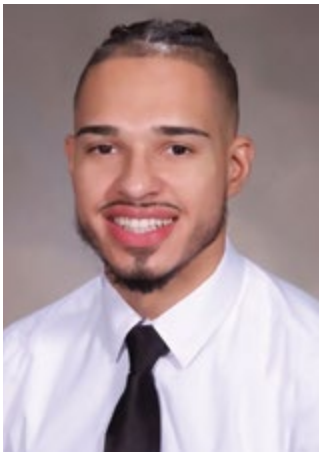


CCNY  


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 GREAT  
 GRADS <sup>20</sup>/<sub>22</sub>

175  
 Years  
 The City College  
 of New York



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175  
Years

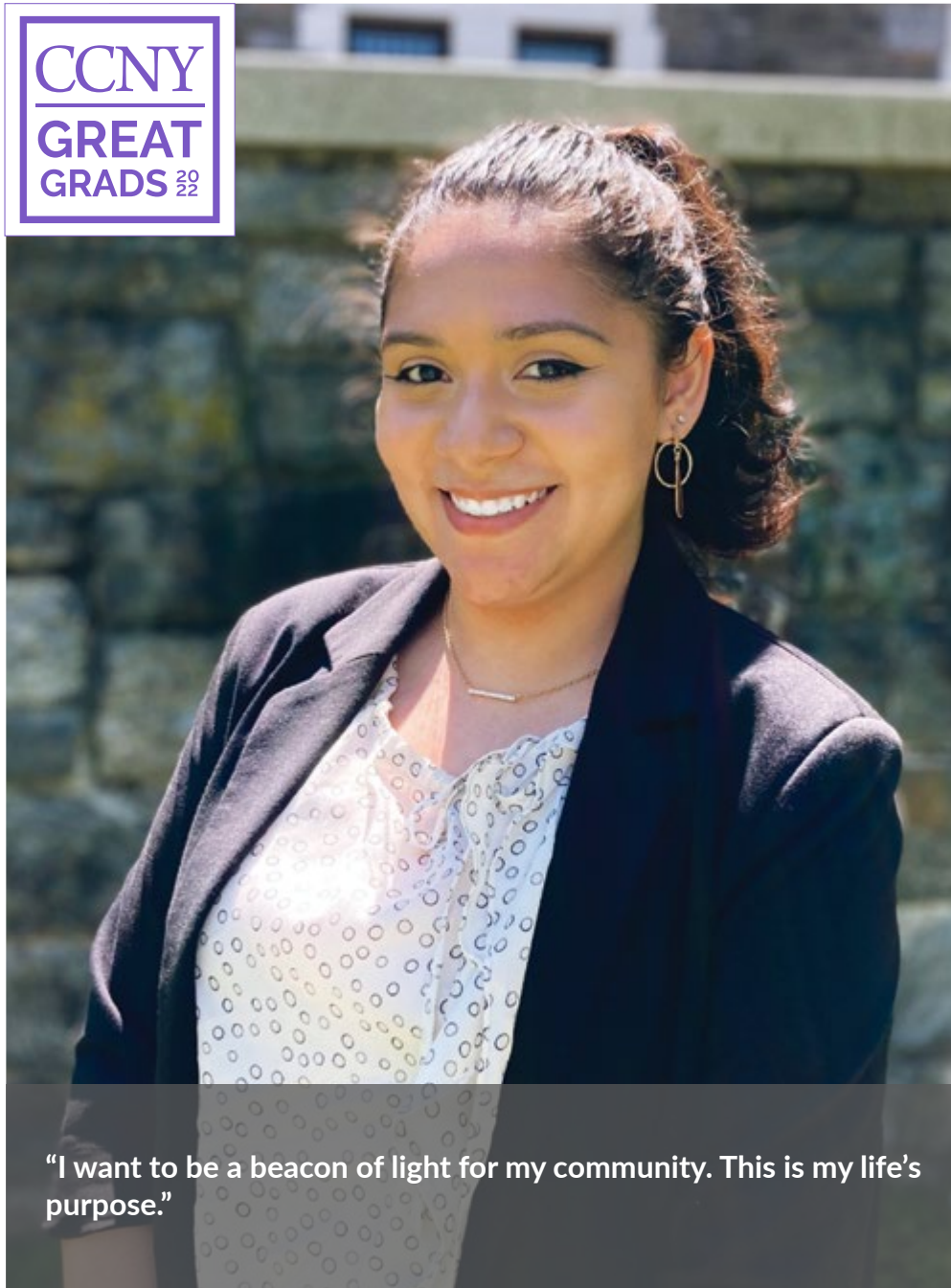


The City College  
of New York

Meet some of the most talented students that The City College of New York has to offer from the Class of 2022. As we celebrate our 175th year, and look ahead to the important work we will do together to rebuild our city and nation, we celebrate the achievements of this year's Great Grads.

