

A blue-tinted photograph of the Statue of Lady Justice, seated on a throne. She holds a scale of justice in her right hand and a sword in her left. She wears a crown of olive and oak leaves. The background shows classical architectural columns and a decorative pediment.

Davis Polk Leadership Initiative: Fall 2024 Report

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



Lynnise Pantin, Co-Chair
Pritzker Pucker Family
Clinical Professor of Transactional Law;
Vice Dean for Experiential Education



Eunice Hong
Director;
Lecturer-in-Law



Kate Andrias

Patricia D. and R. Paul Yetter
Professor of Law



Jessica Valdes Jimenez

Executive Director
Student Services



Dennis Fan

Associate Clinical
Professor of Law



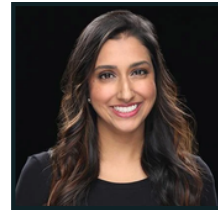
Marissa Zalk

Director
Graduate Student Affairs



Clare Huntington

Barbara Aronstein Black
Professor of Law



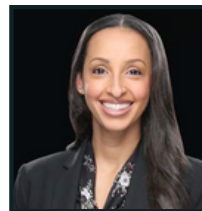
Roshni Banker Cariello

Partner
Davis Polk



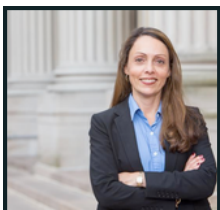
Danielle Schweiloch

Assistant Dean
Private Sector Careers



Vanessa Jackson

Partner
Davis Polk



Erica Smock

Assistant Dean
Public Interest/Public Service



Thalia Julme

Supervising Attorney
Brooklyn Defender Services

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

LEADERSHIP COACHES



Richard Gray
Lecturer-in-Law;
Director of Community and
School Development,
Center for Collaborative
Education



Eunice Hong
Director, DPLI;
Lecturer-in-Law



Warren Motley '89
Retired Partner, Davis Polk;
Counselor for Office of
Private Sector Careers



Marissa Zalk
Director
Graduate Student Affairs



Warren Motley '89

Retired Partner, Davis Polk;
Counselor for Office of Private
Sector Careers



Michael H. Ullmann '83

Retired General Counsel
Johnson & Johnson



Michele Warman

Retired General Counsel
Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

EXPERIENCED PRACTITIONERS IN RESIDENCE



FELLOWSHIPS

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 by designing and implementing projects intended to create positive change within the community. Fellows receive a \$5,000 personal stipend, form relationships with faculty mentors, and participate in weekly leadership development sessions during which they form a close-knit cohort and workshop their projects. In addition to the personal stipend, Fellows receive project expense funding of up to \$1,000. Interested Fellows are also eligible for automatic acceptance into the Lawyer-Leadership Seminar and/or Public Education Policy Lab.



Ghalia Aamer
'26

Ghalia recruited a dedicated group of law students, undergraduate students, and community members to help develop a series of empowering and culturally sensitive public speaking workshops for young Muslim girls. These workshops will begin in Fall 2024, to be followed by a children's book, with the aim of equipping the girls with the confidence to pursue their ambitious goals.

Sandra, Sharline, and Isamar created a bilingual digital guide, available in English and in Spanish, to help low-income individuals, particularly those facing language barriers, to effectively navigate social media privacy settings in order to ensure digital privacy and literacy in an era of increasing government surveillance. They plan to pilot the guide in Fall 2024 in partnership with Law School clinics.



Sandra Ascencio
'25



Sharline Rojo Reyes
'25



Isamar Vaquero '25

2023-2024 FELLOWS

2023-2024 FELLOWS

Rana organized and moderated a panel in April on women's rights in Afghanistan that offered crucial insights from Adeena Niazi, Executive Director of the Afghan Women's Association; Heather Barr '97, Director of the Human Rights Watch Women's Rights Division; and Sara Wahedi GS '24, CEO and Co-Founder of Ehtesab, a crowdsourcing app that provides Kabul residents with immediate information and updates about security threats in the city. Rana also hosted regular advocacy meetings among lawyers and civil society experts to raise awareness of and propose solutions to the crisis in Afghanistan. Rana's work will be a starting point for a justice and accountability project aimed at recording human rights violations in Afghanistan to use in legal proceedings in partnership with Afghan-led organizations and with potential support from the Human Rights Institute.



