

## 2023 Continuing Student Bios



**Robert Abrahamian (he/him/his)** is a first year MPA student from Fox Point, WI. He graduated in 2018 from UW-Stevens Point with degrees in hydrology and political science, and minors in sustainable energy and soil science. Since graduating from UWSP, Robby has worked as political organizer for AFT-Wisconsin in the 2018 election cycle, and for the past 2.5 years has lived in Madison and worked as a Legislative Aide in the Wisconsin State Assembly, for Reps. Katrina Shankland (D-Stevens Point) and Greta Neubauer (D-Racine). He enjoyed being able to staff both the Speaker's Task Force on Water Quality (2019-20) and Governor's Climate Change Task Force (2020). His main policy concentrations are environmental, (water, climate change/justice, sustainable agriculture), and education. He enjoys reading, cooking, running, biking, fishing, and pretty much all things outdoors!



**Matthew Akins (he/him/his)** is a first-year MPA student from Atlanta, Georgia. In May of 2022, he graduated magna cum laude from the College of Wooster in Ohio. He earned a Dual Degree of Arts in Political Science and History and is excited to continue his studies at UW Madison before entering the political arena in some capacity. His policy interests include healthcare policy, law, and income inequality, among many others. During his time in Madison, he also hopes to pursue a J.D. degree alongside his MPA program. In his free time, Matthew enjoys learning about history and current events, playing video games and going for walks. He also has two cats that he enjoys spending time with!



**Zaher Akl (he/him/his)** is an incoming Masters of International Public Affairs student. He is joining La Follette after completing a Foreign Language and Area Studies fellowship in Amman, Jordan where he studied classical Arabic. As a Southern California native, Zaher graduated from the University of California, Santa Barbara studying Sociology and Technology Management. Upon graduating, he worked for Oracle in San Francisco, in addition to leading humanitarian relief efforts for Beirut, Lebanon in the wake of the 2020 port tragedy. Zaher has a passion for intersectionality, policy inequalities, and all things surrounding the Arab world. He enjoys running, Mexican food, and learning from locals on ways to prepare for the Midwest winters.



**Lauri Asbury (she/her)** is a first year Master of Public Affairs and Energy Analysis & Policy Certificate student with a background in Learning Analytics. She's a graduate of the University of Michigan with a BA in Political Science and has always been interested in politics and the effects upon society. Previous experience includes property management, advertising, state assembly candidacy, and her dream job working for a boutique government relations and public affairs group in Washington, DC. She's honored to serve as Vice President of the Neenah Joint School District Board of Education, as legislative committee chair, and as a member of the policy committee, also as a board member for the Samaritan Counseling Center and the Winnebago Area Literacy Council. These nonprofit connections give great vision into the intersection between education, language literacy, and mental health as they impact our community

and society at large. She sees firsthand how education improves lives both inside and outside of the classroom and is interested in gaining an understanding of how to create strong policy that encourages investment in public education at all levels. She is also interested in bringing sustainability and hands-on renewable energy experiences into k-12 education and navigating energy policy related to the utilities and infrastructure transformation necessary for electric vehicles at the municipal, state, and federal level. She's looking forward to learning from and working with the talented students and staff at La Follette!



**Zach Bauer** is a first year MPA student from Neenah, WI. He graduated from UW-Madison in 2020 with degrees in Economics and Political Science. While at UW, Zach interned for Rep. David Crowley in the WI State Assembly and spent a summer working at the WI Dept. of Workforce Development. He also participated in UW's Wisconsin in Washington program, where he interned in the State Dept. Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs. Since graduation, Zach has worked two years with the WI Dept. of Health Services in the Medicaid Division. His work focused on data analysis and rate setting for long term care programs and the direct care workforce payment initiative. His policy interests include social safety net programs, especially Medicaid, and housing policy. In his free time, Zach likes to read science fiction, paint, and try new recipes.



**Mary Baumgartner** is an incoming MPA student from Duluth, MN. In 2018, she received a BA in Political Science and a minor in Educational Studies from Carleton College. She then worked as a policy fellow at OpenSky Policy Institute, a fiscal policy think tank in Lincoln, NE. After completing her fellowship, she moved back to Minnesota where she worked as a community organizer around state-level anti-poverty legislation and became involved with the Homes for All Coalition. During the pandemic, she moved back to Duluth to be closer to family and accepted a position researching mobile food distribution programs for CHUM Food Shelf. Through her research, she designed and implemented CHUM2GO, the food shelf's food delivery program that works to increase food accessibility and security in the area. Going forward, she wants to continue with fiscal policy work and hopes to help others see how foundational it is to all social justice issues. In her free time, Mary loves reading, meeting new people, eating dessert, and spending time outdoors (during all four seasons!).



My name is **Jon Bechard** and I am originally from Wild Rose, Wisconsin. In 2018 I went back to school and graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh with a bachelor's degree in International Studies with an emphasis in Political Science. My policy interests have always been based on human rights advocacy and international development. Previously I worked with my local homeless population to improve access to state and local resources. I also helped resettle incoming refugees into the Fox Valley area of Wisconsin while working for the NGO World Relief. During my time at The University of Wisconsin-Madison I plan to work towards a career in creating programs for international aid while focusing on its intersection with climate change and the effects that has on refugee populations. I am truly excited to attend The La Follette School of Public Affairs, and look forward to working with such a diverse array of talented students and faculty!