Nominated by their CCNY mentors, and representative of all schools and divisions of the College, the students chosen as Great Grads excel in the classroom, inspire us with their personal histories, and illustrate the transformative power of the City experience.

Poised to make great contributions to society, these graduates have done more than just attain high grades. As they confronted and overcame such challenges as health and developmental setbacks, turbulent domestic situations, and acculturation, they led, mentored and served. Now, they embark upon their paths to becoming change agents and role models as healers, educators, researchers, mentors, public servants and policymakers.



“I want to be a beacon of light for my community. This is my life’s purpose.”

## STEPHANIE ROSE ALMODOVAR

BS, EARTH SYSTEM SCIENCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING  
THE GROVE SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING

Stephanie Almodovar seems destined for a life of service. The great granddaughter of a Guatemalan Army lieutenant, daughter of a nurse, and stepsister of a U.S. Army reservist aspires to “be a beacon of light for my community,” the South Bronx, where she grew up. “This is my life’s purpose.”

Almodovar’s passion for environmental and social justice took root in high school, when she interned at a local nonprofit organization. Her passion and dedication drove her to achieve numerous honors, awards and recognitions at The City College of New York, including service as Opportunities Chairwoman of Grove’s Society of Women Engineers, and president of the New York Water Environmental Association, and the National Society of Leadership and Success.

Another goal is to be “a resource to help those in need,” which Almodovar became during the COVID-19 pandemic in spring 2020. She sought to transition from her career as an

afterschool STEM teacher at a Harlem elementary school when the pandemic cost her a coveted summer internship. “Everything fell apart,” she said. “I literally had nothing.”

She then took to her network every day— “through every channel, every post, and every newsletter, teaching myself things I hadn’t learned before”—and became an asset to students worldwide at Built by Girls, an organization that prepares female and non-binary students for STEM careers. She parlayed that experience into an apprenticeship with NASA’s LSPACE Academy, in which she worked with students from around the world on a project that studied the Venusian cloud tops. The Academy has the potential to fund these projects through the NASA Proposal Writing and Evaluation Experience (NPWEE) program.

Almodovar now works as an energy and sustainability engineering intern for Altanova, an environmental consulting company that works to decarbonize buildings, making them more sustainable.



**“My efforts are not innate talent or intellect; rather, they are more a product of discipline, a discipline inspired by my faith, by faculty at City College and loved ones.”**

## ROSE MARY BIJU

**BS, BIOMEDICAL SCIENCE**  
**SOPHIE DAVIS BIOMEDICAL EDUCATION PROGRAM**  
**CLASS OF 2022 VALEDICTORIAN**

By her own modest admission, Rose Mary Biju owes her stellar academic success more to discipline than smarts. This is an eyebrow-raising remark by the Class of 2022 Valedictorian, whose honors in her four years at CCNY include making the Dean’s List in her freshman year, and earning the Dean’s Medal for Academic Excellence, and the Rita and Howard Shapiro Memorial Award. She graduated summa cum laude with a 3.96 GPA and her BS degree in Biomedical Science.

“My efforts are not innate talent or intellect; rather, they are more a product of discipline, a discipline inspired by my faith, by faculty at City College and loved ones,” said Biju, whose parents emigrated from India when she was eight.

Those efforts having paid off, Biju is now on track for a medical career. She’s in her first year at the CCNY-based CUNY School of Medicine and plans a career as an emergency medicine physician among underserved populations.

She’s had good practice for her future calling, winning the Empress EMT Sergeant Award for Zeal. Biju also gained clinical experience as a volunteer in the summer of 2019 at Samaritan Hospital in her native Kerala, India. There, she worked in the emergency room, tending to patients and shadowing physicians.

Associate Medical Professor Nancy L. Sohler described Biju as “a stellar student, not only achieving high grades, but working impressively as a team player.”

As their Valedictorian, Biju has this message to the Class of 2022: “There is a great importance in living in the present moment. It is only the present moment that is real. The past moment has ended, and the future is yet to come. Often, we find ourselves living mentally in the past or tied to the future yet without fully existing in the present. I would urge each person to live each moment fully present, whether that is dancing to a song or speaking to a loved one because the next moment is not guaranteed.”



## ADAM COHEN

BA, INTERDISCIPLINARY ARTS AND SCIENCES  
DIVISION OF INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES AT  
THE CENTER FOR WORKER EDUCATION

Originally from Maine, Adam Cohen moved to New York City 10 years ago to focus on his passion: restaurants, food and wine. With almost two decades of experience and success in the restaurant, food and wine industry, Cohen found himself pivoting during the pandemic when he lost both his jobs.

