



Graduation with Leadership Distinction

# Abstract Booklet

Fall Showcase 2023

November 17 | 2-4:30pm

Hollings Library Program Room



# Table of Contents

<b>GLD Pathways</b>	pg. 3
<b>Community Service Pathway</b>	
Khushi Dave	pg. 5
Kaitlyn Messer	pg. 6
Zora Tyson	pg. 7
Aneesa Zahran	pg. 8
<b>Diversity &amp; Social Advocacy</b>	
<b>Global Learning</b>	
<b>Professional &amp; Civic Engagement</b>	
Lana Abunijem	pg. 12
Sydney Brown	pg. 13
Taylor Brown	pg. 14
Celia Hadjin	pg. 15
Reagan Hooks	pg. 16
Jacob Hubert	pg. 17
Nivetha Jaishankar	pg. 18
Anne Kowalski	pg. 19
Jacqueline Kurtz	pg. 20
Rachel Manukas	pg. 21
Laial Matar	pg. 22
Sophia Mazza	pg. 23
Emily Okon	pg. 24
Allison Pauley	pg. 25
John Pazokian	pg. 26
Kaleb Phelps	pg. 27
Anna Tone	pg. 28
Katherine Torbert	pg. 29
Eduardo Sosa	pg. 30
Lauren Young	pg. 31
<b>Research</b>	
John Bruno	pg. 33
Breanna Gardener	pg. 34
Emily Miller	pg. 35
Isabelle Paris	pg. 36
Sydney Reichardt	pg. 37

# GLD Pathways

**Graduation with Leadership Distinction** is an official academic distinction that students can earn that acknowledges their **within- and beyond-the-classroom learning**. It is recognized on students' official transcripts and diplomas. Graduates also receive honor cords. Students can earn GLD in one of the five topical areas, called pathways, listed below. Presenting one of their experiences is a requirement of GLD.



Community  
Service



Diversity &  
Social  
Advocacy



Global  
Learning



Professional  
& Civic  
Engagement



Research

## Learning Outcomes

As a result of earning GLD, students will:

- 1.) Provide examples of beyond the classroom experiences in which they have engaged and describe how one or more beyond the classroom experience has contributed to their learning.
- 2.) Articulate examples of beyond the classroom experiences that illuminate concepts, theories, or frameworks presented in their coursework including a clear description of elements of the beyond the classroom experience that are consistent with or contradictory to the identified concept.
- 3.) Thoughtfully connect examples, facts, and/or theories from more than one experience, field of study, and/or perspective such as describing the similarities and differences across experiences, fields of study, or perspectives.
- 4.) Pose solutions to problems (i.e., make recommendations) that incorporate learning from both beyond the classroom and within the classroom experiences, and articulate how their decisions are supported by what they have learned through their experiences and content.



# Community Service

# Khushi Dave

In the spring semester of 2023, I took a course regarding the life of Anne Frank. The goal of the class was to utilize the voice of youth, much like Anne Frank herself, to bring awareness to the importance of the Holocaust in the modern day. We were trained to become tour guides at the Anne Frank Center at UofSC, incorporating current and local events to encourage standing up to injustice and being an upstander in our society. Since taking the class, I have had the privilege to attend the Anne Frank Youth Conference, created to build on the peer guide experience. In this conference, we were able to learn more about Jewish culture and connect it with the African slave trade up to the modern-day civil rights movements. We also had dinners with the children of the survivors of the Holocaust. At first, I thought that it would be hard to see the immediate connection of their story to my life and my city. Yet, I found myself relating to many of the values they held despite the differences in generation and culture. I was struck by one conversation I had with the son of a survivor about the loss his parents faced; losing everyone they loved instilled strong family values. He told us always to cherish the people around us and celebrate the little things with them. This touched me because I could see a similar value instilled in me through my parents because they left their family to come to America. Additionally, we worked to organize a traveling exhibit for our community, specifically the youth of South Carolina. These experiences not only helped me become a better tour guide but also helped me play a part in creating a more compassionate world by truly understanding the meaning of connection.

# Kaitlyn Messer

One aspect of the intergenerational cycle of violence shows how many sexual violence offenders were exposed to violence from others at a young age. Research shows that this cycle continues even after they are the perpetrator and they become vulnerable again once incarcerated. I spent one year volunteering as an advocate at Pathways to Healing and logged over 250 hours working as an advocate. I was on call to answer the 24-hour hotline and meet survivors of sexual assault at the hospital to advocate and support them while getting a forensic exam and being interviewed by the police. When taking hotline calls, I spoke to a variety of people including incarcerated survivors who were at one point the perpetrators of sexual violence themselves. Working with this population of survivors, I have recognized how important it is to show empathy to all individuals, not just those society deems one should since it is important to try to break the cycle. In this presentation, I will introduce the research from the cycle of violence and show how this cycle not only continues but also escalates and my experiences trying to understand this cycle and respond accordingly to this clientele.





# Zora Tyson

Throughout this summer and this semester I have had the opportunity to volunteer at Richland Northeast High School with the head athletic trainer.

