

## Spring 2024 Cohort Directory



### Valeria Acevedo

Columbia School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA)



### Belen Best

Belen, a third-year law student at the University of Michigan Law School, holds a B.S. in psychology from the University of Pittsburgh. During her undergraduate years, she worked as a research assistant at the Behavioral Neurophysiology Lab, exploring the connection between discrimination and cardiovascular disease risk. In law school, Belen served as a graduate student instructor for "Humanizing Science" and as an advanced student clinician in the Pediatric Advocacy Clinic. Her casework focuses on social determinants of health for children and families, covering areas such as special education, public benefits, and family law.



### Jonathan Cola

Jonathan is pursuing a master's in education policy at Teachers College, Columbia University. He earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Miami in 2020. Prior to being a graduate student, Jonathan was a high school special education teacher. Fueled by a profound passion for education, he seeks to make a meaningful impact on public education. Jonathan aspires to earn a law degree after attending Teachers College to address systemic inequities comprehensively.



## Emmel El-Fiky

Emmel is a second-year student at Teachers College, Columbia University, pursuing her master's in politics and education. She received her bachelor's degree in government from the College of William and Mary in Virginia. Prior to graduate school at TC, Emmel spent three years in Washington, DC, as an associate editor for the National Association for the Education of Young Children. At NAEYC, she narrowed in on her specific career interests, including the intersection of education and public policy, political influence on public services, and the field of early childhood education.



## Luke Foreman

Luke is pursuing his master's in public administration at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, concentrating in urban and education policy. He received his B.A. in sociology from Washington University in St. Louis. Luke began his career at a progressive public affairs firm, and brings experience from the private, public, and non-profit sectors focusing primarily on racial equity and education. He is passionate about increasing access to education and transforming public school systems in urban areas.



## Margaret E Hood

Margaret, a Columbia Law School second-year, holds a B.S. in human and organizational development from Vanderbilt University, specializing in education policy. After graduation, she spent a year in London at Lloyds of London as a Wattles Fellow. In law school, Margaret is continuing to explore her varied academic and professional interests. Currently, she is contributing as an editor for Columbia's *Journal of Law and Social Problems*, crafting a Note that navigates the crossroads of equity and Title IX resolutions on university campuses.



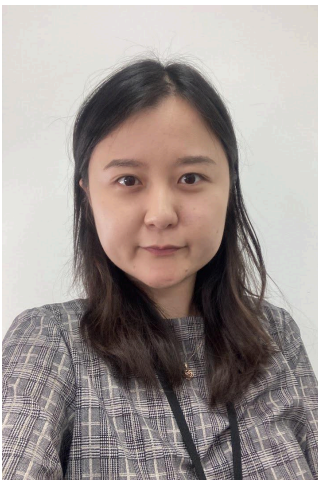
## Abigail Hoover

Abigail is a second-year student at NYU School of Law. She holds a B.A. from American University in CLEG (communication, legal institutions, economics, and government). At AU, she tutored in local elementary schools through the D.C. Reads program. She also interned for a judge in Cumberland County's Juvenile and Family Courts. Recently, she worked for the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development and currently serves on the board of NYU Law's Education Law and Policy Society. She hopes to focus on education law and juvenile defense.



## Jooyoung Jeon

Jooyoung is pursuing her doctoral degree in science education at Teachers College, Columbia University. She was born and raised in Korea and graduated from Ewha Womans University with B.S. and M.A. in Earth science education. Before her doctoral program, she taught science in informal settings for low-income populations in Korea. Currently, she's involved in various positions, teaching in Korean schools and conducting climate workshops and research within K-12 settings. Jooyoung is particularly interested in more responsive and inclusive climate and environmental education.



## Yeonji Kang

Yeonji (Hannah) Kang is currently pursuing an M.A. in quantitative methods in social sciences at Columbia University. She holds an M.A. in international educational development from Teachers College, Columbia University and a B.A. in mathematics from Wellesley College. As an experienced high school math teacher, she taught and designed curriculum for various classes. Last semester, she worked as an intern at the Institute of International Education and analyzed data for the Fulbright Scholar project. Hannah aspires to create equitable learning environments through her teaching experience and data analysis skills.



## Joshua Kim

Josh is a first-year student at NYU Steinhardt pursuing an M.A. in education policy. He holds a bachelor's degree from NYU Stern School of Business where he studied finance with a minor in teacher education. During his undergraduate years, Josh pursued a career in finance but decided to switch paths to education upon graduating. With interests in business and education, Josh hopes to make macro level changes that promote social equity.



## Sai Priya Kodidala

Columbia School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA)



## Denise Anne Larson

Denise is a second year student at Columbia Law School. After receiving her B.A. in history with a minor in educational studies from Colgate University, she got her Ed.M. from the Harvard Graduate School of Education's Teacher Education Program. Then, Denise worked as a high school history teacher in Virginia and as a curriculum developer for an academic non-profit (Exploration School) in Massachusetts. In law school, Denise is on the Gender & Sexuality Moot Court Team, and loves reading/drafting contracts.