The 34-year-old was in search of a career that would provide long-term security and enrolled at The City College of New York in the middle of the pandemic. At CCNY, Cohen finished his degree requirements remotely in three semesters, while simultaneously working two, and sometimes three, restaurant jobs.

“I left undergraduate studies at the University of Colorado, Boulder more than 10 years ago

after personal matters took over my focus from school,” he said. “Frankly, I was scared to go back to school and thought my academic skills would be too far gone, but City College changed that and helped me get over my fears, approach goals with a step-by-step mindset, and remain positive.”

While at City College, he made the Dean’s List, graduating summa cum laude. After graduation, Cohen hopes to pursue a career in the media field but also has a strong desire to work for city government someday.

“I was empowered to finish—and finish strong—and that shift in mindset is directly transferable to my feelings about what is next for me professionally,” he said.

“I was empowered to finish—and finish strong—and that shift in mindset is directly transferable to my feelings about what is next for me professionally.”



## JEANA PEARL FLETCHER

MLA, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE  
THE BERNARD AND ANNE SPITZER SCHOOL  
OF ARCHITECTURE

After leaving Delaware to pursue college track and field, and an undergraduate degree in visual arts and environmental policy in New York City, Jeana Fletcher eventually found her passion in public spaces and enrolled at The City College of New York. She transitioned from a career in the jewelry industry to landscape architecture, where she plans to advocate for community interests and representation through urban policy and design.

“There is a disproportionate number of public spaces lacking maintenance in areas of communities that I feel bound to, and the divestment narrative that flips to green gentrification—in majority BIPOC communities—is persistent across the country,” said Fletcher.

In 2020, they served as a moderator on the American Society of Landscape Architecture New York Chapter’s education committee’s panel, “Centering Perspectives: Discussion of Black Equity in Landscape Architecture” and has participated

in its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee’s strategic planning.

Fletcher seeks to parse the language of the ASLA’s Code of Professional Ethics and its Code of Environmental Ethics in their practice, advocating for the safety and welfare of neurodivergent, disabled, and aging publics’ comfort through design landscapes.

“I want to collaborate, as a co-creator, with communities seeking public spaces,” they said.

The 34-year-old is a 2021–2022 fellow of the Fund for City of New York’s Community Planning Fellowship Program, working with Manhattan’s Community Board 9. Fletcher is also a recipient of the 2022 Landscape Architecture Foundation Honor Scholarship for Inclusive Community Design and the ASLA-NY Equitable Public Urban Scholarship Award.

This summer, Fletcher plans to work with the Science + Resilience Institute at Jamaica Bay as a socioecological resilience research fellow.

“There is a disproportionate number of public spaces lacking maintenance in areas of communities that I feel bound to, and the divestment narrative that flips to green gentrification—in majority BIPOC communities—is persistent across the country.”



"I notice the subtle, nearly invisible boundaries that set the way I navigate the world on a different path than that of the norm."

## CAROLINE HO

**BArch, ARCHITECTURE**  
THE BERNARD AND ANNE SPITZER SCHOOL  
OF ARCHITECTURE

Having a non-compliant body has not deterred Caroline Ho. That made her what she is and what compels her to make the world a better place through space-making design.

"Living with a mobility impairment, I experience the world a little shorter and a little slower than most people my age," she said. "I notice the subtle, nearly invisible boundaries that set the way I navigate the world on a different path than that of the norm."

To address these boundaries, she dedicated her studio work to removing or mitigating physical barriers in physical spaces. Her projects highlight elements overlooked in "uninviting and exclusionary" architecture for, as she puts it, "people who experience the world differently."

In one instance, she created a pinup board that was accessible to all by incorporating the ability of the board to come down and fold out.

Her activism extends beyond architecture and design. She served as the undergraduate student representative of the Spitzer School's *ad hoc* Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee, proposed a playground design for the Kutupalong refugee camp for Rohingya in Bangladesh—the world's largest such facility—and was a studio teaching assistant and mentor. In addition, the Spitzer faculty selected her as the best student in second year.

All of her efforts and advocacy serve her ultimate goal of "seeing positive equitable change in the architectural education system."



**“Don’t be afraid to fail because it might be the first step towards your success. Sometimes we fail so that we can come up with a better plan or maybe the failure was just an indicator that we were heading in the wrong direction.”**

# ALI KHALIL

**BS, BIOLOGY**  
**DIVISION OF SCIENCE**  
**CLASS OF 2022 SALUTATORIAN**

When Ali Khalil landed at JFK Airport from Egypt in July 2016, the biggest challenge he faced was language. The young immigrant barely spoke English. He improved his English while in high school and, six years later, is graduating from CCNY with a 3.91 GPA, and as the Class of 2022 Salutatorian.