In addition to the athletic trainer, I also had the chance to work with 3 athletic training students and 5 student aides. In my time here I have worked primarily with the football team, which has roughly 70 players. I also worked with the volleyball team, the cross country team, track and field team, and the boy's and girl's basketball teams. I have been able to complete injury evaluations, tape and brace athletes, monitor the weather and be a part of emergency response situations. During practices I float around the practice fields, provide care and treatment for minor injuries, assist with hydration, and complete injury evaluations as needed. I also lead the student aides through field setup for practices and games. My volunteer experience began out of my need to gain observation hours, but quickly turned into so much more. This experience, amongst many others, showed me how to better show up for the people I serve. I was able to learn that to get the most out of serving you must constantly maintain a learner's mindset. To have a learner's mindset means that you are ready to truly understand and engage in what you are taking part in; to constantly immerse yourself into what you are doing and to take every opportunity to grow even if it means doing things outside of your normal volunteer duties at times. To have this mindset you must be willing to ask questions, actively apply yourself to your service, and use your service as an opportunity to dig deep into what you have previously learned. I was able to display my learner's mindset consistently; in doing so I was successful in improving practice setup time and the efficiency of padding casts. I was also able to secure tape, pre wrap, power flex and power tape for the athletic trainer that would otherwise have been thrown away. The impact this volunteer experience had on my growth personally and professionally is invaluable.



# Aneesa Zahran

Almost every disease comes with its own stereotypes and preconceived notions from society. Thoughts like “patients with diabetes must eat unhealthily” or “people with liver disease consume large amounts of alcohol”. One disease with the largest background of misinformation is HIV. During my interprofessional education program at Prisma Health’s HIV clinic, I was able to expand my education about the disease process and speak to patients about living with HIV. Going into the program, I knew I would learn more about how HIV is transmitted and how it is treated. I learned this and so much more. Through lectures, shadowing different healthcare providers, and facilitating an appointment with a patient, I learned how uneducated society truly is about the disease. This lack of education leads to many people unknowingly living with HIV and people diagnosed with HIV being abandoned and shunned by their family and friends. I believe it is an important community service effort to educate people on how HIV is transmitted and accessibility to treatment. I learned about the Ryan White Care Act which is a government initiative that completely pays for HIV treatment so that patients may live with their HIV viral load being undetectable. This is incredibly significant because undetectable equals UNTRANSMITTABLE. In conclusion, better education about HIV can turn assumptions about the disease to encouragement that allows more people to get tested and treated as soon as possible. Quicker treatment means quicker control of the disease and less risk of transmission. In my class, NURS 435, we are taught the importance of therapeutic communication when treating patients, the realities of HIV, and the importance of not putting these patients into a box. I’m really grateful for my experience at the HIV clinic where I got to see first-hand how HIV is controlled and a realistic patient population. I hope that throughout my future career, I am able to adequately education people on HIV and break some of the stereotypes and negative connotations associated with this disease.





# **Diversity & Social Advocacy**



# **Global Learning**



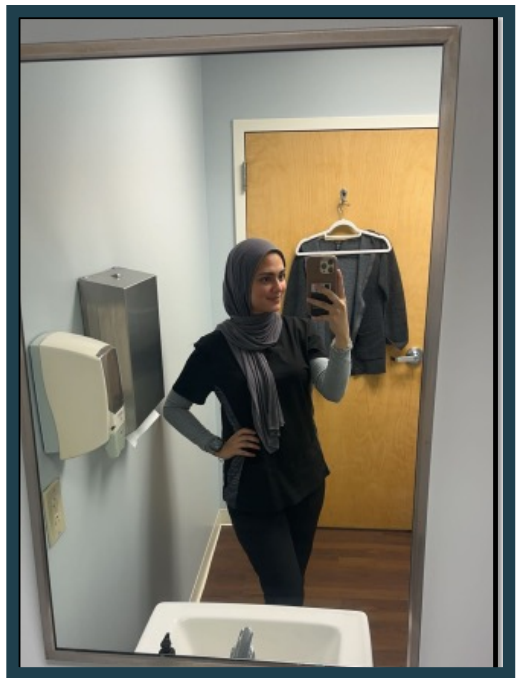
# Professional and Civic Engagement

# Lana Abunijem

Did you know that certain factors including your environment, economic status, and education affect your overall well-being?

A major concept I learned through my field of public health is the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH). The SDOH are the conditions that a person is born into including where they live, their socio-economic status, and education. This is important because knowing your

surroundings and how they impact your health helps you control and prevent illness. My employment for the past year as a medical assistant at Sandhills Pediatrics has been a privilege. This role has given me first-hand experience in seeing the effects that someone's surroundings and upbringing can have on their overall health. I had many opportunities to see how people with various economic and educational statuses have differing health issues and how negative health outcomes are more prominent for people of lower incomes. I used the knowledge I learned through my public health classes to aid my understanding of the potential additional challenges that many patients I encountered may have been facing. Becoming a medical assistant has confirmed my passion for pursuing a career as a physician assistant. Seeing children's smiles and the strong personal connections they make with their pediatricians has inspired me to continue my journey. Even when the children are feeling their worst the excitement they get when they see their doctor or physician assistant is so wholesome. I want to have the same effect on my young patients as a future healthcare worker.



