



Grad Rebel Ambassadors Program

**Congratulations to our incoming
2021-2022 cohort**

ALDO BARRITA



**Ph.D. Student,
Department of
Psychology**

**Faculty Advisor:
Dr. Gloria Wong-
Padoongpatt**



Aldo Barrita received his Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the University of California, Berkeley in 2017 with high honors. His research focus includes how different forms of discrimination, primarily microaggressions, impact the well being of individuals from marginalized communities. In 2020, he received the President's Citation from the National Latinx Psychological Association (NLPA) for his service and commitment to LGBTQ+ and student members. Aldo Barrita has 5 years of experience working in clinical and social psychology research labs.

ANALIESA DELGADO (ANNIE)



Ph.D. student, History

**Advisor: Dr. William
Bauer**



Annie Delgado is currently a second year student attending UNLV in the post-Baccalaureate program as a history PhD student. She is an alumna of UC Riverside, and holds two bachelor's degrees in History and Political Science w/ International Affairs. As a first generation graduate student, she hopes to inspire students who come from backgrounds like hers. She is interested in studying the history of the intersections between racial violence and capitalism in California and how it affected Native Californian communities. Inspired by her own hidden family history, she hopes to make history accessible for communities who have had theirs stolen from them.

She is excited to be a grad rebel ambassador to give back to the UNLV Grad College. She hopes to help foster a stronger connection between graduate students, the graduate college, and the community.

BRIANNA RIVERA



**Masters Student /
School of Public
Health**

**Advisor: Dr. Brian
Labus**

Brianna is a Master's Student in the School of Public Health in the Epidemiology and Biostatistics Track. She earned her Bachelor's degree from UNLV with a degree in Public Health in 2019.

Brianna is a first-generation college student who was born and raised in Las Vegas. Her interest lies within infectious diseases specifically here in Nevada.

Her future research will focus on mosquito-borne diseases and the impact they have on our community along and comparing the incidence rates reported to the CDC.

As a Graduate Ambassador, Brianna is looking forward to sharing my experience as a UNLV graduate student with the community and strengthening UNLV's connection with the community.

CHRISTIE RA



**M.A. Student,
Department of
Criminal Justice**

**Advisor: Dr. Margaret
Kennedy**



Christie is a Master's Student in the Greenspun College of Urban Affairs in the Criminal Justice program. She received her Bachelor's in Criminal Justice from UNLV as well.



Her research focuses on human-trafficking of children and adolescents. It is a topic that is widely researched due to its impact on human exploitation. The specific focus will be on runaway youths who have been sex-trafficked and the adversities they face in the welfare system in the United States.



As a Grad Rebel Ambassador, Christie is eager to be a part of this program to build a stronger graduate community at UNLV. Engaging with the local community members will help create growth of the community and the Graduate College.

DANIEL PEREZ



**Ph.D. candidate,
Anthropology**

**Advisor: Dr. Karen
Harry**

I am an archaeologist and doctoral candidate in the Department of Anthropology. My dissertation research focuses on the Virgin Branch people, a prehistoric culture that spanned southern Nevada, southern Utah, and northwestern Arizona. Specifically, my research considers ways of discerning and better understanding Virgin Branch community identity and group affiliation over time through the study of prehistoric pottery—as seen through pottery technology and painted design styles.

Having engaged with the both the university and greater Las Vegas communities, I want to serve in the Grad Rebel Ambassadors program as a means of helping further and promote graduate education among members of the campus community through collaborative efforts with the Graduate College.

DUSTIN DAVIS



**Interdisciplinary
Health Sciences Ph.D.
student, Kinesiology
and Nutrition Sciences
Advisor: Dr. James
Navalta**

Dustin is a third-year Ph.D. student who studies mindful exercise. When someone exercises mindfully, they minimize distractions and apply an accepting, non-judgmental, and moment-to-moment awareness to their bodily sensations, emotions, thoughts, and environment. Dustin's research focuses on using mindful exercise to improve the health of undergraduate students' hearts and minds. Besides his research, Dustin teaches exercise and anatomy and physiology. As a teacher, he invests in his students as people first and students second. He strives to embrace their individualities and empower them with control over their learning. Outside of research and teaching, Dustin enjoys reading, hiking, strength training, and being with his roommates. He became a Grad Rebel Ambassador because he admires the Graduate College and broader grad Rebel community. Being an Ambassador helps him inform others of UNLV's outstanding resources for graduate students. After his expected graduation in May 2022, Dustin wishes to keep working in higher education.