Medical school awaits the driven Queens resident who, inspired by his brother’s battle with cancer, is determined to achieve his goal of becoming a doctor.

“Ali is the kind of smart, engaged student that makes teaching fun, and his academic record is probably in the top three percent I have ever seen at City College,” said David J. Lohman, associate professor of biology. “He is intelligent, engaging, hard-working, and selfless. These are qualities that embody the ideals of CCNY.”

Khalil’s academic honors include the Dean’s List, the Ira & Cecille Weber Scholarship from the Division of Science, and the S Jay Levy Fellowship. The latter is a year-long professional development experience for academically accomplished and career-focused students.

Off campus, he volunteered at New York-Presbyterian Hospital Queens, providing patients with emotional support prior to surgery, and assisting clinical staff with their general duties.

With an interest in both oncology and cardiology, Khalil’s main goal once he becomes a medical practitioner will be “bridging the gap between research and healthcare.”

He has this advice for his peers: “Don’t be afraid to fail because it might be the first step towards your success. Sometimes we fail so that we can come up with a better plan or maybe the failure was just an indicator that we were heading in the wrong direction. Focus on what makes you successful, not on what prevents you from reaching that success.”

On his CCNY experience, Khalil said: “City College made me appreciate diversity. It gave me the chance to connect with students from all over the world and learn new things from their perspectives. Owing to professors and mentors, I was able to discover my career interest. But most importantly, my advisors were inspiring as were always there for me when I needed them the most on a professional and personal level.”





**“Being able to tutor and mentor students has prepared me to work within higher education because I’ve been able to see what I want to improve on within the college system and how I can alter my pedagogy to fit with college students.”**

# ALIA MEDINA

**BSEd, CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
COLIN POWELL SCHOOL FOR CIVIC AND  
GLOBAL LEADERSHIP**

At The City College of New York, Alia Medina combined her passion for racial justice and teaching through research, tutoring and mentoring. Now, the Brooklyn native is heading to Purdue University for her master’s degree in special education and a doctorate in gifted education.

“Initially, I planned to enter elementary education, but after seeing how I could have an impact on my peers, I wanted to enter higher education,” said the 21-year-old, who attended Williamsburg Preparatory High School. “Being able to tutor and mentor students has prepared me to work within higher education because I’ve been able to see what I want to improve on within the college system and how I can alter my pedagogy to fit with college students.”

While pursuing her undergraduate degree, Medina’s honors thesis focused on the mental health stigma and how it contributes to service underutilization. She developed her research question around “Bronx Voices,” a project of her mentors, Associate Professor of Psychology Deidre Anglin and Ph.D. candidate Stephanie Nunez. The project

focused on the inequities that Black and brown communities experienced at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Medina received the Levine Family Scholarship, NYCHA-CUNY, which supports the educational advancement of New York City public housing residents. She also received scholarships from the S Jay Levy Fellowship for Future Leaders, the Racial Justice Fellows Program and the Edward I. Koch Fellowship in Public Service.

Her graduate school research will consist of how historically marginalized groups are underrepresented in special education, which will explore how being mislabeled leads to stigmatization.

“Both populations [higher and elementary education students] need female teachers of color, but most importantly, teachers who bring fresh perspectives,” she said. “So, although I am taking steps to prepare myself to work in higher education, the end goal of my career is to be an undergraduate teacher preparation professor who simultaneously works in an elementary school as a teacher or substitute.”



“Being a first-generation college student meant that it would not be easy for me, but I received so much help from people at CCNY that I am grateful for; professors mentored me for my career as well as graduate school.”

## CHELSEA MORALES

**BA, ECONOMICS**  
**COLIN POWELL SCHOOL FOR CIVIC**  
**AND GLOBAL LEADERSHIP**  
**SEEK PROGRAM**

Chelsea Morales has been interested in finance and economics since she was 12, independently selling items on eBay and Facebook. At The City College of New York, the Queens native discovered her potential for academic achievement and personal success.

As a student at City College, Morales received SEEK’s Freshman of the Year award. She was also in the Kaye Scholars Program and was a fellow of America Needs You and the Boudreau Fellows Program, which was named in honor of the Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership, inaugural dean, current CCNY President Vincent Boudreau. She has also been the recipient of the Alumni Association’s Nancy & Lawrence Greengrass Scholarship.

