The Office of Diversity & Multicultural Affairs

THE SUMMER PUBLIC HEALTH SCHOLARS PROGRAM (SPHSP)

2016 Participants

Columbia University Medical Center
College of Physicians and Surgeons
Amenda Almonte
School: CUNY Lehman College
Year: Senior
Public Health Interests: Public Health Nursing and Emergency Preparedness/Response
Career Goals: To finish my double major in Health Care Administration and Nursing. I would then love to marry my previous degrees with a Masters in Public Health. Low income communities are usually underserved and overlooked. I strive to be the individual that will serve and teach these communities the importance of sustaining a healthy lifestyle and taking care of your well-being.
Tell us something about yourself: I misspelled my name the first 16 years of my life.

Jorge Asenjo
School: University of Puerto Rico Rio Piedras
Year: Junior
Public Health Interests: Emergency Management and Infectious Diseases
Career Goals: I want to work in an agency or organization that enables me to assess communities’ resilience towards emergencies and target specific factors that impede effective emergency preparation.
Tell us something about yourself: I’ve discovered during my time in SPHSP that public health is much more than just an area of study. Public Health is a crossroads where every career and profession meet to work together for the betterment of society; just about any career can be linked one way or another to public health.
**Silva Avila-Garcia**

**School:** University of California Berkeley  
**Year:** Senior  
**Public Health Interests:** Community Health and Health Policy  
**Career Goals:** After I graduate from UC Berkeley, I plan to pursue a Master’s Degree in Public Health. My career goal is to work in the Public Health field advocating for health as a right and working with underserved communities domestically and in Latin America to improve their access to health care. Specifically, I will strive to address health disparities in vulnerable populations such as minorities, immigrants/refugees, and low-income individuals.

**Tell us something about yourself:** One of my favorite quotes by Martin Luther King Jr. is “Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.”

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**Gayle Benoit**

**School:** Prairie View A&M University  
**Year:** Senior  
**Public Health Interests:** Healthcare Administration  
**Career Goals:** To manage a health facility one day.  
**Tell us something about yourself:** I have gained some weight while being in this program!
Kristen Paul Bonifacio

School: University of Hawaii at Manoa
Year: Recent graduate
Public Health Interests: Epidemiology, Social Determinants of Health, HIV Interventions, Health disparities among minority groups. I am interested in the etiology of infectious diseases in relation to the psychosocial environment.
Career Goals: My career goal is to pursue a PhD in Public Health with a focus on Epidemiology. I would like to work as an infectious disease Epidemiologist for a health organization.
Tell us something about yourself: I was originally born in the Philippines. I moved to Hawaii when I was 8 years old, and I'm now living in NYC.

Catherine Bunza

School: Bryn Mawr College
Year: Junior
Public Health Interests: Urban Studies and Public Health, Eliminating Health Disparities
Career Goals: After receiving a Bachelor's Degree in Growth and Structure of Cities, I am interested in obtaining a Master's in Public Health focusing on Urban Studies. I am interested in evaluating the relationship between Urban Studies and Public Health and how urban environments determine one's opportunity to live a healthy life, especially for people who are overcome by health disparities. I would like to further my studies in obtaining a Medical Degree and expanding on access to quality health care for vulnerable populations.
Tell us something about yourself: As a Junior at Bryn Mawr College, I will hold the position as Traditions Mistress, where I will continue on the historic traditions of the College in welcoming the First-Year students. Traditions are a fundamental component to the sense of community at Bryn Mawr and I am eager to start this position next year!
Rogelio Caro

School: University of Pennsylvania
Year: Junior
Public Health Interests: Epidemiology
Career Goals: Getting an MPH in Epidemiology and working in social epidemiology or health policy
Tell us something about yourself: I am very passionate about advocating for marginalized communities.