**Clark Benson** graduated from UW-Madison in 2018 with a BS in psychology and has since then worked as a research specialist in an applied dementia care research lab. Several of his research experiences are related to documenting gaps in care delivery for cognitively vulnerable older adults, such as re-hospitalization, under-diagnosis, and use of surveillance in care delivery. His long-term career goal is to advance the development, implementation, and evaluation of evidence-informed policies that center the needs and priorities of cognitively vulnerable older adults, particularly those living with Alzheimer's disease and Alzheimer's disease related dementias. Clark enjoys longboarding, cats, and making pies in his free time.



**Abigail Bishop** graduated from the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse with a BA in Sociology and minor in Psychology. During her undergraduate education she developed an interest in social science research after learning how it can be used to evaluate and influence policy that affects human livelihood. Abigail is extremely excited to begin studying at UW-Madison and is hoping to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for a career in policy analysis. Her policy interests include health care and criminal justice after completing multiple research projects on these areas as an undergraduate student. She also loves any outdoor activity, is an avid Wisconsin sports fan, and recently became a cat mom to the cutest little kitten.





**Myranda Breezee (she/her/hers)** is a first year Accelerated MPA student who was born and raised in the Lake Superior area. She is also working toward her undergraduate Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and Legal Studies, as well as a certificate in Public Policy at UW-Madison. She is currently serving as the Vice President of Wisconsin Collegiate DECA and previously served as the Vice President of Chapter Development, as well as numerous other positions for UW-Madison's Collegiate DECA Chapter. She was also a Wisconsin Ideas Conference Speaker and Collaborator in 2021-2022 where she published a policy memo on the use of AI Technology during Global Pandemics. Myranda also works at The World Music Foundation as a Nonprofit Management Intern and at the Center for Pre-Law and Pre-Health Advising as a Communications and Advising Intern. She is also a Peer Mentor to incoming freshman at the Center for Academic Excellence. Stemming from her childhood in rural Wisconsin, Myranda's policy interests are in education, environmental, and social justice policy. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with friends, reading, playing the tuba, and riding her bike. She is thrilled to be a part of the La Follette Community!



**Anthony Gabriel Carreño** was born and raised in Logan Square, Chicago, Illinois. In May 2022, he graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a B.S. in International Studies and Russian with certificates in Chicano@ Latino@ Studies and Global Health. Anthony is a first-year MPA-MPH student and will focus on the MPH track first. Through the dual-degree program, he intends to become a more well-rounded individual by working on his quantitative skills and creating a stronger structure in his personal and career life with a goal of helping people. Anthony's interests lie in exploring the feasibility of universal health coverage in the U.S., improving education infrastructure for students to become lifelong self-learners, and increasing the public's agency to have a home – consistency in their lives. While not worrying about the political and economic state of the world, Anthony can be found bothering his cat, cooking/baking, playing basketball at the Nick, managing his fantasy teams, biking, bingeing TV shows (I highly recommend Naruto), and cheering for the Chicago Bulls.



**Courtney Collins (she/her)** is from Beloit, Wisconsin. She graduated from Beloit College in 2019 with a major in Anthropology and a minor in Political Science. Since then, she's worked for the Wisconsin Department of Health Services as an auditor in the Office of the Inspector General. She's sort of developed a niche for healthcare, specifically government health insurance programs (especially Medicaid). Courtney is super excited to learn more about social policy, and how to craft general policy. She hopes one day to aid in ensuring everyone has quality, equitable, and accessible healthcare. In her free time, Courtney loves running around Monona Bay, attempting to keep her plants alive, trying new recipes, and watching bad reality TV.



**Tatiana Paula da Cruz (she/her)** is a first-year Master of International Public Affairs. She was born in a small town in Minas Gerais, Brazil. After graduating in Law from the Federal University of Juiz de Fora, she taught at the same school for two years. At the same time, she completed her Master's in Law at the University of the State of Rio de Janeiro. To gain experience in the Executive Branche, she became an officer of the Brazilian Air Force, working for six years as a legal advisor at the Air Force High Command in the capital of Brazil. At Brasilia, Tatiana could also pursue a Ph.D. in Law, which is in its final phase. Now it is time for her to dedicate herself entirely to Academia, going deeper into issues involving public policies, notably in Latin America. In her free time, she enjoys exercising, cooking, and adventuring with friends, family, and her dog.



**Alex DeSena (she/her)** is a first year Master of Public Affairs and Master of Urban and Regional Planning dual degree student. She is originally from Los Angeles, CA but moved to the Midwest to attend Cornell College in Iowa. After graduating with a BA in Sociology and minor in Gender and Sexuality Studies in 2017, Alex moved to Madison and began working in homeless services. She worked at Briarpatch Youth Services as a Street Outreach Specialist and case manager for youth and young adults experiencing homelessness in Dane County. Alex is eager to pursue her interest in housing policy at La Follette. She enjoys trying new local restaurants, trips to the dog park with her puppy, playing games, and visiting friends and family.



**Jeffrey Eychaner** is a first year MPA student. He graduated in 2014 from Northern Illinois University with a degree in Psychology with an emphasis in Industrial Organizational Psychology. Since graduating from NIU, he has done research with Dr. Lisa Finklestein and worked in marketing, publishing, and as a private tutor. Jeffrey's main public policy interests include Public Health, Energy Policy, and Environmentalism. He enjoys hiking, rock climbing, camping, cooking, baking, reading, and community-building.





