

A blue-tinted background image of the Statue of Lady Justice, seated and holding a scale of justice in her right hand and a sword in her left. She wears a laurel wreath and a robe. The statue is positioned in front of a classical building with columns.

# Davis Polk Leadership Initiative: 2022-23 Year in Review



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# A Word from Gillian Lester

## Dean and Lucy G. Moses Professor of Law



Throughout the 165-year history of Columbia Law School, our graduates have been called into roles of service and leadership. In the judiciary, at the bar, in business, government, and in the trenches of social progress, Columbians lead on major issues of the day and contribute to a vital and well-functioning democracy. It's part of who we are.

Until recently, the Law School had not built a curriculum or programming with the express intent of nurturing leadership. But now, with the generous support of Davis Polk, that has changed.

Now entering its seventh year, the Davis Polk Leadership Initiative offers a comprehensive array of courses, programs, fellowships, and mentorship opportunities that cultivate and empower lawyer-leaders of the next generation. The Initiative is led by experienced practitioners and talented legal scholars, and each year, it launches a new wave of Columbia-trained lawyers who will lead in whatever fields of law they choose to pursue.

The most recent class of Davis Polk Fellows and Grant Recipients is working on issues that range from foregrounding Black women lawyers, to amplifying the work of immigrant composers, to preparing formerly incarcerated persons for the workplace. Each fellow has formulated a vision for making a difference in the world, sharing their ideas to inspire and motivate others, and—thanks to the work of DPLI—working collaboratively to achieve their goals.

I'm proud of what we have been able to accomplish in just a few years, and I can't wait to see what's next, not just here in the Law School, but in the world beyond, as our DPLI graduates join the profession.

Onward!

*Gillian*



# OUR MISSION

The Davis Polk Leadership Initiative is an innovative and pathbreaking leadership program that equips students from the time they enter law school to cultivate the lawyer-leadership skills they will need to succeed and thrive at every stage of their professional development and in a wide variety of professional and civic settings.

Successful lawyers can influence, negotiate, facilitate, and strategize. They have the capacity to engage in difficult conversations and complex challenges, often in collaboration with others. Students participating in the Leadership Initiative at Columbia Law School will learn those lawyer-leadership competencies and graduate prepared to change the world for the better.

This groundbreaking initiative is supported by a generous grant from **Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP**. With the support of the firm, the Law School has developed an integrated series of courses, workshops, fellowships, grants, and mentorship opportunities that allow for in-depth learning in innovative ways.

# OUR TEAM



**Petal Modeste, Co-Chair**  
Associate Dean,  
Professional Advancement,  
Graduate Degree Programs,  
and Executive Education



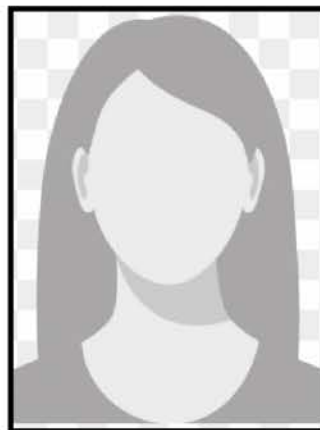
**Susan Sturm, Co-Chair**  
George M. Jaffin Professor  
of Law and Social  
Responsibility



**Colleen Shanahan, Co-Chair**  
Vice Dean, Experiential Education  
Clinical Professor of Law



**Eunice Hong**  
Director



**Jessie Liu**  
Coordinator





**Marka Belinfanti**

Asst. Director, Pro  
Bono and Summer  
Programs



**Talia Gillis**

Assoc. Professor  
of Law



**Clare Huntington**

Professor of Law



**Lev Menand**

Assoc. Professor  
of Law



**Timur Pakay**

Director, Reuben Mark  
Initiative and  
J.D./M.B.A. Program



**Camille Pannu**

Assoc. Clinical  
Professor of Law



**Danielle Schweiloch**

Asst. Dean, Office of  
Private Sector Careers



**Jessica Valdes Jimenez**

Exec. Director,  
Student Services



**Marissa Zalk**

Director, Graduate  
Student Affairs



**Roshni Banker Cariello**

Partner, Davis Polk



**Vanessa Jackson**

Partner, Davis Polk



**Dennis Fan**

Sr. Asst. Solicitor  
General, NYAG



**Thalia Julme**

Supervising  
Attorney, Brooklyn  
Defender Services

# ADVISORY COMMITTEE

# Leadership Coaches

The Leadership Initiative provides leadership coaching for students and staff who are involved in building leadership capacity in other law students, including students occupying leadership roles in student organizations, Davis Polk Leadership Fellows, Innovation Grant recipients, student mentors and peer coaches, teaching assistants, and students leading projects requiring leadership skills.