Tyler Crowe

School: Skidmore College
Year: Junior
Public Health Interests: Healthcare Administration/ Health Education/ Minority Health Disparities
Career Goals: I am uncertain as to which career path I would like to pursue after graduation, but I do know that I am very passionate about tackling issues on health disparities, and educating the public and the youth. I hope to one day obtain my MBA/MPH and start up my own non-profit organization geared towards fixing and addressing issues of health disparities in underprivileged neighborhoods in the U.S. and eventually in the Caribbean where my family is from.
Tell us something about yourself: I’m a New York City native, I love the color red, and I’m a Leo.
Vy Doan

School: Pomona College
Year: Junior
Public Health Interests: Mental Health, Policy, Social Determinants of Health

Career Goals: My career goal is to eventually pursue an MPH and work to reduce health inequities within communities of color. Specifically, I would like to focus on increasing research and data disaggregation on the complex mental health needs within the Asian American and Pacific Islander community.

Tell us something about yourself: I love photography and graphic design! I hope to utilize these two passions in conjunction with my future advocacy work.

Mayra Janet Garcia

School: University of California, Berkeley
Year: Recent Graduate
Public Health Interests: Social Work

Career Goals: I am interested in pursuing a joint Master degree in Public Health and Social Work.
Tell us something about yourself: I am especially interested in community health and development.
Indigo Gill

School: Xavier University of Louisiana
Year: Junior
Public Health Interests: Nutrition and Food Security
Career Goals: I desire to become a preventive medicine doctor and public health professional with interests in obstetrics and gynecology. I wish to make nutrition a primary focus in my practice and aspire to promote the education of disease mechanisms among patients and to contribute to research efforts that are geared toward the prevention and control of obesity and its complications.

Tell us something about yourself: My favorite saying is that imperfection is character because I believe our imperfections can guide us toward expanding our potential!

Latoria Glaude

School: Mississippi University for Women
Year: Senior
Public Health Interests: I am interested in HIV/AIDS  Global Health  Crisis issues  & OUTREACH
Career Goals: My goal after graduation is to work with a highly recognized community-based organization maybe specializing in being an advocate for HIV. In the near future, overall I would like to someday own my own community-based, nonprofit organization.

Tell us something about yourself: I am a leader before anything. I am a bit nervous, but once I am comfortable of my surroundings I am determined to complete any job or duty. I am very honest, and determined about my education and future. I do not like to fail, but failure does help me pick myself up. My biggest goal is to be the best at whatever it is I do, and to make a change in my community and the world the best way I can.
Angela Gonzalez

**School:** University of Delaware  
**Year:** Senior  
**Public Health Interests:** Exploring the relationship between nursing and public health  
**Career Goals:** Possibly pursuing a dual Masters in Public Health and Nurse Practitioner degree  
**Tell us something about yourself:** I am interested in the geriatric population

Tyler Harvey

**School:** Rhodes College  
**Year:** Senior  
**Career Goals:** After graduating from Rhodes, my goal is to pursue an MD/MPH with a focus on global health. I hope to one day travel the world working in under-resourced areas and finding culturally-appropriate solutions to the most pressing public health needs of diverse communities around the globe.  
**Public Health Interests:** Global Health, Minority Health, Sexual Health  
**Tell us something about yourself:** Last semester, I studied abroad in Vietnam, South Africa, and Argentina learning about community health and exploring different parts of each country. This trip helped me realize my passion for global health and international affairs.
Nicholas Hastings

**School:** University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
**Year:** Senior  
**Public Health Interests:** Minority Health & Social Determinants of Health  
**Career Goals:** I plan to obtain an MD/MPH and work in a community health setting to serve marginalized folks within the broader LGBTQ+ community. Additionally, I hope to work in an advocacy role at the national level in hopes of implementing more inclusive, accessible, and equitable healthcare policy.  
**Tell us something about yourself:** I won a state championship with my American Legion baseball team!

Evanah Hill

**School:** Temple University  
**Year:** Recent Graduate  
**Public Health Interests:** Health Disparities  
**Career Goals:** To pursue a PhD and work with urban gardening initiatives. I would like to become a PI of my own research.  
**Tell us something about yourself:** I love jazz my favorite jazz musician is Mongo Santamaria.
Terence Jones

School: Loyola University Maryland
Year: Recent Graduate
Public Health Interests: Health Behavior/Health Education
Career Goals: To make my community a better place.
Tell us something about yourself: The event that sparked my interest in social justice and advocacy was watching the famous show “the wire”.