# Sydney Brown

For most college students getting involved in campus activities and groups is a large part of their experience. Throughout my time here at the University of South Carolina I have found it important to me to find things to be a part of that will better me both academically and professionally. One experience that stands out to me is my time at Preston Residential College. The great thing about Preston is the community that it builds and the leaders that come from it. Preston offers a lot of different ways to get involved both within Preston and with the community. There are multiple organizations or clubs, special courses only offered to students within the college, and has its own live-in faculty principal. As far as my experience, I am currently serving as secretary for the Preston Ambassadors Club, have participated in the Preston Mentor Program, and have attended two Leadership Weekends hosted by the college. While each thing I have participated in has taught me a lot, leadership weekends would be where I came out feeling like I improved myself and my leadership skills. Leadership weekend is hosted once a year and is when around 30 residents or so go off-campus for up to two days to learn about teamwork, communication skills, delegation, and much more. This is done through all kinds of exercises, spending the whole weekend together, and observing others. The two times I have done leadership weekend have taught me what a leader is and how I can best be a leader for myself and others. This has not only been a helpful skill in my roles at Preston but also within the classroom and socially. Using the skills, I have learned I have been able to better myself as a student through accurate time delegation and communication with the professors and other students. Socially, I have seen improvements in my friend groups and have shared with them the skills I have learned. Overall, this experience has allowed me to become more confident in myself and excited about how these skills will help me with my future.

# Taylor Brown

As a nursing major, I am doing a Labor and Delivery externship at Doctors Hospital of Augusta as a nurse extern. As a nurse extern I follow other nurses and perform tasks delegated to me such as blood draws, intravenous sticks, performing assessments, assisting with deliveries, and postpartum care. I chose to be dedicated and work extremely hard in this externship because I want to be a Labor and Delivery nurse once I graduate, specifically at the hospital I am an extern at. This has always been my dream job since I was a little girl, and I am relatively close to my goal. The reason why I enjoy this externship is because the nursing staff is always willing to show me detailed tasks and allow me to examine and formulate my own outlook. I had the creative freedom to do a mini experiment on the effectiveness of transcutaneous bilirubin (TCB) testing on our unit to determine if darker skin tones skewed results. It was determined that although some results were skewed it was not enough variation for the TCB to be inaccurate. The nurses empower me to be a leader and to advocate for my patients. This externship made me appreciative of my future career and my goal to be a labor and delivery nurse. Aside from the externship, the nurses are a consistent inspiration for me to graduate and even further my education. I hope to pursue a degree in the future to become a Neonatal Nurse Practitioner (NNP). I had the opportunity this semester to do my nursing capstone placement in the nursery, and by having my labor and delivery experience, it has allowed me to synthesize better interventions for my patients and increase their overall care. This externship allowed me to evolve in my role as not only a nurse, but also a leader. I have been able to use critical thinking, deductive reasoning and so much more within and outside the externship. I hope to continue progressing as a leader in my academic and professional endeavors.



# Celia Hadjin

I was a sales associate at LOFT in Columbia and then got promoted to sales lead. LOFT is a women's clothing store. I originally got the job the summer after sophomore year because I needed a work experience for my retail degree program. I got my job by walking into the store with my resume in hand and introducing myself to the manager. Next thing you know I was interviewed and hired. I got to greet and interact with clients on the sales floor, style them in the fitting room, and help them check out at the registers. Then after that summer was over, I liked it so much I decided to stay! Then the next summer I got promoted after all my hard work and dedication. I got to open and close the store as the manager on duty, supervise our associates, and help lead the team overall and focus on our csat survey. I found that I was able to learn so much more about the retail industry working in it, compared to learning in the classroom. My manager has taught me so much, and I'm still being developed. I appreciate that my manager has mentored me in the field. She knows I'm pursuing a retail degree, so she is always looking for ways to share her knowledge with me. I have been able to see the values she communicates as a leader and how she leads our team effectively.



# Reagan Hooks

During the Spring semester of 2021, I had the opportunity to move to Boston, Massachusetts and intern with Supportive Living, a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) clinic. Supportive Living is an inpatient and outpatient clinic that specializes in maximizing body functioning after traumatic brain injuries occur. This clinic accepts patients after they have been discharged from hospitals and from their baseline physical therapy—so normally around 2 years after the injury has occurred. From there, this clinic dedicates time and resources to maximizing recovery so patients can live the most normal life possible. My job was to help physical therapists to come up with an exercise protocol for our patient's specific needs as well as instruct our patients through this protocol and truly just be a supportive figure in this vulnerable time in their life. Although incredibly rewarding, this internship was emotionally exhausting. Many of our patients suffered from short- and long-term memory loss, personality changes, behavioral reversion, and aphasia—this made it extremely difficult to establish and keep a strong relationship as well as communicate effectively. Connecting to my time at USC, I took Learners and the Diversity of Learning which teaches students how to communicate and teach effectively to all different types of learners with an emphasis in Unit 3 on social skills and behavioral cues. Due to the side effects mentioned from their injuries, working with our patients was similar to working with kids—they just did not know any better. Aside from the physical aspect of recovery, I worked with our patients on their social interactions and emotional communication which was severely stunted by their TBI. I wish I had taken this class before my internship because it taught me all about effective communication and altering your styles in order to best fit your audience which would have been extremely helpful when working with this vulnerable and regressed population. Beyond what I learned medically, this experience allowed me to learn to connect with people living such a different life than mine and genuinely make a difference in their arduous journey of recovery.

