

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

# **DEI Fellows Program**

## **2021-2022**



OFFICE OF THE PROVOST  
Diversity and Inclusion

# Program Overview

The University Office for Diversity and Inclusion is piloting the DEI Fellows Program during the 2021-2022 academic year. This new program is aimed at second and third year students with an interest in proactively advancing diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging at Carolina and in their home communities. DEI Fellows will be coached by DEI and subject matter experts to further develop their own leadership skills and competencies, engage in community-based active learning, and have the opportunity to take part in career networking, readiness and planning. During the second semester, students will be placed with UNC offices, departments, schools and business units throughout Carolina to apply their skills in real-world settings.

*For more information contact:*

Cloe Liparini, MA (she/her/hers)

*Director of Education, Community Engagement and Belonging*

[cloe@unc.edu](mailto:cloe@unc.edu)



# DEI Fellows

Abigail Adams	4
Parnika Agrawal	5
Salena Braye-Bulls	6
Georgia Broitman	7
Alyson Cabeza	8
Kamryn Denise Dixon	9
Molly Dorgan	10
Jarrah Faye	11
Austin Geer	12
Lauren Haines	13
Britney Dao Hong	14
Elias Horowitz	15
Fatima Konsouh	16
Molly Moran	17
Zakiya-mali Morris	18
Hannah Swanton	19
Ben Tran	20
Nikalus Ward	21
Stone Watson	22
Matthew Weaver	23
Gu Wei Tian “Leon” Xie	24



# Abigail (Abby) Adams

she/her/hers

English, Spanish (intermediate) and Hebrew (basic)

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Double Major in Political Science and Public Policy with a Minor in Conflict Resolution

I'm a sophomore Pogue Scholar and honors student at UNC-Chapel Hill. In addition to being a DEI Fellow, I'm the Assistant Director of Interfaith and Religion in the Executive Branch of Student Government. I also serve as the Limmud (Education) Chair at UNC Hillel, the Multicultural Greek Council Representative for Sigma Rho Lambda, and am on the communications team of the UNC Institute of Politics. I'm an Israel on Campus Coalition Fellow and President of Heels for Israel, where I hope to help foster constructive dialogue about peace, understanding, and nonviolence between Israelis and Palestinians.

I've spent most of my formative years working to combat antisemitism, which I first experienced in first grade and have experienced countless times since. Two days after the Chabad of Poway shooting and six months after the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting, I cofounded the international campaign, Why I Wear My Star, which seeks to share stories of Jewish pride and persistence in the midst of rising hate. We've shared stories from over 25 countries on social media and have run programs throughout the United States, Canada, Israel, and Bulgaria about utilizing Jewish pride to combat antisemitism and have been highlighted in the *Charlotte Observer*, Charlotte TODAY, Sirius XM Radio, and more.

In the future I'm interested in working in government/politics, public policy, human rights organizations, or law, and eventually want to run for office in North Carolina.

When I'm not working, I enjoy cooking, traveling, and watching documentaries!

## What do you hope to learn as a DEI Fellow?

I hope to learn from experts and other fellows about how to foster a culture of inclusion and diversity within any environment and uplift voices that have historically been marginalized.

## What do you hope to contribute as a DEI Fellow?

I hope to contribute my previous knowledge and experience with DEI, particularly the work that I've done to ensure that the Jewish community is included and feels safe in all spaces. I also hope to contribute my conflict resolution skills by helping others appreciate nuance.



# Parnika Agrawal

she/her/hers

English

Orlando, Florida, USA

Biostatistics and Quantitative Biology

I'm Parnika, a rising junior at UNC! I am currently working towards majors in biostatistics in the School of Public Health, and quantitative biology. I hope to ultimately enter the medical profession, where I can combine my love for science with a passion for public health and equitable access to healthcare.

