



2022-2023 Humphrey Policy Fellows

Each year, up to 40 individuals are selected from across the state of Minnesota to participate in the Policy Fellows program at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs. The program aims to prepare a new generation of people to assume the responsibilities of leadership and to encourage their effective involvement in public affairs and civic life. Policy Fellows come from a variety of professions in the business, nonprofit, and public sectors, from across the political spectrum, and have demonstrated leadership in their careers and communities.



Abdullahi Abdulle is a local elected official, veteran of the Minnesota Army National Guard and a transportation equity planning coordinator at the Minnesota Department of Transportation. He leads the agency's Advancing Transportation Equity Initiative; an effort created to study and address the different ways the transportation system and associated decision-making processes affect the lives of underserved and overburdened communities in Minnesota. As a council member in the City of New Brighton, Abdullahi pushes for people-centric policies on everyday issues that improve people's quality of life. Abdullahi has been involved in creating the city's first diversity, equity and inclusion policy, paid parental leave, climate action plan, and improving housing conditions, among other initiatives. Abdullahi has a master's degree in urban planning and bachelor's degree in construction management from Minnesota State University, Mankato.



Alyssa Banks is a manager on the Global Impact Team at General Mills where she stewards the company's philanthropy and initiatives focused on improving racial equity in food access and educational achievement in the Twin Cities. Prior to that, she worked as a Program Officer at Greater Twin Cities United Way, as well as for the City of Minneapolis advancing solutions to improve community health and well-being. She holds a master's degree in public and nonprofit administration from Metropolitan State University and a bachelor's degree in communication studies and minor in Spanish from the University of Minnesota.



Paul K. Beck is an associate attorney in the regulatory affairs group at Dorsey & Whitney LLP. His practice focuses on energy, environmental, and land use matters, including representation of Fortune 500 companies, investor-owned utilities, renewable energy developers, real estate developers, and municipalities, among others. Prior to joining Dorsey in 2018, Paul spent five years working as a policy aide to a senior member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Paul holds a bachelor of arts degree from Northwestern University and a juris doctor degree from New York University School of Law. Paul lives in Minneapolis with his wife and two young daughters.



Joanne Brockington leads creative strategy on marketing campaigns for Target, where she brings cultural insights and the human perspective to complex problems. Through Target, she has supported long-term pro bono projects with local businesses in the Twin Cities. With a deep passion for performing arts, she spent the first part of her career in non-profit arts management in New York City before moving to Minneapolis and shifting to retail marketing communications. She is involved with several public education advocacy groups and has two children in Minneapolis Public Schools. Joanne holds a bachelor's degree in economics from Oberlin College.



Kayla Christensen is executive director of the Minnesota Conservative Energy Forum where she educates and advocates for market-based energy policies that free consumers, create jobs, and modernize the electricity markets. Before joining MnCEF, Kayla ran the President of the Senate's office at the Minnesota Senate—serving under Congresswoman Fischbach and Senate Majority Leader Jeremy Miller. She also has electoral experience as field staff for the House Republican Campaign Committee and campaign manager for the Senate Victory Fund. Kayla is a proud graduate of University of Wisconsin—River Falls and lives in Savage, Minnesota with her husband and two young sons.



Njeri Clement was born and raised in Kenya and is currently the director of cultural fluency, equity, and inclusion at St. Cloud Technical and Community College (SCTCC). Prior to working at SCTCC, Njeri worked in nonprofit organizations both in Kenya and the US that focus on providing support services to women and their families. She also serves in several local nonprofit boards that are geared towards serving marginalized populations. Njeri holds a bachelor's in gender and women studies and a master's in social responsibility from St. Cloud State University, a master's in public and nonprofit administration from Metropolitan State University and is currently completing her doctorate in leadership studies from Johnson University. Njeri enjoys traveling and spending time with her nieces and nephews.



Allison Corrado is a senior program officer with the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation, a statewide racial and health equity funder, where she is responsible for the strategy, management and execution of grantmaking focused on early childhood care and education. Allison holds a bachelor's degree in family social science and master's degrees in public policy and social work from the University of Minnesota. Outside of her formal work role, she has spent the last few years developing electoral skills by supporting progressive candidates across the country and locally. Allison is passionate about working in partnership with other organizations and advocates to advance racial & health equity and dismantle oppressive systems. She lives in Minneapolis with her husband, child and two cats.



