had the pleasure of mentoring and working with a number of SROP students, and it has been very rewarding to watch their careers develop.

This year we find ourselves in unprecedented and difficult circumstances with the COVID-19 pandemic, leading us to transition SROP from an in-person, research-intensive experience to a remote and virtual format. However, the program has continued to offer our student participants a wide-ranging series of academic activities and professional development workshops to aid in preparing each individual for their next steps toward graduate education.

Congratulations to all of our student participants, faculty and student mentors, and staff who have made this experience possible. We hope that SROP inspires your continued learning and exploration, at Northwestern and beyond.

Sincerely,

Kelly E. Mayo

Walter and Jennie Bayne Professor of Molecular Biosciences
Interim Dean of The Graduate School and
Interim Associate Provost for Graduate Education
Northwestern University



A Message from the **Assistant Dean**

Thank you for joining us for our milestone 35th Annual Research Forum for Northwestern's Summer Research Opportunity Program (SROP). We are extremely proud of our 26 SROP participants who will be sharing their summer research projects through oral presentations in our inaugural remote program.

We recognize that innovative research and scholarship must include diversity, equity, and inclusion. To remain competitive as a research university of the first rank, we must recommit, restructure, and reframe discussions that tie diversity to access, matriculation, retention, progress, and mentoring. SROP fosters diverse ideas, experiences, and identities for innovation and inclusive excellence.

We welcomed our SROP students six weeks ago with orientation programming including workshops on mentoring, time management, research, and writing skills. Our SROP participants networked with current graduate students and administrators at professional development events, practiced presentation skills with Ready, Set, Go programming, and enjoyed remote socializing and coaching in our inaugural Purple Table conversation hosted by the SROP group leaders who are current Northwestern PhD students.

The success of SROP would not be possible without the partnership of many Northwestern colleagues. I would like to extend a sincere thank you to The Graduate School, SROP faculty mentors, and SROP leaders, as well as The Graduate School's Office of Diversity and Inclusion for their leadership and resilience during this unprecedented time in history. We look forward to continuing to sponsor this wonderful program in the years to come. Congratulations to our scholars on this milestone accomplishment.

Sincerely,

Damon L. Williams, Jr (he/him/his)

Assistant Dean of Diversity and Inclusion
The Graduate School



A Message from the **SROP** Team

Thank you for joining us today as we celebrate the achievements and research of our 35th Summer Research Opportunity Program (SROP) cohort. We, the SROP team, have had the honor of engaging with the SROP students as The Graduate School's Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) staff, graduate student leaders, and collaborators to make our adapted virtual experience one of quality, co-learning, and community.

We have been impressed by the caliber of our students, their resilience, and joy throughout this entire process, resulting in us being filled with so much joy and life. Fearless of the challenges of a virtual program and tenacious of the opportunities presented to them, our SROP students have participated in ongoing remote research, data and literature research analysis, independent research, and review writing for ongoing and future projects. We have learned so much from them and we are excited to experience what they will contribute to the future of academia and society at large.

Our success this year would not have been possible without the partnership of many Northwestern colleagues and, above all, the commitment, dedication, and focus of our students. We would like to extend a sincere thank you to The Graduate School staff, SROP faculty mentors, and all of our guest speakers for their support of SROP. We look forward to continuing working with you and enhancing this amazing program in the years to come.

Sincerely,

The SROP Team

SROP Research Symposium Schedule - July 31, 2020

Opening Ceremonies

- 11:00 AM** **Opening Remarks**
Damon L. Williams, Jr.
Assistant Dean of Diversity & Inclusion
- 11:05 AM** **Welcome Remarks**
Kelly E. Mayo, PhD
Interim Dean of The Graduate School
- 11:10 AM** **Humanities/SBS Presentation**
Janelle Green
- 11:20 AM** **STEM Presentation**
Luis Aldama