At UNC, I've enjoyed getting involved with many amazing organizations that foster a sense of community. I'm excited to be serving as an alternative break leader with APPLES, where students can use one of their breaks from school to perform service-learning. As the founding Vice President of Phi Delta Epsilon medical fraternity, I have loved the opportunity to form relationships with other pre-med students at UNC. I have also been able to continue in a tradition of creating a space for South Asian culture on campus as a director for two non-profit South Asian dance competitions on campus.

## **What do you hope to learn as a DEI Fellow?**

I hope to learn how to productively apply my experiences towards making the Carolina community a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive space. I'm most excited to engage with leaders on campus and take part in community-based learning to be a part of how future UNC students experience their time here!

## **What do you hope to contribute as a DEI Fellow?**

I hope to contribute a passion for turning learned knowledge into active change on campus, and to use my unique set of experiences to foster greater connections between student organizations and UNC leadership.



# Salena Braye-Bulls

she/her/hers

English

Tuskegee, Alabama, USA

Public Policy and Geography

I have always had a genuine interest in bettering my communities. Having grown up in the historic rural town of Tuskegee, Alabama, I was raised with a keen awareness of race, southern U.S. culture and socioeconomic disparities. I graduated from the Alabama School of Math and Science in 2019 and am now a junior at UNC majoring in Public Policy and Geography while also obtaining a minor in African, African-American, and Diaspora Studies.

In addition to being a DEI Fellow, I am also a Will Fellow through Honors Carolina, the Political Activism Committee Chair for UNC's NAACP Chapter, an incoming Editor in Chief for Black Ink Magazine, and the Assistant Director of Basic Needs and Affordability under the Richards Student Government Administration. During the school year, I also work at the Orange County Literacy Center as a literacy tutor. I eventually want to attend law school and am always most focused on providing marginalized communities with truly equitable access to crucial resources. In my free time, I love to find new music, go on road trips, and drink smoothies. My favorite spots on campus are the Hanes Art Center Library and the shaded tables behind Lenoir. Though I occasionally miss home, I am thankful to be a member of the Carolina community and a DEI Fellow.

## **What do you hope to learn as a DEI Fellow?**

As a DEI Fellow, I hope to learn the best strategies and techniques for fostering meaningful inclusion in all spaces that I enter. I am excited to critically examine current DEI practices at UNC and consider the best ways to connect communities.

## **What do you hope to contribute as a DEI Fellow?**

I hope to contribute not only perspectives and insight based on my unique life experiences but an empathetic listening ear, too. I also hope to contribute meaningful collaboration and communication skills to all projects and goals.



# Georgia Broitman

she/her/hers

English and Spanish

Kensington, Maryland, USA

Human Development and Family Studies

I am a junior at UNC coming from my beloved home state of Maryland. When in Chapel Hill, you might find me in the Campus Y, engaging in conversation about abolition with Criminal Justice Awareness and Action; running down the sidelines of a field, managing for UNC's elite women's soccer team; volunteering as an Outreach Ambassador for the Orange County Rape Crisis Center; or spending too much time at Wegmans (when I should be in the library studying).

In the past, I have had the privilege to work with non-profit groups like Grow Your World (tutoring and developing curriculum grounded in racial equity), North Carolina Education Corps (teaching phonics and literacy to K-4 students and recruiting community members to be high impact tutors), and Know Your IX (organizing around Title IX and advocating for students' right to an education free from violence). Looking to the future, I hope to become an educator and have aspirations to go into policy work and/or public office to dismantle oppressive systems and make the world a more equitable, honest, and kinder place.

Currently, some of my passions include soccer, education, laughing and making others laugh, and doing things through joy and pleasure (I am reading *Pleasure Activism* by Adrienne Maree Brown, and I highly recommend). I am learning to set boundaries and say no to things. When I'm not overbooking myself, you might catch me listening to music, trying to figure out how watercolors work, running, enjoying nature, or calling my grandma to gossip over the latest episode of *The Bachelorette*.