Tyler Joseph

School: University at Albany (SUNY)
Year: Senior
Public Health Interests: Healthcare Administration, Policy & Management, Emergency Preparedness
Career Goals: I aspire to work for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as a Healthcare Administrator
Tell us something about yourself: I would love to be a CEO of a NGO in the Bronx to help the unhealthy habits of individuals in my community
Christina Jung

School: University of Guam
Year: Recent Graduate

Public Health Interests: My area of interest in public health have become numerous after this program. However, I am most interested in minority health, health disparities, and the social determinants of health.

Career Goals: My career goal is to become a physical therapist with an interest in public health. It is my dream to open my own clinic to provide services available and accessible to those who need it to help them regain their functional activities to their daily lives. I want to apply the connection of art, healing, and public health to the community and to the individuals who need it.

Tell us something about yourself: I am a first-generation college graduate, born and raised on a beautiful island of Guam. To be given this opportunity to learn and grow as a person holds dear to my heart that I plan on bringing back home. Biba!

Briana Lettsome

School: Rider University
Year: Senior

Public Health Interests: Infectious Diseases

Career Goals: To be an infectious disease specialist or epidemiologist for the CDC. Later in life, I then plan to be a liaison between my home (the U.S. Virgin Islands) and the CDC.

Tell us something about yourself: My favorite things to do are eat, sleep and reading new things including historical or biological facts.
Cynthia Louis-Juste

School: University at Albany
Year: Recent Graduate
Public Health Interests: Public Health Nursing
Career Goals: To become a nurse and work at a health center or hospital.
Tell us something about yourself: In Barbados this past spring break, I snorkeled for the first time.

Armando Valdez Martinez, Jr.

School: University of Illinois at Chicago College of Nursing
Year: Recent Graduate
Public Health Interests: Epidemiology, obesity, psychiatric health, nursing, pediatric health, and health disparities.
Career Goals: As a recent new graduate, I plan to work at Mayo Clinic as an RN for two years and then return to Columbia University to pursue my Doctorate in Nursing (DNP) and achieve certification as a Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP). Following my nursing education, I will most likely pursue my Masters in Public Health (MPH) at John Hopkins University and intersect public health into my practice as a nurse practitioner.
Tell us something about yourself: I’m a mixture of Mexican, Italian, Irish, African-American, and German. My favorite color is red and I’m all about positive vibes.
Miles McConner

School: Norfolk State University
Year: Senior
Public Health Interests: Epidemiology
Career Goals: Become a physician to work at a FQHC. Then work with the CDC in the epidemic intelligence service (EIS).
Tell us something about yourself: Quentin Tarantino is my favorite director.

Dulce Mendoza

School: Arcadia University
Year: Junior
Public Health Interests: Healthcare Management /Healthcare Communications/ Access to Healthcare
Career Goals: To find my niche in the public health field.
Tell us something about yourself: On a cold fall evening, I encountered Sylvester Stallone on the famous Rocky Steps.
Kelsey Minix

School: Xavier University

Year: Recent Graduate

Public Health Interests: Global Health, Health and Social Behaviors

Career Goals: Work to help under-served, rural communities have access to healthcare. As well as help communities understand that health is holistic and how to achieve a healthy lifestyle through their culture.

Tell us something about yourself: Starting October 2016, I will be working at a non-for-profit health clinic in Southern Belize. There I will be the first public health volunteer and will be implementing the first patient education programs regarding hygienic practices, chronic disease and the Zika virus. Along with this I will be overseeing the implementation of a new school-based health center in a local elementary school. It is a very rural community and 50% of the population is indigenous! I am VERY excited.

David Molina

School: University of Rhode Island

Year: Senior

Public Health Interests: Epidemiology, Infectious Diseases

Career Goals: To become an expert in research methodology and later on work on translation work that would will help bridge critical gaps of different sectors of public health.

Tell us something about yourself: I am a proud introvert!
Khristian Monterroso

School: The University of Pennsylvania
Year: Junior
Public Health Interests: Health Policy, Family Health, Community Health, Pediatrics
Career Goals: I want pursue an MD/MPH in hopes of combining health policy and medical practice. I want to address the health disparities that current health policies produce and help shape future legislation that impacts marginalized communities.
Tell us something about yourself: I love photography and music.