Oral Presentations

	Room 1	Room 2	Room 3	Room 4
11:45 AM	Jonathan Valmonte	Zaina Moussa	Sophia Hernandez	Aaliyah Berryman
11:55 AM	Keala Uchoa	Justin Jasperse	Gabriel Pineda	Kenya Bonitto
12:05 PM	Marie-Emmanuelle Tano	Kourtni McNeil	Bishop Lawton	Julian Acevedo
12:15 PM	Break			
12:30 PM	Erin King	Cheyenne Bates	Idel Martinez	Yamina Sfiat
12:40 PM	Miguel Chavez	Ariana Del Valle	Kiana Staples	Brandon Campbell
12:50 PM	Alicia Rivera Durán	Joseph Salem-Hernández	Gabriel Torres-Mejias	Stephanie M. Pérez Cabrera

SROP Participants



Julian Acevedo

English & History, Rutgers University-New Brunswick
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Paul Gillingham

Julian Acevedo is a rising senior at Rutgers University-New Brunswick, where he is double majoring in English and history, with a minor in Latino and Caribbean studies. Julian's research interests surround the study of 20th century Latin America, focusing on the Catholic Church, political conflict, and drug trafficking. Born in Medellin, Colombia, but growing up in Southern New Jersey, Julian has developed a particular interest in learning about the past of Latin America to better understand its present changes. As a McNair Scholar, Julian hopes to earn his PhD in Latin American history, with the hopes of teaching in academia or working with the Colombian government. Julian's interests outside academia include MMA, soccer, basketball, and above all, nerd culture (video games, manga, anime, movies, board games, etc.).



Luis Aldama

Biology, Northeastern Illinois University
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Heather Pinkett

Luis Aldama is a biology major with a minor in mathematical and statistical modeling at Northeastern Illinois University. He was awarded the Maximizing Access to Research Careers (MARC) Training Grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Luis' undergraduate thesis focuses on investigating the structure and function of a light-regulated enzyme by using X-ray crystallography. To conduct his research, Luis has become familiar with methods such as protein expression, purification, and crystallization and data analysis. Luis' dream has always been to become a dentist, but with his newfound love for research, he now hopes to pursue a dual DDS/PhD or DMD/PhD. As a first-generation student and son of two Mexican immigrants, he also aspires to mentor and help underserved students develop their careers. Outside of school, Luis enjoys spending time with his four dogs, listening to music, trying new cuisines, and playing chess.



Cheyenne Bates

Psychological Sciences, California State University San Marcos
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Jennifer Tackett

Cheyenne Bates is a first-generation college student, and rising senior, studying psychological sciences at California State University San Marcos. Her experiences growing up Black and Mexican in impoverished areas of San Diego have continuously motivated her to be resilient despite adversity and inspiring others to advocate for their own success, as well as the success of others. Currently, she is engaged in research that aims to further clarify the spectrum of typical and atypical externalizing behaviors and how they relate to psychopathology in early childhood. Her experiences in the lab, serving as a youth leader in both low- and high-income communities, participating in minority training programs, and tutoring her peers have inspired her to pursue a PhD in psychology. Cheyenne aspires to conduct research on how identity and society-based factors such as socioeconomic status, stereotypes, race, and culture relate to self-efficacy, as well as mental and physical health outcomes in minority youth populations. Her ultimate goal is to use the knowledge she gains through academia and in everyday life to be an effective tenure professor and community advocate. In her free time, Cheyenne enjoys dancing and spending time with her family.

SROP Participants



Aaliyah Berryman

Sociology & International Studies, Northwestern University

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Mary Pattillo

Aaliyah Berryman is a rising junior at Northwestern University studying sociology and international studies. She is interested in Black transnationalism and how the perception of Blackness transcends and transforms along and across boundaries and borders. Her research this summer, under the mentorship of Professor Pattillo, consists of a content analysis of newspapers in four countries to understand how the recent murder of George Floyd at the hands of U.S. police has been interpreted by Black and other racialized groups contesting the inequities within their own countries. Outside of academics, Aaliyah is a mentor for first-year first-generation, low-income students and serves as a work-study student at Northwestern University Women's Center. In the future, she hopes to pursue a PhD in sociology and a JD in refugee law.