# Jacob Hubert

During the summer, I worked as a student nurse extern at MedStar Washington Hospital Center. Washington Hospital Center offers primary, secondary, and tertiary level health care to residents of the DC area and is known for being a national leader in the research, diagnosis, and treatment of cardiovascular disease. With 926 beds, it is the largest private hospital in Washington D.C. As a nursing major at the University of



South Carolina, this externship provided me with hands-on patient care experience outside of the structure of a clinical rotation. As an extern, I was given a lot more responsibility and freedom that helped to build my confidence with patient care. I had the opportunity to work in a variety of units including perioperative services, interventional radiology, the surgical trauma intensive care unit as well as shadow members of the anesthesia team. Participating in this externship reaffirmed my decision to pursue a career in nursing while broadening my knowledge of the options available to a nurse. The units that I was exposed to during my externship aren't typically available for a nursing student. From this experience, I found a passion for trauma nursing and hope to pursue a career in this field after graduation.

# Nivetha Jaishankar



At USC, we pride ourselves on being the campus that provides the best first-year experience in the nation. Much of the success is because of our University 101 Programs. University 101 has been an incredibly rewarding moment for me. From being a student, to being a peer leader for the second year. As a peer leader, you are seen as being a role model for freshmen students, and being subject matter expert of navigating the University of South Carolina. Throughout both semesters, I have had the opportunity to thoroughly learn, and bond with the students, and become involved in their successes whether it be academic, social, or personal ones. This experience has allowed me to grow more confident in who I am as a leader, mentor, and peer because of the positive feedback I have been able to earn. Initially, I wanted to have the moment to help freshmen navigate the tumultuous time that is coming into college. However, I have been able to grow myself in a meaningful way that I did not know was possible. Due to the pandemic, I did not have the most traditional freshmen experience and through connecting with freshmen students, I have allowed myself to overcome the guilt I felt for not enjoying much of that year. I have had the opportunity to reflect on my own goals, and constantly reevaluate who I am through the activities that I do alongside the U101 students. In this manner, I have helped myself far greater than I had imagined. My presentation will focus on my reflection on who I was freshman year, who I was the first time I taught U101, and who I am now and how that ties into my leadership and professional skills.

# Anne Kowalski

Having the opportunity to experience my school work and theoretical frameworks in a clinical setting has been one of the most crucial aspects of my college experience. This time shadowing Occupational Therapists has kickstarted my understanding of how I will be able to use the lessons and concepts taught to me during my time as a student at the University of South Carolina. Having learned from some of the best people I know at various clinics, I have a newfound love and passion for increasing access to healthcare by reducing the effect of specific social determinants of health. Inequitable healthcare access could be reduced by active social change and education. My presentation will discuss the insights I have learned regarding social determinants of health and how seeing other clinicians be on fire for change has inspired me to do the same.

# Jacqueline Kurtz

The first job I got in the clinical setting set the foundation for my nursing career. As a Patient Monitor in the psych ward at Robert Wood Johnson Hospital, I kept close surveillance of patients on suicide precautions, who were at risk for harming themselves or others. I documented their activity every 15 minutes, stayed within arms length of them, and made sure their environment was safe. Despite struggling with mental health myself, I had a stigma of what I thought a psych patient was to be, but this was quickly counteracted by the conversations I had with my patients. I realized you can learn a lot about a person in 8 hours, and my patients' experiences taught me the uniqueness and validity that is each and every one of our stories. The judgment I once had from false preconceived notions only served as an injustice to my patients. Recognizing this broke down a wall I subconsciously built between my patient and I, allowing me to fully connect and empathize. My role as a Patient Monitor was where my love for the patient-nurse interaction began, which is an interaction that is one of my favorite aspects of nursing today. I am grateful to have the privilege of making my patients feel safe, heard and seen and I plan on taking what I have learned from this job to continue to grow as a patient advocate.



# Rachel Manukas

Throughout my experience in the College of Nursing at the University of South Carolina I have been able to immerse myself in the healthcare field through my clinical experiences. Growing up both of my parents had service-oriented professions, my father a police officer and my mother a teacher, and they instilled in me the desire to help and serve others. I explored numerous professions and ultimately fell in love with nursing. During my clinical experiences, I have transformed from a nursing student to a confident healthcare worker. I had clinical experiences on Medical Surgical Floors, Psychiatric Units, Labor and Delivery Floors, and everything in between. I have had hands-on experiences working with individuals during the most challenging times of their lives and learned to be vulnerable and assess patients of all different ages and socioeconomic statuses. I have also provided resources and helped to make a positive difference in people's lives by collaborating with other health care professionals, families, and patients. Most importantly, I have developed a sense of self and grown into who I want to be as a nurse in the future. When working on the Labor and Delivery floor, I had a patient who came into the Emergency Department in active labor. She was only 15 years old and terrified. I was able to hold her hand and be there to support her. I was able to use therapeutic communication to make her feel safe even when she felt most vulnerable. On days like the one on the Labor and Delivery Unit, I know that I am truly meant to be a nurse. Through my clinical experiences, I have learned about the importance of service and compassion. I learned to think out-of-the-box and approach each patient and scenario differently, but with confidence. I am now able to incorporate the concept of therapeutic communication and always supporting others in my professional practice. I hope to demonstrate through my actions the importance of nursing professionals delivering exceptional care no matter who they encounter and the challenges they may be facing.

