

MAY 2022

# GSC Bulletin



**UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND**  
**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION**  
**GRADUATE STUDENT ORGANIZATION**

# End of Year Letter

Dear College of Education graduate students:

Amidst the stresses of the past year, the College of Education Graduate Student Organization (COE GSO) has worked to provide COE graduate students with meaningful opportunities for connection, celebration, and growth. The 2021-2022 COE GSO Executive Board (E-Board) members are grateful to have served as your representatives during this challenging year.

Being on GSO E-Board has meant an opportunity to plan events like the COE Welcome Fair, Graduate Student Research Symposium (SRS), and other events that we thought would benefit COE graduate students. GSO E-Board members also share their ideas with COE administrators and work with other student leaders across the college.

This bulletin contains information about our Spring Graduate Research Symposium, student and alumni spotlights, and a summary of our accomplishments this year.

The goals we set for ourselves at the beginning of the year were:

1. Foster a diverse, inclusive, and anti-racist community across our COE departments and programs;
2. Celebrate our colleagues' successes and milestones as graduate students;
3. Create opportunities for graduate students to develop their professional growth.

Although we want to acknowledge our accomplishments and initiatives to work toward these goals during the 2021 - 2022 academic year, we also want to recognize the difficulties we had as we began the year navigating a hybrid of in-person and virtual activities at UMD. There were additional initiatives we would have loved to execute that we were unable to. We are excited to see what the upcoming COE GSO board members do in their time and roles within COE GSO!

Congratulations to those who are graduating, and have a great summer!

President | Mary DePascale, [mdep@terpmail.umd.edu](mailto:mdep@terpmail.umd.edu)  
Vice President | Brodell Jeremy McNeil, [bjmcneil@terpmail.umd.edu](mailto:bjmcneil@terpmail.umd.edu)  
Secretary-Treasurer | Joana Granados, [joanagra@umd.edu](mailto:joanagra@umd.edu)  
CHSE Representative | Pearl Lo, [pearllo@umd.edu](mailto:pearllo@umd.edu)  
CHSE Representative | Jessica Parker, [jparker@umd.edu](mailto:jparker@umd.edu)  
TLPL Representative | Antoinette Waller, [ajwaller@umd.edu](mailto:ajwaller@umd.edu)  
TLPL Representative | Danett Song, [dsong619@umd.edu](mailto:dsong619@umd.edu)  
HDQM Representative | Eric C. Schoute, [ecschout@umd.edu](mailto:ecschout@umd.edu)  
HDQM Representative | Gillian Grose, [ggrose@umd.edu](mailto:ggrose@umd.edu)

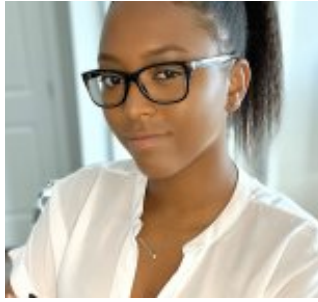


# 2022-2023 GSO Executive Board

We also want to take a moment to welcome our incoming board members, some of whom had an opportunity to serve this year. The 2022 – 2023 board consists of:



**Danett Song**  
President  
2nd Year PhD  
Education Policy  
TLPL



**Antoinette J. Waller**  
Vice President  
2nd Year PhD  
Education Policy & Leadership  
TLPL



**Joyce Koo**  
Secretary/Treasurer  
1st Year PhD  
Education Policy  
TLPL



**Gillian Grose**  
HDQM Representative  
2nd Year PhD  
Developmental Science,  
HDQM



**Eric Schoute**  
HDQM Representative  
4th Year PhD  
Educational Psychology  
HDQM



**Manny Zapata**  
TLPL Representative  
2nd Year PhD  
Urban Education  
TLPL



**Crystal Charity**  
TLPL Representative  
2nd Year PhD  
Urban Education  
TLPL



**Monerah Al-Dubayan**  
CHSE Representative  
1st Year PhD  
Special Education  
CHSE



**Pearl Lo**  
CHSE Representative  
2nd Year PhD  
Student Affairs  
CHSE

# STUDENT RESEARCHER SPOTLIGHT

## Jessica Mahoney

Master of Education student in Teaching and Learning, Policy and Leadership (TLPL)  
Social Studies Curriculum and Instruction specialization

### **Tell us about your research and how it contributes to the field.**

My research is focused on student engagement in civic education. In this work, I examine the actionable ways teachers can enhance their practices in social studies classrooms to make content more accessible and engaging for students of all backgrounds. This research attempts to fill a gap in the field by focusing on actual lesson models teachers can use to increase engagement, something I had a hard time finding, both as a researcher planning my own work and as an educator teaching a civics class.

