



Milken Institute School
of Public Health
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

GWSPH Public Health Scholars Program

Cohort 1

Spring 2023

Milken Institute School of Public Health

George Washington University

950 New Hampshire Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20052

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Alisa Bannerjee (she/her/hers)

Alisa was born and raised in Columbia, MD and now reside in Baltimore, MD. She completed her undergraduate degree at University of Maryland, Baltimore County with a double major in Psychology, B.A. and Biological Sciences, B.A. Currently, she works as a Research Coordinator for the Laboratory of Behavioral Neuroscience (LBN) at the National Institute of Aging (NIA), National Institute of Health (NIH) in Baltimore, MD. Outside of school and work, she is also a professional portrait and family photographer, avid world traveler (having visited 20+ countries), and loving cat-mom to a sweet fur-girl named Henney.

Alisa was inspired to pursue an MPH degree at the George Washington University Milken School of Public Health through her deep passion for fighting against public health disparities and promoting health equity across the United States. In addition, Alisa plans on completing a concentration on Women, Youth and Child Health to further direct her interest in women's and child health. After graduation, she aspires to work in a local or state health department on program development, implementation, and management, particularly focusing on women's health, reproductive health, and maternal and child health, especially in marginalized communities.



Griffin Barriss

Griffin Barriss is a second-year Global Health Policy MPH candidate at The George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health. He also works full-time at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s Office of Appropriations, where he helps prepare the annual Congressional Budget justification for CDC's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) and manages congressional relations between NCHS and members of Congress. Griffin came to CDC via the Public Health Associates Program (PHAP), where he was placed at the non-profit Physical Activity Alliance (PAA) and managed external communications for PAA's campaigns, webinars, and publications in support of physical activity. Griffin

graduated from Elon University in 2021 with a Bachelors of Arts in Public Health Studies and International & Global studies. He grew up in Melrose, MA, and currently lives in Washington, DC.



Carolyn Brown-Kaiser (she/her/hers)

Raised just outside of Washington, D.C., Carolyn has always been intrigued by public policy and social justice. Seeking to marry her passions for reproductive justice and science, she pursued a Bachelor of Arts in Global Public Health and Biology at the University of Virginia. In May 2022, Carolyn graduated Phi Beta Kappa from UVA and is now pursuing her Master of Public Health in Maternal and Child Health at George Washington University's Milken Institute School of Public Health. She is also a Graduate Research Assistant and Teaching Assistant for the Maternal and Child Health Center of Excellence. Carolyn is passionate about Maternal and Child Health Epidemiology and firmly believes it is crucial to have high-quality measurements of key indicators to advance the health of women, children, and families. She intends to deepen her understanding of the social determinants of health and apply this knowledge to the real world. Inspired and informed by the reproductive justice framework, she is driven to address the many health inequities persisting both in the United States, and globally.



Cara Dufresne (she/her/hers)

Cara is pursuing her MPH at GW in the Maternal and Child Health program. She graduated from Tufts University in 2022 with a Bachelor's degree in Community Health and a minor in Child Development. Cara currently works for a local health department in Medford, Massachusetts as a youth coordinator under a grant aimed at preventing initiation of substance use among youth. Her topics of interest include substance use, positive youth development, mental health, and reproductive health, rights, and justice.



Kathryn (Katie) Ghougasian (she/her/hers)

Katie is an MPH in Health Policy student at the Milken Institute School of Public Health at George Washington University. She currently works as a Research Assistant at the Sumner M. Redstone Global Center for Prevention & Wellness, where she works with the STOP Obesity Alliance on various projects in research and advocacy. Also in this role, she coordinates hospital sustainability projects with GW Hospital administration. She completed her practicum with the Drug and Injury Prevention Team at Guilford County Health Department in North Carolina doing a literature review on policies that impact resources available to people with substance use disorder. Also during her MPH program, Katie worked as a Government Affairs Intern with the National Association for County and City Health Officials where she helped advocate for increased funding for health departments. She earned her B.A. in Religious Studies and B.S. in Public Health from the University of Miami. While at the University of Miami, she worked as a student health peer educator with program development and implementation and interned at the Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County with the HIV education and outreach team. In her free time, Katie enjoys exploring D.C., cooking, and reading.



Rikayah Mixson (she/her/hers)

New Jersey native, Rikayah Mixson, is an MPH Community-Oriented Primary Care candidate at the Milken Institute School of Public Health. Her research and writing are rooted in health inequities that impact African-Americans/minority populations. In May of 2022, she graduated with her B.A. in Communication Studies at Rider University. There, she published several opinion editorials for Tapestry, an on-campus student organization. Some of the topics she discussed are Traditional Chinese Medicine, Signs You're Dealing With a Narcissist, The Birthing Crisis Among Black Women, and more. During her undergraduate studies, she also served as a research associate at the National Center for

African-American Health Disparities Education & Research, and as a McNair Scholar. In 2021, she presented a study addressing the implications of resilience in Black American Women at the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS).