**Katie Gabrick (she/her)** is a first-year MIPA student originally from Mahtomedi, MN, a suburb of the Twin Cities. In 2018, she received her bachelor's degree in economics and mathematics from Rhodes College, and in the following year had the opportunity to work in France as an English-Language Teaching Assistant. Most recently, Katie has been living in Milwaukee, WI and working in the private sector as a Marketing Analytics Analyst for Kohl's. Her long-term goal is to have a career in international policy research and implementation where she is also able to use her French. While at La Follette, she would like to study how policy can create economic opportunities and conversely how it can perpetuate inequalities on an international scale. She is especially interested in how globalization impacts the flow of capital between countries and influences domestic economic policy. In her free time, she enjoys speaking French, learning Spanish, reading, and taking walks.



**Katie Gienapp (she/her)** is a Master of Public Affairs and M.S. in Urban & Regional Planning double degree student. Although she has lived many different places as the daughter of a former Air Force pilot, she always calls Wisconsin her home. Katie recently earned her B.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies from Wheaton College (IL), where she wrote her senior thesis about the impact of place on social engagement. During her undergraduate career, she participated in multiple organizations that promoted antiracism and illuminated gender inequity. Her experiences as a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) in an assisted living facility, an administrator at her campus' Military and Veteran Services Office, and a research assistant investigating Chicago's social and ecclesial demographics have also helped her understand the various economic, racial, and gendered realities within the United States.



#### **McKenna Goetz, MPA-MPH Candidate**

McKenna Goetz graduated from UW-Madison in December 2021 with bachelor's degree in economics and political science, and she is currently an MPA-MPH candidate. In navigating through her undergraduate experience, she was drawn to her majors because each was able to give students a solid foundation of knowledge on important topics. Through courses, she learned about unemployment insurance, healthcare, housing policies, poverty reduction programs, and much more. These experiences inspired her to turn to a career in social policy. Ideally, one day she would like to work for a research or academic institution focused on social policy research. Specifically, her policy interests draw her to cost, access, and quality issues in healthcare and education. However, she is excited to explore other potential career paths as she completes her graduate school coursework. During the summer, most of her free time is dedicated to sailing and volunteering at the animal shelter. In her free time throughout the rest of the year, she loves to make earrings, read, travel, and play intramural sports.



**Casey Hanson** is originally from Barron, Wisconsin and moved to Madison in 2012 for her undergraduate degree. She will be joining La Follette this year as she pursues a dual degree in Public Affairs and Public Health. Casey is a UW Alumni who graduated with her MSW in 2017. Casey has worked as a social worker in the Madison community for the last five years, primarily working with women, infants, and children. While working as a social worker, Casey became interested in looking at the “upstream” factors that contributed to her clients needing services in the first place. She has most recently worked with the UW Outbreak Investigation Team and FEMA’s Project Recovery Crisis Counseling program during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Casey is passionate about improving the health and wellness of families and reducing health disparities. Casey will be working with the Family Impact Seminar this year, where she will be helping connect

policymakers to information and evidenced based approaches for the selected topic. In her free time, you can find Casey cooking, crafting, hiking, and spending time with her friends and family.



**Kevin Jacobson (he/him/his)** is a first year accelerated MPA Student from Brookfield, WI. He is in his final year of undergraduate school pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science and communication arts. Kevin hopes to focus on environmental and energy policy. He currently serves as the Chair of the Student Activity Center Governing Board, on the Student Services Finance Committee, and as the Senior Class Communications Director. In his free time, he enjoys reading, hiking, and spending times with friends.



**Elizabeth Johnson (she/hers)** graduated from the University of Wisconsin – Madison with a degree in Rehabilitation Psychology and History. She received Departmental Distinction within the history department. Elizabeth worked as a certified nursing assistant throughout her schooling and became interested in health policy. Her interests also lie in educational policy. In her free time she enjoys baking, reading, and playing with her cat!



**Owen Jonas** is a rising senior at UW-Madison. Originally from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, he is currently earning his bachelor's degree in political science and environmental studies and pursuing a minor in public policy. Owen previously interned for Representative Deb Andraca in the Wisconsin State Assembly and for a PAC in Washington DC called End Citizens United // Let America Vote. His main areas of interest are environmental and voting rights policy. Outside of school Owen loves to watch movies, cook, and play piano and guitar.



**Minjung Jun** is from South Korea and graduated from Chosun University in 2017 with a degree in international trade. She interned in the United States through a government program to have experience related to her major after graduation. She worked for the Asian Chamber of Commerce in California and was responsible for researching trade regulations, economic conditions, and culture so that small and medium-sized companies between United States and Asia and to help their business expand overseas. In addition, she worked at Keeper Security in Chicago and was able to learn about the factors needed for the growth of small businesses and the international role of government. She is currently seeking to expand her interests further and become an expert on international policy by studying deeply. In her free time, she likes to watch sports and travels alone or reads books. She wants to have good relationships with more people here and hopes to make happy memories.