# Laial Matar

Over spring break, I had the opportunity to travel to Guatemala to help volunteer at a free medical clinic set up within one of the communities. Traveling to Guatemala with the Association of Pre-Physician Assistant Students (APPAS) was one of the highlights of my experience at USC, and the experience alone taught me more



than I could imagine. The organization that APPAS partnered with for this medical mission trip is Global Community Health Volunteers, who travel across South America to set up free medical clinics for communities with low socioeconomic statuses and have no access to health care. Before this opportunity, I had never traveled outside the country and did not know what to expect. However, with the minimum expectations I did have, the trip exceeded them beyond anything I imagined. We were able to assess patient needs and come up with a treatment plan while working alongside doctors and community leaders. Along with providing health care to the community, we were given time to explore the beautiful city of Panajachel, and we immersed ourselves in Guatemalan culture with food, music, and recreational activities such as tortilla making and a sunrise boat ride on Lake Atitlan. This experience alone gave me leadership skills and allowed me to apply what I learned in my time here at USC to real-world situations. On top of that, it allowed me to help a community in need which was the most rewarding outcome. In the future, I can't wait to see what more opportunities my time at USC will offer post-graduation.

# Sophia Mazza



During the fall semester of my senior year at the University of South Carolina I interned with the South Carolina House Ways

and Means Committee. Within this role I had the opportunity to witness the planning stages of the budget process, engaging with the budget analysts to deepen my knowledge of the state agencies and government operations. Because of my enthusiasm for the intersection of communications, public policy, and law, I eagerly accepted this opportunity to further explore work within the government sphere. I am passionate about effectively serving our communities and engaging with them in positive ways, so this role was promising because it highlighted the operations and services of various areas of government, exposing me to a wide variety of topics and people. Being exposed to a plethora of topics has helped me explore my career interests and learn about areas that were previously unfamiliar to me. The meetings I attended and the research I conducted helped me gain a more complete understanding of policies and programs, providing a basis for me to more aptly analyze policies and practices. Additionally, my internship helped me hone my practical skills and expand upon my networking and communication skills which are vital to all workplace environments. Beyond these skills, I have learned to trust in myself and my abilities more, allowing me to better promote the strong, empathetic, and advocative leader I aspire to be. For me, this shift is central to my development as a professional and civically engaged individual since it grants me the courage to stand firm in my abilities and capitalize on my strengths rather than shy away. I will carry this spirit on with me as I continue to explore different career opportunities that genuinely captivate me, just as this internship has.

# Emily Okon

During my internship at the Lexington Chronicle, I embarked on a transformative journey that allowed me to blend my academic pursuits with practical, real-world journalism seamlessly. I was tasked with reporting on a wide range of local events, issues, and stories that not only broadened my horizons but also taught me the invaluable skills of investigative journalism. The experience was a testament to the bridge between classroom learning and newsroom practice, helping me grow as a journalist. What sets my experience apart is my emphasis on inclusivity and diversity. As a student reporter, I actively sought out stories highlighting underrepresented voices within our community. I believe in the power of equitable storytelling and the need to reflect the rich tapestry of perspectives that make up our society. My work not only addressed this need but also fostered a sense of belonging for marginalized groups by giving them a platform to share their experiences.

I have encapsulated the essential aspects of my experience, highlighting the synergy between my academic growth, journalistic development, and my commitment to fostering an inclusive and diverse news environment within the community and the newsroom.

# Allison Pauley

During my time at the University of South Carolina, I have grown personally, professionally, and academically with the support of my Greek organization. When I joined my sorority, Phi Mu, freshman year, I truly had no idea how much my membership would influence my life. I have had the incredible opportunity to serve as Phi Mu's ritual chairman. As my chapter's ritual chairman, I oversaw a committee of five women who assisted me with tasks like conducting initiation for new members as well as ordering and organizing ritual supplies. I also worked closely with members of my chapter's executive board to help improve our chapter's ritual services. Additionally, I served the College Panhellenic Association as a recruitment counselor, or Pi Chi, for two fall formal recruitments. Being a Pi Chi the fall of my junior year provided me confidence and developed my skills as a leader outside of my sorority, which translated to me applying to become my chapter's ritual chairman and serving as a Pi Chi again during my senior year. While being a Pi Chi, I worked alongside a fellow sorority member to guide a group of 25 to 30 freshman women through the formal recruitment process. Recruitment consists of these women attending four rounds with strict schedules. These leadership positions within Greek life have taught me important skills that have helped me professionally, like how to work as part of a team, communicate effectively with large groups of people, remain efficient under pressure, and how to hold myself and others accountable. I have also learned many personal lessons through my leadership experiences, such as actively listening, being empathetic, and staying calm during stressful situations. All of these skills and lessons have directly translated to my performance at my internship at a law firm here in Columbia, which has reaffirmed my goals to attend law school starting in the fall of 2024. I feel that I have a strong foundation for many crucial skills that will benefit me later in life, all thanks to my time and experience in Greek life at USC.



# John Pazokian

I spent the fall of 2022 as a housing specialist with a non-profit organization known as The Health Trust.

In this role, I helped build health equity in Silicon Valley by working with low-income HIV/AIDS-positive individuals by helping locate and secure housing while assisting with providing chronic medical needs, food assistance, and advocacy. This experience had an extremely positive effect on my perspective on working in the field of public health, maturing my understanding of the concepts I had been learning in my coursework as a public health major. I decided that upon my return to South Carolina, I would make it my mission to bring positive change in the field of infectious disease in our state.

