

SUGC Class of 2024 Bios



Olivia Anderson is originally from Toronto, Ontario, and graduated from the University of Georgia in 2021 with a B.S. in Genetics and a minor in Cellular Biology. During her time at UGA, she conducted research studying the processing of DNA transcripts in *E. coli*. Starting in undergrad, she gained exposure to genetic counseling and fertility treatment as the genetic counseling assistant at Advocate Genetics, a company specializing in reproductive genetic counseling. Olivia developed counseling skills volunteering with Kid's Help Phone, a crisis text line for Canadian youth. She also volunteered with Team Impact, connecting chronically-ill children to college athletic teams, and EM•Power Donation, where she worked with families considering embryo donation. During her time at UGA, Olivia was a member of the swimming and diving team, having earned All-American accolades. She was also a member of the Canadian National Swimming Team for several years, including appearances at two Junior World Championships and two Swimming World Championships. Olivia is a certified spin instructor and enjoys hiking, watching movies, going to concerts, and spending time with her dog, Avon.



Alissa Bandalene is from Sylvan Lake, Michigan and graduated from Oakland University in Rochester Michigan with a B.S. in Biology, a minor in Studio Art, and a minor in Communication and Deaf Studies. Alissa was very involved in research throughout her undergraduate career, working in a chemistry lab at Oakland University synthesizing organometallic compounds for alternative energy research, a Bioengineering lab at NASA Ames Research Center researching the effects microgravity has on gene expression in bacteria, and in a Bioinformatics lab where she worked for 2 years on a large-scale pangenomic analysis and developed scripts to streamline the process. Alissa volunteered at Maggie's Wigs for Kids of Michigan, an organization that provides wigs and wellness services to children who have lost their hair due to any medical reason, free of cost. She also gained advocacy experience through working for Oakland University Housing as a Resident Assistant (RA), an Academic Peer Mentor (APM) and tutor. Alissa is a nationally competitive wheelchair fencer with the goals of one day competing at the Paralympics. During the pandemic Alissa found a love for baking and also enjoys playing the piano, singing, art, and playing with her service dog and best friend, Dobby.



Lizzy Chandler (she/they) is from Kirkland, Washington, the unceded and ancestral land of Coast Salish, Duwamish, and Stillaguamish tribes. She graduated from the University of Washington Bothell in 2016 with a bachelor's degree in Biology. As an undergraduate, she worked on a team of student researchers studying single nucleotide polymorphisms in human exomes to assess genetic risk factors for disease, and she led discussion sessions for introductory biology as a peer facilitator. Lizzy also volunteered for a non-profit organization that investigates animal cruelty crimes and provides sanctuary and rehabilitation to abused and neglected animals. This launched her into animal rescue and emergency veterinary medicine work. Notably, she was deployed to Texas to support overwhelmed animal shelters following Hurricane Harvey. In 2020, she rediscovered her undergraduate interest in genetics and found genetic counseling