**Ellie Karls** is a University of Wisconsin - Madison graduate with a B.S. in Economics. As an undergraduate student, she was highly involved with Asian American Student Union and the Multicultural Student Center, aiming to promote diversity and create an inclusive environment. She has stayed involved in the UW-Madison community through working with Public Citizen to increase voter turnout in the 2020 presidential election. Her policy interests are broad as she hopes to work on policies that help those who are disadvantaged and marginalized in society. She is most interested in social, education, and healthcare policy and is excited to learn how she can help advance progressive legislation and ensure data-driven policy. In her free time, she enjoys doing all things outdoors, working on art projects, and walking her adorable pup, Dexter.





**Chloe Kepler (she/her/hers)** is a first year Master of Public Affairs and Master of Social Work double degree student. She recently graduated from the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse with a degree in psychology and a minor in at-risk child and youth care. During undergrad, her research focused on political polarization in online settings. Chloe is originally from Madison and is excited to be back in her favorite city. She hopes to become a social worker focused on macro-policy issues related to children and families, with the ultimate goal of preserving families and providing them with resources to help them succeed. In her spare time, Chloe enjoys hiking, traveling, reading, and tennis.

**Michael Krispinsky** I have spent a couple of decades living outside of Wisconsin after growing up in the state and graduating from UW-Madison in the previous century. Thanks to funding from the G.I. Bill, I am now able to return for a graduate program and explore how much I, the city/state, and the university have all changed. So far, my list includes several new/remodeled buildings, Paul Soglin no longer being mayor, and a hotter summer than I remembered. When I last lived here, I frequently enjoyed baking – a range of simple breads and cakes – and with access to the proper equipment and ingredients, I might – with a bit of practice – have the courage to attempt my nana’s potica (a type of Slovenian pastry) recipe for Christmas.



**Janet Lee (she/her)** is from Seattle, Washington and graduated with a B.S. in Neuroscience at the University of Washington in 2019. At the University of Washington, she studied the role of dopamine in drug addiction. Afterwards, Janet was a research technician at the Veteran Affairs Puget Sound Healthcare System for over two years, researching on the outcomes following repetitive blast exposures in mild traumatic brain injury and Dr. Abigail Schindler and Dr. David Cook. Janet is joining the UW-Madison Neuroscience PhD & MPA dual degree program because of her strong interest in policy and politics. Janet is strongly interested in evidenced-based policy and in exploring science, social, and economic policy. In her free time, she likes to scroll through Instagram reels, take walks, play the Nintendo Switch, and explore the neighborhood.



**Amelia Lowe (she/her)** is a first-year MIPA student originally from Tulsa, OK. She received her BA in Political Science, Global and International Studies, and Chinese Language and Literature from the University of Kansas. Amelia has specific interests in international relations and power relations in the current international system and education access within different societies. In her free time, Amelia enjoys reading, writing, and playing videogames.



**Alexis Madson (she/her)** is a first-year MPA student from Milwaukee, WI. Alexis recently received her Bachelor's degree in Communication from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. During her time training as a firefighter, she learned just how harmful carcinogenic materials can be on the body, which ultimately fueled her outrage towards the 2021 benzene crisis and to realize that her policy interests lie at the intersection of environmental, economic, and regulatory policy. At La Follette, she hopes to gain the tools necessary to utilize policy to ensure safer products, both for humans and the environment, reach all levels of society. In her free time, Alexis loves to rock climb and play soccer.



**Awa Maiga** is an incoming MIPA graduate student. Originally from Mali (West Africa), she has a master's degree in Culture and Business from the University of Mohamed Ben Ahmed-Oran in Algiers, in addition to a Communication Marketing-Management Certificate. After graduation, she completed an internship at the Embassy of Mali in Algiers. She later started working at Leading Change Africa as an Executive Director. Leading Change is an International Organization based in the US and Africa. In the future, Awa is interested in working on projects that will impact people in Africa in general, and in her own country. Awa has a passion for reading and is author of two books. She is excited to attend the La Follette School and looks forward to learning from such a diverse and talented cohort of students and faculty!



**Angela Maloney**, a native of Madison, is an accelerated student in the MPA program, finishing her undergraduate degree double majoring in community and nonprofit leadership and international studies, with certificates in public policy, Chicano/Latino studies, development economics, and leadership. She has been involved in grassroots organizing, working on-campus to expand students' access to the ballot, and off-campus as a labor organizer. Angela also served for two years as President of Zoe Bayliss Student Housing Cooperative working to ensure that students have affordable housing options on campus. She also serves as a caseworker in the Office of Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers and interned with the

Washington D.C. office of Congressman Mark Pocan last summer. Angela plans to pursue a career focused on confronting socioeconomic inequality, defending voting rights, and working to get money out of politics.



**TJ Espino McGurran** is an incoming Master of International Public Affairs Student with roots in three places: central Mexico, northwestern Wisconsin, and Uganda, East Africa. He graduated from Wheaton College (IL) with a BA degree in Theology, Anthropology, and Philosophy as well as a certificate in International Development studies; additionally, he holds a master's degree from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities in Evaluation Studies. Most of his professional experience has been as a program evaluation consultant working in Sub-Saharan Africa. Additionally, he has been working for several years on anthropological research on the good life, Christianity, heritage, and political economy in Uganda. He is pursuing this degree in order to grow as a policy analyst and evaluator working in environmental and heritage related organizations. The key interests that bring him to the

program are: studying cultural logics of value in policy and law, ethnicity and politics, legal and political theory, post-colonial politics, heritage policies, international development policy and evaluation, and the possibility of sustainable and regenerative human civilizations that provides all people the pathways to flourish. Outside the classroom, he enjoys discussion about enduring human questions, reading, playing tabletop games, cooking, and running; he is also an aspiring gardener and dancer.