Adan Oviedo

School: Georgia Gwinnett College
Year: Recent Graduate
Public Health Interests: Epidemiology of infectious diseases
Career Goals: I hope to work in a government or a non-profit organization aiding in global infectious disease prevention.
Tell us something about yourself: I am highly inquisitive and have never been to New York before. I look forward to the new experience!
Evan Peters

School: Jackson State University
Year: Senior
Public Health Interests: I find all areas of Public Health interesting. However, being raised in the deep south, I have developed a passion for public policy—specifically in rural areas.
Career Goals: After obtaining my undergraduate degree from Jackson State University, I would like to get both an MD (pediatrics) and an MPH (public policy). I am going to be a Pediatrician and also focus on public policy within my community.
Tell us something about yourself: I once ate a thirty inch pizza by myself.

Ricardo Ramirez

School: University of Illinois at Chicago
Year: Senior
Public Health Interests: I am very interested in community health, working towards health equity, and tailoring culturally-competent public health interventions.
Career Goals: I plan to be an occupational therapist who works with underserved communities and who seeks healthcare justice for people with disabilities. Specifically, I desire to work with the Hispanic community and deliver culturally-competent care. Hopefully, after a few years of clinical experience, I will pursue my PhD in rehabilitation sciences to conduct my own research aimed at minimizing health disparities in rehabilitation settings.
Tell us something about yourself: Before SPHSP, I was indecisive as to what setting I wanted to practice in as a future occupational therapist. However, through my internship at a federally qualified health center (FQHC), I was able to learn how amazing and rich of a setting it is as it allows me to work with underserved communities. Now, I can’t envision myself working anywhere else in the future. This program has allowed me to learn so much about my future career, myself, public health, and has been such a memorable experience. I am eternally grateful to have participated in this program!
Kristina Rhett

School: Tennessee State University
Year: Recent Graduate
Public Health Interests: Health promotion and prevention and health education
Career Goals: My short term goals include going to graduate school and creating a not for profit business targeted to help the youth and young teens.
Tell us something about yourself: Gaining a spot in this program would be a blessing, I appreciate you all for putting me on the waiting list, thank you. I enjoy talking to people and I just want to help the world.

Ashley Rodgers

School: Tuskegee University
Year: Senior
Public Health Interests: I'm not exactly sure, but I have an interest in three areas: Minority Health and Health Disparities, Behavioral and Social Science, Environmental Health Sciences
Career Goals: My career goal is to work in the field of Public Health where I may utilize my skills effectively. I would like to earn my Master's degree and possibly Doctorate degree in Public Health, although I'm not exactly sure what discipline I want to focus on. I'm still exploring that option, and will be open to any opportunity I may receive. An ideal career would be to work with the federal government, in the field of Public Health where I will be able to make a major impact nationally and locally. Also, I want to educate the growing population.
Tell us something about yourself: I am currently a Junior at Tuskegee University majoring in Biology, with a minor in Psychology. I am a goal oriented, ambitious, hardworking achiever who settles for nothing but the best. I also played college basketball for 2 years at Wallace State, before transferring to Tuskegee University last Fall.
Alfred Rodriguez

School: California State University San Bernardino
Year: Senior
Public Health Interests: Not Sure

Career Goals: My career goal is to establish organizations which benefit my broad community. I will pursue my education in public health and medicine to target health disparities seen in racial, ethnic, and sexual minorities. We need leaders in our community that will be able to face the problems that disproportionately affect minority communities. In being a healthcare leader I would hope to target these issues and inspire others who would also make the change.

Tell us something about yourself: I love film, will direct at least one movie in my life, not sure when.

Thalia Saldana

School: CUNY Lehman College
Year: Senior
Public Health Interests: Possibly health literacy

Career Goals: Masters in Public Health after working for a year as a registered nurse or possibly applying to Columbia’s 3 year PhD program for Nursing.

Tell us something about yourself: This program has changed me completely as a person.
Rebekah Schwartz

**School:** University of Florida  
**Year:** Junior  
**Public Health Interests:** Health Disparities and Disaster Preparedness  
**Career Goals:** After I obtain a MPH, I would like to go into a career in Disaster Preparedness on the national level working for FEMA or USAID. Specifically, I want to address inequalities in delivery of care after a disaster, trauma, or outbreak.