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| | <p>to be in close alignment with her evolving career goals. Lizzy was accepted into Columbia University's Pre-Genetic Counselor Experiential Practicum and gained valuable insight into the profession. Currently, she is a teacher at a learning center providing supplemental educational services to K-12 students, and she volunteers as a crisis intervention and suicide prevention counselor for LGBTQIA+ youth. She advocates for trauma-informed and responsive healthcare and aims to help make genetic counseling services more inclusive, affirming, accessible, and equitable. Lizzy loves to rock climb, read, hike, camp, play croquet, and walk her three dogs.</p> |
|  | <p>Sean Dailey grew up in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and graduated from the Pennsylvania State University in 2019, where he earned a B.S. in Microbiology and a minor in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. As an undergraduate, Sean worked as a research assistant studying the physiology, sexual selection, and reproductive fitness of reptiles. Sean volunteered with Penn State Thon, a student-led philanthropy that aims to provide emotional and financial support for patients with pediatric cancer and their families. While at Penn State, he also worked for several years in an Emergency Department as a medical scribe. Since graduation, Sean has gained crisis counseling experience through Crisis Text Line, and he has worked at Gladstone Institutes for two neuroscience labs that study Alzheimer's Disease, epilepsy, and neurodegeneration after stroke or traumatic brain injury. In his free time, he enjoys swimming, hiking, and going to concerts.</p> |
|  | <p>Ben Esmaili (he/him) is originally from Medina, Ohio and Wilmot, New Hampshire. He graduated from the University of New Hampshire with a B.S. in Biomedical Science: Medical and Veterinary Sciences along with a B.A. in Women's and Gender Studies. During his time at UNH, he obtained his EMT Basic certification and volunteered with the McGregor Memorial EMS on and off campus while also working as a Medical Transporter at Wentworth-Douglas Hospital. Ben was very involved with Residential Life working as a Resident Assistant for two years, then working as a Community Assistant in on-campus apartment housing during his senior year. He also spent a summer as an Orientation Leader, welcoming first-year students to campus and helping them begin the transition to college life. One of Ben's favorite experiences was his involvement with the UNH Music Department in which he was a member of the Wildcat Marching Band and the Beast of the East Pep Band as a sousaphone player, even getting to play for former President of the United States, Barack Obama. Additionally, he was a member of Kappa Kappa Psi, a National Honorary Band Fraternity, serving as the Vice President of Service. Since graduating, Ben worked as a Cytopreparatory Technician at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Hospital, collecting and processing specimens at on-site fine needle aspiration and core biopsy procedures. In the fall of 2020, Ben moved to Chicago and started working as a Genetic Counseling Assistant in the Medical Genetics clinic at Evanston Hospital. Further, as one of the clinic's first GCAs he played a significant role in building and developing the GCA position to best fit the evolving needs of the clinic. In his free time, Ben loves playing video games, D&D, hiking, and playing with his two cats Jimmy and Herman.</p> |



Evan Lewis was born and raised in Albuquerque NM received his BS in Genetics at Arizona State University. During his time at ASU, Evan continued to conduct research at the University of New Mexico on the microbiological environment of caves. Notably, he was involved in NASA's BRAILLE project to train a rover to recognize signs of life in caves on MARS. He also worked closely with the National Parks service to track the spread of white-nose syndrome in the American Southwest and illustrated a children's book about bats. At ASU, Evan was an ambassador for Gift of Life Marrow Registry and worked to make it easier for people from diverse backgrounds to find a match. Since graduation, he has worked as a genetic counseling assistant for the inherited cancer team at GeneDx, while also assisting the rare disorders and exome teams. Outside of his career in genetics, Evan pursues an interest in visual arts, with a primary focus in oil painting.



Sevil Mahfoofi is originally from Iran. She moved to the US to obtain her master's degree in journalism. She taught journalism courses at Indiana University and worked as a journalist before deciding to make a career change. After taking science courses at community college, she realized her passion for biology and pursued a second bachelor's degree in biology at the University of San Diego. During this time, Sevil was a molecular medicine intern at the Scripps Research Institute, investigating the evolution patterns of various Influenza A viruses. She discovered her love for genetic counseling at USD and pursued different shadowing opportunities, including Columbia University's Pre-Genetic Counselor Experiential Practicum, and gained exposure to various specialties. Over the past ten years, Sevil has volunteered at different non-profit organizations. Most recently, she was a youth advocate for San Diego Youth Services, providing trauma-informed care services to youth in the juvenile justice system. She gained counseling skills volunteering as a domestic violence counselor at W.O.M.A.N. Inc., counseling survivors within a transformative justice framework. In her free time, she enjoys photography, reading, and cooking/baking for family and friends.



Matthea (Mattie) Monroe is from Oklahoma City, OK. She graduated in 2016 from the University of San Diego with a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and minor in Biology. Upon graduating, she worked in program outcomes at Rady Children's Hospital, San Diego for a project that provides services to children with mild to moderate developmental delays. In an effort to find a balance between numbers and people, Mattie transitioned to a clinical research role at UC San Diego. As the project coordinator, she managed data collection for a longitudinal study that investigates the effects of alcohol use on adolescent brain development. For the past year, Mattie has enjoyed volunteering with the San Diego chapter of Huntington's Disease Society of America and Limitless Adventures, a group that organizes hikes for people with disabilities. To gain experience with genetic counseling she shadowed genetic counselors at Kaiser Permanente Oakland and at the Huntington's Disease Clinic at UCSD. In her free time, Mattie enjoys exploring new restaurants, reading, and traveling.