Andrea Cuene works in education. She recently finished her second term on the Wayzata school board where she focused on student learning, teacher contract negotiations, district finances and supporting mental health. Andrea also has a special interest in education advocacy. She led her community's Legislative Action Committee and served as the chair of the Association of Metropolitan School Districts during the 2020 legislative session. She began her career in public education as a speech language pathologist which sparked her drive to create relationships and systems so that all students can thrive. For fun, Andrea loves to read fiction, cook, see live music, travel and spend time with family and friends.



Abdirizak Diis is currently a Somali Ethnic Studies teacher at Minneapolis Public Schools, a position he has served in since 2018. He developed the Somali Ethnic Studies curriculum for the first time in the US. Abdirizak also serves as a host at Somali TV of Minnesota and addresses issues of great concern for the Somali community in Minnesota such as healthcare, education, housing, drug abuse, etc. Abdirizak actively works in community organization. He serves as the Executive Director of As-sunnah Islamic Center in St. Paul and volunteers in the civic engagement project of the Islamic Association of North America. Abdirizak holds a master's degree in international relations from Western Illinois University and a bachelor's degree in education. Abdirizak is a certified 5-12 Social Studies teacher in the State of Minnesota.



Aisha Elmquist is deputy ombudsman of the Office of Ombudsman for Long-Term Care, serving as a leader and advocate for the rights of people receiving long-term care services. One of her career highlights was negotiating and reaching consensus with key stakeholders on legislation licensing Minnesota's assisted living facilities. This transformative legislation became law in 2021. Aisha previously served as an attorney for the Legal Aid Society of Minneapolis and Fox Rothschild LLP, with a focus on litigation, and clerked for Judge John Tunheim of the United States District Court. She was a Borchard Fellow and holds a bachelor of arts from Carleton College and a juris doctor from the University of Michigan Law School.



Pete Engler has nearly a decade of experience in the public and nonprofit healthcare sectors, and is committed to transforming our healthcare system so it serves everyone. He is a policy advisor covering the health and health insurance portfolio in the Office of Governor Tim Walz & Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan, and serves as secretary of the Myasthenia Gravis Minnesota board of directors. Pete received a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Minnesota Duluth and a master of healthcare administration from the University of Minnesota. He enjoys spending time with family and friends, reading, and listening to podcasts. Pete is a native of Roseau, Minnesota.



Antonio Espinosa is the founder and CEO of Art From the Inside. Art From the Inside creates the opportunity for incarcerated artists to have a visual voice through engaging, community-centered exhibitions of their art. With almost 20 years of experience as a correctional officer at the Minnesota Correctional Facility in Stillwater, Antonio envisions a correctional system where people come out of it stronger and more resilient than when they entered, supported by a community committed to their success. He was awarded the 2021 Bush Fellowship to create broader change for the incarcerated in Minnesota.



Robert Galligan is the director of government and industry relations for the Minnesota Craft Brewers Guild. In his role, he advocates on behalf of membership in all manners, including policy. Robert earned his bachelor of fine arts in acting from the University of Minnesota/Guthrie Theater before moving to Austin, Texas where he entered the brewing industry. There, he worked in all aspects of the industry from packaging to production to policy. He served on the board of the Minnesota Craft Brewers Guild in 2021 where he helped guide membership and advise the state during the COVID-19 pandemic while also serving as chair of the Minnesota Craft Beer PAC. When not advocating for his members, Robert likes to spend time outdoors with his wife and enjoys history and film.



Annalise George has been a front line nurse for 18 years, specializing in emergency care for 12 years. Since 2015, she provides care at Regions Hospital Emergency Department, a level one trauma center that sees close to 90,000 patient visits per year. Prior to joining Regions, she worked at pediatric hospitals in the Twin Cities, Chicago, and Boston. Annalise has a passion for global health initiatives and spent time volunteering abroad in Tanzania as a nurse. She earned her bachelor's of science in nursing from Boston College. Outside of her work, Annalise enjoys travel, art museums, soccer and is a proud aunt to her niece and nephew.



