MEET OUR TEAM

The UVA Diversity Influencers is a multidisciplinary leadership team and advisory board composed of graduate students and postdoctoral scholars across Grounds. The Diversity Influencers are change agents committed to the creation of a more diverse and inclusive learning environment for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars at UVA, especially for members from historically underrepresented and marginalized communities.

Joaquin Canal Bosque Nunez is an evolutionary biologist interested in understanding how evolution happens in highly variable environments. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Miami (FL) and his masters and Ph.D. from Brown University (RI). His research at UVA investigates patterns of seasonal genetic variation in natural populations of fruit flies (Drosophila melanogaster). Aside from research, Joaquin is very passionate about finding ways to make academia a more equitable and inclusive institution.

MaDeja Leverett is a native of Ninety Six, South Carolina, and an alumnus of North Carolina Central University, where she received a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science with a minor in Spanish. She is a first-year graduate student in the Bridge to the Doctorate Program, pursuing a master’s degree in History. MaDeja is interested in researching nineteenth century Black women’s history; specifically, the ways in which they resisted white supremacy and how their experiences manifest in the struggles of Black women in the present-day.

Courtney Rogers is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Engineering Systems and Environment. She received her undergraduate degree in Global Public Health and a Masters of Public Health from the University of Virginia. Before returning to UVA for her Ph.D. studies, she completed the Public Health Associate Program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
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Megan Sayyad joined the UVA community in 2019 after earning her Ph.D. in Neuroscience from VCU in Richmond, VA. Her doctoral thesis studies focused on the role of extracellular vesicles in breast cancer brain metastasis. She is currently a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Parichy lab in the Department of Biology where she is studying neural crest derived progenitor cells in post-embryonic development and regeneration. Megan recently earned a NIH NRSA F32 Fellowship to perform these studies. Megan is of Palestinian descent and is passionate about promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Jose’ Carlos Villegas is originally from Northern México and is a first-year student in the Media Studies Graduate Program. His research topics include media literacy, citizenship and democracy, and Latin American culture. In his free time, he enjoys mountain bike riding, playing tennis, and road trips.

Natalie Badgett, Ph.D., BCBA-D is a postdoctoral research associate with Supporting Transformative Autism Research (STAR) Initiative at the University of Virginia School of Education and Human Development. She earned her master’s degree in early childhood special education from the University of Texas at Austin and her Ph.D. from the University of Washington in Seattle. Natalie is a Board- Certified Behavior Analyst and has extensive experience working with individuals with disabilities in home, clinic, and school settings. Her work focuses on promoting the inclusion of individuals with disabilities through implementation and dissemination of applied behavior analysis in diverse contexts.