Anjali Narain grew up in Mumbai, India. She graduated from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor in 2022 with a bachelor's degree in Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology and a minor in Community Action and Social Change. As an undergraduate, she conducted research on *C. elegans*, analyzing polyphosphate localization and abundance changes over its life cycle and assessing its putative contributions to aging-related amyloid diseases like Alzheimer's. Anjali is very passionate about teaching. She was one of the founding members and the Co-President of HumanKind Michigan, an educational non-profit that strives toward eradicating educational inequities through virtual tutoring for K-12 kids. Additionally, she tutored her fellow college students in introductory Statistics and Molecular Biology courses through UofM's Office of Academic Multicultural Initiatives. She sharpened her counseling and active listening skills by volunteering at Crisis Text Line. To further her knowledge of genetic counseling, Anjali pursued a reproductive and fertility genetic counseling internship at the Viafet Genetics Laboratory in Dubai. Here, she observed GC sessions with diverse patient populations from all around the world and gained insight into pre-implantation genetic testing and variant interpretation and classification. She is also a member of the Minority Genetics Professionals Network. In her free time, Anjali enjoys reading, singing, playing Pokémon, and spending time with friends.



Michelle Nguyen is from Duarte, CA and graduated from the University of San Diego in 2022 with a bachelor's degree in Behavioral Neuroscience and a minor in Biomedical Ethics. She is passionate about creating spaces for people to find community. As an undergraduate, she led and coordinated retreats for first year college students, served as a Tijuana Day Trip leader in which she facilitated student visits to communities in Tijuana, Mexico, and became an *ate* (older sister) within the Filipino Ugnayan Student Organization at the University of San Diego. Along with these involvements, Michelle conducted research on Trauma, Mourning, and Homelessness during Covid-19 as well as research on the Role of Speech Convergence in Casual and Difficult Conversations. To develop her counseling skills of mutuality and active listening, she volunteered with the TrevorProject and taught science experiments and art lessons to students in local San Diego communities. Her goal as a genetic counselor is to work on the community level to create inclusive spaces and bring equitable genetic counseling services to minority populations. Michelle loves cooking and watching cooking shows as well as playing classical guitar, oil painting, and listening to local live music.



Juliana Rodegheri Brito is originally from São Paulo, Brazil. She is a first generation immigrant to both the United States and New Zealand, where she graduated from Victoria University of Wellington with a dual degree in Human Genetics and Psychology in 2012. At Victoria University, she conducted research at the Chemical Genetics Department investigating genetic interactions and regulatory pathways underlying pathogenesis, as well as screening novel chemical compounds for bioactivity in targeted medicine. She participated in a research project at the Pharmacology and Experimental Neuroscience Department at University of Nebraska Medical Center, studying emerging nanomedicine and pharmacology in HIV-1. During her tenure at the University of Colorado Cardiovascular Pediatrics Department, she performed multidisciplinary translational research focused on heart disease, investigating the unique molecular adaptive response within the pediatric population. She was also part of the clinical transplant team, collecting heart tissue at the time of transplantation to test individualized treatments based on those therapeutic variabilities. Recently, Juliana worked as a Genetic Counseling Assistant Intern for Igenomix, where she worked closely with genetic counselors in the Assisted Reproductive Technologies field providing reproductive genetics services. Juliana is passionate about increasing accessibility and exposure to science, and to that end has acted as a mentor in various capacities, including the Minority Genetics Network. She is personally involved within the Rare Disease Community, and is specially interested in the Lymphatics and Vascular Malformations conditions. Her goal is to increase accessibility to genomic targeted therapies, further genetic counseling research, and to establish genetic counselors as crucial members of translational science and patient centered care. In her free time, Juliana enjoys reading science fiction, hiking, and traveling with her husband, son, and two dogs.