### **How did you come to choose your research topic of interest?**

I came to this topic after two distinct experiences. Firstly, I read work by other education researchers on the level of disengagement of students in their civics classes and how that has long-term impacts on the health of our nation's democracy. After reflecting on that data, I thought about my own experience as a high schooler vs. an undergraduate who studied history and government. When comparing these two experiences, I noticed that the college classes I enjoyed the most focused heavily on student discussion, whereas in high school, I have very few memories of being able to have those in-depth conversations with my peers and teachers. These two experiences in tandem led me to center my research on how using that discussion-based model that I so enjoyed could impact the engagement issue I encountered while reviewing the research.



### **What are some emerging research areas that interest you or you believe need to be explored?**

Something that came up during my research was the idea that many of my students did not see themselves as change-makers in their government. I think when students have that buy-in within their civics class, they are much more likely to be able to contextualize the topics covered in their own lives. I think further research on how to promote and sustain that buy-in among students, as well as research on how to make the content of civics classes more applicable to young people, are two pathways I hope to take my research in the future.

### **Share your social media for fellow researchers to connect with you.**

Twitter: @jess\_mahoney\_8

Linkedin: Jessica Mahoney

# STUDENT RESEARCHER SPOTLIGHT

## Nan Zhang

Third year Ph.D. student in Human Development (HDQM),  
Educational Psychology specialization

### **Tell us about your research and how it contributes to the field.**

My research is about second language acquisition, especially adults' reading acquisition and processing in a second language. I am especially interested in the difference in reading abilities between good and poor readers and how we could develop an effective intervention method to help poor readers improve.

### **How did you come to choose your research topic of interest?**

I have a passion for education and foreign language. This approach to second language acquisition materializes a perfect combination of the two of my interests. As a bilingual, I feel my reading development has benefited from the effective instruction that is being supported by the empirical data recently. Therefore, I want to contribute more in this area as well.



### **What are some emerging research areas that interest you or you believe need to be explored?**

The second language learning difficulty in adults.  
Share your social media for fellow researchers to connect with you.

[Google Scholar](#)





# Nandi A. Carson

## FIRST-YEAR STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

First year Ph.D. Student  
Education Policy and Leadership (TLPL)

### **Why did you choose to attend UMD for your Ph.D.?**

As an aspiring Education Policy Researcher and Analyst, the University of Maryland's proximity to the D.C. area attracted me. The endless possibilities in policy work, the networking opportunities available for students to get involved in impacting education systems and the faculty's extensive experience and reputation within the community, drew me to UMD. Specifically, TLPL was a perfect fit for my research questions and passions as a researcher focusing on school funding and academic achievement.

### **What challenges have you faced this year, both academically and socially?**

Recovering from a pandemic while in Graduate School has created difficulties during my matriculation. Overcoming virtual classes and lack of social interactions has been quite an adjustment. My experiences in Core 1 last Fall helped me to interact with and relate to my cohort. I love that we have a range of interests, backgrounds, passions and expertise. Anytime I've needed support, I have found it in my colleagues. Classes in TLPL are challenging compared to my previous experiences in undergraduate coursework. Despite the challenge, my professors have been accommodating, understanding and willing to help at any time! I am so grateful for that level of support.

### **In what ways have you developed a sense of community since starting your program?**

I have been lucky enough to be a Graduate Assistant under Dr. David Blazar, where I've been able to connect with advanced Ph.D. students in my department. They have been an invaluable resource during my second semester and have shared advice and knowledge that they've learned in the years before me (Shout out to them!). They have made my transition easier and reduced my stress about the benchmarks in my program. I would recommend other first-year students to reach out to advanced students and share this knowledge!

### **What are some of your hobbies or favorite activities to do outside of school and work?**

Outside of reading articles and preparing for class, I am a retired choir kid who loves to sing and play my guitar. I love long walks with my puppy, Sage, and spending time with my family when I can. Recently, I've been exploring different coffee shops in the area to try new foods and new environments for brainstorming. My environment influences my productivity so I love switching it up when I can!

