

A photograph of two students in a meeting. One student is sitting and pointing at a laptop screen, while another student stands behind them. The laptop screen displays a dashboard with various charts and graphs. The background is a blurred indoor setting.

# Grad Rebel Ambassador Program, 2023-2024

# ANDRES RODRIGUEZ

**Ph.D. Candidate, Public Affairs**  
**Advisor: Dr. Jaewon Lim**

I'm 28 years old and I'm currently a fourth-year Ph.D. candidate in Public Affairs at UNLV. I completed a Master of Business Administration and a Master of Science in Management Information Systems at UNLV.

My research is focused on the Hispanic population in the United States. Apart from being interested in academic research and teaching, I'm also interested in getting involved in state politics. I'm currently the President of the Young Democrats of UNLV.

UNLV has supported me throughout my academic career, and without its support I wouldn't be where I am today. I am honored to be a Grad Rebel Ambassador to share the positive experiences and the opportunities I have had at UNLV with other students, alumni, and community members.



**THE GRAD ACADEMY**

# DAVID KING

**Chemistry Ph.D. Student, Department of  
Chemistry & Biochemistry  
Advisor: Dr. Pradip Bhowmik**

I specialize in organic/polymer chemistry where I synthesize materials used for battery applications, fire retardants, photoluminescent devices, and biosensors. In addition to my research, I teach general chemistry labs every semester and aspire to become an academician.

In the future, I want to become actively involved in a research-related career to investigate new materials that offer the same or improved properties to replace commonly used materials that damage the environment and are harmful to human health. Creating a bridge between chemistry and the environment encourages a healthier interaction with our changing planet and modern society. My ambition stems from the global effort of conservation and sustainability of our planet.



**THE GRAD ACADEMY**

# KARIN TIDGEWELL

**Doctor of Public Policy student, School of  
Public Policy and Leadership  
Capstone Advisor: Dr. Michael Bruner**

As a longtime advocate for military families, my personal and professional experiences highlighted the need for increased academic assistance for highly mobile military children that is both consistent and continuous, particularly at the elementary level. Every time a military child moves, that student encounters radically different education systems because states differ not only in what they teach, but when and how they teach it. My policy work examines how to best assist military children with these frequent transitions and improve their academic performance.

I have been privileged to be a graduate student twice at UNLV, and our Grad Rebels are an extraordinary and interesting group of graduate and professional students covering diverse disciplines and fields of study. Exciting things are happening in the Graduate College at UNLV, and I look forward to sharing these stories as a Grad Rebel Ambassador.



**THE GRAD ACADEMY**

# LAURENCIA BIYAA BONSU

**Ph.D. student, School of Public Health**  
**Advisor: Dr. Manoj Sharma**

Laurencia is a second-year PhD student in the Department of Social and Behavioral Health, School of Public Health. She is a first-generation student from Ghana. Her research focuses on developing an intervention to minimize binge drinking among college students in the Las Vegas area utilizing her advisor's, Dr. Manoj Sharma, unique multi-theory model of health behavior change. In her first year as a PhD student, she was awarded a mini-grant from the Nevada Department of Public and Behavioral Health to undertake research on problem gambling among college students and older adults.

Laurencia is delighted to promote UNLV as a Grad Rebel Ambassador, particularly in the African community. She aims to use this platform to promote UNLV to African students interested in pursuing graduate studies in the United States.

Laurencia believes this program will strengthen her leadership and professional skills, and she is excited to give back to UNLV.



**THE GRAD ACADEMY**

# LINA LAKOCZKY-TORRES

**Master's Student, Public Administration**

**Advisor: Dr. LeAnne Salazar Montoya**

Lina is excited to be pursuing a master's degree in public administration after graduating in December 2022 from Menlo College with a B.S. in Business Management and a concentration in entrepreneurship and innovation.

During this time, she became a University Innovation Fellow through the Stanford d.school and completed the Engaged Latina Leadership Activist (ELLA) program at the Latina Coalition of Silicon Valley. She is passionate about finding ways to leverage innovation to improve public policy and create opportunities for underserved communities to thrive.