## What do you hope to learn as a DEI Fellow?

I look forward to learning skills and confidence to encourage those around me to have a deeper love for others and become more equitable in their work and lives. I hope to learn best practices for making a place welcoming, inviting, and equitable, especially as it pertains to the classroom.

## What do you hope to contribute as a DEI Fellow?

I would like to contribute my unique perspective and courage to grow, in hopes that others might lean into that magical, vulnerable place with me. Most of all, I hope to contribute my love for community and being in community with others.



# Alyson Cabeza

she/her/hers

English and Spanish

Fuquay-Varina, North Carolina, USA

English and Comparative Literature with  
Education; Social and Economic Justice

Currently, I serve as an intern for the Global Office within the Campus Y, where I work with different cohorts in the Global Gap Year Fellowship. I am also a Blue-Ribbon Mentor, where I meet one-on-one with a student in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Schools. After graduation, I plan to enter the workforce in nonprofit communications or corporate social responsibility. After a few years, I hope to become a double Tar Heel by getting my Master's in Education.

I currently spend my free time writing creative nonfiction stories, reading, learning more about film photography, and playing with my kitten, Salem.

## **What do you hope to learn as a DEI Fellow?**

I hope to learn more about my fellow cohort members and their experiences. I also hope to learn more about my own identity and how my time at UNC has impacted it. Overall, I want to learn more about diversity both in an educational environment and outside of one.

## **What do you hope to contribute as a DEI Fellow?**

I hope to contribute my thoughts and experiences as a queer first-generation Mexican woman at UNC. I hope to contribute my realistic approach to life and social justice issues. Lastly, I also hope to contribute my words and stories throughout my experiences with diversity.





# Kamryn Dixon

she/her/hers

English

Wake Forest, North Carolina, USA

Major in Communications and Minor in Media and Journalism

I was born in Wake Forest, North Carolina. During elementary and middle school, I learned from professional dancers frequently and I competed on a national level. In addition to this, I have a background in cheerleading. I was a member of the varsity cheerleading squad at Heritage High School. My team won the state championship in 2018, and I was named captain the following year. I was a member of Jack and Jill of America for over a decade and through this organization I completed over 500 volunteer hours and participated in numerous cultural and leadership workshops. I also co-authored a book about being an African American teenager in America. In 2019, I founded an organization called Kam's Toy Box through which I provided Christmas presents for children in low-income communities with good grades. I also started the very first cheer clinic for students with special needs at my high school.

I have been exposed to diversity programs at UNC since I was a sophomore in high school. During my junior year of high school, I participated in a two-day summer program at UNC called NC Renaissance. During my senior year of high school, I participated in Project Uplift and Uplift Plus at UNC-Chapel Hill. During my first year at UNC, I was named Miss Freshman of the Black Student Movement and I was also appointed to the First Year Class Council.

## **What do you hope to learn as a DEI Fellow?**

I hope to have the opportunity to get to know people who come from different backgrounds than me so that we can educate one another while celebrating our differences. I also hope to learn more about how I can make UNC-Chapel Hill a more diverse university.

## **What do you hope to contribute as a DEI Fellow?**

I hope to contribute my perseverance, empathy, kindness, and strong desire for change as a DEI Fellow. I also hope to contribute my ability to listen to the other fellows in order to ensure that everyone feels like their voice is being heard.



# Molly Dorgan

she/her/hers

English

Waynesville, North Carolina, USA

Sociology

I am a sophomore majoring in Sociology with a minor in Data Science. I currently serve as the Co-Director of Institutional Research and Assessment in the Undergraduate Student Government and on the Executive Board of the Richards Administration. I also play on the Women's Rugby team.

My goals for the upcoming year focus on closing gaps between University administration and the student body. I am passionate about combatting biases in education against BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, low-income, rural, and disabled students and want to use my position to advocate for inclusive, positive, and equitable college experiences. When I'm not working, you can probably find me running through campus, doing yoga in my room, or studying at Epilogue.