**Richard Gray**

Adjunct Professor, CLS  
Director of Community and School  
Development,  
Center for Collaborative Education



**Warren Motley '89**

Retired Partner, Davis Polk  
CLS Career Counselor



# Experienced Practitioners in Residence

The Experienced Practitioner in Residence Program gives students and practitioners an opportunity to meet with, learn from, and share insights with each other about a wide range of topics related to leadership competencies and law practice. Experienced Practitioners in Residence hold individual meetings with students, facilitate workshops, provide leadership coaching, and work with faculty and administrators to develop professional development and leadership programs.



**Warren Motley '89**  
Former Partner, Davis Polk  
CLS Career Counselor



**Michael H. Ullmann '83**  
Retired General Counsel,  
Johnson & Johnson



**Michele Warman**  
Retired General Counsel,  
Andrew W. Mellon  
Foundation





# FELLOWSHIPS AND GRANTS

The **Davis Polk Leadership Fellowship** is a year-long program that provides recipients with resources and support from faculty, staff, and leadership coaches to build their leadership capacities through weekly development sessions and project creation. Over the course of the school year, Fellows design and implement a year-long project that builds leadership and creates positive change within the community, broadly defined. Fellows receive a \$5,000 stipend, participate in weekly leadership development sessions, and work with a faculty mentor. If interested and otherwise eligible, Fellows are automatically accepted into the Lawyer-Leadership Seminar, Public Education Policy Lab, and/or Community Advocacy Lab Clinic. In addition to the stipend, Fellows receive project funding of up to \$1,000. Fellows also mentor others as stewards of leadership within the Law School.

The **Innovation Grant** provides project funding of up to \$1,000 and offers support from faculty, staff, and leadership coaches for individuals or groups of students, staff, or faculty to design and implement semester-long projects that fill an existing and concrete need at the Law School.



# 2022–2023 Fellows



**Luke Cronin '24**

**Luke** founded the Columbia Legal Outreach Team, a student group that directly serves unhoused folks in Morningside Heights and Harlem. In conjunction with local community partners, the group will canvass the area to understand the needs of and provide material support to folks experiencing homelessness. As appropriate, they will provide references to local legal organizations.



**Dawchelle Hamilton '25**

**Dawchelle** and **Tobin** created a network of African and Caribbean lawyers in New York and hosted the first annual event in Spring 2023 for CCALNY (Connecting Caribbean & African Lawyers of New York). Approximately 200 lawyers and law students (representing 33 countries, 8 law schools, and varied career experiences including corporate law, international human rights, non-profit, government, and tech) gathered for a night of community, culture, and contribution. The event included a keynote speech from the Honorable Bahaati E. Pitt-Burke, a panel discussion, and a networking reception. Shelly and Tobin are working with the Columbia Black Law Students Association (BLSA) to make CCALNY an annual event, and CCALNY is now an official committee housed within BLSA.



**Tobin Kassa '25**



**Amanda Wang '25**

**Amanda** collaborated with Artists Reaching Out, a Columbia University organization, to teach theater and performing arts to middle school children as part of an after-school program in Harlem. Amanda created a curriculum and recruited law students to work with children every week during the spring semester. She will continue with the program in the 2023–2024 year and is moving to institutionalize a branch of it within the Law School.



# 2022–2023 Fellows



**Natia Navrouzov**  
LL.M. '23

**Natia** is working tirelessly to bring accurate and timely information about the Yazidi genocide directly to survivors and the Yazidi community, as well as to raise awareness of the genocide and surrounding legal issues throughout the Columbia Law School community and beyond. On International Women's Day in 2023 (March 8), Natia hosted an event with Professor Amal Clooney in which they discussed the atrocities committed by ISIS against the Yazidi community and the ongoing efforts to prosecute the perpetrators for genocide and crimes against humanity. Following the event, Natia pulled together a diverse community of students to help create a digital platform and map to help bring information about the legal work around the genocide directly to survivors. Natia will be partnering with the Clooney Foundation for Justice in the continued development of the platform.