Upon my arrival in Columbia, I joined Ending the Epidemics SC and DHEC, searching for a way to start making a difference. Since, I have attended the South Carolina HIV Planning Council Quarterly Meeting and was awarded a scholarship to attend the SC HIV, STD, and Viral Hepatitis Conference. At both events, I met extraordinarily involved and interesting advocates, physicians, and dedicated voices to this cause spanning the local, state, and national levels. I also joined the SC Viral Hepatitis Committee, driven by the intention of becoming involved in future initiatives with similar impact to the SC Viral Hepatitis Strategic Plan. This fall, I have been working closely with Ending the Epidemics SC, primarily serving as director of a new youth-led Midlands Sexual Health Awareness, [STI] Prevention & Education (SHAPE) Initiative group. This organization currently has around 50 members at USC, and I plan to establish it as a student organization on campus. I have also had the opportunity to present before my senior capstone course at USC, recruiting numerous new volunteers to our cause.

These experiences have provided me with a revelation that community involvement in this capacity brings me intense joy and that I have a genuine passion for working in the field of public health. I am continually learning about the importance of infectious disease medicine and the significance that stigma and social determinants of health have on a community.





# Kaleb Phelps



This project seeks to examine the diagnostic experiences of Black families with children with autism spectrum disorder.

With a focus on families in the Southeastern United States, this within-group study is designed to acknowledge the similarities, and differences, that Black families across the socioeconomic strata face when trying to receive an autism diagnosis for their child. This study was conducted at the Early Social Development Lab, housed under the Carolina Autism and Neurodevelopment Research Center. While research on black experiences remains limited, studies have shown that compared to non-Hispanic white children, Black youth are more likely to be diagnosed with conduct disorders, rather than autism (Mandell et al., 2006). Moreover, Black youth are less likely to have their less severe cases of autism, diagnosed as actual autism (Jarquin et al., 2011). This study seeks to fill in these gaps in literature. The project was funded by a grant from the Autism Science Foundation. A survey was created, and probed topics regarding diagnosis timeline, patient provider relationships, stigmas, education, and accessibility. Before making the survey available to the public, meetings were held with community members of our target population to see how the survey would be received, and hear suggestions on how the survey could be improved. Randomly selected participants of the study received an Amazon gift card for their participation. The survey was promoted on social media, and sent to families in listservs affiliated with the lab. Ultimately, 71 legitimate responses were collected and analyzed. Early analysis showed that while first concerns for roughly 75% of families arose before age 2-years-old, only 10% of families received a diagnosis before age 2. In addition, about half of families received multiple evaluations before finally receiving an ASD diagnosis. These results will be interpreted, and ways to further this research will be discussed. One key discussion point will center around ways that barriers to care can be reduced, in order to ensure health equality and equity for all.

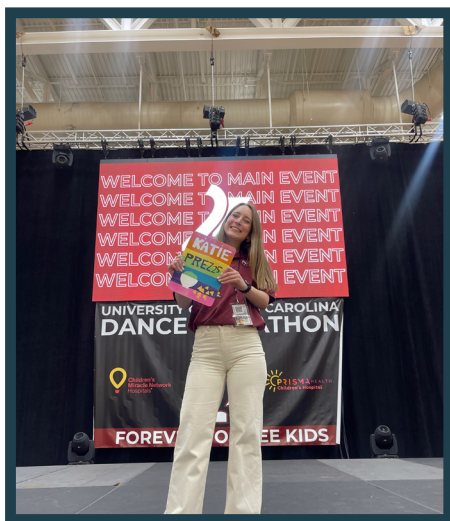
# Anna Tone

How could I give voice to those who had long been silenced? As a Mass Communications major, I recognize how that sense of perspective is a crucial element to storytelling. In today's evolving world, the importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) within educational institutions cannot be overstated. I believe that every voice has value, regardless of their background, identity, or experiences that can be heard and empowered. I recognize the need to create a fair environment that acknowledges the community but also actively celebrates and amplifies the voices of those who have historically been silenced. I aim to create spaces where an individual's unique perspective contributes to a more inclusive academic and social environment. Through dedicated programs, curriculum enhancements, we can commit to fostering an atmosphere where all voices can be celebrated. We can demystify the diversity notion — by making it a vibrant reality for our university community. The role of journalism has never been more vital to our current media landscape. In pursuit of the truth and the dissemination of information, we must make it our duty to reflect the diverse voices that make up our world. I propose a visionary addition to our programs- a required DEI course within the School of Journalism and Mass Communications. By requiring a DEI course, we could equip graduates with the skills to approach their work with a critical lens, empowering them to be catalysts for change and advocates for social justice. Universities should be addressing this need for heterogeneity, where we feel connected to our peers and build a sense of belonging. The power for empathy fastens our community in and beyond the classroom. By solving this problem, I can secure a solution for generations of graduates to come. As I will graduate next month, I ask myself what can I do to ensure that these goals are reached. Together, we will not only ensure that our university is a place where all can contribute to a brighter future. We can dismantle barriers of bias by strengthening a shared vision for generations to come.