## **What do you hope to learn as a DEI Fellow?**

As a DEI Fellow, I hope to learn more about the intricacies of DEI work within a large university system, as well as about ways to incite change in spaces where equality, justice, and equity are new.

## **What do you hope to contribute as a DEI Fellow?**

I hope to contribute my perspective as a student with a unique story. In addition, I hope that my connections to my peers will allow me to help give them a voice within the current administration.



# Jarrah Faye

she/her/hers

English, Wolof

High Point, North Carolina, USA

Sociology and African and African American  
Diaspora Studies

My name is Jarrah Faye and I'm a junior Sociology and African/African American Diaspora Studies major. My dream is to become a civic activist and civil/human rights attorney and push towards a better future for Black and other groups of color who for far too long have been marginalized and ignored.

## **What do you hope to learn as a DEI Fellow?**

I hope to learn how to incorporate tactics of diversity and inclusion in systems so that there is a basis of human dignity and respect that allows equity to take place in institutions.

## **What do you hope to contribute as a DEI Fellow?**

I hope to bring forth my experience as a Black woman so that we are always represented at this University and use that experience to advocate for real structural change and push towards a better experience for future Black Tar Heels.



# Austin Geer

he/him/his

English and Spanish (intermediate)

Anderson, South Carolina, USA

Biochemistry and Neuroscience

At UNC, I am involved in research in the Chemistry department; a member of Alpha Epsilon Delta; Director of Programs and Policy Implementation for the Undergraduate Student Government; and LAMBDA Chair for SAGA.

I am excited to be a DEI Fellow because I want to be able to have an equity lens in many different scenarios. Specifically, I am interested in being a pioneer for dissolving health inequities in the U.S. and around the world.

## **What do you hope to learn as a DEI Fellow?**

I hope to learn about the diverse perspectives that are all across Carolina's campus and beyond. I want to take what I learn here and apply it to the plethora of situations that require an equity lens. Specifically, I want to learn more about health equity efforts and how I can be a change agent for healthcare access.

## **What do you hope to contribute as a DEI Fellow?**

I want to contribute my life experiences as a black, queer student at UNC and in this world. I believe it is important for my fellow BIPOC students and me to take space and realize how much we have overcome to get to the spot that we are in now! I also want to be someone who listens as much as possible and provides compassion and understanding where necessary.



# Lauren Haines

she/her/hers

English and Spanish (working proficiency)

Portland, Oregon, USA

Public Policy

I was born in San Diego, California, but have lived in Portland, Oregon, for most of my life. I love the Pacific Northwest and spend most of my time outdoors, running, hiking, and collecting rocks. When I am not outdoors, I enjoy reading and writing science fiction.

At UNC, I am a sophomore Public Policy major with minors in Spanish and Creative Writing. I am also a member of the UNC Rock Climbing Club and Residence Hall Association. I hope that, when I graduate, I will go to law school or pursue a career in politics.

## **What do you hope to learn as a DEI Fellow?**

Growing up in a private, Catholic school, I wasn't exposed to a great diversity of people or perspectives. I'm hoping to learn more about experiences outside of my own relatively narrow worldview so that I can incorporate that awareness into my personal and professional choices.

## **What do you hope to contribute as a DEI Fellow?**

I think everyone has a unique, valuable perspective. Mine has been shaped by my experience as a queer, biracial woman and from years of volunteering, interning, and working in political spaces. Consequently, I'm collaborative, motivated, and action-orientated, and I hope I can contribute those qualities, as well as my personal voice and perspective, as a DEI Fellow.



# Britney Hong

she/her/hers

English

Cary, North Carolina, USA

American Studies and Human Development  
and Family Studies

I am double majoring in American Studies and Human Development and Family Studies with a possible minor in Creative Writing. As a first-generation college student, daughter of refugees, and a Chinese-Vietnamese American, I am most passionate about bridging the education gap for minority students, extending voting rights to every American, and advocating for social justice through an intersectional lens.