ELIZABETH JOHNSON



**Ph.D. student,
Anthropology**

**Advisor: Dr. Peter
Gray**

Elizabeth Johnson is in her second year of pursuing her Ph.D. at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). She advocates for interdisciplinary research, focusing on biocultural approaches to human behavior and anthrozoology. These approaches include human-animal kinship and attachment dynamics, stress response mediation, emotion regulation, and social engagement.

Elizabeth has investigated the physiological responses in human-cat interactions and interspecies attachment and worked with undergraduate students via the RAMP program. Additionally, she is currently examining the potential benefits of companion animal videos to invoke affective engagement in the education setting. She is interested in human-animal co-evolution, specifically in quantifying the effects of human-cat bonds, human parenting applications towards cats, and investigating companion animals' roles in media and human emotion.

As part of the Graduate Ambassador Program, Elizabeth plans to build and strengthen her skills in communication and leadership, advocate for the graduate college and connect with the broader Las Vegas community.

GODSON EBENEZER ADJOVU



**Ph.D. student,
Department of Civil
and Environmental
Engineering and
Construction**

**Advisor: Dr. Sajjad
Ahmad**

Godson Ebenezer Adjovu is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering and Construction.

He received his bachelor's and master's degree in Civil Engineering. His research focuses on remote sensing applications in water quality monitoring.

He is the current Treasurer of the Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA) here in UNLV.

He is excited to be accepted into the Graduate Rebel Ambassadors program for the 2021/2022 year.

As a grad rebel ambassador, Godson Ebenezer hopes to advocate and lead initiatives to ensure justice and inclusion. He also hopes to help strengthen the ties between the graduate college and the Las Vegas community.

Godson Ebenezer believes the grad rebel ambassador will enhance his leadership and professional skills.

JAMES LARSEN



**Ph. D.
Student
Hospitality Admin.**

**Advisor: Dr. Amanda
Belarmino**



I've been uncommonly fortunate to have been surrounded by many, many talented people throughout my personal and professional lives. From a professional perspective, the team at The Yale Club of New York City taught me that hospitality is about people; the students and faculty at Cornell's Hotel School taught me about the business of hospitality; the team at the Waldorf-Astoria taught me about legendary service; the team at Caesars taught me to be intensely analytical; and my colleagues at UNLV have taught me the value of creative collaboration. None of these lessons would have been possible to learn without several members of each community working together toward shared goals.

My research is focused on emotional engagement between casino hosts and their guests. We live in the greatest city in the world for this line of inquiry—there's a literal living laboratory blocks away from UNLV, and it's where I've spent the past seven years of my hospitality career. The potential for continuous improvement and constant hypothesis-testing is limitless. I look forward to further entrenching myself within the UNLV community and nurturing the symbiotic relationship between a world-class university and a world-class casino-hotel industry.

JESSE L. BARNES, M.S.



Ph.D. Student, Public Affairs

Advisor: Dr. Krystyna Stave



Jesse is currently a third-year Ph.D. student in Public Affairs. Jesse earned a B.A. in Political Science from UC Berkeley in 2016 and an M.S. in Water Resources Management (WRM) from UNLV in 2019. UNLV provided Jesse with the perfect opportunity to work with fantastic professors and to conduct research on water-related issues. Jesse's research is interdisciplinary and predominantly focuses on the intersection of drinking water policy, drinking water administration, the natural environment, and the built environment, all within the context of urban social systems.

As a first-generation college student, Jesse has overcome multiple obstacles to attain the knowledge and skills necessary to produce research and teach undergraduate students. UNLV helped eliminate academic and financial obstacles, and without this support, Jesse may not have reached such high academic standing. Jesse is honored to represent and support UNLV in building stronger ties with alumni and the greater public as a Grad Rebel Ambassador!

MORGAN STARNES



**MBA Candidate, Lee
Business School**

Advisor: Dr. Lisa Davis



Morgan Starnes is in her second year of the Lee Business School's MBA program. She graduated with her BS in Business Administration from the University of Oregon in 2016. Upon deciding to further her education, UNLV's network of alumni and community members is one of the reasons she decided to become a Grad Rebel.