# Katherine Torbert

My experiences in USC Dance Marathon (USCDM) have been a transformative part of my college experience. USC Dance Marathon is the largest student-run philanthropic organization in South Carolina, and raises funds for Prisma Health Children's Hospital throughout the year. I have served in three different roles during my time



with USCDM, but the most profound was my role as President during the 2022-23 campaign. As President of USCDM, I oversaw the strategic planning and implementation of programming to grow the program in its 25th anniversary year. I also managed and guided a 40-person leadership team and over 300 additional internal members within the organization to bring our mission of supporting Prisma Health Children's Hospital to the University of South Carolina campus. I was inspired to join USCDM through my involvement with Dance Marathon in high school. In my five years of being involved with Dance Marathon, my growth as a leader has grown exponentially each year. I learned about the values of adapting and problem solving, while also utilizing negative experiences to motivate myself to inspire change. I have been challenged to view play as not only a form of connection, but as a strategy to promote learning and growth. My experiences have challenged me to rethink my outlook on how I work with a team, communicate with my peers, and inspire those around me. In each role I have held in USC Dance Marathon I have walked away a changed person. Dance Marathon shaped my college experience and I dedicated most of my time, effort, and heart to making an impact within the organization. USC Dance Marathon has taught me what true passion feels like, and I strive to find this same level of passion in anything that I do. Throughout my time with Dance Marathon, I have grown to become an advocate for myself and others and a more thoughtful and empathetic leader. I plan to utilize the skills I have learned through USC Dance Marathon in my future career path of becoming a speech language pathologist, as these skills and traits are the building blocks for success and change.

# Eduardo Sosa

In my Environmental Anthropology course, I explored the relationship between human culture, technology, and the environment, realizing that modern technology has disrupted our connection with nature. This shift from adaptation to manipulation was highlighted in the classroom. My participation in the Green Certification Team allowed me to apply this knowledge by certifying environmentally friendly events and offices, emphasizing the impact of individual actions on the environment. This experience transformed my perspective, emphasizing the significance of everyday practices. It underlines the power of education to create meaningful change, a concept I carry forward as I graduate with Leadership Distinction committed to a more environmentally conscious future. As my journey continued, I took on the task of green certifying the office of IAP (International Accelerator Program). Here, the scope of my role expanded, and the challenge grew. I was no longer involved in certifying one-time events but was shaping the dynamics of a university office towards more sustainable practices. This experience made me realize that change was not only possible but could be implemented from within, altering the way an entire institution operates.

# Lauren Young

In the summer of 2023, I had the opportunity to intern with Anheuser-Busch (AB) as a Global Management Trainee Intern in the New York City Corporate Strategy Office (CSO). As a rising senior in the Darla Moore School of Business, I knew it was going to be vital to secure a summer internship. I wanted to gain exposure to brand and product management, as that is the field of marketing I am interested in pursuing. I liked the fact that this opportunity would lead to working on a cross functional project with direct impact on the company, and that I would be able to gain exposure across all aspects of the business, not just marketing. I was placed on the Michelob ULTRA Brand team at the CSO. While working on this project, I had the opportunity to talk to different stakeholders within the company, including the Director of Draught Operations, Regional Directors of On-Premise Sales, Key Account Managers, Business Development Representatives, Account Owners, Bartenders, and other Commercial Directors across several other AB brands. In addition, I had the opportunity to sit in marketing agency briefings and creative reviews for the 2024 brand world. I also attended other brand events and networked with over 50 different Anheuser-Busch employees and interns to learn more about their career paths and role responsibilities. At the end of my project, I presented my findings and recommendations to Vice President of Michelob ULTRA and the entire Michelob ULTRA brand team, as well as several other marketing and brand Vice Presidents. I had the opportunity to start executing my recommendation by briefing a retail marketing agency, reaffirming my desire to pursue corporate brand management. I am incredibly grateful to have gotten the chance to experience what a career in beer looks like and I am excited to be starting full-time with Anheuser-Busch in the Fall of 2024 as a Graduate Management Trainee. Here is to a future with more cheers!





**Research**

# John Bruno



Since the Post-9/11 GI Bill was enacted in 2009, colleges and universities have seen an influx of student service members and veterans (SSM/Vs). Though these educational benefits have allowed more military personnel access to an undergraduate degree, there is much left unknown regarding their experiences in a college atmosphere. College campuses are often considered high-risk environments for problematic drinking due to the tradition of promoting the recreational use of alcohol among students. This is particularly concerning, given that service members and veterans are already at elevated risk for alcohol misuse and related consequences, before ever setting foot on a college campus. Indeed, alcohol misuse co-occurs at high rates with mental health issues common among service members and veterans (PTSD, depression). Prior research demonstrates that this population is at increased risk for using alcohol to cope with mental health problems. The challenges of adjusting to college life may further exacerbate these maladaptive drinking patterns. This pronounced risk for SSM/Vs could also contribute to academic hardship or even an interruption of degree completion as a whole. There is a lack of understanding of the extent to which college increases the risk for alcohol misuse among SSM/Vs. Additionally, limitations in prior research have interfered with a more complete understanding of this phenomenon. As an important step towards filling this critical gap in the literature, a scoping review of the extant research on alcohol use among SSM/Vs will be conducted. This scoping review aims to increase understanding of the risk for alcohol misuse and related problems for SSM/Vs in college settings. The objectives of this review are to (1) describe current research on alcohol misuse and related problems in this population and (2) identify key gaps in the literature to help inform future research. This scoping review will be conducted in accordance with the Joanna Briggs Institute's (JBI) methodology. The protocol was written following Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis Protocols and registered with the Open Science Framework.