Rana Hazarat
LL.M. '24



Edson Sandoval
'26

Edson established a network of undocumented/DACAmented students to create a community of support for students through their academic, social, and professional journeys. The project culminated in a wellness event that offered a respite from and space to process the challenges of the semester.

2023-2024 FELLOWS

Jane and **Reakash** created Manhattan Courtwatch, an ongoing program that invites law students and community members to exercise their constitutional right to attend public criminal proceedings. The project was inspired by and modeled on an inactive volunteer project called Court Watch NYC. Jane and Reakash recruited an organizing committee of twelve students, formed a partnership with previous Court Watch NYC volunteers, and obtained Student Senate recognition of Manhattan Courtwatch as a student organization. They led over eighty students in joining six courtwatching sessions of arraignments at the Manhattan Criminal Court and developed a data collection form for volunteers to share their observations. They will continue to advise the rising 2L leaders of Manhattan Courtwatch, who plan to release a report based on their observations in Fall 2024.



Jane Spencer
LL.M. '24



Reakash Walters
LL.M. '24

2024-2025 FELLOWS

Journey and **Lyndon** seek to inspire civic engagement in the next generation of voters through Harlem Youth Voter Engagement (HYVE), an initiative designed to empower the next generation of voters through civic education workshops that will impress upon prospective voters the importance of exercising their right to be heard and prepare them to participate in local, state, and federal elections.



Journey Browne
'27



Lyndon DeFoe
'27



Onyx Brunner
'27



Liel Sterling
'27

Onyx and **Liel** plan to re-establish the Columbia Law Tenants' Rights Project, which seeks to convene community organizations, individual renters, and tenants' unions to promote comfortable and secure housing for all New Yorkers, and to expose students to tenant advocacy work through hands-on pro bono opportunities, community advocacy, and curricular and co-curricular programming.



Brooke Greenwood
LL.M. '25



Jordina Rust
LL.M. '25

Brooke and **Jordina** intend to create a Climate Justice Leadership Program for Columbia students seeking to be effective climate justice advocates in the US and internationally. The program will provide a unique opportunity for students to engage with the theory and practice of climate justice in a supported and practical way, including connecting students with climate justice initiatives in the local community.

Safia is working to create a Reparations Advocacy Toolkit and Policy Competition will provide law students with hands-on resources for reparations advocacy, offering case studies, legal research tools, and policy drafting strategies to help students design effective reparations programs and apply their legal skills to real-world advocacy.



Safia Southey '26

2024-2025 FELLOWS

INNOVATION GRANTS

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.

The 2023–2024 Innovation Grants were awarded to:

- **Bennett Lunn '25, Anthony Mejia '25, and Malik Sammons '25**, leaders of the Education Law and Policy Society, who created and organized **With All Deliberate Speed: the Past, Present, and Future of Racial Equity in Education**, a day-long conference at Columbia to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*.
- **Justin Norris '24**, who, in partnership with Columbia OutLaws, spearheaded **Queens on Campus: Understanding the Relationship Between LGBTQ+ Art and Activism**, a full day of programming at the Law School centered around drag entertainers, activism, and first amendment protections.
- **Ali Birge '25, Soni Madnani '25, Alice Park '25, and Brandon Reid '25**, who expanded and deepened their training program for participants in the Parole Advocacy Project.
- **Rhiannon Adams LL.M. '24, Justina Bruera LL.M. '24, Josefina Isadora Gutierrez Weil LL.M. '24, and Karla Aimee Cuevas Ramirez LL.M. '24**, who, in collaboration with Professors Amber Baylor and Alejo Rodriguez, formed the Trauma-Informed Lawyering Project.