### **Since your first year is coming to an end, do you have any advice for prospective/future Ph.D. students?**

My first year has stretched and challenged me in ways I couldn't imagine. Balancing teaching, research assistantships and coursework can, at times, become overwhelming. Prioritizing yourself is so important for this level. Taking rest, taking walks, meditating and journaling have all helped me to manage my stress and come back with a fresh mind. I highly recommend establishing a self-love and self-care routine that is a commitment at the same level of graduate responsibilities. Carve out your time!

# Mary DePascale

## ACADEMIC MILESTONE STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

**Fifth year Ph.D. student in HDQM  
Developmental Science specialization**

### **Tell us a little about your academic interests?**

My research focuses on understanding factors that contribute to variability in children's early math development and promoting young children's math learning both in and outside of school. I examine the roles of parental support and children's exploration and engagement in their math learning and the effectiveness of play-based activities for children's math development.

### **Can you give us a brief overview of your dissertation project?**

For my dissertation, I developed and examined a home-based experimental game intervention to understand if playing graphing games at home would promote children's (ages 5 and 6 years) graphing and math skills. I developed graphing and literacy games and mailed them to families to play together at home. We conducted pretest and posttest sessions with children on Zoom to measure their graphing and math skills and math anxiety. Families also recorded and sent us videos of themselves playing the games, which we transcribed and examined for parent and child use of numerical, mathematical, and statistical talk during play. Overall, we found that playing graphing games at home promoted children's graphing and arithmetic skills.

### **What and who do you credit with helping you to achieve this milestone?**

My advisor, Dr. Geetha Ramani, helped make this possible, and I appreciate the time and feedback she provided throughout all stages of the process. I am also very grateful for the advice, community, and support I received from members of writing groups, as well as lab members, friends, and family.



### **Did you face any challenges while completing your dissertation?**

Conducting developmental research online during the pandemic comes with certain challenges, however, talking with other students and researchers was helpful for navigating these.

### **What comes next for you in terms of your research trajectory?**

I plan to build on and expand my current research, and I will be starting a postdoctoral research position this summer.

### **What advice do you have for other students working to complete this milestone?**

I would suggest allowing yourself time and flexibility as you complete each aspect of the dissertation process – knowing you have built-in extra time from the beginning can make it easier if certain aspects take longer than originally planned. In addition, finding the support and process that works best for you (e.g., writing groups, daily writing time, shared goal-setting, etc.) can make a big difference!

# Sophie Tablansky

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

### **Hi Sophie! Could you tell the reader something about yourself?**

While I was in graduate school, I studied educational psychology with Dr. Patricia Alexander, focusing specifically on how teams use relational reasoning and socially shared regulation to solve problems. In our increasingly distributed and technological world, the ability to work with others has become tantamount both in educational and professional settings. Understanding how teams use patterning to innovate, as well as how they collectively plan, monitor, and reflect on their activity, has important implications for team performance.

I'm currently working as a Senior Research Associate at a talent acquisition research consultancy called Veris Insights. But what does that mean?! In a nutshell, we do research on what individuals in the workforce are looking for in their jobs, and we sell employers a subscription to that research. The goal is to make a better world of work for everyone!

Outside of work, I'm usually playing roller hockey with my husband, trying out new board games, or training my cats (yes, it is possible!).

### **Let's talk about post-UMD. You now have a non-academic position.**

Slightly before I defended my dissertation, I accepted a position doing military recruiting research for Fors Marsh Group (FMG), where I had the opportunity, among other things, to develop and evaluate creative campaigns for the U.S. Army. After 9 months at FMG, I transitioned to a role at Veris Insights, where I work now.

While I was in graduate school, I had no idea what the scope of opportunities were for research positions in industry. As it turns out, there is a huge need for the types of skills we develop in our grad programs at UMD—particularly quantitative skills. My best advice to graduate students is to talk to lots of different people as you prepare for graduation. Conduct “informational interviews” where you ask people about what they do and how they got there. It's great for networking but also for getting a better sense of what's out there!

### **Say you had a time machine. What part of or experience during grad school would you revisit?**

This is a tough question. I'd revisit the theories of learning course [EDHD722, red.] I took with Patricia early on in my grad school career. It made me think hard about my epistemic beliefs and challenged me to define what learning meant. It was also such a great atmosphere for thinking, brainstorming, and asking questions— it's exactly the kind of course I went to graduate school to experience!