Kenya Bonitto

Molecular, Cell, and Developmental Biology, University of California, Los Angeles

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Panagiotis Ntziachristos

Kenya Bonitto, is a rising senior at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). She is majoring in molecular, cell, and developmental biology and minoring in biomedical research. She is from Houston, TX. Aside from spending time with her friends, trying new foods, and enjoying the beautiful city of Los Angeles, Kenya has always loved singing, and even participates in the UCLA Choir. Despite her love for music, Kenya has always wanted to pursue a career in the biomedical sciences. She started research in a lab that explored how RNA and RNA-binding proteins affect gene expression and how their deregulation contributes to disease. She currently conducts research in a lab that explores the molecular mechanisms of cellular quiescence, specifically how certain epigenetic modifications affect cell cycle regulation. As she continues her research at UCLA and now at Northwestern, Kenya intends to pursue her PhD with the ultimate goal of becoming a principal investigator at a university. Her experiences so far, inside and outside of the lab, have only reinforced her admiration of the scientific world, instilling in her the desire to change the world through her scientific contributions.



Brandon Campbell

Chemistry, Washington University in St. Louis

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Adilson Motter

Brandon Campbell is a rising senior at Washington University in St. Louis. He is majoring in chemistry. Brandon is from Bloomington, IL. His research at his home institution revolves around synthesizing different material systems and studying their response to external stimuli such as photoexcitation or applied voltages. This work has numerous applications such as the design of photocatalytic materials for green energy production. Brandon's SROP research focuses on carbon cycle modeling and is under the mentorship of Dr. Adilson Motter. Upon graduation, Brandon intends to pursue a PhD in chemistry, with the goal of pursuing a career in academia. In his free time, Brandon likes to play and watch sports, produce music, play board games, and watch Netflix. His favorite sport is soccer, and he also plays club ultimate frisbee at Washington University.

SROP Participants



Miguel Chavez

Sociology & Women's and Gender Studies, University of Oklahoma
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Michael Rodríguez-Muñiz

Miguel Chavez is a rising senior at the University of Oklahoma pursuing a double major in sociology and women's and gender studies. Although he was born in Oklahoma City, his family hails from Chihuahua, Mexico. Miguel's research interests are situated at the intersections of race, inequality, sexuality, and religion. As a McNair Scholar, Miguel analyzed the impacts of race, mentorship, and socioeconomic status on graduate school preparation. He also examined the effects of class, education, and religion on Latino partisanship within the United States. For his honors thesis, Miguel conducted a cross-cultural analysis of *Mexicanidad*, *machismo*, and hegemonic masculinity within *lucha libre* and professional wrestling more broadly. In 2017, Miguel founded Miracle Mindset, which is a college access program that aims to eliminate the disparity of educational resources, information, and opportunities facing first-generation, low-income high school students in Oklahoma City by providing them with the necessary tools and guidance to successfully apply to top colleges and scholarship programs. After graduating, Miguel aims to continue his research in a PhD program while continuing to explore different pathways that ensure his research remains accessible for communities outside of academia.



Ariana Del Valle

Physics, University of Illinois at Chicago
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Sossina M. Haile

Ariana Del Valle is a junior at the University of Illinois at Chicago, where she is majoring in physics with a double minor in materials engineering and mathematics. She is originally from Trujillo Alto, Puerto Rico, but has lived in the northwest Chicago suburbs for eight years. She is passionate about applied science, her Puerto Rican culture, and environmental sustainability. Her research interests are in exploring the efficiency and translatability of small energy sources in order to aid the rehabilitation of infrastructure affected by natural disasters. Her motivation stems from the devastating effects Hurricane Maria had on the Puerto Rican people and landscape, and the difficulties experienced during rehabilitation and the rebuilding of infrastructure. During the SROP, under Dr. Sossina Haile, she researches thermochemical fuel production and explores different material thermodynamic and environmental conditions for optimal solar fuel generation. After obtaining her bachelor's degree, Ariana would like to attend a graduate program in materials science or energy engineering in order to further her research goals, and she hopes to contribute to the development and the distribution of green energy technologies to remote areas affected by disasters. In her free time, she enjoys playing with her two cats, traveling, and playing video games.