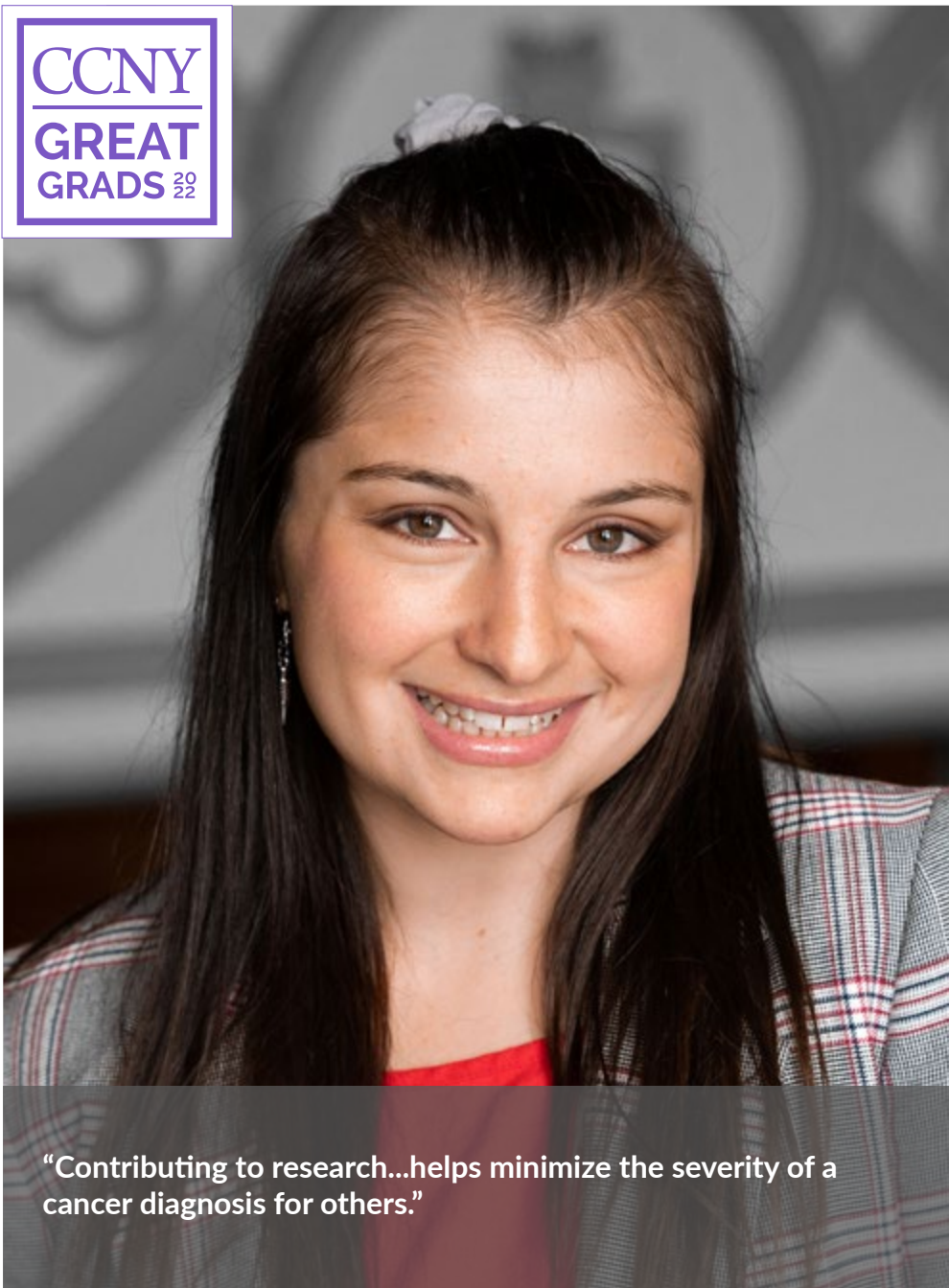
“I feel that CCNY gave me the opportunity and support to improve my academic performance,” she said. “Being a first-generation college student meant that it would not be easy for me, but I received so much

help from people at CCNY that I am grateful for. Professors mentored me for my career as well as graduate school.”

Prior to attending City College, she attended the High School for Dual Language and Asian Studies, where she was a quarter finalist of the Junior Achievement of New York Business Plan Competition, designing a business plan for an innovative product, a Near Field Communications (NFC) card that would connect to all smart devices in a home.

She currently serves as an audit intern at U.S. Customs and Border Protection and will graduate summa cum laude with a 3.9 GPA. After graduation, Morales will start a position at Bloomberg in customer service.

“My plans after graduation are to develop a career in finance and eventually go to graduate school to get an MBA,” said the 22-year-old. “I also would like to mentor CCNY students by helping them to find jobs in finance.”



## ABBE PANNUCCI

BS, BIOTECHNOLOGY  
MACAULAY HONORS COLLEGE

When Abbe Pannucci was 10 years old, she was diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer, a diagnosis that subjected her to two years of chemotherapy and radiation therapy. When she was 11 and a half, she earned her second-degree black belt in karate. At 12, she dedicated herself to the study of science “with the goal of contributing to research that helps minimize the severity of a cancer diagnosis for others.”