In the past, I have interned for the North Carolina Democratic Party, You Can Vote, and North Carolina Asian Americans Together. Currently, I am a Resident Advisor for Creative Writing. I also serve as a Graphic Designer for the Campus Y and on the DEI Committee for the School of Education Undergraduate Advisory Council.

In the future, I wish to pursue a career in public service, specifically education policy. In my free time, I love scrapbooking, writing poetry, listening to podcasts, and getting Chipotle or boba with friends.

## **What do you hope to learn as a DEI Fellow?**

So far, I have only gained my DEI skills through personal experiences. As a Fellow, I hope to learn how to navigate DEI through a professional perspective from the workshops and meetings

## **What do you hope to contribute as a DEI Fellow?**

UNC has a track record of excluding marginalized communities who have had to fight to get their voice heard. As a DEI Fellow, I wish to apply the skills that I've obtained from my life and this fellowship to Carolina to pivot the track record we once had.



# Elias Horowitz

they/them/theirs

English and Hebrew (basic)

Cary, North Carolina, USA

Public Policy and History

I am a sophomore studying Public Policy and History, as well as Jewish studies. I am from Cary, North Carolina, where I grew up as the youngest of four kids. In high school, I found my voice coaching and competing in Speech and Debate throughout NC, where I qualified for CFL Nationals twice. I also founded IDEA club with friends following the 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas HS as a space to learn about (Inform), Discuss, and Engage in Actional services surrounding issues of social justice.

As a first-year student at UNC, I joined Hillel and participated in the Campus Y's "You Can't Silence Us" photo campaign as a response to the antisemitic and racist vandalism incident at the Campus Y building in January of 2020. This event galvanized my commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion work at UNC. I am the 2021-2022 Co-Director of Communications for the Campus Y. As a queer, nonbinary, and disabled Jewish student, I am passionate about making all UNC students feel like they belong and are valued on campus. I am especially interested in local government, disability marriage equality, and combating white supremacy through policy.

In my free time, I enjoy drinking tea, playing Dungeons and Dragons with friends, and pretending I sound as good as Andre de Shields while singing along to Hadestown. I am currently reconnecting to Judaism, culturally and religiously, and learning Hebrew (very slowly). I have a pet Australian Tree Frog named Oslo and will most certainly send you pictures if you ask politely.

## **What do you hope to learn as a DEI Fellow?**

I am excited to learn from their diverse cohort of Fellows. I hope to gain real-world experience working within a UNC office during the program's second semester and hope to transfer those skills to my future goal of working in a policy nonprofit environment.

## **What do you hope to contribute as a DEI Fellow?**

I ultimately hope to contribute to increased equity and inclusion at UNC, particularly by uplifting the needs and demands of student organizations already operating on campus to support minority students. I hope to initiate meaningful and tangible responses to issues of racial and gender inequality at this university.



# Fatima Konsouh

she/her/hers

English and Arabic

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Business Administration

I am a rising junior at UNC interested in strategic and innovative frameworks and models that empower disadvantaged populations—specifically, students of color who come from low-income backgrounds and matriculate into professional and academic settings. As a first-generation immigrant and woman of color, I grew up witnessing myself, friends and family experience a lack of support or feeling that their perspectives and experiences were overshadowed in their professional and academic careers. From there, I became curious about learning how to advocate for myself and others around me who shared these experiences, hoping to bring about constructive change and cultivate more inclusive environments. Before entering university, I took a gap year living and working in various countries; this experience further opened my eyes to the importance of cross-cultural communication and cultivating inclusive and diverse environments.

Outside of these interests, I enjoy spoken word, art, drinking copious amounts of coffee, and watching (often too much) Netflix.

