

# Introducing the 2021-2022 Dean's Fellows



**Meet the student scholars selected for academic excellence, leadership and dedication to bettering the world**

The UC San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS) is internationally recognized for its excellence – and a key reason for our growing distinction is our ability to attract the best graduate students from across the globe.

Each year, GPS selects students to honor with the special distinction of Dean's Fellow. Students awarded this fellowship exude the professional qualities of excellence that the school cultivates; fellows are selected based on academic excellence, leadership, civic engagement and regional involvement.

We invited this year's Dean's Fellows to answer a few questions about themselves, their post-graduation plans and their best advice for incoming GPS students. For more on this year's cohort, read our [student profiles](#).

**What's the most challenging part of grad school?**

## What's the most rewarding?

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Elissa Bozhkov</b> Hometown: Toronto, Canada</p> <p>“The most challenging part of grad school is learning how to adapt and balance your academic workload with jobs, research and extracurriculars - all while staying motivated during a pandemic! The most rewarding part is definitely the community; the students, professors, academic advisers, career coaches, alumni and everyone else I've met at GPS have all made grad school an incredible learning experience.”</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Nicholas Heimann</b> Hometown: Hawthorne, California</p> <p>“The most challenging part of grad school has been navigating the entire experience by myself as a first generation college student. I was completely unfamiliar with every step of the process, from researching programs to the application, financial aid, studying, networking and now preparing for post-grad. But the most rewarding part of grad school would be the people I've met along the way and the memories we shared going through this entire experience together, in the midst of a pandemic.”</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Tomás Lavados</b> Hometown: Santiago, Chile</p> <p>“The most challenging part for me has been having to juggle my studies, a part-time job and being a parent at the same time. It has certainly been very different from my undergraduate experience, where I could just focus on studying. However, it is rewarding to meet so many new interesting people and to be learning all these interesting things again.”</p>

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## What do you hope to do after graduating from GPS?

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Kenneth "Cashin" Brown</b></p> <p>Hometown: Newport Coast, California – but I also lived in Mexico City, Bangkok, Singapore, Connecticut, and New York City.</p> <p>"I hope to work for an ocean or wildlife oriented nonprofit that is based in coastal California. I would also like the opportunity to live abroad again, preferably somewhere in the Mediterranean."</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Alberto Santos-Davidson</b></p> <p>Hometown: Kensington, California</p> <p>"After attending <a href="#">COP26</a> in Scotland last year, it became clearer than ever to me that I want to do work where I am helping to mitigate and help communities adapt to the effects of climate change. I don't yet know where that will take me, but that is the direction I want to continue in."</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Swati Nair</b></p> <p>Hometown: Kerala, India</p> <p>"After I graduate from GPS, I hope to work in the development sector, specifically focusing on poverty alleviation."</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Jorge Mata Ochoa</b></p> <p>Hometown: Yuma, Arizona</p> <p>"I would love to work in government, specifically diplomacy or consulting. I am currently applying to the State Department, FEMA and the California Bureau of Investigation and looking at the Inter-American Development Bank."</p>

## Who has made the biggest impact on you during your time at GPS?

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Laura Nóra</b></p> <p>Hometown: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil</p> <p>"During my time at GPS, I've made some great friends and met incredibly smart professors, but there are two people that I simply could not mention here: <a href="#">Laurie Tanjuaquio</a> and <a href="#">Jerry Pang</a>. They both go above and beyond to assist students; they make everything happen. I have a huge appreciation for their work and how much they helped me throughout my first and second year at GPS."</p>
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### **McKenzie Richardson**

Hometown: Technically, San Diego. I've lived here for the past ten years! I grew up as an Army brat so I moved every 1-3 years before my dad retired from the military.

"My friends at GPS have made an enormous impact on my life during graduate school. I sometimes joke that I learn more from my friends than I do from my professors because my friends bring in incredible perspectives from their unique experiences prior to their time at GPS. I've greatly enjoyed watching everyone gain expertise in the fields they are interested in through taking specialized courses and new work opportunities. Similarly, my friends have celebrated my accomplishments with me and given me encouragement when I needed it most. If it weren't for them, I wouldn't have had the academic and emotional support to be successful at GPS.

Another person worth recognizing in my time at GPS is [Vice Adm. Robert Thomas](#). He has not only been an excellent professor but also a fantastic mentor who has supported me since the day I approached him to ask for his thoughts on my GPS application while I was an undergrad at UC San Diego. He has motivated me to pursue my niche interests in security studies while also challenging me to become a better writer and researcher. I'm very grateful for his support and I'm eager to think of more research ideas to throw at him before I graduate."

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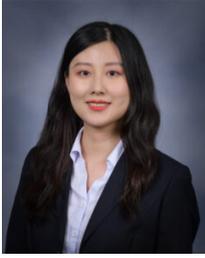
## **What advice would you give to new students at GPS?**



### **Chase Farrell**

Hometown: Poway, California

"I'd suggest forming connections with your colleagues. The GPS community has a diverse set of people from different backgrounds and skill sets. Your colleagues are an invaluable resource - not just for help in course material or in forming ideas for topics, but also to give you an opportunity for professional development. I find talking to my colleagues has given me ideas for my own career path and has given me insight into different sectors and countries. Make use of them while you are here."

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Nikki Jazayeri</b> Hometown: Irvine, California</p> <p>“The advice I would give to GPS students is to form study groups! Even if you were able to breeze through undergrad, graduate school is a very different and, in my opinion, a more difficult experience. And the cool thing about GPS is that there is such a variety of educational backgrounds that everyone brings their different strengths to the table, so team up and help where you can – and don’t be afraid to ask for help when you need it.”</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Zeyu Li</b> Hometown: Ordos, Inner Mongolia, China</p> <p>“The most helpful thing is to go to the professors’ office hours more often. You can ask questions or just chat with the professors, but you are able to learn a lot from it!”</p>

The full cohort of 2021-2022 Dean’s Fellows are as follows:

- Deepika Bagaria, MPP '22
  - Elissa Bozhkov, MIA '22
  - Kenneth “Cashin” Brown, MIA '22
  - Chase Farrell, BA/MPP '22
  - Chi “Will” Gao, MCEPA '22
  - Nicholas Heimann, MIA '22
  - Ayush Jain, MPP '22
  - Nikki Jazayeri, BA/MIA '22
  - Tomás Lavados, MIA '22
  - Zeyu Li, MCEPA '22
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- Kelli Maples, MPP '22
  - Jorge Mata Ochoa, MIA '22
  - Swati Nair, MIA '22
  - Laura Nóra, MPP '22
  - McKenzie Richardson, MPP '22
  - Alberto Santos-Davidson, MPP '22
  - Tyler Spencer, MIA '22

- Harrison Tang, BA/MIA '22
- Miriam Vakhitova, MPP '22
- Joshua Zajdel, MIA '22