Words of Wisdom: Messages from Current Students to the Incoming Cohort

"Your purpose is much bigger than what you do."

"Lean on your classmates and advisors for support, take it one day (sometimes, one minute) at a time, don't neglect your social life because you will need the reprieve, and enjoy the journey!"

"If you get tired, selfcare, but don't quit."

"Keep doing whatever you are doing now to keep you grounded (for me it is Mysore yoga). It is easy to let these habits slip in the service of spending time on your studies, but keeping up your daily practice of whatever it is that you do will be better for you and your work in the long run."

"Writing inspires. If you don't write, nothing will change."

"Find clarity in why you're here, and remain open to how that can change as you grow."

"A fulfilling journey is based on collaboration not, competition."

"The talent of others can inspire."

Healthy CUNY

A Guide to Surviving and Thriving at CUNY

The CUNY-wide initiative that helps CUNY students overcome health and social problems in order to support their academic success has developed the Guide to Surviving and Thriving at CUNY. The guide aims to:

- Provide a one-stop guide of health, academic, financial, and basic needs services
- Offer the emotional support and social connections
- Encourage members of the CUNY community to advocate for ourselves and to act collectively

Visit the Guide here
Student Achievements: June & July

Sabretta Alford's abstract "Expanding dedicated instruction in intellectual disabilities in graduate social work programs," has been accepted for presentation at the Council on Social Work Education's Annual Program Meeting in November.

Ian Williams was elected as the 2022-2023 Officer for Governance & Membership on the Steering Committee of the Doctoral and Graduate Students’ Council (DGSC) and was selected for the Graduate Center Program Social Media Fellowship

Anupa Fabian joined the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation as their new Chief Evaluation and Learning Officer. She will lead the design and implementation of the Foundation's evaluation and learning strategy, in collaboration with internal and external stakeholders. This involves understanding community needs, assessing the impact of the foundation's grantmaking, and using research and evaluation to inform the Foundation's grantmaking strategy.

Yasmine Awais's manuscript, "Naming who performs care: Occupational segregation in the creative arts therapies" has been published in journal The Arts in Psychotherapy, 80. The paper is part of the special issue called Intersectionality and the Ethics of Care in the Creative Arts Therapies

Katrina Hannan (with Barbra Teater, Jill Chonody, and Katelyn Hall) had her paper, "Stress during COVID-19: The role of fear and health status across the age spectrum" accepted for publication in Advances in Social Work.

Britton William, MPhil, LCAT, RDT-BCT
PhD Candidate
Recipient of the 2022-2023 Graduate Center Dissertation Year Award

This competitive award provided through the Graduate Center's Provost Office is granted to Level III students to support the completion of their dissertation. Britton’s research is concerned with exploring how the histories and the trajectories of Black creative practices offer roadmaps for liberation, healing, and education.

Britton’s dissertation, The Black MAP Project: A Black People’s Epistemology of Healing, seeks to (re)imagine mental health care for Black people(s) through a liberatory lens. Designed as an online historic archive of Black aesthetics, this project lifts the deep history of Black music, performance, embodied and enacted practices as a form of expression, cultural memory, resistance, freedom dreaming, and liberatory praxis. www.thebmp.org
Ian Williams is the PhD in Social Welfare representative for the Doctoral and Graduate Students’ Council (DGSC). The DGSC is the sole policy-making body representing students in doctoral and master’s programs at the Graduate Center. The DGSC is located in the Robert E. Gilleece Student Center on the 5th floor (Room 5495). Telephone: 212.817.7888 or 212.817.7845; email: dsc@cunydsc.org. Visit the DGSC website where all bylaws, governance documents, and information regarding current representatives and elected officers are publicly available. Ian will hold an info/listening session for PhD in Social Welfare students on September 8th from 5:30 - 7pm via Zoom. The link is here.

Ian is also appointed as a Graduate Center Social Media Fellow for the next three years. This is not only an accomplishment for him, but it is also an accomplishment for our Program as the new role will serve as a resource for our PhD in Social Welfare community. Ian will be involved in developing our social media strategy and will work with other fellows and the GC Digital Initiatives to build our social media profile and activities and expand our access to digital resources.

Important Dates, Deadlines, and Events

- **8/25 from 5 - 7pm** - We are holding our first in-person "Meet & Greet" at the Graduate Center. Come enjoy refreshments and informal conversation with students, staff, and faculty. RSVP by 8/4 here.
- **8/25** - The first day of the Fall 2022 semester. Access the Fall calendar here.
- **9/8 from 5:30 - 7pm** - Attend the info/listening session with Ian Williams, the DGSC program rep. Join via Zoom at this link.
- **9/14** - Deadline for level changes
- **9/15** - Dissertation library deposit date for Fall 2022 graduation. More details here.
Student Spotlight: Emily Lopez

Why did you apply to the PhD in Social Welfare? - My network of Puerto Rican Women and Women of Color encouraged me to apply to the Social Welfare program. A professor and mentor also supported my decision to return to school. I went to these networks to discuss the importance of delving into the subject of Puerto Rican women executive directors in New York City nonprofit organizations. We discussed the significance of researching topics we thought were essential and would contribute to the narrative of Puerto Rican women leaders. However, research was not my area of expertise. I dedicated my life to direct service in local and national nonprofit organizations. The field of research was not a profession I had ever considered, plus stats terrified me. Nevertheless, I thought it was essential to highlight what Puerto Rican women were and are contributing as leaders in New York City. Finally, what led me to put pen to paper and complete the application was the idea that I would have a space to publish these lived experiences and draw attention to important topics Puerto Rican women and women of color succeed in, but few recognize in academia.