**Madison Mehlberg (she/her)** is originally from a small, rural town 50 minutes west of Green Bay, WI called Clintonville. She graduated from UW-Madison in May with a bachelor's in Political Science and two certificates in Public Policy and Political Economy, Philosophy, and Politics. During undergrad, Madison held various internships, including one with the State of Wisconsin Investment Board, one with Wisconsin State Representative LaKeshia Myers, and one with the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services. Madison's policy interests are centered around poverty and education. During her free time, Madison enjoys spending time with her friends and family, exploring Madison, going to the beach, and going to concerts!



**Nicole Meyer (she/her)** is a first year Master of Public Affairs and Master of Public Health dual degree student. She graduated with a BS in psychology, neurobiology, and English with a certificate in public policy from UW-Madison in 2022. Nicole began researching and volunteering with housing insecurity and Domestic Violence at a variety of nonprofits during her undergraduate experience. She has worked and volunteered at Madison Street Health, The Beacon, Friends of State Street Family, and Domestic Abuse Intervention Services, among others. Nicole is excited to pursue her interests in research and policy on housing insecurity, domestic violence, and public health. She also enjoys backpacking and is always reading.





**Jalayna Miles** is a MPA student originally from West Burlington, Iowa. Jalayna graduated from the University of Central Missouri in May 2022 with a B.S. in Dietetics. During her time as an undergraduate student, Jalayna participated in the McNair Scholars Program and completed research focused on food assistance programs. This research strengthened her interest to work in health policy. She looks forward to exploring and trying many new activities in Madison, and in her free time, she enjoys cooking, reading, and spending time outside.



**Stacey Novogoratz (she/her)** grew up in Southeastern Wisconsin but has lived in Madison for over 20 years. She graduated from UW-Madison in 2005 with a BA in Psychology and Art History. Stacey is now pursuing an MPA-MPH dual-degree to shift her career to focus on health policy. Following her undergraduate studies, Stacey led clinic implementations of the Epic electronic health record at UW Health and Stanford Hospital & Clinics. She then worked for 12 years at MetaStar, a non-profit healthcare quality improvement organization based in Madison. At MetaStar, she managed a variety of projects funded by state and federal government agencies and collaborated with national, state, and local partners to effect positive change in health and healthcare. Stacey is excited to build on her professional experience and further her education to drive systemic change through health policy. In her spare time, Stacey enjoys barre classes, reading, and musical theatre, as well as biking, traveling, and exploring new restaurants with her husband, Tyler.



**Josh Owens** is an incoming MPA candidate who is originally from Sewanee, Tennessee. He received his B.A. in 2017 from Eckerd College where he majored in international business with minors in anthropology and Chinese. Prior to moving to Madison, Josh lived in Colorado and Tennessee working in commercial real estate valuation and higher education, respectively. While at the La Follette School, Josh is excited to pursue interests in areas of energy policy and analysis, specifically related to climate policy and negative emissions technologies. Outside of work, Josh enjoys camping, hiking, reading, and swimming and is looking forward to enjoying all that Madison has to offer.



**Sara Pabich (she/her)** is an incoming Master of Public Affairs and Public Health student. She is originally from Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, and holds a bachelor's degree in Economics and Environmental Studies with a certificate in Global Health from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Sara has completed various internships during her time at UW-Madison, including being an Environmental and Public Health Strategist at Washington/Ozaukee Public Health Department and Environmental Research Assistant for Environmental Innovation and Research Center at UW-Oshkosh. She currently works within Dane County's Office of Energy and Climate Change as a Climate Assistant tracking facility data. Her past internships and the position as a Climate Data Assistant have made her passionate about energy, climate, and health policy. Throughout her time at La Follette, Sara hopes to build skills in analyzing, creating, and communicating policies that make more equitable and healthy communities. You can find Sara baking, reading, hiking, traveling, and spending time with her friends and family in her free time.



**Carlos Puga** is a University of Wisconsin-Madison graduate with a B.S in Political Science, Economics, and Legal Studies and a Certificate in Chicana & Latinx Studies. As an undergraduate student, he led several student organizations like the Chicana & Latinx Certificate Student Association (ChiLaCSA) and Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity, Inc. Moreover, he co-founded and led the Latinx Pre-Law Student Association (LPSA) at UW-Madison. He strives to support and uplift marginalized communities and hopes to continue representing and advocating for marginalized and essential workers throughout the State of Wisconsin. Above all, as a first-generation student, he understands that he is the first of many who will embark on this path. Hence, it is crucial to create and establish accessible spaces and organizations that will continue to help future generations.