She credits the Macaulay Honors College for helping to launch her on that journey. After spending a summer interning at the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases in Fort Detrick, Md., near her hometown, where she “got my hands on some real science,” she applied to City College. “I definitely knew I wanted to go to CCNY; it was just that I didn’t think I would get into the Macaulay Honors College when I applied” – but she did.

She has made the most of that decision, participating in clubs, acting

as a peer mentor and orientation leader, and conducting research in the labs of Professor of Biomedical Engineering Marom Bikson and Dean of the Division of Science Susan Perkins, a biologist and her thesis advisor.

In addition to interning at Rockefeller University and Columbia University Medical Center, Pannucci volunteers as a patient advocate for Children’s National Medical Center in Washington, where she was treated, to help to improve the experience of current patients and to encourage new research in pediatric oncology.

Pannucci plans to spend the next year as an oncology laboratory technician before applying to the Physician’s Assistant Program at City College.

All of these experiences to date—and the ones yet to come—“help me give back to the community that helped me so much during my diagnosis,” she said.

“Contributing to research...helps minimize the severity of a cancer diagnosis for others.”



“I want to build projects that not just help gender equality, but ones that bring peace of mind.”

## ABIGAIL RAGHUNATH

BA, POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
COLIN POWELL SCHOOL FOR CIVIC AND  
GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

When Abigail Raghunath was a freshman at A. Philip Randolph Campus High School, a teacher quoted Frederick Douglass: “Once you learn to read you will be forever free.” Young Abigail took that to heart; the quote inspired her to “keep going” when she could be forgiven for giving up.

The daughter of Guyanese immigrants, and one of seven children, Raghunath endured eight years of foster care, an abusive alcoholic father, an older half-brother condemned to the juvenile detention system, and a half-sister who became an underage, unmarried mother. Growing up in a rough South Bronx neighborhood exposed her to violence and lost opportunities that she was determined to avoid and escape, and she saw education as a pathway.

“People can take a lot away from you, but they can’t take your education away from you,” she said, echoing Douglass’s sentiment.

Propelled by her determination, Raghunath’s desire to excel served her well as a City College student. She won numerous fellowships and internships, as well as the 2021 City College Humanitarian Award for her volunteer work with refugees in her community. She earned her degree in political science and international studies with a near-perfect 3.965 GPA.

Devoting herself to addressing gender-based violence, Raghunath will spend the summer after graduation volunteering with international nongovernmental organization GVI to improve women’s empowerment in Siem Reap, Cambodia. She will then pursue a master’s degree at Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs. Her potential career options include law school, academia, and the foreign service.

“I want to build projects that not just help gender equality, but ones that bring peace of mind,” she said. “I learned that growing up.”



“The SEEK program played a critical role in not only financing my college education but also enhancing it, by providing me with mentors, advisors, and personal tutoring.”

## GABRIEL REYES

**BA, POLITICAL SCIENCE**  
**COLIN POWELL SCHOOL FOR CIVIC AND**  
**GLOBAL LEADERSHIP**  
**SEEK PROGRAM**

The son of immigrants from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, Gabriel Reyes dreamed of being a doctor, even volunteering at a nursing home while a student at Health Opportunities High School in the Bronx. That ambition changed when he started to follow the 2020 presidential campaign of U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders (D-Vt.).

“I didn’t know that we had all these problems,” he said, referring to national inequities in healthcare, education and public safety, to name a few. “That inspired me to get involved.”

That inspiration led him to study political science, with minors in community change studies and Black studies, at the Colin Powell School. Along the way to graduating in December with a 3.7 GPA, he blossomed into a committed social justice activist. He interned at the New York State Assembly, the Washington-based Education

Trust, and the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition. He also earned S Jay Levy and Racial Justice fellowships.

Grateful for the opportunities provided to him by the SEEK program, he has given back in many ways, including serving as president of the City College SEEK club chapter during his senior year.

“The SEEK program played a critical role in not only financing my college education but also enhancing it, by providing me with mentors, advisors, and personal tutoring,” he said.

In his senior year, Reyes took a part-time position as a program assistant at New Economy Project, a nonprofit that advocates for racial and economic justice in New York City. He now works there full time as he continues to be an active member of the City College and SEEK alumni communities.