She is currently a Research Assistant and supports efforts to empower Latinx educators and administrators in our very own Clark County School District.

As a Grad Rebel Ambassador, Lina is eager to create meaningful connections within the vibrant local and graduate student communities. In her free time, she enjoys crafting with her Cricut, listening to podcasts, and volunteering.



**THE GRAD ACADEMY**

# MAIZIE DYESS

**Ph.D. student, Curriculum & Instruction**

**Advisor: Dr. Katie Wade-Jaimes**

Maizie Dyess is a second-year Ph.D. Student in Curriculum and Instruction studying Science Education, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, and the School-to-Prison Pipeline. She earned her Master's Degree in Natural Science Education at Colorado State University and her Bachelor's Degree in Science Education at Auburn University.

After teaching high school science for 5 years, Maizie observed the need for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Equitable Teaching Practices firsthand. She is dedicated to researching and designing justice-centered science resources with the ultimate goal of disrupting the School-to-Prison Pipeline and examining bias within K-12 Education.

As a Grad Rebel Ambassador, Maizie is eager to strengthen the relationship between the graduate college and the Las Vegas Community. She is passionate about equity and compassion within education, two of UNLV's core values, and intends to be an advocate for students within the graduate college and within the greater community.



**THE GRAD ACADEMY**

# MILES A. MERCER

**Interdisciplinary Health Sciences Ph.D. candidate, Kinesiology & Nutrition Sciences**  
**Advisor: Dr. Julia Silvernail**

Miles is a third-year Ph.D. candidate studying preventative techniques to reduce running injuries in recreational and sedentary populations. Currently, Miles is focusing on bodyweight support interventions to reduce the impact forces associated with running to facilitate safe return to activity.

Miles' long-term goals are to increase education of undergraduate and master's students in an academic and research setting. Miles has been teaching exercise physiology and biomechanics to Kinesiology students and expresses his passions for these subjects in both the classroom and lab. Miles approaches his students from a position of empathy, understanding that life exists outside of the classes he teaches.

Miles enjoys running, weight-lifting, hiking, reading, and spending time with his friends and family. Miles is excited to be a Grad Rebel Ambassador as he strongly believes that community outreach is a key piece of advancing the graduate field.



**THE GRAD ACADEMY**

# PHILIP MENSAH

**MS student, Applied Economics and  
Data Intelligence**

**Advisor: Dr Han-fen Hu**

My research will revolve around developing and evaluating predictive models for various domains.

I seek to widen my network through the programs and conferences that will be organized. I want to meet, interact, and learn from professionals in the Data Science industry. I believe this will greatly help me achieve my career goal as a Data Scientist.



**THE GRAD ACADEMY**

# RENEE OLNEY

**Radiochemistry Ph.D. Student, Chemistry Department**

**Advisor: David Hatchett**

**Co-Advisor: Ken Czerwinski**

I am a second-year Ph.D. student majoring in radiochemistry.

As a non-traditional student, I received my bachelor's of science in biochemistry from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in 2022. Now, I am studying radiochemistry, specifically stabilization and reuse of a highly corrosive nuclear material from the nuclear fuel cycle. My research project is the investigation of the repurposing of spent nuclear components from the nuclear fuel cycle in order to reduce the amount of radioactive waste, as well as reduction of the longevity of the radiotoxicity. I am also focusing on reuse of valuable radioactive resources for nuclear energy and medical purposes.

I am honored to be a Grad Rebel Ambassador and I hope to use this opportunity to build a network of peers who support recycling of nuclear waste over long-term storage.



**THE GRAD ACADEMY**

# RICHARD CHANG

**Ph.D. in Psychological & Brain Sciences**  
**Advisor: Dr. Gloria Wong-Padoongpatt**

Richard "Rich" Chang is an incoming second-year doctoral student in the Psychological and Brain Sciences Ph.D. program at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He earned his Masters in psychology at California State University, Fullerton. As a Rebel Grad Ambassador, he hopes to increase representation, build community, and advocate for marginalized students. He also aims to increase access to higher education by demystifying the graduate school application and experience.



**THE GRAD ACADEMY**