### **What is a piece of advice or wisdom that you would want to bestow upon the reader?**

A piece of advice I would give to anyone reading this is to follow your interests. Take advantage of the time you have to explore what drives you, and then nurture that intrinsic motivation. You'll be so much happier (and, I think, more successful) if you pursue projects you find interesting.

Additionally, I would encourage people to take up interests outside of school. As an example, I played pickup roller hockey on the weekends and intramural volleyball and softball during the fall and spring. Having your self-esteem come from something other than just school can really help offset the stress you sometimes feel.

# Things COE Graduate Students Should Know

## HELPFUL PRO TIPS

### **Who are my COE GSO representatives?**

Grad students from across our three COE departments (i.e., CHSE, HDQM, & TLPL) represent you in the GSO COE. Check out the COE GSO homepage [here](#), where you see each of our names and means to reach out to us.

### **How do I get in touch with the COE GSO?**

Simply send us an email at [coegradstuorg@umd.edu](mailto:coegradstuorg@umd.edu)! If you want to contact a specific representative (e.g., HDQM), you can always CC the relevant address found at the [homepage](#). Do not hesitate to reach out with any questions, remarks, or concerns you may have.

### **How can I join a student organization?**

Check out our [COE Student Organizations](#) page for a list of campus-wide, college-wide graduate student organizations that you can be involved with! In this updated version, we have sorted the organizations into relevant categories for you to easily find what you are looking for: Academic Services, Well-Being, Research and Professional Development, and Student Life & Community

### **How can I find out more about funding opportunities?**

The COE has a page dedicated to helping you find [funding and other information](#) on what you can expect to pay for tuition and fees. **Smart tip:** register for only the number of credits that you need in order to meet degree requirements, as fees *double* once you register for  $\geq 9$  graduate credits each semester. You can plan your future semesters accordingly!

### **I want to get to know more graduate students. How can I get in touch with my peers?**

UMD Graduate Student Life frequently hosts social events for graduate students. Increasingly, events are in person again, which helps build a sense of community! Check out their [homepage](#) and subscribe to their newsletter. Further, we at the COE GSO also have several events in the pipeline. We will invite you for those events via email, so don't forget to monitor that!

### **I want to get active. What does Recwell currently offer?**

Good news! Many of Recwell's activities are back in-person! Check out [Recwell's website](#), where you can find Adventure Trips, the Fitness Schedule (virtual and in-person!), and the rules for working out by yourself in the functional training space.

# Spring 2022 Recap

Bringing together members of the College of Education Community is a primary goal that the Graduate Student Organization worked to achieve this semester. We enjoyed planning an active semester full of events to provide opportunities for students to become involved and build community within the College of Education.

In February, we held our Valentine's Day Sweets and Treats event in the Tawes Lobby of the Benjamin Building. This event was a great success, as we had the opportunity to meet and engage in conversation with many College of Education community members. Undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty and staff all stopped by to enjoy a sweet treat to celebrate Valentine's Day.

We hosted the Student Research Symposium on April 1st from 10am-2pm. During this event, several graduate students showcased their research through practice presentations in room 0306, or poster sessions in the Tawes Lobby. Students had the opportunity to practice in front of Faculty members and receive valuable feedback to prepare for research conferences such as AERA, CDS, and NCME that graduate students attended this spring. Refreshments were provided in room 0220, and this gave the opportunity for graduate students and faculty members to chat and connect with one another during the event.

We enjoyed engaging with the entire UMD campus community by participating in Maryland Day on Saturday, April 30th. Maryland Day is an annual campus-wide event where various student organizations and academic colleges come together to host members of the University Community and the general public. On Maryland Day, the GSO set up a table with an interactive giveaway activity. Participants selected a rubber duck out of our "duck pond" and received a giveaway corresponding to the duck's number. Students, faculty, staff, and families from nearby communities all visited our table to meet the GSO and participate in the giveaway.

During the last week of classes, we hosted one final event- our ice cream social to celebrate the end of classes for the 2021-2023 school year. Several students, faculty, and staff joined us as we enjoyed some ice cream. It is always a treat to take a break from studying, get outside, and socialize with the College of Education.

Thank you to everyone who joined us at these events this semester. We are looking forward to another eventful semester in Fall 2022.

# Spring 2022 Highlights