Alyssa Greene is a licensed professional clinical counselor in Minnesota, and has a strong background in local and state politics. In her therapy work, she has specialized in treating eating disorders with co-occurring substance use disorders and anxiety disorders. Her political and advocacy work includes political organizing for Sen. Tina Smith's 2020 campaign, digital manager for Kate Knuth for Minneapolis Mayor, and currently serves as the vice chair for Pro-Choice Minnesota's c4 Board. Through all avenues of Alyssa's work, she conveys a strong passion for reproductive rights, reproductive justice, accessibility to trauma-informed and culturally competent mental health care, and fighting fatphobia in our medical system.



Sam Hills is a strategy implementation lead at Target, working with business leaders to drive strategic priorities, build new capabilities, and continuously improve operations. Prior to Target, Sam held roles in strategy consulting and federal criminal prosecution. Sam serves on the board of Fourth Generation, a philanthropic organization focused on racial equity in and around Minneapolis. He holds a bachelor's degree in government from Dartmouth College. He lives in south Minneapolis with his wife and puppy and enjoys playing volleyball around the lakes.



Jason Hull is a full time deputy support group commander, and weekend security forces squadron commander with the 133rd Airlift Wing, Minnesota Air National Guard. Prior to this position, he spent two years as the Minnesota National Guard government relations director, educating and informing the Minnesota federal congressional delegation on the National Guard and its legislative priorities. Jason received his master's degree from Embry Riddle Aeronautical University. He also volunteers as a Minnesota National Guard Association legislative affairs representative. Away from work, he enjoys time with his three adult children and wife traveling, kayaking, and other outdoor activities.



Mike Karbo is the associate director of the Midwest region for the American Petroleum Institute (API). Prior to API, he worked for a decade at the Minnesota Grocers Association as the vice president government affairs and for five years at the Minnesota Senate in various capacities. He currently is the vice president at the Minnesota Governmental Relations Council (MGRC), which represents the lobbying community in Minnesota. Born and raised in Minnesota, Mike went to the University of Minnesota and received a double major in history and political science. He studied abroad in France, Germany and Mexico. Mike lives in Minneapolis with his wife Cristina and golden retriever Luca and enjoys traveling, hiking, and biking with them.



Leah Koch is an attorney practicing municipal law. Prior to becoming a city attorney in 2020, Leah was a judicial law clerk in Dakota County and has past experience in government relations at the state legislative level. She was raised on a farm in central Minnesota, graduated from Kerkhoven Murdock Sunburg High School, and went on to attend the University of St. Thomas for her undergraduate degree in political science and her joint law degree and master's in catholic studies. As a new West St. Paul homeowner Leah likes to take on house-related projects with gusto, including gardening, some electrical work, and painting.



Alex Liuzzi is the Executive Director of the Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board, an independent board of eleven members with a mission to ensure a qualified educator is in every classroom. Alex has worked in nearly every area of education, teaching in public, private, and charter schools, and teacher preparation programs. His work has never veered from seeking an equitable education for all students. Alex has begun a doctoral program in comparative and international development education. He also has too many eclectic hobbies he attempts to sneak in around raising three children and two dogs.



Chris Macy resides in Brainerd, Minnesota, where he was raised since the age of six. After graduating from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2005 with degrees in history and political science, he did a brief stint as a ski bum in Utah before attending and graduating from Marquette Law School in 2009. For the past six years Chris has been an attorney at Legal Aid Services of Northeastern Minnesota, practicing poverty law as a generalist in almost all legal matters civil-- with an emphasis on helping victims of domestic violence—including an attempt to create a domestic violence court in Crow Wing County. Chris was recently promoted to supervising attorney for Legal Aid and will have around half the staff working under his supervision. Besides hanging out with his wife and kids and extended family, volunteering at the local battered women's center and sitting on the Board of Sexual Assault Services, Chris enjoys reading, lifting weights/working out, almost any outdoor recreation, and Brazilian jujitsu.