What has been your favorite course so far as a student? Why? - I don’t know about a favorite, but a course to help me further investigate my topic was Contemporary Feminist Thought, taught by Professor Jean Halley. I learned the foundations of feminist theory focusing on gender inequality. I concentrated on Puerto Rican feminist Luisa Capetillo, a gender equality and labor movement organizer. I knew of her in Puerto Rican history; however, I never delved into her herstory. The findings helped me formulate my thinking related to the topic(s) I want to research. With this intersectional lens, I am expanding and revealing the strength of the women I am currently interviewing for my narrative study. Quote: "Women being an important factor in our civilization, are worthy of obtaining all forms of liberation." Luisa Capetillo

What do you want to do after you graduate? - My post-graduation plans began soon after my IRB application was approved. I am now the Senior Director of Community Leadership Development at Graham Windham. I also work closely with the community organizing department at Fordham University. At Fordham University, I work with the community organizing team to educate students on a strength-based approach to working with young people in the Bronx. The next career move is to complete one work area and then shift professions.

I plan to teach and be a researcher full-time. The research and teaching concentration will be on community organizing, youth and teen leadership, and Puerto Rican women in leadership. Nonprofit work will be my "consulting gig." As an educator and researcher, I want to share knowledge and exchange information with those entering the field of nonprofit organizations, specifically in social service.

What leadership and/or employment positions do you hold within CUNY? - I am on the Graduate Center committee representing student voices in the Social Welfare Department. I must say it’s been a fascinating experience. During my short time on the committee, topics discussed were curricula modifications and changes in the various programs at the Graduate Center, CUNY funds, and adjunct salaries, to name a few. I appreciate the student voice in these meetings. Professors and Administrators do listen to the students. Students do not shy away from challenging the institution when necessary. However, it’s never clear if much change is happening.

What’s something that people would be surprised to know about you? - Three Puerto Rican women and I founded an organization called Casa Atabex Aché/The House of the Mother Goddess of Power. It was an alternative healing center for Women of Color in the South Bronx. We created programs like Entre Mujeres/Among Women, which focused on intergenerational relationships concentrating on mothers and daughters, and Fuerza/Power supported young women by strengthening their ability for self-advocacy.
I've shared this with many in my social welfare cohort and other peers at the Graduate Center. However, what I've not shared is that we were the recipients of the Union Square Award. In 1999 we were recognized for our innovation and leadership. The grant awarded by Union Square helped us to build on the foundation of our Abuelas. Our work was a reminder that healing is an inside job. Back then, obtaining funding for such an idea was challenging. Today this would be funded as an alternative healing center.

**What is the focus of your research?** - My research explores the barriers and facilitators of Puerto Rican Women Executive Directors in New York City nonprofit organizations. I chose this topic because I applied to the doctoral program with this question and the subject I want most to explore.

As I conduct these interviews for the study, I find myself inspired and moved by how generous the Puerto Rican women are in sharing their experiences. The women have wisdom and grit. My goal in this investigation is to present their lived experiences while identifying and elevating the themes and patterns that make their experiences unique.

I want this study to be accessible to Puerto Rican Women and Women of Color who are in the field now or may consider it in the future. Although rigorous and emotionally taxing, this exploration deepens my understanding of the practical application of theoretical knowledge and frameworks. Hopefully, shortly after I complete my dissertation, I’d like to get deeper with this work.

**What are you currently reading, watching, or listening to?** - I am reading and rereading several books that center on themes recently identified within my research topic. I created a weekly study plan to learn more about the themes arising through the interviews I am conducting. I am motivated to make this plan to keep me driven, assuring that I represent the Puerto Rican women in my study well. My only leisure reading these days are magazines that have nothing to do with my research topic but provide me with a bit of reprieve. The three books I’m reading are:


**What’s something we should ask you? What’s your answer?** - What is an area of support the CUNY Graduate Center could have offered to enhance your learning experience in the social welfare doctoral program?

My short answer would be to create a writing program that addresses the academic and individual writing needs of social welfare students. The research language is complex and not quickly learned. The Social Welfare program needs its own space to learn it. The CUNY Grad writing center is a resource. However, it is not enough to address the difficulty of academic writing.

At the Grad writing center, the tutor I was assigned was an anthropology major whose feedback was, "Why are you writing in the third person?" and "there is nothing wrong with your writing." I then attended a group drop-in session where the tutor was overwhelmed with many students. Nevertheless, professors continued to give me unconstructive and ignominious feedback that further broke my confidence.

I did not find the help I needed in school. I found an outside tutor who helped me make sense of academic writing. However, I know not all students have funds to pay for an external tutor. I would share that as a starting point, the program should discuss with students the topic of academic writing and tutoring needs they are encountering. Shaming students into doing better is not a tutoring strategy. However, thoughtfully and patiently working with students to identify their specific writing needs is.