**Muhammad Rehan** is from Pakistan and came to UW as a Fulbright Scholar in 2021. He grew up in the FATA region of Pakistan, the region where Malala Yousfzai (Nobel Peace Prize Winner) raised her voice for women's education. He joined the national level organization with Malala Yousafzai and worked for education and women empowerment in the region. While using the platform of the organization, he signed a memorandum of understanding with the government of Pakistan to provide funding and logistics for youth engagement in various activities such as sports, education, and expos. He had the honor to meet the President and Prime Minister of Pakistan and participated in the opening ceremony of the women's campus of the university in his region. In collaboration with the Provincial Assembly, he worked with the United Nations to design a proposal for high school education policies in Pakistan. He presented this proposal to the President of Pakistan to consider for future implementation. Muhammad also worked directly with the US Embassy in Pakistan and assisted in English teaching projects. He has taught in multiple South Asian Universities and was at the University of Wisconsin-Madison last year. He wants to work for the United Nations or other nonprofit organizations. In his free time, he likes to hang out and watch movies, enjoys travel, and stays active by hiking, bicycling, and kayaking.





**Lauren Rhodes (she/her)** is a first year Master of Public Affairs and Master of Urban and Regional Planning double degree student. After graduating from Oberlin College in 2017 with a BA in Environmental Studies, Lauren worked on federal policy projects in D.C. related to carbon pricing and infrastructure policy. Once she moved to Madison, she developed a strong background in residential energy efficiency program implementation at ICF, and most recently supported a range of program evaluation research projects at ILLUME Advising. Lauren has supported each step of quantitative and qualitative social science research studies. At UW-Madison, she looks forward to focusing on environmental justice, learning more about how the urban planning process can be more equitable and how environmental policy can better connect to public health policy. Lauren enjoys spending time with her fiancée, friends, family, and cat Bennie.



**Johanna Schmidt (she/her/hers)** Johanna Schmidt is a first year MPA student with interests in immigration, housing, transportation, workers' rights, and reproductive justice. Originally from Oak Creek, Wisconsin, she is overjoyed to be returning to her home state after spending the past few years in Minnesota and Connecticut. She graduated from the University of Minnesota in 2019 with a BA in Spanish Studies and a BS in Sociology. Her passion for government was ignited by her experience volunteering with Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en la Lucha (CTUL), a workers' rights organization in Minneapolis. During her time at CTUL, she witnessed the ways that government fails vulnerable communities and was inspired to pursue a career bettering those systems. After graduating, she became a fellow with Govern for America (GFA) and spent three years at the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF). In her time with DCF,

she supported DCF's Family First Planning Process, legislative work, fatherhood engagement, and Statewide Advisory Council. She also holds a Graduate Certificate in Leadership and Public Management from the University of Connecticut. In her free time, Johanna enjoys curling up with some freshly brewed tea and reading horror novels.



**Sukhvir "Ski" Singh** is a lifelong Wisconsin resident, originally from Green Bay, WI. In the Spring of 2021, he graduated from UW-Madison with a degree in Health Promotion & Health Equity and a certificate in Global Health. He works with the evaluation team of the Population Health Institute as a project assistant on the State Opioid Response grant. A dual-degree student in the MPA and Master of Public Health programs, Ski's first year was spent in the MPH program. He is excited to join the La Follette school for his second year to pursue his public health policy interests. Ski is interested in substance use prevention, as well as the intersection of criminal justice and public health. In his free time, he loves to explore the lively Madison neighborhoods, try new restaurants, and watch football.





**Doniqua Smith** offers her greetings as a fellow incoming MPA student from Milwaukee, WI. She completed her undergraduate degree in Community & Nonprofit Leadership with a certificate in Public Policy as a Badger in Spring '22. She hopes to incorporate her studies in public policy to unpack how decision-making affects those who have less influence but are the most impacted by policy. Her future goals are to assist in the fight against systemic racism and be a part of the solution to alleviate poverty and oppression. In her free time, Doniqua enjoys watching comedy movies and stand-ups. She is excited to be a part of the La Follette cohort and looking forward to making new connections and memories.



**Grace Stallworth (she/her)** is a first year Master of Public Affairs student. She is originally from Lincoln, Nebraska, where she earned Bachelor's degrees in Sociology and Psychology from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. After graduation, Grace worked as a Project Assistant for the Bureau of Sociological Research, and as a Project Coordinator on the NIH-funded "Worlds of Connections" science grant. Her policy interests include housing accessibility, social welfare, and local and state level public budgeting. She enjoys knitting, live music, and baking.



**Jing Ling Tan** is an incoming MIPA student. He graduated from the dual degree program with Sciences Po Paris and the National University of Singapore in 2022. At Sciences Po, Jing Ling studied at the Le Havre Campus and majored in Politics and Government. He was a member of the debate team, mooted for the campus' Jessup team, and cooked extensively for the Southeast Asian Club. At NUS, Jing Ling majored in political science with a focus on environmental policy diffusion for his undergraduate thesis. Outside school, Jing Ling was a part-time Legislative Aide to a Member-of-Parliament in Singapore, drafting parliamentary questions and speeches on socio-environmental issues – including climate policies, migrant labour, and refugee aid. He has held research and internship stints at the

Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, the Civil Service College of Singapore, and Eco-Business. In his free time, he can be found across a chess board, on a bicycle, or browsing his next travel destination.



**Ryan Thiele (he/him)** was born and raised outside of downtown Milwaukee. He graduated from UW-Madison this past spring with a B.A. in Political Science and Legal Studies. As an undergraduate, Ryan worked with the Tommy Thompson Center for Public Leadership and interned with the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation. He was active in the Sifting & Winnowing Foundation and a founder of the Wisconsin Journal of Public Affairs. An incoming MPA student, Ryan is heavily interested in administrative law and civil rights, but in his free time likes to read, visit national and state parks, and will attend any and all basketball games.