Gina Obiri (she/her) is a program manager in the Office of Performance & Innovation (OPI) at the City of Minneapolis and currently serves on the Minnesota Crime Victims Reparations Board. Since joining OPI, Gina has been leading the development of unarmed public safety alternatives in Minneapolis, one of which is the new Behavioral Crisis Response that sends teams of mental health providers to emergency mental health 911 calls. A central focus of her work is prioritizing the needs of Black and brown communities who continue to be harmed by systemic racism in government services. Gina holds a master's degree in public health from the University of Minnesota and a bachelor's degree in economics from Carleton College. In her spare time, Gina loves trying new DIY projects, traveling, and thrift store hunting.



Eugenia Paulus has served as a community college educator in Minnesota for over 22 years. She has been a leader in science education as a member of the National Science Foundation's Committee for Equal Opportunities in Science and Engineering and a member of the Minnesota Academy of Science Board of Directors. Her efforts in fostering innovation and helping women grow and achieve was recognized with a Women in Leadership for Building Communities Award. She has been educated in Australia, England, Scotland, India, and the US. She aspires to have a voice in decision making and in creating opportunities for the underrepresented population.



Stephanie Pinkalla is the government relations manager for The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota-North Dakota-South Dakota, a global environmental nonprofit working to create a world where people and nature can thrive. In her role, she is an advocate for land and water conservation, sustainable forests and agriculture, and mitigating climate change. Stephanie also serves as the Board Chair at the YMCA Center for Youth Voice who develops cause-driven youth leaders through programs that build civic skills, and is a devoted volunteer with their Youth in Government program. She holds a bachelor of arts from the College of Saint Benedict/St. John's University in political science and environmental studies.



Mubina Qureshi (She/They) is an executive co-director at SEWA-AIFW (Asian Indian Family Wellness), a non-profit organization working for and with South Asian Communities in Minnesota. She is queer, Muslim, multi-lingual research scholar, and a trained professional leading gender-based violence prevention and intervention programing, support group facilitation, community advocacy initiatives, mental health care and Covid-19 related community campaigns for South Asians in diaspora. She is a founding board member for a national coalition of South Asian organizations SOAR. She holds a PhD in Islamic Feminism in South Asian women's writing; and two master's in english literature and African American Literature.



Nathan Ratner has worked in social impact strategy for nearly a decade in many different capacities ranging from health to social entrepreneurship. He has launched multiple interdisciplinary research studies and published numerous articles in peer-reviewed academic journals. He is the coordinator for the Resurgence Urban Indian Education Initiative, a national coalition of urban Native schools advancing Indigenous pedagogies and integrating cultural lifeways into K-12 education. In June 2022, he coordinated the first-ever policy summit on urban Indigenous education at the U.S. Department of Education. Nathan was born and raised in Minneapolis, MN. He earned his bachelor's and master's degree in cultural anthropology from Wesleyan University. He has won numerous honors and awards for his innovative social equity work including being named Roy Wilkins Public Policy Fellow and a Harvard University Innovation Lab Resident. He enjoys Zen meditation, basketball, chess, everything coffee (including roasting beans), and being in nature and on the water however he can.



Beth Singleton is a philosophy instructor at Ridgewater College where she is also a faculty advisor to the Multicultural Club and member of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council. Previously, she has worked with interfaith and environmental nonprofits in various roles and continues to be a member of agricultural organizations working towards environmental justice and sustainability. She has a doctorate of philosophy in religion, ethics, and society from Claremont School of Theology. In her spare time she enjoys running with her dogs, biking, swimming, and gardening.



Eduardo Suárez is the director of communications for the Minnesota National Guard where he provides leadership and strategic oversight of public affairs, government relations, diversity & inclusion and military outreach. As a member of the special staff, Eduardo works to ensure the organization's priorities encompassing People and Partnerships are communicated, synchronized and accomplished. In his spare time, he serves as president for a nonprofit committed to the well-being of veterans, service members and their families. Eduardo holds a bachelor's in architecture from the University of Minnesota, and master's degrees in administration from Central Michigan State University, and strategic studies from the U.S. Army War College. He lives in Marine on St. Croix, with his wife Jennifer. They have two children, Antonio and Maria.