**Tell us something about yourself:** I volunteered with Ronald McDonald House Charities for over a year. Every child and family I encounter reminds me of why I love Public Health. As a Public Health official, we have an opportunity to encounter and impact every culture and community. Health is a Human Right and I am so thankful to be part of such a diverse, talented, and inspirational cohort that will go on to advocate this axiom in every path, passion, and pursuit they choose. In the words of Anne Frank (one of my inspirations), “How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.”

Dylan Silverman

**School:** Haverford College  
**Year:** Junior  
**Public Health Interests:** I am very interested in obesity, but largely unsure.  
**Career Goals:** I would like to use knowledge of medicine to influence public policy in the field of public health to decrease mortality from preventable causes.

**Tell us something about yourself:** Tom Farley’s book, “Saving Gotham” has really inspired me to shift my career focus from one that focuses on health at the individual level to one that aims to improve population health. Close reading of this book helped me decide that a career in public health is truly for me and that applying to this program was a step in the right direction.
**Subria Spencer**

**School:** The University of Alabama at Birmingham  
**Year:** Recent Graduate  

**Public Health Interests:** My current interest in public health includes addressing issues of food security/nutrition and sustainability in low-resource communities through the use of health education.  

**Career Goals:** Grassroots organizations and civic mobilization are what truly drive transformation in a community. Individuals identify the issues they feel need attention and public health professionals work alongside community members to address those needs. As a future public health professional, I aspire to be an agent of change in low-resourced areas. Specifically, my goals are to target food security, health education and sustainability issues through education and hands-on projects such as community gardens.  

**Tell us something about yourself:** Although I am from a small town namely, Auburn, AL, I enjoy traveling and understand the importance of becoming a world citizen. From a young age, I have had the opportunity to visit many different states and also experience what it is like to travel internationally. My time in Costa Rica at the age of 16 truly helped fuel my desire to become fluent in Spanish and use that skill in my future career. I look forward to fulfilling that dream this upcoming fall semester while living and teaching English at local businesses there.

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**Gabrielle Williams**

**School:** Georgia State University  
**Year:** Recent Graduate  

**Public Health Interests:** Social Determinants of Health, Minority health disparities, Correctional Health Care, Health Policy & Management  

**Career Goals:** I plan to pursue an MPH in Health Policy. My career goals are to implement public policies that will improve the health of minority communities and homeless populations. I also hope to influence healthcare policies within correctional facilities and increase mental health resources in low income communities.  

**Tell us something about yourself:** I was born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia!
Mark Williams Jr.

School: Bard College
Year: Senior
Public Health Interests: My interests include Global Health, Infectious Diseases (Neglected Tropical Infections), & Social Determinants of Health
Career Goals: Upon graduation I plan on pursuing an MPH in Infectious Disease Epidemiology & then a PhD in Anthropology (Medical)

Tell us something about yourself: An interesting fact about me is that I graduated from high school with both a high school diploma and Associates Degree in Liberal Arts from Bard College!

Marquivieus "Trey" Wright

School: University of South Carolina
Year: Senior
Public Health Interests: Nutrition, sexual health, mobile health technology, mental health
Career Goals: MD/MPH
Tell us something about yourself: I hate grapes and grape-flavored candies, drinks, etc.
Jamal Yearwood

School: Albion College
Year: Senior
Public Health Interests: Policy and Management
Career Goals: My career goal is to be working with future-minded people in industries that don’t exist today
Tell us something about yourself: I plan to live abroad in the next year

Taylor Zabel

School: University of Kansas
Year: Junior
Public Health Interests: Rural Health, Epidemiology
Career Goals: Rural Health Advocacy and Medicine
Tell us something about yourself: I am the 5th generation to grow up working on my family’s farm in Kansas
Nicholas Zarasua

School: University of New Mexico

Year: Recent Graduate

Public Health Interests: Community Health in Rural Areas

Career Goals: I plan on attending Medical School and practicing Medicine as a Pediatrician. I am planning to work in rural and underserved areas in New Mexico.

Tell us something about yourself: I am a Certified Athletic Trainer (ATC) and EMT. I am passionate about sports and being outdoors, especially in the beautiful state of New Mexico.
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