# Breanna Gardener

My most significant beyond the classroom experience during my time at the University of South Carolina is my research with Connect Through Play. The goal of this program is that it focuses on promoting the physical activity and overall health of children and adult role models by working with pre-existing after school programs and targeting staff for making changes in the physical and social-motivational for supporting physical activity. As a research assistant on the intervention team, I visit different elementary and middle schools to facilitate small group health sessions, variety of games, and activities to promote exercise. I chose to partake in this research because I'm aspiring to be a pediatric physician assistant (PA) and this was a great opportunity to gain more insights into health interventions while working with kids and insight into the research process. To improve adolescent health, we focus on improving students' motivation by facilitating fun and social games that foster physical activity. We've found increased levels of exercise among the students from baseline measurement of the program to post intervention through tracking fitness levels on an actograph, which we give the students and staff at the beginning of the program. This research is important in that it highlights the need to increase physical activity in children to encourage a healthy lifestyle as they age. By showcasing my research, I am to show others that motivating children to embrace exercise and understand its significance is possible. I aspire to raise awareness of directing interventions towards underserved populations in order to improve the overall health of the community. This research has paved my foundation as a future PA as I will be dedicated to working with underserved populations and seeking solutions on how to improve their health and wellbeing. My research experience has been worthwhile as it served as a genuine encounter during my undergraduate education in helping my community.



# Emily Miller

Down Syndrome (DS) is a genetic disorder that is caused by abnormal cell division which results in extra genetic material from chromosome 21. Down Syndrome is often characterized by a distinct facial appearance, intellectual disability, developmental delays, and may be associated with thyroid or heart disease. The purpose of this study is to review current literature that determines the developmental differences of motor skill acquisition between children with down syndrome and typically-developing children. The broad aim of this study is to examine what changes in intervention strategies have been suggested and can be made to potentially reduce the gap in developmental timelines between the two populations. During the first phase, the developmental delays commonly associated with having down syndrome were assessed. The second phase reviews intervention strategies along with social and environmental determinants that affect these delays. Finally, the last phase of the study sought to compare intervention and therapy types with the average insurance coverage and cost to assess whether changes in therapy, which could improve motor function development, were practical from an affordability of care standpoint. A preliminary review of the current literature suggests that there are sufficient changes that can be made to the typical therapy regimen, but that there is a limited scope of knowledge as to how changes in intervention may affect or be affected by insurance coverage for the average family in the US given the lack of research within the scope of this topic.

# Isabelle

## Paris

In 2013, Dr. Joe Quattro and his laboratory from the University of South Carolina discovered a new species of rare shark, the Carolina hammerhead (*Sphyrna gilberti*). The Carolina hammerhead is visually indistinguishable from the common scalloped hammerhead shark (*Sphyrna lewini*), classifying it as a cryptic species. Dr. Quattro's lab used traditional DNA-sequencing technology in order to gain more insight into the species's population genetics and life history. Near Infrared Radiation Spectroscopy, NIRS for short, is a new form of technology that reveals the vibrational frequency of bonds in a molecule by irradiating a sample with near-infrared energy. Scientists are still testing the ecological applications of NIRS, and this experiment was conducted with the goal of determining whether NIRS can predict speciation between specimens and evaluating which fin specimen had the highest accuracy of results, the dorsal fin, the upper tail fin, or the lower tail fin. It was hypothesized that NIRS would successfully differentiate between the two shark species, with the highest accuracy among dorsal fin clippings. NIRS has been used in other realms of science to predict specimen age, and dorsal fin clippings are often used by fisheries scientists to collect data on tagged sharks. In order to accomplish this, the dorsal fin, upper tail fin, and lower tail fins of Carolina hammerhead specimens were cross-referenced with scalloped hammerhead specimens in order to test whether this new form of technology could successfully differentiate between the two. Results showed that NIRS could confidently differentiate between the two species, with the highest confidence displayed in the dorsal fin samples. This aligns with the initial hypotheses and implies that in future studies, NIRS is suitable for speciation purposes and the most effective type of fin clipping to sample is the dorsal fin.

# Sydney Reichardt

Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS) is a disorder caused by a dysfunction of the autonomic nervous system, characterized by extreme fatigue and dizziness or loss of consciousness when changing positions from laying to standing, ultimately leading to a decreased quality of life (QOL). I was diagnosed with POTS in the eighth grade, and my personal connection to POTS fueled my interest to conduct research on the subject. With the help of Dr. Cynthia Corbett, I conducted a feasibility study, the purpose of which was to assess depressive symptoms and QOL of people with POTS. I created a survey asking about depressive symptoms and QOL and posted it to a Facebook group for people living with POTS in South Carolina, ultimately receiving 22 responses. Fifty percent of respondents' PHQ-8 scores indicated major depression. Given a scale of 0 (worst physical/mental health) to 100 (best physical/mental health), the average was 62.6. Overall QOL was a mean of 6.26 on a scale from 1 (poor) to 10 (excellent). Over 72% of respondents perceived their health to be worse than others' health. Findings suggest people with POTS perceive their health and QOL to be sub-optimal, and worse than others' health and QOL. Further investigation is needed to bridge the gap of medical knowledge to improve diagnosis, care, and treatment for people with POTS, such that QOL is increased. Throughout my time conducting this study, I had the opportunity to increase my research skills through classroom experiences, including SCHC-279: Introduction to Nursing Research Methods, SCHC-499: Senior Thesis/Project, and NURS-400: Evidence-Based Nursing Practice. I learned how to develop and conduct research studies, create abstracts, and write and disseminate findings. The skills I learned in these classes increased my knowledge about research and my capability to conduct my feasibility study. My beyond-the-classroom experiences with this study taught me many important lessons, including the importance of continued learning; exploring the world around me through research blossomed into a love for nursing research and evidence-based practice, and I plan to continue my research to help bridge the gap of medical knowledge and improve health outcomes for people with POTS.