Currently, Rikayah is a graduate assistant for Student Support and Military Services at George Washington University. Her ultimate goal is to continue to build upon her skills during her MPH program and create a non-profit organization that focuses on serving underprivileged communities. Rikayah's biggest accomplishments to date are GW HRSA PHSP, and interviewing radio personality, Angie Martinez, who discussed her maternal health issues as a minority woman during her pregnancy.



Dayna de Montagnac (she/her/hers)

Dayna is an MPH student at Milken studying environmental health science and policy. Originally from New Jersey, she came to D.C. to get her bachelor's degree in public health from American University. There, she discovered her passion for the intersection between human health and the environment, and maternal/child health. When Dayna was admitted to GWU, she began working for the Urban Health Program, where she learned more about the pollutants that we encounter on a daily basis. This inspired her to learn more by joining the EPA's Center for Public Health and

Environmental Assessment and working with the Environmental Defense Fund to identify chemicals classified under TSCA. Currently, Dayna is completing her practicum at the Prince George's County Health Department, where she works on lead safety communication and environmental health assessment. She also works as an administrative assistant for the Office of Research Excellence at GWU, publishing their biweekly newsletter, coordinating program marketing, and facilitating communication between schools. She has a passion for improving indoor air quality, maternal/child health, examining everyday chemicals, and environmental health communication. After receiving her MPH, Dayna hopes to work for an organization like the EDF that promotes environmental justice and gets people to take a closer look at how where they live and what they consume have an effect on their health.



Angel Oteghile (she/her/hers)

Angel is currently obtaining her MPH in Health Policy and Management, class of 2024. She grew up in a military family and considers Washington D.C. to be her current home. Although she has lived in multiple states and overseas, she's originally from Texas. Angel has had the opportunity to enter this field of public health originally as a Registered Nurse. She received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree from Howard University in 2019 and has been working in the profession since then, and throughout the pandemic as an agency nurse at various hospitals to improve nurse staffing shortages and patient outcomes. Angel currently works in an intermediate care unit at the largest healthcare system in

D.C. providing care to patients with advanced cardiac, metabolic, and respiratory illnesses. Angel hopes to continue her focus on systems-level interactions between our healthcare delivery system and communities of color predominantly issues regarding health equity—whether mental health disparities, lack of insurance coverage amongst minorities, disparities in reproductive and women's health, burden of comorbid illnesses among minorities, and improving access to care in rural communities. Aside from being a healthcare professional and advocate for minority health, she enjoys spending time with family, and friends, traveling, and trying new food. She's truly excited to be a part of GWSPH's first cohort of Public Health Scholars!



Laura Perez (she/her/hers)

Laura is an MPH candidate concentrating in health policy at the George Washington University's Milken Institute of Public Health. Born and raised in inner-city Dallas, TX, she hopes to focus her work on inner-city health, access to care, and health equality. Her passion strives on seeking improvement in health policy specifically among Spanish-speaking minorities living in inner-city communities.

During the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, she found her passion in public health and health policy. Her community faced a huge disadvantage when it came to access to care- many stating the cause was the language barrier and lack of translations. She noticed the deficiency of effective delivery of healthcare in these areas and sought change for her community.

Laura completed her undergraduate degree at The University of Texas at Austin, majoring in Government with a certificate in Social Inequality, Health, and Policy. After graduating, she worked at a specialist practice in Dallas helping patients understand their insurance policies, medical billing, and innovative patient care. There, she learned about health insurance policies while actively seeking innovative ways to improve human health and communication in such vulnerable communities.

Currently, she is working at an immunology clinic in Washington, DC as a patient care coordinator and part-time medical biller. She is still learning how to continue being an advocate for patients while keeping track of insurance policy changes and making sure everything regarding insurance is up to date for the clinic.

In her free time, Laura enjoys reading, doing embroidery, building Legos, exploring new Hispanic/Latinx restaurants, and facetimeing her family and dog.



Claire Summa (they/them/theirs)

Claire grew up in the Puget Sound region of Washington state and earned a B.S in Public Health – Global Health from the University of Washington in Seattle. While a student at UW they enjoyed a variety of work opportunities in public health, research and communications. Claire worked on a local documentary film crew, wrote for the student newspaper, worked for a health policy non-profit and completed research internships at the Washington State Department of Health and the Seattle Children’s Research Institute. After college, they worked in mental healthcare. First in outpatient TMS treatment for adults and then at a Dialectical Behavioral Therapy partial-hospitalization program for adolescents and adults. In every workplace setting, Claire has sought out opportunities to improve data collection and analysis, as well as advocate for the translations of findings from improved systems into policy change.

After beginning their MPH, Claire started working as a Research Specialist III at the Sumner M. Redstone Global Center for Prevention & Wellness. At the Redstone Center, Claire contributes to local policy research centered on climate and health in the District of Columbia. During their first academic year, Claire co-authored a policy recommendation report on the myriad public health benefits of activating local-facing District parks. Claire came to GW fresh off a summer working at a Washington state park and decades of accessing nature on the ancestral lands and waterways of the Coast Salish peoples. They believe environmental health and mental health are fundamentally linked and overlooked areas of public health. In their career, Claire hopes to strengthen critical public health infrastructure to build a resilient, equitable and healthy future for people and our planet.