Abbey Roth is originally from Connecticut. She graduated from Vanderbilt University in 2020 with a bachelor's degree in Medicine, Health, and Society and Biological Sciences. At Vanderbilt, Abbey discovered a love for genetic counseling by participating in the Genetic Counseling Club and shadowing at Vanderbilt Medical Center. She particularly enjoyed teaching others about science and reproductive health as a member of Vanderbilt Student Volunteers for Science and as a participant of Planned Parenthood's Health Center Advocacy Program. After graduating, she wrote articles for a student-run website covering relevant topics like social activism, science, and health. She later worked as a teaching clinician for students of all ages with cognitive and physical disabilities in Denver, CO. Furthering her interest in prenatal genetic counseling, Abbey most recently earned her master's degree in Reproductive and Developmental Biology from Imperial College London, and worked as a research assistant at King's College London investigating the link between neuron activity in the medial amygdala and fertility. In her free time Abbey enjoys a good movie with friends, reading, playing tennis, and perfecting her chocolate chip banana bread recipe.



Kayla Ruiz was born and raised in Aliso Viejo, CA. She graduated from UC Berkeley in 2021 with a B.A. in Integrative Biology and Psychology. She was initially drawn to the genetic counseling field because of its emphasis on social emotional support. Her conversations with practicing genetic counselors further cemented her desire to pursue a career in genetic counseling. Kayla spent her college years working as a writing tutor for the UC Berkeley Student Learning Center and counseling students in the Student to Student Peer Counseling Club. Through these roles, she developed her individual-centered counseling skills and learned to appreciate each challenging conversation she encountered. She also worked as a research assistant for the Berkeley Social Interaction Lab where she explored the emotion ‘awe’ through the lens of various cultures and grew into her role as a leader. After college, Kayla tapped into her love for children and worked as a Western Youth Services Behavioral Health Aide for the Anaheim Elementary School District. She learned invaluable lessons from the unique experiences students shared with her on their very best and very worst days. Kayla had the pleasure of utilizing Spanish in her work with students and she hopes to continue working with children and developing her medical Spanish language skills at Stanford. In her free time, Kayla enjoys running outdoors, dancing to any kind of music, and heading to the beach for a swim or sunset.



Rebecca Schapiro is from Los Angeles, CA and graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 2016 with a bachelor's degree in Biological Basis of Behavior and a minor in Health Services Management. After college she worked as a consultant at Health Advances to support life science companies with commercial decision-making and subsequently led market research at a clinical-stage biopharmaceutical company, MyoKardia, to help launch a targeted therapy for hypertrophic cardiomyopathy. She gained exposure to the clinical aspects of genetic counseling as an intern at USC Norris and participated in the genetic counseling community as the Vice President of the Genetic Counseling Prospective Student Network, where she launched a program to educate community college students about the career. In her free time, she enjoys reading, cooking for friends and family, and hiking with her dog, Hugo.



Candice Jiahui Shi calls both Vancouver, Canada and Beijing, China her home. She graduated from Wesleyan University with a Biology major and an Informatics and Modeling minor. Throughout university she studied the genetic underpinnings of toxin resistance within *Drosophila* and was active in her university's international student advocacy group, peer tutoring program, and an East Asian culture outreach program. Candice gained exposure to genetic counseling through mentorship within the Minority Genetics Professionals Network and shadowing genetic counselors in Indiana. Her time at the Community Health Center (a FQHC) researching patients' knowledge and usage of family health history greatly shaped her understanding of access and education of genetics. Most recently, Candice worked as a clinical trial assistant at BeiGene, an oncology pharmaceutical company. She has a special interest in bringing genetic services to underserved communities, practicing as a bilingual genetic counselor, and learning about health law and policy. Candice is a foodie who loves trying new restaurants and recipes. She also enjoys hiking, sci-fi movies, and spending time with her cat Loaf.