Janelle Green

African American Studies & Philosophy, Claflin University
Faculty Mentor: Dr. kihana miraya ross

Janelle Green is a senior at Claflin University double majoring in African American studies and philosophy. She is the recipient of the English-Speaking Union (ESU) Luard Morse Scholarship, which allowed her to attend Oxford University in spring 2020 as a visiting student in Hertford College. Her research interests include intersectional educational inequality, prison reform, and the various creative outlets that Black women use to document and express their trauma within both systems.

SROP Participants



Sophia Hernandez

Economics & English Literature, Northwestern University

Mentor: Dr. Emily Maguire

Sophia Hernandez is a rising junior at Northwestern University majoring in economics and English literature. She is from Miami, FL. In addition to her passions for reading and writing, Sophia enjoys running, spending time with friends and family, and listening to music. At Northwestern, Sophia is a resident assistant and Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow (MMUF). After graduation, Sophia hopes to pursue a PhD. Her ultimate goal is to expand the notion of “American literature” for her future students and to teach classes concentrated on Latinx literature, especially Cuban-American literature. She also yearns to have the opportunity to serve as a mentor for students from underrepresented minority groups, just as many of her professors have done for her.



Justin Jasperse

Philosophy, Northwestern University

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Chad Horne

Justin Jasperse is a rising junior at Northwestern University majoring in philosophy and minoring in classics. He primarily specializes in bioethics, information technology, and transhumanism. Justin was born and raised in Burnsville, MN, a suburb of Minneapolis. Throughout high school and college, Justin has been involved in academic trivia competitions as both a staff member and a player. In his spare time, he enjoys reading science fiction novels and playing video games with friends and family. Justin is a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow (MMUF) and a QuestBridge Scholar. In the future, Justin hopes to earn his PhD in philosophy and work in academia.

As a member of the Filipinx community, he hopes to increase awareness of the unique cultural traditions and values of the Philippines in higher education. Additionally, Justin wants to dispel the “ivory tower” view of philosophy by making the field more inclusive and attentive to the voices of non-white, non-CIS people in academia. As a first-generation low-income student, Justin aims to use his experiences to mentor students who need encouragement in pursuing a degree in the humanities while coping with financial hardship and feelings of “imposter syndrome.”



Erin King

Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, Xavier University of Louisiana

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Pamela Souza

Erin King is a rising junior at Xavier University of Louisiana, majoring in speech-language pathology and audiology. After obtaining her undergraduate degree, she plans on going to graduate school. Erin is interested in the development of literacy and language skills of children of different cultural backgrounds that may have a certain dialect. She is also interested in hearing loss due to presbycusis, noise-exposure as well as exploring D/deafness and the different treatment plans that can help improve a patient’s hearing. This summer Erin is working on research, with her mentor Dr. Pamela Souza, that explores the effects of acoustic differences, within various speakers, on a listener with a hearing impairment. When Erin is not in school she enjoys hanging out with her family and friends. Erin was born and raised in the south side of Chicago and loves to walk along the lake front when she returns home from school. Some of Erin’s hobbies include yoga, embroidery, and cooking plant-based meals.

SROP Participants



Bishop Lawton

History, Howard University

Faculty Mentor: Dr. John D. Marquez

Bishop Lawton is a rising senior at Howard University majoring in history. He is from Jacksonville, FL. As an undergraduate, Bishop has engaged in several research projects and academic programs. He has served as an intern at the Ritz Theater and African-American History Museum in Jacksonville, worked on the Ballitore Archive Digitization Project at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and has been a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow (MMUF) since his sophomore year. His research interests include Pan-African intellectual history, the history of pre-colonial African civilizations, and 20th-century Black movements. This summer, Bishop is working with Dr. John D. Marquez from the Department of African-American Studies on a project centered around the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). In his spare time, Bishop enjoys reading, doing calisthenics, playing basketball, and watching television. In further pursuit of his interests, in June 2020, Bishop became a writer for blackpast.org, the largest online encyclopedia of African American history. He aspires to pursue his PhD in history and eventually become a professor.