## Brenda Martiza Mendez

Brenda Mendez is a second year law student at New York University School of Law. She holds a B.A. from New York University in politics and social and cultural analysis. During her undergraduate and law school studies, she interned in the offices of U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, U.S. Representative Tom Suozzi, at the U.S. Department of Justice, and was a law clerk in U.S. Senator Cory Booker's office. Her professional interests are primarily in legislation and public policy.



## Joshua Morrison

Joshua is currently pursuing a master's degree in politics and education at Teachers College, Columbia University. He earned his B.A. in government from St. Lawrence University and then subsequently served as a middle school history teacher in Brooklyn, New York. Demonstrating a profound interest in policy and consulting, Joshua is fervently committed to broadening educational opportunities for low-income students.



## Van Pérez

Van Pérez is a second-year student at Howard University School of Law. She graduated from Arizona State University with a B.A. in political science. Before attending law school, she worked as a college counselor and academic interventionist at a public high school in Arizona. Van is passionate about advancing public school systems and educational opportunities for immigrants and other historically marginalized communities.



## Jayden Rush

Jayden is a second-year student at Columbia Law School. He holds a B.A. in strategic, legal, and management communication from Howard University. Before graduate school, he worked for U.S. Sen. Cory Booker and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, where he garnered support for education bills and spearheaded a nationwide research project tracking the school-to-prison pipeline, respectively. During law school, Jayden joined the NAACP Legal Defense Fund's education policy team, continuing the same work with respect to K-12 schools. Jayden is passionate about closing the racial achievement gap in education.



## Madison Rudick

Madison is pursuing her master's in clinical psychology with a forensic psychology concentration at Teachers College, Columbia University. She holds a B.A. in psychology and a B.A. in criminal justice from Indiana University. Before graduate school, she volunteered as a HOPE mentor at the Pendleton Juvenile Correctional Facility. Additionally, she served as an intern for a personal injury law firm and clerked for a judge. During her master's program, she has focused on conducting research on child protection laws to reform testimony accommodations for child sexual abuse witnesses.



## Aurie Serrette

Aurie is a third-year day student at the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law. She holds her B.S. in biology and psychology from Loyola University of Maryland. During her undergraduate studies, she served as the Guilford Elementary School service coordinator for the Center for Community Service and Justice. During law school, she has focused her studies on family and juvenile law, including interning with the Juvenile Division of the Maryland Office of the Public Defender and participating with Baltimore Outreach for Student Success.



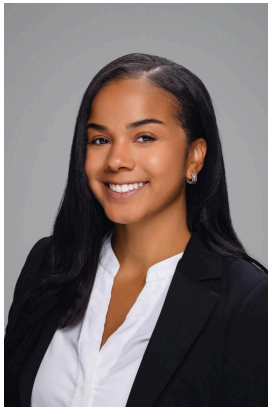
## Vanshika Singh

Vanshika, a second-year MPA in development practice student at Columbia University, SIPA, specializes in gender and public policy. With a B.A. (Hons.) in international affairs from Jindal Global University, she conducted research and designed programs for women's financial inclusion in India at the Yale Economic Growth Centre. Previously, she served as a field researcher for J-PAL's Math Games project and a teaching fellow with Teach For India. Vanshika aspires to persist in driving research and education programs for underserved communities, aiming to establish community-driven education infrastructure and systems.



## Pablo Vasquez

Pablo is a second-year student at the Howard University School of Law. He received his B.A. in politics, concentrating in American politics and quantitative studies, from Princeton University. After graduation, Pablo worked in public relations, arts education, and public advocacy. He later earned his M.A. in arts politics from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, where he focused on intersections between dance and activism. Pablo believes deeply that access to the arts and quality education is vital and he aims to explore the policymaking side of the law.



## Taryn Wilkins

Taryn, a third-year student at Columbia Law School, majored in political science and African American studies at Howard University. At CLS, she served as an English Teaching Fellow for Breakthrough Collaborative Houston. Inspired by her parents' successful careers in education, Taryn developed a passion for strengthening educational systems, particularly for students of color. In law school, she participated in the Community & Entrepreneurship and Development Clinic, aiming to advise startups and venture capital firms post-graduation, focusing on minority-owned businesses. Taryn aspires to transition to a clinical teaching role in the near future.



## Cora Wolfinger

Drexel School of Law



## Isabelle Yuan

Isabelle is a second-year student at USC Gould School of Law. After receiving her B.A. in History from Wellesley College, she taught third and fourth graders in Boston. During college, she worked at a preschool and served as a resident assistant and a peer academic coach. She also conducted research in a biology lab. Isabelle is passionate about improving students' school experiences and hopes to address systemic issues in schools through the law.



