



Grad Rebel Ambassadors Program

**Congratulations to our incoming
2019-2020 cohort**

BETH WI

**Master's in Business
and Hospitality**

**Chair:
Dr. Mehmet Erdem**



Following my passion for making an impact in the hospitality industry, the focus of my research is to explore hotel employees' perceptions of service robots in the hospitality workplace. Through analysis of human attitudes toward robots, the outcome of the proposed research may help offer smart deployment strategies for hotels and reduce potential employee anxiety and increase employee engagement. In my graduate study in business and hospitality, I have been exposed to academic and practical experiences to further explore my capabilities. The Graduate College has provided me with necessary resources to thrive and take my work to the next level at every step of the research process. Together, the student body, fellow students, and I would like to share the opportunity to grow as amazing Rebels. I look forward to serving as a Grad Rebel Ambassador who can contribute to building a strong Grad Rebel community.

Bhagya De Silva



**Ph.D. candidate,
Chemistry &
Biochemistry**

**Advisor:
Dr. Ronald Gary**



Bhagya is a Ph.D. candidate in biochemistry. Her research focuses on studying a mechanism that has the potential to limit the activity of a brain enzyme called GSK3 β . This enzyme is one of the responsible factors in the progression of Alzheimer's disease, which is currently the 6th leading cause of death in the USA. Bhagya hopes that her research can help understand the chemistry involved to design drug molecules targeting GSK3 β .

Bhagya is excited to be part of the Graduate Rebel Ambassadors Program and the opportunity to be involved in professional development for herself as well as fellow graduate students. She wishes to advocate for UNLV graduate education and the importance of improving research activities.

JANNA BERNSTEIN

**Ph.D. student,
Teaching and Learning**

**Advisor:
Dr. Christine Clark**



Born and raised in the suburbs of Los Angeles in the San Fernando Valley, Janna received her B.A. and M. Ed. from the University of Southern California. Janna's research utilizes critical race theory and intersectional analysis to investigate the leadership roles of women in higher education administration. Additionally, Janna works on campus full-time as the Assistant Director for Leadership and Scholar Development within the Division of Student Affairs.

As a lifelong learner, Janna is always looking for new ways to engage in professional development opportunities and is thrilled to continue her role as a Graduate Rebel Ambassador!

**JASON M.
AVEDESIAN,
M.S., CSCS**

**Ph.D. Student,
Department of
Kinesiology and
Nutrition Sciences**

**Advisor:
Dr. Janet Dufek**



Athletes across all levels of sport are at greater risk for lower extremity (LE) injury following a sport-related concussion (SRC). However, the biomechanical movement patterns, and their relationship to LE injury risk, following a SRC have not been elucidated. The purpose of my research is to examine jump-landing biomechanics in adolescent and collegiate athletes with a history of SRC.

Through the Grad Rebel Ambassadors Program, I will take advantage of the opportunity to share my experiences as a graduate student at UNLV. I will inform interested parties on the novel research being conducted and strengthen the bond between the Graduate College and members of the Las Vegas community.

JOHN OLAWEPO



**PhD Candidate,
Public Health**

**Advisor:
Dr. Jennifer Pharr**



My research focuses on the intersection between HIV and obesity.

I am using a mixed methods design to study the prevalence and trends of obesity and overweight among people living with HIV (PLHIV) in Africa (using Nigeria as a case study) and the perceptions of healthcare workers about this double epidemic. My research uses both a quantitative and a qualitative approach to further understand this emergent phenomenon of obesity among PLHIV.

The Grad Rebel Ambassadors Program provides an opportunity to gain knowledge and skills which will be deployed to advocate for graduate education at UNLV.

**JUANITA JASSO
HINOJOSA, M.Ed.**



**Ph.D. student, Higher
Education**

**Advisor:
Dr. Blanca Rincón**



Juanita is a doctoral student pursuing her Ph.D. in Higher Education. Having immigrated from México as a young child, she identifies as first-generation, Mexican-American. Juanita is passionate about researching, developing, and implementing inclusive practices and policies that advocate for and support underrepresented communities in higher education.

Juanita is a Graduate Research Assistant in the Department of Educational Psychology & Higher Education, working under the guidance of Dr. Blanca Rincón. Juanita is also a Holmes Scholar and serves as the president of the UNLV Higher Education Student Leadership Association (HESLA).

LATOYA BURDISS



**Ph.D. student,
Department of
Educational
Psychology & Higher
Education**

**Advisor:
Dr. Blanca Rincón**



LaToya Burdiss is a wife and mother as well as a Ph.D. student in the Department of Higher Education under faculty advisor Dr. Blanca Rincón. Mrs. Burdiss received her B.S. in Exercise in Sport Science from Oregon State University and her M.S. in Sport Management from The University of Tennessee.

Being born and raised in Anchorage, Alaska, LaToya was given the opportunity to experience a wide range of sports and recreational activities, which led her to her current career. As the Associate Director of Recreational Programming here at UNLV, LaToya shares her passion for sports, officiating, fitness, and overall wellness.

Despite her passion for sports, LaToya hopes to focus her research on the undergraduate experience for students of color and how it affects their engagement, retention, and overall well-being.

LINSEY BELISLE



**PhD Student,
Criminal Justice and
Criminology**

**Advisor: Dr. Emily
Salisbury**



I am a third year PhD student in Criminal Justice and Criminology. My research interests include correctional reform, gender responsive practices, and harm reduction. My master's thesis examined the long term outcomes of juvenile drug courts in the Midwest.