## **What do you hope to learn as a DEI Fellow?**

I hope to learn how diversity, equity, and inclusion are incorporated into strategic planning and professional frameworks on an institutional level. Additionally, I hope to learn how to be a better DEI advocate and forge strong connections with fellow peers at UNC.

## **What do you hope to contribute as a DEI Fellow?**

I hope to contribute my skills as an effective communicator and team builder that facilitates impactful dialogue across various campus communities and individuals. In the process, I hope to add my own unique experience as a religious minority and student of color at UNC to these conversations.





# Molly Moran

she/her/hers

English and Spanish

Asheville, North Carolina, USA

Psychology

I am a Korean Irish student from Asheville, North Carolina, and currently attending UNC as a rising junior. I am pursuing a degree in Psychology and minoring in Creative Writing and Environmental Science. One of my growing passions while here at UNC and moving forward is connecting back to my mother's Korean heritage and culture, which I never got to experience in my life, since I grew up in a majority white city. Two cultural positions I hold at UNC are Political Chair for the Asian American Students Association and Co-Cultural Chair for the Korean American Students Association, with a hope of helping other upcoming Asian-American students to find their community and celebrate their culture.

I want to go to Law School, in the direction of becoming an Environmental Lawyer. My focus is on environmental racism and how it affects rural communities where minority communities reside. Within the subject of conservation and environmental protection, minorities are often left out of the conversation and forgotten even though we have made huge steps for these movements as a whole. Diversity and equity are typically pushed to the side in many environmental advocacy programs. I hope to be one more voice working towards a healthier and more sustainable world, while also addressing how racism and socioeconomic status have an overwhelming role in which areas are currently protected and which areas have a blind eye turned on them.

## **What do you hope to learn as a DEI Fellow?**

I hope to learn more about intersectionality and how different minority groups can actively and effectively support one another. Although I have strong beliefs about diversity and equity, I still sometimes grapple with how to work on connecting people and creating projects to uplift them. As a DEI Fellow, I am excited to learn from my peers and mentors about their ideas and guidance.

## **What do you hope to contribute as a DEI Fellow?**

I hope to share my own experiences and lessons as a queer, biracial person to the other Fellows and hopefully expand others' views. I also want to thread in environmental advocacy with my work in diversity and inclusion, leading to projects that spread over multiple topics and conversations.



# Zakiya Morris

she/her/hers or they/them/theirs

English and American Sign Language

Knightdale, North Carolina, USA

Major in Psychology and Minor in Speech & Hearing Science

Originally, I am from Boston, Massachusetts, but my family moved to North Carolina when I was three years old. I am majoring in Psychology with a minor in Speech and Hearing Sciences, with which I plan to pursue a career as an audiologist when I leave UNC. One of my passions is providing aid to marginalized individuals—especially those with special needs— and I hope to apply this in my future work. Growing up with a Deaf+ brother has significantly shaped my life experience; it pointed me toward the field of Audiology and made me especially driven to become a healthcare worker that truly makes a positive impact on my patients' lives.

Currently, I work in the University's Work-Study department as a communications intern, and I have volunteered at a camp for special needs children every summer for the last four years. At UNC, I am involved with the Black Student Movement and I serve on the executive board for the National Student Speech, Language, & Hearing Association. Additionally, through my membership in AED (a pre-health honor society), I have volunteered with Habitat for Humanity, TABLE, and Meals on Wheels. I am incredibly passionate about LGBTQIA+, disability, and women's rights and I am immensely excited to serve these communities with the skills I gain from this fellowship!

## **What do you hope to learn as a DEI Fellow?**

I hope to gain the skills to empower UNC students that have felt in any way disenfranchised or unimportant within the last two years and help them know that their voice matters.

## **What do you hope to contribute as a DEI Fellow?**

I hope to contribute my wide range of leadership experience as well as my passion for social justice to help this program to be as productive and beneficial as possible.



