



Grad Rebel Advantage, 24-25

Mana Azizsoltani

Ph.D. Hospitality Administration

With a background in mathematics and statistics, I seek to apply artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) to the hospitality industry.

Specifically, I have a deep interest in gambling research, where I apply AI and ML to casino marketing, loyalty programs, floor optimization, fraud detection, and responsible gambling.

I am currently a part-time research scientist at the UNLV International Gaming Institute and the Head of Data Science at Differential Labs.

I am excited about serving as a mentor in the Grad Rebel Advantage program because I would be nothing without the wonderful mentors I have had over the years. I am looking forward to mentoring those looking to go to graduate school (whether PhD or masters), those looking to break into the industry, or both.



THE GRAD ACADEMY

Richard “Rich” Chang, M.A.

**Psychological & Brain Sciences Ph.D.
Program**

Department of Psychology

Richard “Rich” Chang (he/they) received his B.A. in Psychology with a minor in Sociology from California State University, Fresno, and his M.A. in Psychology from California State University, Fullerton. His research focuses on marginalized individuals’ intersectional experiences, increasing social justice efforts in his communities, and reducing the negative impacts of racism toward students of color. His long-term goal is to become a faculty at a public four-year university to increase representation and equity for marginalized students.



THE GRAD ACADEMY

Cherokee Conley-Garcia

**Master of Social Work, School of
Social Work**

Clinical social work is a specialized field within social work that focuses on diagnosing and treating mental health issues, emotional challenges, and behavioral problems. Clinical social workers are trained to provide psychotherapy and counseling services, helping individuals, families, and groups cope with life's difficulties.

Key Aspects of Clinical Social Work:

Assessment & Diagnosis, Therapeutic Interventions, Support and Advocacy, Collaboration, Education & Prevention, Ethics and Cultural Competence

I wanted to be apart of the Grad Academy because I used to be a mentee in the program during my Undergraduate degree. Being apart of this program helped to solidify my decision to apply into the Master of Social Work program.



THE GRAD ACADEMY

Lila Hearn

Ph.D. Candidate

Department of Political Science

I am a Ph.D. student studying religion and political theory. I am interested in the proper relationship between superstition and politics for Western liberal societies that value philosophical freedom.

Mentorship is an important, yet informal, aspect of working as an instructor at UNLV. I chose to be a Grad Rebel Advantage Mentor because I wanted to continue this work and help reach more students. I know how difficult planning for graduate school can be as a first-generation college student, so I am grateful for the opportunity to destigmatize this process for students as much as possible.



THE GRAD ACADEMY

Kaitlin Hock

**MD Student at Kirk Kerkorian School
of Medicine at UNLV**

Hello! I am a 3rd year medical student with a passion for obstetrics and gynecology discovered during my clinical rotations. My journey in the MD program has been driven by a commitment to providing compassionate care to patients and learning about all fields of medicine. In the past couple years, I have gained invaluable experience and insight into patient care, which has further solidified my dedication to the medical field. I completed my Bachelor of Science degree at the University of Arizona before applying to medical school.

I am eager to participate in this program because as a previous undergraduate myself, I had a difficult time navigating obstacles prior to medical school. I am also a first-generation medical student, and the first in my family to go into a healthcare profession. By sharing my experiences and knowledge, I hope to inspire and assist students in navigating their own paths to success.



THE GRAD ACADEMY

Daphne Lu

M.S. Couple and Family Therapy

Hi everyone! I am currently working to get my license as a Marriage and Family Therapist. I believe that majority of people's issues stem from their relationships with others, whether that be from their upbringing or their present life, and that the solutions come from understanding how these relationships affect us and adapting to manage our own feelings and actions to accept our circumstances and our role in feeling better. I am leaning toward pursuing a Ph.D. in my future in order to be able to teach as a professor.

I wanted to join this program because I have always loved teaching and mentoring. During my undergraduate program at UCSD, I was a mentor in multiple programs similar to this one, where I helped students younger than me access information and resources that I wish I had when I was in their shoes. I look forward to working with you!