Leading Self, Leading Others, Leading Change

Lawyer Leadership, the Initiative's signature course, cultivates students' leadership capacities through a seminar, lab, and project component. The projects from Spring 2024 included:

- **Legal Equity and Access Day (LEAD)**, a one-day bootcamp at the Law School for high school students interested in the legal field, which included panel discussions, a mock law school lecture, and a negotiations workshop.
- **Columbia Legal Outreach Team (LOT)**, a student group that started as a DPLI Fellowship Project, and which directly serves unhoused people in Morningside Heights and Harlem. LOT partnered with Coalition for the Homeless to provide food and material goods to the unhoused, and also partnered with the Law School Library to create a website to provide resources for the public.
- **Student Orgs 102**, in collaboration with the Initiative and Student Services, brought together student organization leaders to create guidelines for facilitating the transition process of student organizations.
- **Manhattan Courtwatch**, which began as a Fellowship project, invited law students and community members to exercise their constitutional right to attend public criminal proceedings.

Enrollment for Spring 2025 is currently open, and applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis until all seats are filled.

LAWYER LEADERSHIP

PROGRAMMING

Fall 2023

- **Trying Trump: The E. Jean Carroll Case.** The Initiative hosted a lunch talk with Kaplan Hecker & Fink LLP attorneys Robbie Kaplan '91 and Shawn Crowley '11, who spoke about their representation of E. Jean Carroll in her defamation and sexual battery case against Donald Trump (who was subsequently ordered to pay \$83 million in damages). The talk was moderated by Thandiwe Mallowah '24, the Symposium & Special Projects Editor for the Journal of Gender and Law.
- **Court-Involved Supervised Release Project.** The Honorable Richard M. Berman (S.D.N.Y.) joined the Initiative for a small-group lunch talk with students about his novel supervised release program. While supervisees typically work with the U.S. Probation Office upon release from prison rather than judges themselves, Judge Berman has developed an active approach of personally holding regular check-in hearings with his supervisees, with the aim of facilitating supervisees & adjustment to reentry after incarceration.

Spring 2024

- **Ethical Leadership in Crisis: Workshop with Mike Ullmann.** Based on unanimously positive feedback on a similar workshop the prior year, the Initiative hosted another small-group workshop with Michael Ullmann '83, retired General Counsel at Johnson & Johnson and current Experienced Practitioner in Residence with DPLI. Mike spoke about his approach to ethical decision-making and challenges he has faced as a lawyer-leader in times of crisis. He then split the room into four groups to collaborate on a case study of a crisis scenario, which resulted in a robust discussion on different approaches to leadership.
- **Preparing for Practice and Leading in Law.** Davis Polk attorneys Roshni Banker Cariello '11 and Vanessa L. Jackson '12 joined DPLI Leadership Coach and retired Davis Polk partner Warren Motley '89 for an insightful and candid panel on exercising leadership from junior associate to partner, how they developed their career paths, and what advice they have for students going into practice. The event was moderated by DPLI Innovation Grant recipient Alexis Allen '24.

PROGRAMMING

LOOKING AHEAD

- Applications for the **Innovation Grant** are being reviewed on a rolling basis.
- **Lawyer Leadership**, a 5-credit experiential course, will be offered again in the Spring, with the main seminar meeting on Tuesdays (1:20–3:10) and lab sections offered at 4:20–6:10 and 6:20–8:10. Applications are being reviewed on a rolling basis.
- Michael Ullmann '83, retired general counsel of Johnson & Johnson, will be offering **The Role of the General Counsel as a Legal and Business Leader**, a 1-credit seminar that will meet from January to March.
- The Initiative is partnering with the Office of Graduate Programs to offer **LL.M. Leadership Lunches**, a series of leadership and professionalism workshops for LL.M. students. The Fall workshops will cover active listening, self-awareness, racial literacy & identity, group mindsets, and project management. The series will continue in the Spring.

 Columbia Law School

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