**“It is a desire of mine to utilize my bilingual abilities and incorporate them into the care of my future patients, especially underserved communities.”**

## CESIA ROSAMILIA

**MS, PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM  
CUNY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE**

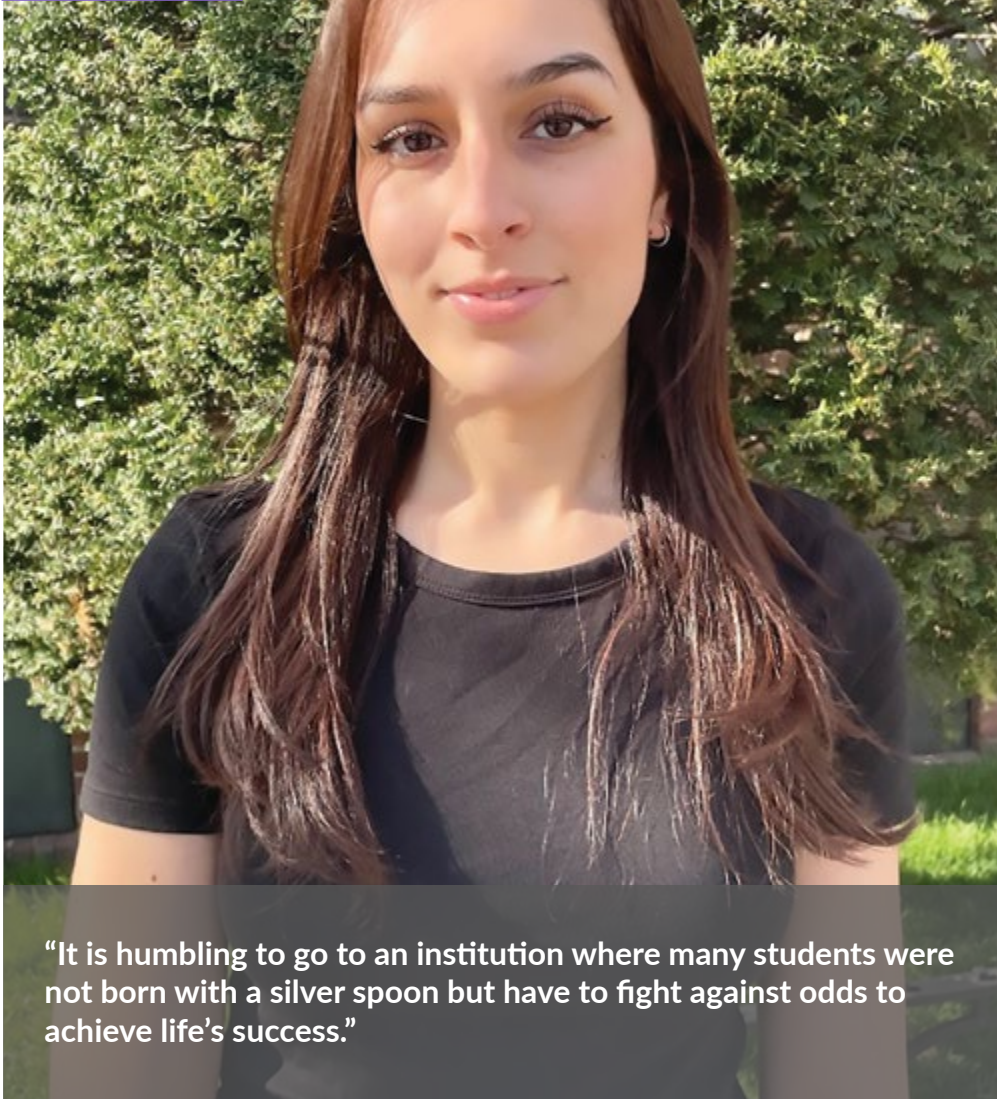
Cesia Rosamilia, who was born in Argentina but raised in Spain, is a first-generation college student with an unwavering commitment to helping underserved communities.

At the age of 18, Rosamilia moved to New York City alone to pursue her dream of receiving a high-quality college education, studying biology and medicine at The City College of New York. Three months later, she was hospitalized with an appendicitis and was unable to pay her medical bill. Through the care of her physician, she did not have to return home and was able to continue her education, which inspired her to pursue a career in the medical field.

“It is a desire of mine to utilize my bilingual abilities and incorporate them into the care of my future patients, especially underserved communities,” said Rosamilia.

While enrolled at City College, Rosamilia served as the class representative organizing multiple events and was a scholar in the National Hispanic Health Professionals Scholarship program. She received the Dean’s Award in March 2022 and volunteered as a medical assistant at AllCare Family Medicine & Urgent Care in Queens, where her interest in becoming a physician’s assistant originated.

“City College has a distinguished School of Medicine, which works diligently to recruit students from all over the world and promote diversity in the medical field,” she said. “They encouraged me to use my bilingual skills as much as possible, especially when working with non-English speaking patients.”



**“It is humbling to go to an institution where many students were not born with a silver spoon but have to fight against odds to achieve life’s success.”**

## ANEESAH SAEED

**BA, INTERNATIONAL STUDIES  
COLIN POWELL SCHOOL FOR CIVIC AND  
GLOBAL LEADERSHIP**

Her mixed heritage sparked her interest in other cultures, languages and people. City College, and its legendary diversity, inspired and honed the skills that she plans on utilizing as an advocate for the underprivileged.