Idel Martinez

Computer Science, University of Central Florida

Faculty Mentors: Dr. Robby Findler & Dr. Christos Dimoulas

Idel Martinez started studying computer science in 2017 after having worked most of his life with computers, although never having programmed before. The more he learned about programming, the more he realized how similar it was to his passion for baking. In the same way one can create delicious pastries with simple ingredients, one could create entire programs from small segments of code. Relating this construction of programs to making baked goods, Idel has applied his mindset of experimentation and creativity to programming. As he realized he loved learning new things, be it photography, recipes, or programming languages, Idel set his sights on attending graduate school, with the hopes of sharing his enthusiasm of learning through teaching.



Kourtnei McNeil

Cognitive Science, Northwestern University

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Brady Clark

Kourtnei McNeil is a rising senior at Northwestern University majoring in cognitive science with a minor in creative writing. Her research interests are in the field of cognitive poetics, as it allows her to apply her work in cognitive science and linguistics to her studies in poetry and literature. She is especially interested in studying the works of Black poets such as Patricia Smith and James Baldwin and exploring how their use of language is unique to their experiences as Black writers. Kourtnei was previously a participant in Northwestern's Posner Fellowship program and a researcher in Professor Jennifer Cole's ProsD lab. She is currently entering her second year as a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow (MMUF). Outside of research, Kourtnei is a co-president of Northwestern's spoken word poetry club, the Slam Society, where she organizes open mic events and contributes to fostering a creative and accepting space for poets and performers. After graduation Kourtnei plans to spend time studying abroad and eventually pursue a PhD in linguistics.

SROP Participants



Zaina Moussa

Bioengineering, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Guillermo Ameer

Zaina Moussa is a rising senior studying bioengineering with a minor in Japanese at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). She is from Lubbock, TX. Her research interests lie in low-cost, accessible medical devices at the intersection of electrical engineering, materials science, and biochemistry. She is interested in pursuing a career as a physician scientist and aspires to a future of translational research, while treating patients directly impacted by those research efforts. Her previous projects include optimizing endoscopically injectable shear-thinning hydrogels to facilitate polyp removal surgery and building a machine learning algorithm to diagnose early stage Amyloid Light (AL) chain Amyloidosis. Zaina is currently undertaking an independent project on high-fidelity detection of estrogen using photoelectrochemical analysis. At Northwestern, she works in Dr. Ameer's lab quantifying wound healing of diabetic chronic ulcers. At MIT, she is involved in the Black Student's Union, the Black Women's Alliance, and the Muslim Students Association. Outside of academics, Zaina enjoys being a part of hip-hop and Afro-Caribbean dance teams. She speaks French and Arabic, and is currently learning Japanese and Spanish.



Stephanie M. Pérez Cabrera

Marketing, Ana G. Méndez University, Gurabo Campus

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Maferima (Rima) Toure-Tillery

Stephanie M. Pérez Cabrera is originally from Puerto Rico. At 16 years old, she started her professional development as a massive event producer. In the summer of 2018, Stephanie worked at United Health Care as a sales intern. During her sophomore year, she did an internship in SMG-Worldwide Entertainment & Convention Venue Management in the "Coliseo de Puerto Rico José Miguel Agrelot" as a marketing intern. At the same time she served as a student ambassador for the Hispanic Educational Technology Services. Stephanie believes that knowledge introduces her to more opportunities; that is why she immerses herself in the research world, working in projects of consumer behavior, neuromarketing, and business continuity practices. Stephanie actively volunteers in fundraiser activities for hospitals, children, and elderly homes. What Stephanie enjoys the most is running and going to concerts or any artistic event. Currently, she is a rising senior majoring in marketing at Ana G. Méndez University, Gurabo Campus, and her plans upon graduation are to enroll in a graduate school, focusing on marketing.



Gabriel Pineda

Gender and Sexuality Studies & Media and Cultural Studies, University of California, Riverside

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Marquis Bey

Gabriel "Gabe" Pineda, is a genderqueer, Mexican-American, and first-generation college student double majoring in gender and sexuality studies and media and cultural studies at the University of California, Riverside (UCR). Specifically, Gabe concentrates on the intersections of race, class, transgender identity, gender non-conformity, and incarceration within literature and media. Essentially, Gabe inquires how previous authors have succeeded or failed to formulate a critical queer/trans political analysis of the prison industrial complex and carceral politics. In addition to being a University Honors Scholar and a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow (MMUF), Gabe serves as a peer educator/mentor for UCR's Academic Resource Center and the first-year learning communities of the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences. While being the president of UCR's Planned Parenthood Generation Action, Gabe has also been heavily involved in Queer Alliance, Associated Students of UCR, and the LGBT Resource Center. After graduating from UCR, Gabe plans to pursue a PhD in sociology or media studies and to continue their career in academia, in hopes of encouraging, mentoring, and building bridges for other LGBTQ+ students interested in higher education. Gabe is originally from San Diego, CA.

