

STUDENT DIRECTORY

20
19



HARVARD-AMGEN | SCHOLARS | PROGRAM



JAQUESTA ADAMS

Howard University | Chemistry, Minor in Biology and Mathematics
Hometown: Opa Locka, Florida
Research Interest/Area: Biomaterials, Neurological Diseases

“Born and raised in Miami, frequent outings to the city’s art and science attractions fostered an appreciation for discovery and creation that inspired me to pursue research. With past research ventures including a biodegradable orthopedic implant and nanoscale DNA drug delivery vehicles, I currently focus on analyzing the interactions of gold nanoparticles and amyloid peptides to potentially develop a therapeutic treatment for neurodegeneration. I aspire to continue researching biomaterials for neurological disorders as a professor. When I am not in lab or volunteering around campus, my hobbies include drawing, singing, playing tennis, and exploring DC’s collection of museums and restaurants.



ANNA BAGHDADI

Michigan State University | Chemistry
Hometown: Mt Pleasant, MI
Research Interest/Area: Nanoparticles and Drug Delivery

“Growing up, I always wanted to study medicine and physical sciences at the same time but never knew how to combine them. This mentality really took off when I started doing research in high school. That project sparked an idea in my mind and I decided to take my passion for chemistry and combine it with medicine. Not knowing where that would lead me, I tried many projects and research labs across the world. After a few years, I have come to conclusion that I want to become a bioengineer and create nanoparticles and drug delivery systems for treatment of various types of cancer. I enjoy photography, baking, and reading wholesome books. I also get very excited for meeting new people and new places and learning about them.”



GIANLUCA BENCOMO

Whittier College | Biochemistry; Economics
Hometown: San Jose, CA
Research Interest/Area: Neurodegeneration, Neural Circuit Modeling, and Biological Algorithms

“Growing up in the Silicon Valley, my initial introductions to science and technology were by the likes of Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg. This led me to my first research experience: developing algorithms for safer autonomous drone flight. Entering college, however, I realized that the algorithms I was truly interested in were those of the human brain. Now, I research the brain from the cellular and molecular scope and hope to serve a career studying neurodegenerative conditions. When I am not studying, I like to enjoy the California sun through surfing, hiking, and playing my guitar outside.”



ANDREW CASTILLO

Harvard College | Human Developmental and Regenerative Biology

Hometown: Cambridge, MA

Research Interest/Area: Genome Editing Technology and its Application to Neurodegenerative Diseases

“As a first generation Mexican-American, I plan to pursue an MD/PhD, always remembering those who I want to serve as a researcher and a doctor. I believe the future of the medical field is personalized medicine and genome modification. I have thus made it my mission to understand and push forward CRISPR technology. I currently work with application of CRISPR to pave the way ALS therapeutics. On my free time, I like to practice calligraphy, drinking tea, and collecting wildflowers and foliage. I also volunteer at local high schools to teach comprehensive health curriculum, work as a tutor, and am a Peer Student Facilitator for our intro genetics course.”



MARTHA CASTRO

Pomona College | Molecular Biology

Hometown: Orinda, CA

Research Interest/Area: Immunology and Regenerative Medicine

“My father’s passing sparked my passion for science and medical research, which has led me to explore the field of transplant immunology as it relates to stem cells and cancer. At Pomona, I compete on the varsity cross country and track and field teams and also mentor for the Pomona Science Scholars Cohort, the Quantitative Skills Center, and a multi-racial affinity group. Outside of class and lab, I enjoy knitting and listening to music. I am incredibly excited to engage in biotechnology research in Cambridge this summer and become part of the Amgen Scholar community.”



JACOB FLORIAN

University of Michigan | Chemical Engineering

Hometown: Vernon Hills, IL

Research Interest/Area: Computational Catalysis and Drug Discovery

“I’m from Vernon Hills, a town close to Chicago. I study Chemical Engineering at University of Michigan and also do research in a computational catalysis lab. Last summer, I did research with Professor Warshel at USC, where I learned more about drug discovery and enzyme catalysis, which I found to be really interesting. Outside of research, I like to play tennis and watch documentaries. I’m very excited to do research this summer at Harvard!”



SEBASTIAN GONZALEZ

University of California Santa Barbara | Physics

Hometown: Oceanside, CA

Research Interest/Area: Biophysics and Continuum Mechanics

“I was born and raised in Venezuela, South America. After finishing high school in my home country, I came to the U.S. to attend college and now I am a third-year physics major at the University of California Santa Barbara. My academic interests lie in biophysics, quantitative biology and materials science. Currently, I am analyzing tissue deformation during *Drosophila* embryogenesis via the use of physical and mathematical principles. Besides academics, I work at the UCSB Library as a Student Assistant and I am part of my school’s McNair scholars program. During my free time, you can find me doing all things soccer (watching, playing and talking), and listening to a wide variety of music from John Mayer to J Balvin.”



LEAH HARMON

University of Notre Dame | Neuroscience and Behavior/Applied and Computational Math and Statistics

Hometown: Ipswich, MA

Research Interest/Area: Neuroscience, Molecular Biology, and Genetics

“A born and raised Bostonian, I grew up in Ipswich, a small coastal town north of the city. After gaining experience in molecular biology during summer biotech internships in high school, I decided that a career in research was my ultimate goal. This goal, paired with my fascination with the biology of the human brain, prompted me to study both neuroscience and applied math in college. My current research on campus involves neural correlates of memory and aging. I hope to combine my interest in molecular biology and genetics with my studies in neuroscience and earn a PhD in molecular neuroscience, focusing on the molecular and genetic basis of Alzheimer’s Disease. In my free time I enjoy playing the violin, skiing, writing, and spending time at the beach.”