As a Grad Rebel Ambassador, she hopes to inspire fellow Grad Rebels and share the importance of continuing education at a higher level. She is particularly passionate about educating and empowering women to pursue higher education and advance their career objectives and professional success.



She is eager to foster a robust and lively graduate community while connecting UNLV Grad Rebels and the amazing work they do with the greater Las Vegas community. She also looks forward to serving as an advocate for the UNLV Grad College and its students and helping incoming Grad Rebels find success and fulfillment during their time at UNLV.

RACHEL GLAZE



**M.A., Communication
Studies**

**Advisor: Dr. Rebecca
Rice**

I've known I wanted to be a Graduate Rebel Ambassador since I was an undergraduate student at UNLV; I am happy to finally be able to check that goal off of my list. As a first-generation college student, I have experienced what higher education can bring to one's life. Not only is college—and graduate school, even more so—an opportunity to strengthen your knowledge of a specific field, but it is an opportunity to strengthen your social skills, your network of colleagues, and yourself. College and graduate school is for everyone. Whether family members before you have gone to college and received their PhDs or you are choosing to blaze a novel trail for your own future...I am a staunch advocate for a University education at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The more accessible college and graduate school is to Las Vegas' non-traditional student population, the better and stronger our community can be.

RYAN CONNER



**Master's Student,
Clinical Mental Health
Counseling**

**Advisor: Dr. Wendy
Hoskins**

My name is Ryan Conner, and I am a master's student in my second semester of the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program here at UNLV. In my time as a graduate student, I want to involve myself in as many ways as possible to be able to get the most out of my academic experience that will transcend into my professional career. I am currently working on researching social, emotional, and behavioral wellness programming in elementary schools.

I want to be a Graduate Rebel Ambassador because I believe that participating in this program will assist me in enhancing my sense of community and becoming more involved in the university. I also believe it will help me become more comfortable with networking, keeping me goal focused, and increasing my leadership skills. By surrounding myself with other like-minded and ambitious individuals, I will be motivated to excel and work toward my goals. It will allow me to become a more skilled, professional individual and could provide opportunity.

SAMANTHA SCHAFFER



**M.A. student,
Communication
Studies
Advisor: Dr. Natalie
Pennington**



I am currently a graduate student studying in the Communication department. I graduated from UNLV with my bachelor's degree in 2018 where I focused my studies on adoption communication. In my current studies, I enjoy researching interpersonal relationships and family communication. My particular research interests are parent-child communication patterns and adoption communication. My ultimate goal is to teach an adoption communication course that spreads awareness about adoption and improves communication patterns in families formed through adoption. In my undergraduate career at UNLV I did not get as involved as I was hoping. It is my goal as a graduate student to be able to not only engrain myself further into the UNLV community but help build it. By immersing myself in academic communities like the Graduate Rebel Ambassador Program I am able to develop critical leadership skills I can take with me in future endeavors.

TSION MELAKU



**Ph.D. student, Public
Affairs
Advisor: Dr. Jayce
Farmer**



I have been UNLV Graduate Student since Fall 2018. I just graduated Master of Management Information Systems and I am continuing PhD in Public Affairs at UNLV as of Fall 2021.

My course of study will be focusing on the research track that assesses the education policy to bring social justice.

I would love to continue serving as a Grad Ambassador in the upcoming academic year 2021/2022. The Graduate Rebel Ambassador Program have been a great opportunity for me to actively interact with the Grad community, participate in different events and attend workshops which has built my professional skill as a leader.

I am a very proud Grad student and I would love to have the opportunity to assist with the promotion and execution of future events at the Graduate College. I am successful because of the UNLV Graduate College.

My current experience working for Graduate College have helped me to make valuable contributions as a Student Ambassador.

WARREN FORBES



**Ph.D. student,
Interdisciplinary
Health Sciences**

**Advisor: Dr. Janet
Dufek**



- Warren Forbes is a PhD student in the Interdisciplinary Health Sciences Department with his research interest being in Biomechanics. He obtained his Bachelor's degree and Master's degree in Kinesiology from California State University Fullerton.
- Warren's current research interests center around analyzing lower extremity landing biomechanics of athletes who have sustained a sports-related concussion. The goal of his research is to decrease lower extremity injury risk in the sports-related concussion population.
- As a Grad Rebel Ambassador, Warren seeks to establish himself as a valuable member of the graduate college and contribute his efforts to make a positive impact on the Rebel community.