Martha Swanson is interested in the intersection of affordable housing and education, and in board governance and policy. She's currently a director at Minneapolis Schools, and formerly manager of the New Families Center, and has a background in public relations and engagement. She also serves as board chair of AeonMn, an affordable housing developer, and as co-chair of the Metro Immigrant & Refugee Health Network (MN Department of Health), and was a 2021 Massachusetts Institute of Technology SAQ Fellow.



Zach Tabatt is the nonprofit development program officer at the Initiative Foundation, where he designs and delivers capacity-building programs to support regional nonprofits. He also co-leads grantmaking programs for the Foundation, which serves 14 counties and two tribal nations in Central Minnesota. Zach serves on the Baxter City Council and is vice chair for the Crow Wing County Housing and Redevelopment Authority. He earned a bachelor's degree in criminology and Spanish language and literature from the University of Minnesota-Duluth and later a master's degree in negotiation and dispute resolution from Creighton University. He served as a financial advisor and police officer prior to transitioning to nonprofit work. Zach and his wife, Jessica, make their home in Baxter with their two daughters. He enjoys getting his family into the outdoors to hunt, fish, and camp.



Erin Vrieze Daniels is a senior manager at Target where she currently leads a team focused on end of season pricing strategies. Erin is an active member in her community, the city of Richfield, where she is a commissioner on the Housing and Redevelopment Authority and the Economic Development Authority. She is also a member of the Hennepin County Library Board, previously serving in the roles of president and vice president. Erin lives in Richfield with her husband David and their two dogs and cat. She enjoys creating pottery, weaving, and several other creative endeavors.



Bianca Ward Virnig lives in Eagan with her husband, three young children and golden doodle. She is the director of health and safety for Metro ECSU, an educational services cooperative, where she has served as the regional COVID coordinator and currently manages a COVID workforce grant that supports school health. In 2021, Bianca was awarded the Public Health Achievement Award by Dakota County and she was elected to the ISD 196 Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan school board. She is also the Deerwood Elementary PTO secretary. In her free time, she enjoys fishing, coaching Lego League, and going up north.



Sarah Weiss works for the Minnesota Department of Education. In this role, she combines the Indigenous wisdom of restorative practices with participatory evaluation strategies to help schools and the state transform discipline practices. Additionally, Sarah supports a range of education-focused organizations to strengthen their monitoring and evaluation practices. She serves as the vice-chair of the statewide organizing council for the Minnesota Association of Professional Employees, and enjoys volunteering on a range of political and issue-based campaigns. Sarah holds a bachelor's degree from Evergreen State College, and a master's degree from Harvard Graduate School of Education.



Matt Woestehoff is a proud father of three, husband, trusted technology leader, and local city council member in Ramsey. As a director at Foundation Technologies, Matt and his team are one of the largest and most successful Apple certified partners in the country. In Ramsey, he represents a growing city of over 27,000 residents. It's a community which balances the rural feel, with suburban needs. One whose demographics are changing, as he tries to ensure that it is the best place to work from home and keep moving forward. As a graduate from Hubbard School of Journalism, he truly appreciates commas.



Joanna Woolman is a professor of law and the director of the Institute to Transform Child Protection at Mitchell Hamline School of Law. She directs a law clinic where law students work on legislative reform around child welfare issues in Minnesota. She teaches Criminal Law and Feminist Jurisprudence. As a lawyer, she provides direct legal representation to parents in child welfare cases. She was born in and lives in South Minneapolis with her nine-year-old son.



May Yang is the public policy manager with the Minnesota Council on Foundations, where she leads efforts to strengthen democratic systems and civic engagement. May has over a decade of experience bringing people together to build collective power and drive systems change. Her previous work includes grassroots organizing, policy development, and campaign management. May earned a master's degree in organizational leadership and policy development and dual bachelor's degrees in communication studies and business marketing education from the University of Minnesota. Outside of work, May is a nature enthusiast and is passionate about animal welfare. You can find her reading or cycling in her free time.



Pang Yang was born and raised in St Paul's Frogtown neighborhood and works in Ramsey County as the deputy director of libraries. She is dedicated to racial and digital equity, and has managed projects to publish children's books in Amharic, Hmong, Karen, and Oromo languages. She has a bachelor's from St Catherine University and master's from PennWest Clarion. In her spare time, she likes caring for her plants and hiking at state parks.