SROP Participants



Alicia Rivera Durán

Social Psychology, University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Eli Finkel

Alicia Rivera Durán is a rising senior at the University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez campus. Throughout the past academic year she partook in a research team that analyzed sexual harassment among athletes from Puerto Rico's federation of athletics. This summer, she is working alongside Dr. Eli Finkel and Mrs. Lydia Emery studying conflict resolution in romantic relationship between couples of different socioeconomic statuses. Alicia's research interests include sexual violence, objectification theory, marriage, and interpersonal relationships. In her free time, Alicia practices American Sign Language (ASL) and volunteers at SIEMPREVIVAS – a non-profit organization located in Puerto Rico that provides legal intercession, as well as psychological counseling and support groups, for survivors of sexual violence and their families.



Joseph Salem-Hernández

Cellular and Molecular Biology, University of Puerto Rico-Rio Piedras

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Angel Alvarez

Joseph Salem-Hernández is a rising senior at the University of Puerto Rico majoring in cellular and molecular biology. He has been under the tutelage of José E. García-Arrarás, PhD since freshman year, where they have researched cellular and molecular mechanisms driving organ regeneration in the sea cucumber. Joseph has also been a Puerto Rico Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (PR-LSAMP) fellow, a Molecular Biology Summer Academy (MBSA) fellow at the Universidad Central del Caribe School of Medicine, a co-founder of the Puerto Rico Rising Scientists Initiative (PRRSI), and an organic chemistry and genetics tutor. He serves as an active member in MEDLIFE, Rotaract and the Pre-Medical Association of Puerto Rico and as a clinical volunteer at the VA Caribbean Healthcare Hospital. Joseph aspires to become a physician-scientist and hopes to bridge the gap between stem cell research and regenerative medicine. Outside of academics, Joseph has been influenced by his experiences in Puerto Rico, particularly his unbreakable bond with his Lebanese father. He loves reading, weightlifting, playing basketball, going to the beach, and hanging out with his friends.



Yamina Sfiat

Criminal Justice & Political Science, University of Central Florida

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Kimberly Suseeya

Yamina Sfiat was born and raised in Boston, MA. She attends the University of Central Florida (UCF) where she is dual majoring in criminal justice and political science. Her research foci are many, but mainly surround Indigenous rights and politics, corrections within the criminal justice system, tribal government, and environmental justice. At UCF, she is working on a comparative case study analysis on the treatment of Amazigh peoples. She chose Algeria and Morocco for their large populations of Amazigh peoples and analyses how each country treats them. She plans to pursue a PhD in indigenous studies or political science and partake in Indigenous activism and policy reform to support Indigenous populations and other POC. She also wants to be an educator. In her free time, she likes to do creative writing, mix up her music playlists, and read.

SROP Participants



Kiana Staples

Korean Language and Culture, Northwestern University

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Nitasha Tamar Sharma

Kiana Staples is a rising junior at Northwestern University majoring in Korean language and culture. Her identity as a biracial Black woman and her father's past experiences as a Black soldier in Korea have inspired her to study perceptions of Blackness and Black experiences in South Korea. She is specifically interested in investigating the experiences of Black female English teachers living in Korea and representations of Black women in Korean music. She dedicates her research to her father, who unexpectedly passed away on March 25, 2020. Outside of her research, Kiana enjoys listening to music, playing Animal Crossing and Sims 4, and cuddling with her four family cats. She also loves creating artwork and enjoys traveling to Chicago to get tattoos from some of her favorite artists. After graduation, she plans to pursue a PhD in Korean studies and become a professor who encourages students of color to educate themselves about each other's histories.