That is Aneesah Saeed, the Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership’s Valedictorian and outgoing Undergraduate Student Government president, who is graduating summa cum laude with a BA in international studies and 3.96 GPA. Her honors include the Dean’s List and two of the Colin Powell School’s most prestigious fellowship programs – the S Jay Levy Fellowship for Future Leaders and the Edward I. Koch Fellowship in Public Service.

Born of a Pakistani father and Italian-American mother, Saeed’s rich heritage was a factor in shaping her life. It fired her intense curiosity to learn about other people and ways. It also led her to Pakistan where she spent part of her childhood, learned Urdu, and witnessed extreme poverty and social

inequity. That influenced her to fight for the underprivileged.

CCNY’s quality and diversity served as powerful reinforcements.

“I learned from my peers and engaged with students and distinguished faculty from a plethora of nationalities, cultures, and backgrounds,” said Saeed. “It is humbling to go to an institution where many students were not born with a silver spoon but have to fight against odds to achieve life’s success.”

Her advice to her peers is inspiring:

“Follow your passion and trust your instinct, even if that means you need to pivot. Remember that the City College of New York has prepared you to go out into the real world and succeed!”

Next for the Queens resident is graduate school – she’s been accepted to NYU and the Rochester Institute of Technology—and a career as an accessibility expert.



## NAFIZA TARANNUM

BA, ADVERTISING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS  
DIVISION OF HUMANITIES & THE ARTS

While studying public relations and advertising, as well as publishing, at The City College of New York, Nafiza Tarannum knew she wanted to create more culturally diverse stories and work with social groups advocating for diverse communities.

“From my experiences at CCNY, I learned that I want to pursue a career in human resources and help spearhead the necessary changes to uplift BIPOC voices,” said Tarannum, who grew up in Queens and attended Brooklyn Technical High School. “I want to be the hijabi interviewer that I never had myself for upcoming generations.”

Tarannum interned at Penguin Random House and worked for Justice for All (JFA), a non-profit associated with the United Nations. She is also an organizer and marketing chairperson for the Muslim Interscholastic Tournament (MIST) in New York, a nonprofit that provides Muslim youth with a safe space to showcase their talents through academic and art competitions.

“CCNY has changed my life for the better; I learned so much from my friends and professors at City that I don’t think I would have learned elsewhere,” she said. “The support I have received from my advisors and professors is unparalleled to anything else.”

While enrolled at City College, Tarannum was a member of the Muslim Students’ Organization, the Women in Islam club and the Public Relations Student Society of America chapter at CCNY. Her academic achievements include making the Dean’s List, being in the Kaye Scholars Program, receiving the Lester Nurick Scholarship and the Lynn Appelbaum Ad/PR All Star Scholarship.

Graduating in the top 10 in her major, Tarannum will be a human resources intern at Ogilvy for the summer and plans to attend graduate school next spring to study strategic communications or organizational psychology.

“CCNY has changed my life for the better; I learned so much from my friends and professors at City that I don’t think I would have learned elsewhere.”





**“As a Latino, I want to be able to show the world and lead by example that male educators of color can educate, engage and empower students to achieve beyond academics and also achieve a strong sense of identity and belonging in this world.”**

# DARREN TARAZA

**BS, EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION  
DIVISION OF INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES  
AT THE CENTER FOR WORKER EDUCATION**

For Darren Taraza, teaching has been a passion since he was young, and while studying early childhood education at The City College of New York, his dream was fully realized when he landed a job as a pre-K lead teacher at Our Lady Queen of Martyrs School in Inwood, Manhattan.

The 23-year-old has been on his own since the age of 16. He is committed to serving and teaching children of all backgrounds and abilities because he believes that every child is unique, has something to bring to the table and deserves free, high-quality education.

“I thoroughly enjoy working with children as a teacher, and I want to give back to the community that I serve,” said Taraza, who grew up in the Bronx and attended the High School for Environmental Studies. “I make it my mission to help children further their development and serve families of all socioeconomic backgrounds to ensure that they receive the high-quality education that they are entitled to.”

While at CCNY, he received grants from NYC Men Teach, which aims to improve the diversity of the New York City teaching workforce by adding 1,000 male teachers of color into the teacher pipeline, and a New York Educational Incentive Program scholarship for graduate school.

When he’s not teaching, Taraza has a growing social media following within the gamer community. He is continuing his education at City College by pursuing his master’s degree in the School of Education’s Graduate Program in Early Childhood Education.

“As a Latino, I want to be able to show the world and lead by example that male educators of color can educate, engage and empower students to achieve beyond academics and also achieve a strong sense of identity and belonging in this world,” he said.



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