KERRY LARKIN

College of the Holy Cross | Biology and Music

Hometown: Westborough, MA

Research Interest/Area: Cell and Molecular Biology, Genetics, Cancer Biology

“I am from Westborough, Massachusetts and am currently a Biology and Music double major and member of the College Honors Program at the College of the Holy Cross. I conduct research in the Mondoux Lab investigating the effects of a high-glucose diet on fertility in *Caenorhabditis elegans*, which has fueled my passion for molecular biology research. Outside of research, I enjoy working as a tutor and biology lab teaching assistant, reading, running, and playing my trumpet in various musical ensembles.”



THOMAS PORTER

The Ohio State University | Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering
(Biomolecular Focus, Chemistry Minor)
Hometown: Hilliard, OH
Research Interest/Area: Bio/Nanomaterials

“I grew up near Columbus, Ohio in a Japanese/American family. I chose to study chemical engineering because of the versatile career options it can lead to. At (The? :D) Ohio State University, I became involved in nanotechnology research in Dr. Jessica Winter’s lab, where I develop photoswitchable quantum dots for super-resolution imaging, among other things. I plan on pursuing a PhD probing the materials/physiology interface. I have also been involved in several engineering education activities in hopes of sharing the inspiration and joy I feel from research. Outside of school, my hobbies include piano and tennis (favorite player is Kei Nishikori!).”



SANJANA RANE

Harvard College | Molecular and Cellular Biology
Hometown: Louisville, KY
Research Interest/Area: Nephrology and Stem Cell Biology

“I’m from Louisville, home of the Kentucky Derby! I was introduced to research in high school, and over the years, I have developed a great interest in stem cell research and its use in understanding organ development and disease states, especially in regards to nephrology. Outside of the laboratory, I am a clinic manager for Access Health which holds free blood pressure screenings and connects homeless individuals with support services and am involved with Harvard’s Undergraduate Research Association which hosts a research conference each January. I am excited to try new foods and actually spend time outdoors in Boston.”



KUNAL SHROFF

Duke University | Neuroscience and Chemistry
Hometown: Great Falls, VA
Research Interest/Area: Molecular Mechanisms of Neurological Disorders

“I spent the entirety of my childhood in the DC metropolitan area before coming to Duke University in 2016. I am interested in studying the biological mechanisms that underlie neurological disorders. One day, I hope to use that mechanistic knowledge in order to develop novel therapeutics. My current project at Duke focuses on trying to understand the molecular mechanisms behind a neurological movement disorder known as DYT1 dystonia. Outside of lab, I really enjoy getting young kids excited about science by showing them cool science demonstrations.”



MARVA TARIQ

Smith College | Chemistry

Hometown: Brooklyn, NY

Research Interest/Area: Drug Discovery and Organic Synthesis

“I am a first-generation Pakistani-American studying chemistry at Smith College. I enjoy conducting research because it challenges me in an enjoyable manner to reconcile and apply classroom knowledge to solve practical problems in a laboratory environment. Working at the Shea Lab at Smith has increased my interest in organic synthesis and medicinal chemistry. Synthesizing drugs that could potentially help eradicate diseases and improve public health strongly appeals to my interests. Besides research, I like to read, spend time with family and friends, and watch Netflix.”



CATHY WANG

Harvard College | Bioengineering

Hometown: Fremont, CA

Research Interest/Area: Tissue Engineering for tendon healing

“Originally from the San Francisco Bay Area, Cathy is currently a rising senior at Harvard College. She has always loved a mix of math, chemistry, and biology subjects and aspires to expand upon the frontiers of biotechnology through interdisciplinary research. Since exposure to cancer glycomics research in high school, she’s explored the neurogenetics and structural immunology areas, and now her research works with hydrogels to improve tendon healing. In her free time, she loves to read, dance, and restaurant-hop.”



MARCUS WILLIAMS

Fort Lewis College | Biochemistry

Hometown: Albuquerque, NM

Research Interest/Area: Tissue Engineering and Biotechnology

“I grew up in the suburbs of Albuquerque, New Mexico and have always been enthralled with the delicate intricacies of the natural world. I have a genuine passion for working in both the lab and in the clinic, so I’ve decided to pursue an MD-PhD following my undergraduate degree. My current research is aimed towards developing novel lung-on-chip devices which accurately mimic a blood gas exchange interface in vitro. Throughout my career I would like to continue working in the field of bio/tissue engineering. Outside of school and research I enjoy going on runs, skiing, working on my truck, and being with friends and family.”



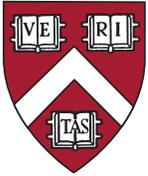
CLARA YOUNG

Iowa State University | Animal Science

Hometown: Springfield, IL

Research Interest/Area: Zoonotic Disease, Pathogenesis and Immunology

“When I entered Iowa State University, I hoped to apply my affinity for animals to a career practicing clinical veterinary medicine. Three years later, my involvement with undergraduate research studying muscular dystrophy and my international experiences in underserved communities have encouraged a shift in my career path. Having recognized my fascination with the intersection of animal and human health, I currently plan to attend veterinary school to study mixed animal medicine with a focus in public health while completing a concurrent Ph.D. in pathogenesis and immunology. I am hopeful my familiarity with the human-animal interface will aid me in improving the health of developing nations through a career researching zoonotic disease. Outside of my studies, I enjoy vegetarian cooking, painting, and discovering new cultures.”



HARVARD-AMGEN | SCHOLARS | PROGRAM



Photo Credit: Seelaj Karzal