I am excited to be a part of the Grad Rebel Ambassadors program and am grateful for the opportunity to give back to UNLV. During my time in the program I hope to strengthen the relationship between UNLV and our local community by sharing the amazing scholarly work and accomplishments of UNLV students with community the community.

MARTA SOLIGO

**Ph.D. candidate,
Sociology**

**Advisor: Drs. Bo
Bernhard and David R.
Dickens**



Marta Soligo is a Ph.D. candidate in Sociology at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), where she teaches Sociology of Leisure and Tourism. Soligo is Research Assistant at the International Gaming Institute (UNLV). She also collaborates with Università di Bergamo (Italy) as a researcher in the field of Cultural Studies. She graduated (Master's degree) in Planning and Management of Tourism Systems at Università di Bergamo in 2012. In 2013, she was invited as visiting scholar by UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles), to investigate the creation of tourism spaces and phenomena linked to the Hollywood Industry. She presented her academic work at several conferences organized by professional associations in sociology and international institutions such as UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization) and ICOM (International Council of Museums). Soligo collaborates with Italian websites and media, publishing articles on her research topics.

MICHAEL WONG



**Ph.D. student,
Department of
Kinesiology and
Nutrition Sciences**

**Advisor:
Dr. Dharini Bhammar**



Michael is doctoral student in the Interdisciplinary Health Sciences program who prior to this, was born and raised in Los Angeles and attained his B.S. and M.S. in exercise physiology from Cal Poly Pomona. As a lifelong basketball player and sports fanatic in general, his prior research at Cal Poly focused on optimizing sport performance in athletes. However, upon arriving at UNLV, he has transitioned into the clinical realm of research to investigate how exercise can act as a treatment for asthma.

As a Grad Rebel Ambassador, he hopes to represent the graduate college well in both the campus community and the broader Las Vegas area by sharing his experiences and providing insight on the value of graduate life and education.

MONICA SINHA

**Master's Student,
School of Public Health**

**Advisor: Dr. Neeraj
Bhandari**



Monica Sinha is a licensed Dentist from India. While practicing dentistry in India she realizes a huge barrier towards preventive aspects of the health. This inspired her to enroll in MPH.

She is interested to start a project/research which creates dental awareness and to maintain oral hygiene in the community. Currently, she is working with her professor to encourage elementary school children to follow a safe route to school.

In 2018-2019, she was a Graduate Liaison with Public Health Student Association and Vice President, Finance with Health Care Administration Student Association. These roles and responsibilities inspired her to work on a bigger platform. She believes being a Graduate Ambassador will provide a mutually beneficial environment, which will help her to share her experience with UNLV and also to learn about the available opportunities.

She is also a recipient of The Guinan and Gerstenberg scholarship, Joan Essex scholarship, UNLV Impact Gold Award for community engagement, GPSA book scholarship, LEAD scholarship, Travel scholarship for Capitol Hill Days, 2019.

A single mom of a 5 months old daughter believes- if life gives you a lemon, make lemonade out of it.

RUBAIYA MURSHED



**Ph.D. student,
Department of
Mechanical
Engineering**

**Advisor: Dr. Shubhra
Bansal**



After completing undergraduate degree in Mechanical Engineering from Bangladesh, I came to UNLV for pursuing Ph.D. in Post Bachelor track. I am working as a Research Assistant and the project I am working on is funded by UNLV TTDGRA.

In the quest to improve the efficiency of thin film solar cells, organic-inorganic perovskites have emerged with rapidly increasing efficiency of over 23% over 9 years. Thermal stability and high absorption coefficient make A_2BX_6 a promising perovskite material for photovoltaic application. To avoid toxicity issue of lead, analyzing alternatives of lead-free perovskite photovoltaic material is my research concern.

I am always keen to engage myself in professional development opportunities. I hope Grad Rebel Ambassador program will enrich my interpersonal skills and I will be able to serve in connecting students and UNLV alumni with UNLV graduate college.

SHAIMAA ABDELHALEM



**Ph.D candidate,
Department of
Geoscience**

**Advisor:
Dr. Wanda J. Taylor**



My research is focused on studying the earthquake potentiality in the city of Las Vegas and its effect on the 2 million lives that live in it and the much more people who visit it each year. Communication is a critical aspect of everyday life.

As Graduate Rebel Ambassador last year, I had the opportunity to speak for graduate education and UNLV Grad school to graduate and younger undergrad students. I met some of UNLV donors. At that time learned, that great accomplishments are achieved through small little steps. I met so many inspiring people. Being a Graduate Rebel Ambassador, taught me to give, to help, to speak up and, most importantly, to develop a sense of belonging and affiliation to UNLV.

SIDATH KAPUKOTUWA

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

**Advisor:
Dr. Francis Cucinotta**



Sidath is a second year Ph.D. student in the Interdisciplinary Health Sciences program with emphasis on Medical Physics.

His research study is about understanding the effects of radiation on the hippocampus of the brain, which is where new neurons are developed. Degradation of neurons in this region can lead to cognitive and learning impairments. Sidath expects to understand the effects of radiation on the hippocampus by quantifying the radiation induced changes in neuronal cell architecture in a mouse model and then build a mathematical model to predict radiation dose vs effects for humans. Sidath hopes his research study would help optimize radiation doses accordingly for patients with brain tumors/cancers.

Sidath wants to be a Graduate Rebel Ambassador with the hope of advocating for more funding for graduate education and research at UNLV. He would like to spread the word about the various professional development and other programs offered by the Graduate College and help fellow graduate students get involved.