# Hannah Swanton

she/her/hers

English

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

Global Studies and Geography

I'm a sophomore from Greensboro, about an hour away from Chapel Hill, majoring in Global Studies and Geography. I hope to possibly go into International Relations or research, and I'm interested in global sustainable development. In my free time, I enjoy traveling, music, and baking, although I'm not great at the last one. I hope to study abroad in Korea next year and meet my extended family. This year, I'll be serving on the Asian American Student Association's board as historian.

## **What do you hope to learn as a DEI Fellow?**

I hope to learn from the different perspectives and experiences of other Fellows, and work together to grow our leadership skills. I would also like to learn to think outside my preconceived definition of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and recognize groups and opinions I may not be familiar with.

## **What do you hope to contribute as a DEI Fellow?**

I hope to work with other Fellows to bridge the gap between the student body, student organizations, and the University. I would like to contribute to important conversations surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion at UNC within the upcoming year.



# Ben Tran

he/him/his

English and Vietnamese

Outer Banks, North Carolina, USA

Economics and Public Policy

I come from a homogeneous community, so I never experienced true diversity. Not only did I experience racism, but I had to come to terms with my sexuality. As a child, I cried when I changed my wardrobe because it wasn't what "normal" boys wore. I cried because I thought that being gay was wrong. I questioned who I was from both a cultural, mental, and social standpoint throughout my entire life. This confusion continued to build as I began to find my place within the Asian community and the LGBTQ+ community. I sought the attention of groups who bullied me. This harassment eroded my confidence in my identity and culture. Though many of these shortcomings have been a struggle, I have had the privilege of viewing the world from a different perspective because of my experience as an Asian-American and a child of Vietnamese immigrants. My identity has put me in many difficult, troubling situations: from being called unwarranted racial slurs to seeing my parents deal with racial prejudice in their workplace. Overcoming these identity crises was not an easy journey, and it is a journey that will continue throughout the rest of my life. However, I am now proud to say that I am a gay person of color, the son of two Vietnamese immigrants, and a first-generation college student.

## **What do you hope to learn as a DEI Fellow?**

As a person of color, I have relayed my story to other people of color and connected with them through our shared experiences. These connections have shown me the importance of using my voice. As a DEI Fellow, I hope to learn how to use my voice and my story in a way that will help others, especially those in marginalized communities

## **What do you hope to contribute as a DEI Fellow?**

The simple act of listening and sharing with others has helped me as a gay Asian-American become more comfortable in my own skin. I hope to share my story and experiences with others. Through these shared experiences, I hope to empathize with others and reassure others that their voices are heard. As a DEI Fellow, I want to continue to use my voice and help those who are unable to voice their stories.



# Nikalus Ward

he/him/his

English and Spanish (intermediate)

Morganton, North Carolina, USA

Environmental Studies, Sustainability Track

I am a rising junior from Marion, NC, majoring in Environmental Studies, with a special interest in equitable access to resources. I have served as an LGBTQ Ambassador since my first semester. During the summer of 2021, I served as a summer intern at UNC's CleanTech Corner and will serve as the Assistant Director of Sexuality and Gender Inclusion for Student Government during the 2021/22 school year. My hobbies include cooking, Minecraft, and playing Dungeons & Dragons with my friends. I am particularly interested in the intersection between accessibility and DEI.

## **What do you hope to learn as a DEI Fellow?**

Our expectations of others are often preconceived to exclude certain groups. I hope to learn how to confront these biases and build new expectations that approach inclusion expansively from the beginning.

## **What do you hope to contribute as a DEI Fellow?**

I hope to provide creative solutions to approaching DEI problems. The spirit of DEI is in the variety of skills it gives us and I want to use that variety to ensure that we aren't just solving problems, but doing so in unique and innovative ways.