Marie-Emmanuelle Tano

Cognitive Science and Africana Studies, Pomona College

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Annette D'Onofrio

Marie-Emmanuelle Tano is a senior at Pomona College pursuing a double major in cognitive science and Africana studies, with a minor in linguistics. Following graduation, she plans to enroll in graduate school, with aspirations of becoming the first person in her West African family to obtain a PhD. As a Black southerner born and raised in Atlanta, Marie has always found interest in regional dialects and accents, which led her to focus her academic interest within the field of sociolinguistics. Her most recent research project examined how social media has influenced the spread of African-American English and Black linguistic stylization. Outside of academia, Marie also loves writing opinion pieces on her personal blog.



Gabriel Torres-Mejias

Biological Sciences, University of Puerto Rico at Ponce

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Gayle Woloschak

Gabriel Torres-Mejias is an aspiring biologist born in New York and raised in Puerto Rico. He is studying biology, with a concentration on biomedical sciences, at the University of Puerto Rico at Ponce, where he strives to become a strong and well-rounded candidate for graduate school. Gabriel's interest in science began at a very early age, when he noticed that he was different from other kids. While all his friends had five fingers, he had six on both hands. Throughout his childhood he always wondered why his hands were so different from normal kids, a question to which neither his grandparents nor his teachers could provide an answer. Years later he learned that he was born with post axial polydactyly, a genetic congenital malformation that gave him an extra finger. Throughout his academic journey, he has had the opportunity to work in different laboratory settings, received National Science Foundation (NSF)-funded (Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation (LSAMP)) and National Institutes of Health (NIH)-funded (Representation, Inclusion, Support and Empowerment (RISE)) fellowships, participated in Northwestern University's SROP (2019–20), and received outstanding presentation awards at the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS) 2019 and the 2020 Emerging Researchers National (ERN) Conference in STEM, among other accomplishments.

SROP Participants



Keala Uchoa

Critical Race and Environmental Justice & Legal Studies, Northwestern University
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Michael Rodríguez-Muñiz

Keala Uchoa is a rising junior studying critical race and environmental justice and legal studies at Northwestern University. She is from the San Francisco Bay Area. Her scholarly and political passions are environmental/climate justice, prison abolition, Afro-Latinx studies, and decolonial studies in the U.S. and Brasil, where her family is from. Her current research examines the linkages between environmental justice and abolitionist frameworks in order to understand how they are being articulated on-the-ground and deepening the liberatory potential of both movements. In the future, she hopes to pursue a joint JD and PhD focusing on criminal justice and ethnic studies, which will aid her in her organizing efforts. In addition to being a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow (MMUF), Keala is the president of Fossil Free Northwestern, an organization fighting for climate justice within and beyond Northwestern.



Jonathan Valmonte

Psychology, DePaul University
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Sylvia Perry

Jonathan Valmonte is a rising junior at DePaul University majoring in psychology and minoring in statistics and LGBTQ studies. Born and raised with his twin brother in Pasadena, CA, John enjoys going to the beach, taking hikes, and discovering new adventures in far and exciting places. John's research interests encompass the psychology of marginalized communities and their intergroup processes, particularly concerning intersections of sexual identities, biases, stereotypes, and discrimination. As a school liaison since freshman year for the DePaul Cities Project, an interventional mental health mentorship program for disadvantaged South Side Chicago adolescents, research and community support have always been inseparable components of his undergraduate work. John plans to earn a PhD in social or clinical psychology so that he may one day establish his own practice tailored for the mental health of underrepresented communities, particularly the LGBTQ community. John hopes to not only address the psychological disparities between individuals, but also the greater social, political, and economic disparities between communities that operate against a collective harmony.

SROP Group Leaders



Schnaude Dorizan

PhD Candidate, Neuroscience

Schnaude Dorizan is a Haitian-born native of Brooklyn, NY. She attended the University of Maryland Baltimore County where she double majored in biology and psychology. After earning her degrees, she went on to complete a two-year post-baccalaureate program at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx where she investigated the role of the cerebellar-VTA pathway in social behavior. Schnaude is now a fifth-year PhD candidate in the Interdepartmental Neuroscience Program at Northwestern University and is a member of the SeNSE Lab under the direction of Dr. Mitra Hartmann. She is working to understand how the spinal trigeminal nucleus is involved in mediating whisker behavior in rats. She is passionate about mentorship and outreach. Her hope for the future is to combine her love of science and outreach so that every child is granted the opportunity to learn and explore the world around them. When she is not doing science, Schnaude loves to dance, play softball, and watch the original *Twilight Zone* series.



