Meet Our 2019 Brandeis/Heller Segal Fellows

The Heller School for Social Policy and Management would like to extend our congratulations to the six 2019 Eli J. and Phyllis N. Segal Citizen Leadership Program Fellows of 2019. These inspiring and dedicated individuals join a Network of 116 Fellows across a wide range of programmatic and organizational streams. Through their participation in the Program each Fellow will be supported with resources and training to continue their development into agents for social change.

Leah Shafer, 2019 Heller MPP/MBA Segal Fellow

Leah Shafer is an MPP candidate at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University concentrating in Children, Youth, and Families. She is committed to creating equitable learning opportunities and career pathways for young people, and is passionate about bridging the divide between academic research and practice. At Brandeis, she teaches a course on skills for college and career success and tutors writing with the Student Support Services Program (SSSP). Before coming to Heller, she wrote for Usable Knowledge at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, making education research more accessible for teachers, school leaders, and families. She also served as a City Year AmeriCorps member in Boston from 2014-15, transitioning to chapter books and learning the times tables with third graders. Leah graduated magna cum laude from Dickinson College in 2014, where she majored in English and American Studies and received departmental honors in both disciplines. She is originally from Simsbury, Connecticut, and is an avid reader, amateur knitter, and admirer of Julia Child. This summer, Leah is excited to learn more about research and evaluation in youth development programming.

Imani Islam, 2019 Brandeis Undergraduate Segal Fellow

Imani Islam is an artist and activist born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. A proudly identified Afro-Caribbean. She is a junior at Brandeis with a double major in Sociology and African-African Americans Studies. Imani is Vice-President of the Caribbean Culture Club, as well as a member of the Poetic Justice Slam Team 2017-2018, and a part of the Bridges Cohort 2018-2019 as well. Imani has interned/volunteered at the Lower Eastside Girls Club summer program in Manhattan, New York mentoring and supporting young girls through middle and high school in varied programs including arts, sciences, and STEM, while also empowering them as young women of color to have their voices represented. As a poet and dancer, Imani believes the arts provides a great sense of therapy for those suffering from mental illness, (i.e. anxiety and depression), especially for people of color. Imani believes that the arts are a building stone in dialogue for those dealing with mental illness to express themselves and be acknowledged, but also as an overall positive force for change within society. Imani is excited to get more involved with being a mental health advocate, and understanding the related public health policies surrounding it as well as being more involved with art/media programs and education.
Jaila Allen, 2019 Brandeis Undergraduate Segal Fellow

Jaila Allen is an activist who was born in Atlanta, GA. She is currently a sophomore at Brandeis University as a Posse Scholar, double majoring in Health: Science, Society & Policy and Women’s, Gender & Sexuality Studies. During her time at Brandeis, she has been active in the cultural groups on campus, joining the e-board as secretary of both the Brandeis African Students Organization and the Caribbean Culture Club. Along with having jobs at the Office of Student Financial Services and the Campus Center Team since her freshmen year, Jaila is great at managing her extracurriculars, school work and jobs. Last summer, she volunteered with Breakthrough Manchester, working to promote the educational growth of minority rising seventh graders by teaching advanced mathematics and origami. In addition to teaching both of these subjects, she was also on the Leadership Board where she worked directly as a liaison between the director of the program and the other teaching fellows, and the Team Events Committee where she assisted in designing programming that helped engage the community through social events. As an avid activist, Jaila hopes to one day work in healthcare policy promoting health equity for queer and minoritized people. In Fall 2019, she will be abroad in Copenhagen, Denmark where she hopes to participate in research opportunities surrounding work in public health, be exposed to leading healthcare professionals and take full advantage of all the new food that Denmark has to offer. Along with all of her advocacy and academic interests, Jaila loves to read science fiction and crime novels, listen to old school R&B music and binge watch shows on Netflix. Jaila is excited to learn more about the impact of LGBTQ+ and minoritized rights on American culture as a Segal Fellow this summer.

Angelina Hwang, 2019 Brandeis Undergraduate Segal Fellow

Angelina Hwang is a passionate advocate and ambitious learner from La Habra in Southern California. Blessed to pursue a higher education, she is a third year majoring in Psychology and Education Studies with a minor in Legal Studies. In all that she has done and continues to do, she hopes to empower those that cannot voice their needs, especially the neurodiverse community. With her personal philosophy of empowerment via education, (she believes knowledge is power), Angie aspires to become the greatest special needs advocate she can become by academically and professionally challenging herself. She currently interns at the New England Center for Children, a school that specializes in students with severe autism, while continuing her studies in psychology and educational policy of neurodiversity. Even before working with children with special needs, Angie has always enjoyed working with youth and worked at Lemberg Children’s Center at Brandeis University. In the summers, she spends her time as a respite caregiver while working as a one-on-one specialist at an all-inclusive gym that prioritizes children with autism and Down syndrome. Through her academic and professional experiences, Angie has absolutely loved meeting various members of the neurodiverse community and cannot wait to continue exploring how to best advocate. As she learns more about neurodiversity advocacy, she grows more passionate and ambitious about what more can and needs to be done to achieve equity for this community, whether she pursues the legal or educational route. Angie is excited to educate others about neurodiversity and advocate even more avidly for those with special needs as a Segal Fellow.
Ashley White, 2019 Heller MPP/MBA Segal Fellow

Ashley White is an MPP candidate at The Heller School for Social Policy and Management, concentrating in Poverty Alleviation. She currently serves as the Vice Chair of the MPP Student Association, representing the 2020 cohort. She is originally from Stamford, Connecticut but grew up in Marblehead, Massachusetts, and still considers herself a Yankee fan (shhh!). After graduating from UMass Amherst in 2012, Ashley went on to work at Big Sister Association of Greater Boston. There, she learned about the many challenges that girls face in the city of Boston and the positive influence that mentoring relationships can have on their lives. In 2014, Ashley began working at State Street Corporation where she supported a workforce development initiative charged with creating employment pathways for Boston youth. Ashley was also a leadership committee member for State Street PRIDE, an LGBTQ+ network that supports internal employees through programming and partnerships with non-profits. Her mix of experience in both the non-profit and corporate sector, in addition to her recent studies at Heller, have exposed her passion for solving the issues that vulnerable and marginalized workers face in an increasingly exploitative labor market. Ashley is extremely excited to have been chosen as a Segal Fellow and looks forward focusing her energy on the issues that are close to her heart.

Sohaima Khilji, 2019 Brandeis Undergraduate Segal Fellow

Sohaima Khilji is a Junior at Brandeis University with a double major in History and International and Global Studies. Sohaima has worked as a member of the Brandeis University 2018 Orientation Core Committee, and is on the executive board of the Brandeis Muslim Student Association. Sohaima is deeply interested in exploring the power of allyship in community organizing.

For more information about the Segal Program, visit https://segal.brandeis.edu.