THE GRAD ACADEMY

DARLYN MAGANA

**M.S STUDENT, DEPARTMENT OF
COUPLE AND FAMILY THERAPY**

ADVISOR: DR. BRANDON EDDY

Darlyn Magaña is a first generation student. She is in her last semester in the Couple and Family Therapy Master's Program in the UNLV Kirk Kerkorian School of Medicine. Her research interest is the role the OBGYNS in Las Vegas have in perinatal mood disorders in moms of color. She participated in the GRA program as an undergraduate wanted to continue to be able to support other students who are interested in learning about higher education to get the resources and information they need to go out and accomplish their own goals



THE GRAD ACADEMY

Maegan Nation

Clinical Psychology Doctoral Student

Advisor: Dr. Kara Christensen Pacella

Maegan is a second-year Ph.D. student studying disordered eating, emotion regulation and social media use. She chose UNLV due to the rigor of research in the psychology department variety of clinical training opportunities.

Maegan's path to graduate school was guided by fantastic mentors that willingly shared their experiences with her, demystifying the process and encouraged her throughout the process. She hopes to become one of these mentors to other students who are looking forward to taking the next step in their careers.



THE GRAD ACADEMY

Katrina Pinili

Ph.D. Biological Sciences, School of Life Sciences

Hi! I'm Katrina and I'm a 4th year Ph.D. student in Dr. Allen Gibbs' lab. My research investigates the energetics and metabolism of starvation-selected *Drosophila melanogaster* populations when subjected to exercise. We ask how the physiology of these obese fruit fly populations are impacted by a long-term exercise regimen to study issues relating to obesity and exercise in humans.

I am a part of Grad Rebel Advantage because I want to help students discover why they want to pursue graduate school and ease them into the process of doing so. I would like to be a mentor so I can provide reassurance to students which will allow them to thrive and be more confident when preparing and applying for graduate school. I hope to facilitate growing confidence in everyone who participates in this program.



THE GRAD ACADEMY

Ashley Roderick

M.B.A. Student in Marketing, and Graduate Certificate in Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Ashley, a first-generation college student, grew up in the East Bay Area of Northern California and attended community college until transferring and graduating Cum Laude from San Francisco State University with a B.A. in Women and Gender Studies with a minor in History. She is currently studying Marketing in the M.B.A. program here at the Lee Business School. Also interested in new venture management, she's simultaneously earning a Graduate Certificate in Entrepreneurship & Innovation to complement her work experience.

Ashley understands through her own experiences the importance of what it means to have resources, tools, and people you can depend on for all the critical types of support that are necessary to get in and through any education program, let alone graduate school. Despite the success she's had on her own college journey, she wishes she had been better informed how to prepare for future educational opportunities like graduate school while in undergrad. She looks forward to be that type of resource she knows she needed, for someone else needing it now.