**Elias "Eli" Tsarovsky (he/him/his)** is a first year MPH-MPA dual degree student from Madison, WI. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2021 with a degree in Biochemistry and certificates in Global Health and Public Policy. Since graduating, Eli has fed his passion for service and public health through his year of service at Wisconsin HealthCorps Program as an AmeriCorps Member in Community Health Improvement and the Healthy Kids Collaborative at UW Health. He also serves the Campus community as the President of the Campus Area Neighborhood Association. Prior to his graduation, Eli served as the Chair of PAVE-UW at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, as a student representative in ASM shared governance at UW-Madison and as an intern for Representative Jimmy Anderson (D-Fitchburg). Eli aims to continue his passions for public health and health equity in his graduate studies in the La Follette School and the School of Public Health and Medicine. In his free time, Eli has a passion for baking and soccer which he fills by playing pick-up and refereeing all the way up to the collegiate level.

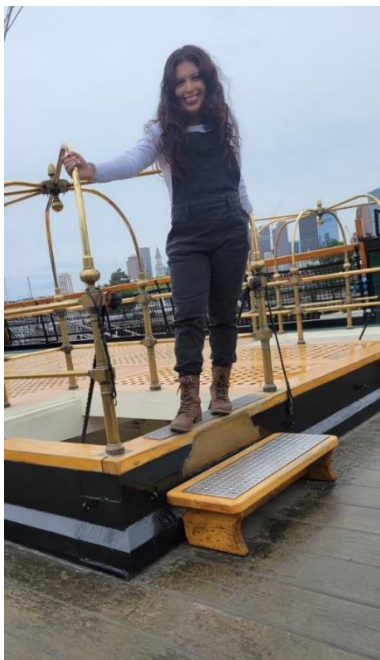


**Nate Vander Velden (he/him/his)** is a first year MPA student from Appleton, Wisconsin. He graduated from UW Madison in 2020 with a degree in sociology and anthropology with some background in economics. During his undergraduate education he became interested in the systems that make up our society and how they can and have been improved. While in Madison he hopes to get involved with the city's many opportunities to practice advocacy and involvement. Nate is mainly interested in the ways in which policy interacts with economic, social, and environmental inequality. In the future he would like to work as a policy analyst in the public sector or on a political campaign in local government. After graduating Nate worked as a substitute teacher in his hometown, which heightened his interest in our country's education system. During his free time Nate enjoys watching film and anime, reading manga, competitive esports, biking, thrifting, and coffee.





**Andrew VanderMeer (he/him)** is a first-year MPA student at the La Follette School. He is originally from Grand Rapids, MI, but has spent the last four years as a special education teacher in Indianapolis, IN. Andrew completed an undergraduate degree in Philosophy and Economics at Wheaton College in Wheaton, IL in 2018. After graduating, he joined Teach for America and completed an M.Ed. in Special Education at Marian University in Indianapolis in 2020. In 2022, he was recognized with the Mayor's Office of Education Innovation High School Teacher of the Year Award. He volunteered as the coach of the debate team at the schools where he taught, and successfully coached his team to the semi-finals of the 2022 Indiana State High School Ethics Bowl. Andrew's primary policy interests are in social policy, including family, education, welfare, and tax policy. Professionally, he is broadly interested in working at the intersection of government services and human development. He is blessed to be able to serve this year as an instructor for Personal and Professional Foundations in Business, the introductory class at the Wisconsin School of Business. In his personal time, he appreciates a good book and a long bike ride. He and his wife spend a great deal of time cooking and playing board games together. Andrew also hopes to get to know the UW Speech and Debate team in his time at La Follette, since he owes his love of policy to the activity.



**Dominique Villaseñor (she/her/hers)** is a first year MPA student interested in healthcare and education policy. She graduated from the University of California, Riverside with a neuroscience degree. Her interests in education policy stem from her experience interning at the UC Center Sacramento (UCCS) and California Council on Science and Technology. She focused her research project on the underrepresentation of women in STEM and hopes to create more outreach programs to encourage more women to strive for a STEM career. Due to her experiences as a delegate for ASUCR's Student Voice Committee and serving as president of the California Health Professional Student Alliance Chapter at UCR, she became a strong advocate for a universal healthcare system and aims to change our policy in healthcare. Since graduating, she has worked in the pharmaceutical industry and the biotech industry and hopes to use her knowledge to educate our leaders about the importance of women in STEM and how access to healthcare should be a right, not a privilege.



**Migena Vula (she/her)** is an incoming JD-MPA student from Gjakova, Kosovo. She received her bachelor's degree in Political Science and Sociology from St. Norbert College in 2020. During college, she worked as a community organizer designing projects to promote and improve student interest in local and global affairs such as voting, interfaith relations, environmental awareness, and democracy. After graduating, Migena worked as an immigration and family law paralegal in Madison. She has chosen a career in law and public affairs because she believes it is the most effective path to influence public policy and government agenda. Migena's policy interests lie in social and economic policies,

with a focus on immigration and human rights. In her free time, Migena enjoys running, snowboarding, reading, and visiting local coffee shops.