Ivan Hernandez

PhD Candidate, Social Psychology

Ivan Alfonso Hernandez is a fourth-year PhD candidate in the social psychology program at Northwestern University. He earned his bachelor's degree from California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) where he majored in psychological science. At CSUSM he received the Presidents Outstanding Student Award and the Outstanding Graduating Student Dean's Award from the College of Humanities, Arts, and Behavioral & Social Sciences. His research focuses on understanding the psychological factors that influence the identities, well-being, and academic outcomes of students from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds and historically underrepresented racial-ethnic groups. Ivan is a first-generation Latinx college student and proudly comes from a family of Mexican immigrants who have worked incredibly hard in this country.



Yaquelin Morales

PhD Candidate, Performance Studies

Yaquelin Eunise Morales is a third-year PhD candidate in performance studies from Los Angeles. Her research focuses on the multiple forms of displacement of Latinx populations, particularly the Central American experience. She works with Los Angeles-based poet Yesika Salgado, a self-proclaimed "Fat, Fly, Brown Poet." Through this collaborative work she investigates the ways in which she uses her body, aesthetics, and poetry to challenge gentrification in Los Angeles. Yaquelin's work comes from an urgent need to highlight the multi-layered forms of displacement that marginalized groups face in the wake of gentrification. She focuses on exploring the question of what happens in the in-betweenness of displacement.

Yaquelin received her BA in sociology from California State University, Northridge. Her research interests are Latina/o studies, Central American studies, border studies, Chicana/o studies, urban planning studies, and gender and sexuality studies.

SROP Group Leaders



Elizabeth Tsui

PhD Candidate, Life Sciences

Elizabeth Tsui is a second-year PhD candidate in the Driskill Graduate Program (DGP), as well as a student in Northwestern's Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP). She is mentored by Monica Laronda, PhD, whose work centers on optimizing fertility preservation and hormone restoration technologies for pediatric cancer patients. She is passionate about understanding the molecular mechanisms that drive cancer, as well as how the microenvironment contributes to metastatic disease. Elizabeth completed her undergraduate studies at Duke University in Durham, NC, where she majored in biology and minored in chemistry and Asian and Middle Eastern studies. Outside of academics, she is proud to celebrate her Filipinx and Hong Kong heritage, and therefore can often be found around copious amounts of delicious food.



Andrene Wright

PhD Candidate, Political Science

Andrene Wright is a first-generation American born and raised in Long Island, New York, and graduated from the City University of New York (CUNY) John Jay College in 2017. Immediately after, she began her PhD career at Northwestern University, specializing in American politics, specifically, urban politics and political behavior at the intersection of race, gender, and class. As a scholar and fourth-year PhD candidate, Andrene is committed to espousing the voices of Black women through the production of academic work and especially through meaningful engagement within marginalized communities. At the end of her time at Northwestern, she hopes to earn a tenure-track position in the field of political science and/or gender and sexuality studies. In her free time, she loves dancing, cooking, and watching HBO's *Insecure*, *Euphoria*, and *Succession* (or most things on HBO, really).

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion

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Damon L. Williams, Jr.
Assistant Dean of Diversity and Inclusion
The Graduate School



Erica Knight
Senior Program Coordinator
The Graduate School



Rashaad Barnett
Program Coordinator, SROP Director
The Graduate School



Felix Nunez '15 PhD
SROP Coordinator
Postdoctoral Trainee, Thoracic
Surgery Division of Pulmonary and
Critical Care Medicine



Liliana Hernandez-Gonzalez
Diversity and Inclusion Graduate Intern
PhD Candidate, Civil & Environmental
Engineering



Ivan Hernandez
Diversity and Inclusion Graduate Intern
PhD Candidate, Social Psychology



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