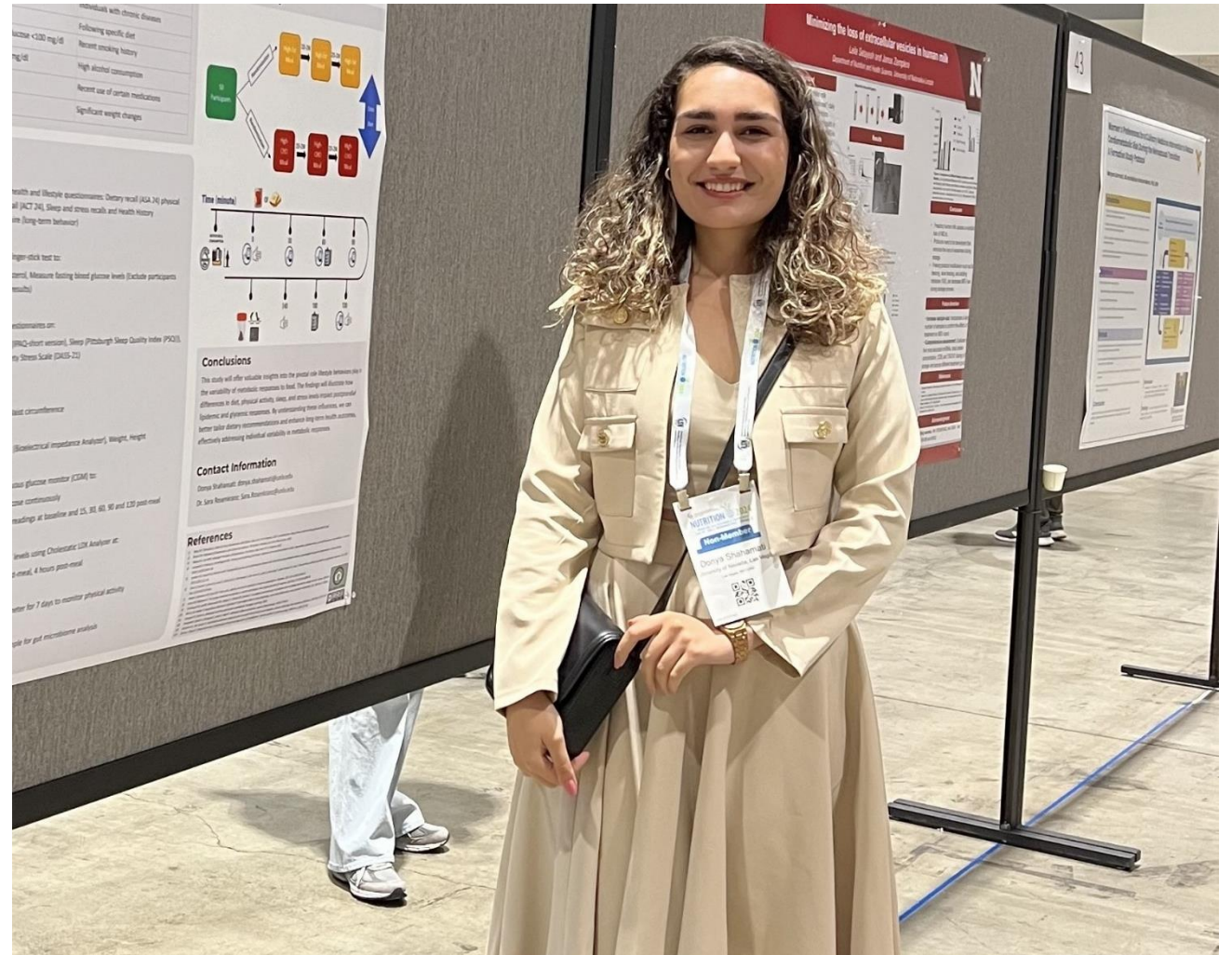
THE GRAD ACADEMY

Donya Shahamati

Master's in General Nutrition Sciences, Kinesiology and Nutrition Sciences Department

I am a graduate student in Nutrition Sciences at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). My research focuses on the interplay between nutrition, diabetes risk, and inflammation. I also investigate lifestyle behaviors, such as physical activity and sleep, in influencing glycemic and lipidemic responses to various meals. I am passionate about interventions for preventing and managing Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus, as well as the feasibility of sit-to-stand desks for students with emotional disturbances.

I am participating in the Grad Rebel Advantage Mentor Program to enhance my academic and professional growth, gain insights from experienced mentors, and refine my leadership skills. This program provides a platform for me to connect with peers and mentors, gain academic and career advice, and build a professional social network, all of which will enhance my graduate experience and support my development in the broader field of health and wellness research."



THE GRAD ACADEMY

Karin Tidgewell

Juris Doctor Candidate

William S. Boyd School of Law, UNLV

A recent graduate of UNLV's Doctor of Public Policy program, Karin began her law studies when she continued to encounter situations when a legal education would benefit her work in policy advocacy to improve the quality of life of military family members and students who change schools frequently.

Karin's path to graduate school—including her pursuit of a law degree—was a direct result of the right people entering her life at the right time and their willingness to candidly share their experiences with her. Karin believes that graduate education should be accessible to all students who are committed to learning at the graduate level, and paying forward the encouragement and opportunities she received drove Karin to be a UNLV Grad Rebel Advantage Mentor.



THE GRAD ACADEMY

Allen Zhang

**M.D.
Kirk Kerkorian School of Medicine at
UNLV**

I am a 3rd year medical student who grew up here in Las Vegas with a plan to remain in Southern Nevada once I graduate to residency. My areas of interest include hospice/palliative care, integrative medicine, and medical ethics. I applied to become a mentor because I owe a lot of my professional development to my own graduate school mentor during my pre-med phase, and now it's my turn to provide the same guidance to a new generation. I look forward to working with you!



THE GRAD ACADEMY