**Quinn Wakley (He/Him/His)** is originally from New Berlin, Wisconsin and went to UW-Madison for undergrad. A first-generation college student, he graduated in 2019 after majoring in history and political science with a certificate in environmental studies. Following graduation, Quinn worked for the Wisconsin Foundation and Alumni Association with alumni chapters across the United States. Through his role, he was able to transform the chapter scholarship program to focus on supporting underrepresented and socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Quinn is eager to explore all that the La Follette school has to offer. Outside of work/school he enjoys being in nature—Wisconsin's Northwoods are amazing and the Madison area has ample

opportunities to bike, kayak, hike, play tennis, and so much more. He also enjoys exploring his local community and is interested in local public management.



**Haoyan "Ken" Wang**, is an international student from Beijing, China. Beginning in Fall 2022 semester, he will be pursuing a master's degree in International Public Affairs as an accelerated student. He is hoping to do more research on how international institutions influence foreign policymaking processes and actors in different states. Ken wants to work for a think tank or become an editor for magazines like Foreign Affairs after obtaining his degree.



**Mia Williams (she/her)** is a first-year MPA-MPH student from Chicago, IL. She graduated from UW-Madison in May 2022, with a B.S. in Psychology and certificate in Public Policy. As an undergraduate student, Mia enjoyed the feeling of community that working at the Multicultural Student Center provided her and other groups on campus. She is excited to continue this path with her Posse appointment, as a mentor who will be working with 10 Chicago scholars as they transition to undergrad, and she helps them explore and employ their leadership background on this campus. Coming from a big city, urban issues solidified her desire to focus on the intersectionality of public health and public policy, specifically with an equity lens. She worked for Governor Evers and a nonprofit organization called the Healthcare Anchor Network. Both exposed her to a plethora of micro disciplines of public health and public affairs that make her excited to leverage her dual-degree to ensure that policies, public health strategies, and research can land

with impact wherever her career may take her. In her free time, Mia loves going to the gym, listening to podcasts, taking walks, and playing NYT Crossword and Spelling Bee.



**Troy Wilson (He/Him)** is a rising senior in the accelerated MPA program. In the summer of 2022, he had the opportunity to study and intern in Washington D.C. at the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). To become a policy maker that upholds our Wisconsin Idea, Troy seeks to apply his experience at NCSL and La Follette. He believes the best assets to achieving success are through his La Follette professors and cohort. Troy's research interests are ameliorating systemic inequalities and inequities, specifically, urban food deserts, while implementing green infrastructure to address climate change. Outside of school, Troy always looks for places to get coffee, play guitar and play basketball.



**Hnub Xiong (she/her)** is from Rothschild, Wisconsin. Both an accelerated MPA and a senior at UW-Madison, Hnub is studying Legal Studies with certificates in Asian American Studies with a HMoob Emphasis, Public Policy, and Criminal Justice. During her time in undergrad, she did research on poverty within HMoob-American families and developed a passion for serving underrepresented and diverse communities. Furthermore, she has worked with many undergraduate students to mentor and help maximize their experiences at UW-Madison as a Peer Mentor for the Center of Academic Excellence and a Housefellow for the Summer Collegiate Experience. Some of her policy interests are social policy and immigration policy. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with family, cooking, baking, and working on creative projects.



**Zhixing Xu** is an incoming Master of International Public Affairs student from Beijing, China. He received his BS degree at UW-Madison with majors in Forest science, Environmental studies, and Japanese in 2018. He interned as a forester with Steigerwaldt Land Service in 2018, and then took an LTE position as forestry technician with Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in 2019 right after graduation. After that, Zhixing completed his first Master's degree in Cartography and GIS in 2021, which was inspired by his working experiences in forestry fields to explore geographic data visualization and database management. When learning to become a cartographer, Zhixing realized the importance of the cartographer's role as a storyteller when creating maps involving geopolitical contents. Given his international student identity at UW-Madison for many years, he developed his interests in international policies, specifically in energy/natural resources areas. In his free time, Zhixing enjoys swimming, hiking, cooking, and sometimes video game rounds with friends.





**Kao Lee Yang** I am an incoming Neuroscience and Public Policy student, interested in working at the intersection of science and policy. I am driven by the belief that science and policy are inextricably interlinked, and I hope to identify areas of growth across both realms. In addition to cultivating a skillset that will enable me to conduct rigorous and inclusive science, I hope to inform policy practices that will uphold such investigations.



**Andrew Zaiser (he/him)** is a first-year MIPA student from Glen Gardner, New Jersey. He graduated from Kenyon College in 2020, where he double-majored in International Studies and Spanish, and played on Kenyon's football team. After graduation, Andrew moved to San Francisco, where he worked as a Conflicts Research Assistant at Covington & Burling, a multinational law firm. His policy interests include development policy in Latin America, energy and natural resource policy, and the ways in which the intersection between the private and public sectors can drive economic growth and development. In his free time, Andrew enjoys discovering new restaurants and bars, home brewing, and traveling; he is excited to explore everything Madison has to offer!



**Yiding Zhang** notes that you can just call him by his English name, Gilbert. An international student come from Hangzhou, China, he is an incoming first-year graduate school student in the MPA program. He was in Milwaukee for a four-year high school program and just graduated from Indiana University Bloomington with his Human Resources Management undergraduate degree. During Gilbert's undergraduate summer internship, he had the opportunity to intern with a state-owned enterprise in China, and mainly focused on policy analysis in Human Resources Department. Outside the classroom, he enjoys playing badminton, swimming, and traveling all over the world with my friend.