**Ido Sadeh**  
LL.M. '23

**Ido** founded the Columbia Law Blockchain Club to educate Law School students about blockchain, cryptocurrencies, and their interactions with the law, as well as to facilitate connections between students, alumni, professors, and practitioners in these areas. In collaboration with the club, Ido hosted six events over the year with a wide range of practitioners. He also drafted a white paper relating to blockchain governance, and is partnering with the Blockchain Association to create industry standards and a searchable registry interface for blockchain-based organizations.



# 2023 Innovation Grantees



**Alexis Allen '24**

**Alexis** collaborated with a group of law students to create and launch “Black Girls @ The Bar,” a podcast dedicated to highlighting the unique journey through the legal profession as Black woman.



**Xiaoyu Huang '24**

**Xiaoyu** hosted a classical music recital in Spring 2023, during which Law School students performed music by immigrant composers, with the aim of advocating for more equitable treatment of nonwhite asylum seekers and broader immigration reform. Over 50 guests, including law students and immigration practitioners, attended the recital and a following networking reception.



**Olivia Martinez '23**

**Olivia partnered** with Exodus Transitional Community to create a podcast that aims to share stories centering the perspectives of formerly incarcerated individuals and sharing their stories, in order to influence how law students and lawyers engage with clients in the criminal legal system.



**Chineze Osakwe '24**

**Chineze** is collaborating with other students and clinics at the Law School to solicit donations of professional clothing for client clinics and other under-served and/or justice-impacted individuals.



**Katelin Walsch  
Staff**

**Katelin Walsch (Staff)** is working with staff and faculty to understand the need for and develop ways to foster a closer community between staff and faculty within the Law School through event programming and other relationship-building opportunities.





# LAWYER LEADERSHIP

## Leading Self, Leading Others, Leading Change

Lawyer Leadership, the Initiative's signature course, is an interactive seminar that cultivates students' leadership capacities. In addition to participating in a seminar and lab, each student works in a group to design and implement a project to effect positive change in the community. The projects from Fall 2022 included:

- **Spanish Legal Studies and Civil Law Initiative**, a mission to promote the use and understanding of legal Spanish and the civil law tradition;
- **Beyond the Rainbow**, a cross-collaboration among LGBTQ+ student groups, with a mission to center intersectionality, inclusivity, and representation within the queer community;
- **Civil Procedure Through a Justice Lens**, a teaching assistant-led supplementary discussion group for 1Ls in Civil Procedure, with the aim of encouraging law students to critically engage with doctrinal material;
- **Law School Toolkit**, a resource guide for aspiring law students on their path to law school, with the ultimate goal of increasing information transparency and increasing applications from students of underrepresented backgrounds;
- **accountaBility cluB**, a resource manual and initiative with the aim of centralizing student knowledge of administrative processes at the Law School and providing resources for students who earn Bs;
- **Restorative Justice Collective**, an expansion of a 2022 DPLI Innovation Grant project to build a restorative justice community at the Law School; and
- **Centering Change Skills Hub Expansion**, an effort to bring the Skills Hub to a larger audience, in collaboration with the Leadership Initiative and the Center for Institutional and Social Change.

## Fall 2022

- **No Robes, No Masters: A Conversations with 5-4 Pod.** The Initiative hosted a panel discussion with the hosts of 5-4 Podcast, moderated by Lawyer Leadership students **Zelly Rosa '24**, **Shaniqua Shaw '24**, and 2022 Innovation Grant recipient **Giselle Valdez '24**.
- **Do Say Gay: Challenging Florida House Bill 1557.** Outlaws President and Lawyer Leadership student **Justin Norris '24** moderated a lunch event with attorneys from Kaplan Hecker & Fink LLP, who discussed their ongoing challenge to Florida H.B. 1557 (also known as the “Don't Say Gay” law) and how law students can effect change.

## Spring 2023

- **Radio Ambulante.** **Daniel Alarcón**, Columbia Journalism School professor and 2021 recipient of the MacArthur Genius Grant, held a lunch discussion with Spanish-speaking law students about his podcast Radio Ambulante, an award-winning Spanish-language podcast distributed by NPR. In conversation with **Giselle Valdez '24**, he spoke about leadership lessons from his early years with the podcast, podcasting as a tool for storytelling and advocacy, and legal issues affecting the Latinx community.
- **International Women's Day: Justice for the Yazidi Community.** The Initiative hosted a lunch talk with **Professor Amal Clooney** and DPLI Fellow **Natia Navrouzov** about the Yazidi genocide and the legal efforts to obtain convictions against ISIS members for their crimes.