# Stone Watson

he/him/his

English

Morehead City, North Carolina, USA

Political Science and Human Organization  
Leadership and Development

Hey y'all! I am a junior from Morehead City, North Carolina. In high school, I served as the Drum Major of the Marching Band and the Student Body President. Since coming to UNC, I have become involved with the Undergraduate Student Government, where I worked on Education Policy and now am the Deputy Chief of Staff. I am also involved with New Student and Family Programs where I have been serving as an Orientation Leader for the past two years.

One major part of my identity is that I am a gay, and I would like to utilize my perspective throughout this fellowship and learn more about the LGBTQ+ population at UNC. Some fun facts about me: I love to run and I am a twin!

## **What do you hope to learn as a DEI Fellow?**

I hope to connect with students and faculty from around campus to fully understand how we as a team can enact change to make UNC a more inclusive place. I hope to learn about the different initiatives that departments have when it comes to DEI and how they take into consideration current events and how they can affect identities differently.

## **What do you hope to contribute as a DEI Fellow?**

I took on this role to mostly learn from my peers and experienced faculty members, but I do have some contributions. I hope to contribute my campus resources and my openness to discuss my identity with others because that is the only way others will become comfortable. I'm very excited to learn, use my skills, and develop leadership through a DEI lens!



# Matthew Weaver

he/him/his

English

Wilmington, North Carolina, USA

History

I spent 13 years in the public school system of Wilmington, NC, where I benefited from engaged teachers and interesting opportunities. Being located between the Cape Fear river and the Atlantic Ocean, environmental justice and safety are central concerns for local organizations, like Cape Fear River Watch, where I first encountered volunteerism and community outreach. In high school, I cast my net wide to pursue many passions; I attended the North Carolina School of Science and Math online, competed in Science Olympiad, ran cross country, and played violin.

A series of influential teachers redirected my interest to history; in September 2018, Wilmington's history added a new chapter, Hurricane Florence. I could not attend school for a month, many people became homeless, and some died. The aftermath exposed existing inequities based on class and race, especially. Neighborhoods with lower incomes still had debris three months after the county pledged to clean it up. There were also great demonstrations of resilience and cooperation in the community, and I wanted to give back to the community that raised me. I knew firsthand how much positive impact an engaged and encouraging teacher could have on a child's life, so I decided to pursue teaching. I was selected by my local Board of Education for a Teaching Fellows scholarship. It is my intention to complete a BA in History and a Master of Arts in Teaching here at UNC before I return to Wilmington to teach history in public secondary school.

## **What do you hope to learn as a DEI Fellow?**

I hope to learn how to include diverse perspectives and experiences of historical events to help my future students relate to, understand, and empathize with the histories that have shaped their lives, challenge the issues of their time, and prepare for their futures.

## **What do you hope to contribute as a DEI Fellow?**

I hope to contribute to building a safe and cooperative campus community that acknowledges its history, welcomes diversity and promotes its inclusion, and pursues equitable treatment of students, staff, and faculty. I hope to support and promote causes and solutions aimed at this outcome.



# Leon Xie

he/him/his

English and Chinese

Pretoria, Gauteng, South Africa

Business Administration

I am a sophomore pre-business student, born and raised in Pretoria, South Africa. There, I would spend most of my time outdoors with friends and family. I grew up surrounded by a melting pot of people and cultures that would shape my life into the person I am today. I came to the United States in 2016 for high school in New Jersey. High school overseas was an amazing experience for me, where my involvement in the school as Class President further motivated me to develop my leadership skills and engage in active community-based learning. My interests have grown to involve connecting and bridging gaps between people with different backgrounds. I'm thrilled to be meeting diverse individuals like me at the DEI Fellows Program.

## **What do you hope to learn as a DEI Fellow?**

I hope to learn more about tough topics about social matters that are not regularly taught in school or conversed in daily life. I also hope to hear and learn from others for the goal of a more equitable and inclusive campus and community.

## **What do you hope to contribute as a DEI Fellow?**

I know that I will continue to work diligently to better myself and my community as I have throughout my career. I will contribute the important lessons that I have learned through my background to others.