# PROGRAMMING



# PROGRAMMING

- **Connecting Caribbean & African Lawyers of New York (CCALNY).** DPLI Fellows **Dawchelle Hamilton** and **Tobin Kassa** hosted the first CCALNY event, which brought together 200 lawyers and law students (representing 33 countries, 8 law schools, and varied career experiences including corporate law, international human rights, non-profit, government, and tech) for a night of community, culture, and contribution. The event included a keynote speech from the **Honorable Bahaati E. Pitt-Burke**, a panel discussion, and a networking reception.
- **General Counsel Panel: A Conversation on Values-Driven Leadership.** The Initiative and the Reuben Mark Initiative for Organizational Character & Leadership co-hosted a panel discussion with **Michele Warman**, retired General Counsel at the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, **Michael Ullman '83**, retired General Counsel at Johnson & Johnson, and **Michele Coleman Mayes**, current General Counsel at the New York Public Library, in a conversation moderated by **Professor Susan Sturm**. The panelists discussed how they grapple with instilling values into their organizations while taking risks that align with the interests of senior leadership, the leadership lessons they have learned over their careers, and advice for law students stepping into their careers.
- **Ethical Leadership and Decision-Making: Workshop with Mike Ullmann.** Mike facilitated a small-group workshop on decision-making and problem solving challenges that in-house leaders face in their roles. Approximately 15 students collaborated with each other to work through case studies and discuss the role of in-house leaders in organizations.

## 2023–2024 Fellows

The Initiative is thrilled to announce the new cohort of Fellows and their projects:

- **Ghalia Aamer '26 (Project:** Empowering young Muslim girls through storytelling and workshops to equip them with the confidence and skills needed to achieve their dreams while fostering cultural understanding);
- **Sandra Ascencio '25, Sharline Rojo Reyes '25, and Isamar Vaquero '25 (Project:** Developing multi-language workshops and guides to empower low-income immigrants in navigating digital privacy settings amid rising government surveillance);
- **Rana Hazarat, LL.M. '24 (Project:** Uplifting Afghan women refugees in New York City through social activities that emphasize physical and mental well-being, and spreading awareness on the plight of Afghan women and girls to the broader international community);
- **Edson Sandoval '26 (Project:** Creating a network of resources and a safe space for undocumented students at Columbia Law School); and
- **Jane Spencer, LL.M. '24, and Reakash Walters, LL.M. '24 (Project:** Expanding the Courtwatch program to the Harlem, Bronx, and Morningside Heights communities, which invites community members to exercise their constitutional right to attend public criminal proceedings and increase accountability in the criminal legal system).

# LOOKING AHEAD



# LOOKING AHEAD

## Fall 2023

- **September 27.** The Initiative will host a lunch talk with Kaplan Hecker & Fink LLP attorneys **Robbie Kaplan '91** and **Shawn Crowley '11**. Robbie and Shawn will talk about their representation of E. Jean Carroll in her defamation and sexual battery case against Donald Trump, in which they won a \$5 million jury verdict. The event will be moderated by **Thandiwe Mallowah '24**, the Symposium & Special Projects Editor for the Journal of Gender and Law.
- **October.** The Initiative will begin reviewing Innovation Grant applications. Applications will also open for the spring semester of the Lawyer Leadership Seminar.
- **November.** In collaboration with students, faculty, affinity groups, and student-facing offices, the Initiative will develop and offer a series of workshops and other programming around affirmative action, diversity, and leadership of self, others, and change.

## Spring 2024

- **January.** The Lawyer Leadership Seminar will be given during the spring semester this year.
- **February.** The Initiative will begin reaching out to student groups and journals to conduct focus groups on leadership development opportunities.
- The Initiative will announce additional Spring programming later this year. If you have suggestions, please let us know!



Columbia Law School

DAVIS POLK LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE



Email Address

**[leadershipinitiative@columbia.edu](mailto:leadershipinitiative@columbia.edu)**



Website

**<https://leadership-initiative.law.columbia.edu/>**