



United Nations Association of the National Capital Area  
**Graduate Fellows Program**  
Annual Report 2022-2023



# About the Graduate Fellows Program

Established in 1953, the United Nations Association of the National Capital Area (UNA-NCA) is among the largest and most active chapters of the United Nations Association of the USA (UNA-USA), serving over 2,000 members and supporters. Although it is a chapter of UNA-USA, UNA-NCA operates as an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit and is solely responsible for securing funding to support its operations and programs. UNA-NCA's mission is to increase public understanding of the United Nations, encourage a robust U.S.-UN relationship, and help prepare the next generation of global citizens. In partnership with more than 60 organizations, UNA-NCA makes its voice heard through advocacy and public education throughout the Washington, DC area, led by Paula Boland, President and CEO of UNA-NCA.



*A shot of the Fellows in the classroom with a panel of guest presenters in spring 2023.*

The Graduate Fellows Program was founded in 1991 by former Dean of the George Washington University (GWU) Elliott School, Maurice East, and UNA-NCA past-president and volunteer Ed Elmendorf, as a partnership between GWU and UNA-NCA. It brings together a group of competitively selected graduate students each spring semester to learn together and deepen their understanding of the United Nations. Since it began, UNA-NCA leaders and staff have guided over 500 students from a dozen Washington, DC, Maryland, and Northern Virginia (DMV) universities in an exploration of the United Nations.

The Program, like the UN, has changed

considerably over the years, adapting to our ever more interconnected and decentralized global community. It continues to grow in diversity and in the size of its network. What has remained constant, however, is the Program's intense engagement on current UN issues, support for Fellows in their exploration of multilateral organizations and career opportunities in the wide world of UN-related organizations, weekly exchanges between Fellows and officials from UN-related organizations, and leadership of the Program by



*Elliott Richardson*

UNA-NCA volunteers with deep UN knowledge and experience. Since the start of the Graduate Fellows Program, we are proud to have hosted many illustrious guests from around the world who are

experts on vital topics addressed in the UN. One of the GFP's first guests was Elliot Richardson, notably known as Attorney General under the Nixon administration. He later served as US ambassador for the UN Law of the Sea negotiations and was Chair of the Board of UNA-USA when the GFP was created.



In 2023, the leadership of the Program was enriched by the addition of Cal Williams, a retired IMF staff member, and Katherine Marshall, formerly with the World Bank, as co-directors. Nancy

Donaldson, previously a co-director, moved to new responsibilities, and Ed Elmendorf continued as co-director. All of the key GFP23 leaders are active members of the UNA-NCA Board of Directors.

# A Message from the Leadership Team

The 36 Fellows in the UNA-NCA Graduate Fellows Program for 2023 were selected from nearly one hundred applicants in a competitive process from 10 universities in the DC metro area. After months of preparation, we launched GFP 2023 with an informal gathering and orientation in a historic DC apartment building. In the weeks that followed we created a learning community of Fellows, GFP Program Leaders and Volunteers. Guest Resource Persons with rich personal experience in the work of the United Nations joined us for individual sessions.

It was impossible to address the entirety of UN activity in GFP 2023, so we focused on key current global issues and how they were reflected in the policies, activities, and programs of the large UN world, from the engagement of the UN Security Council in the Russian aggression in Ukraine through the diverse UN programs addressing climate change and the great challenges of UN human rights and humanitarian action, with case studies on Myanmar and Syria. Fellows brought to the Program highly varied personal knowledge and, in several cases, experience through prior UN-related work. Advance preparation for the Program included study of the UN's Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in an SDG Primer used by UN staff and prepared by the UN itself, and use of a UN knowledge tool designed especially for the GFP by experienced UNA-NCA volunteers. Fellows were expected to engage each week with the issues of the day, drawing on background papers prepared for the Fellows by GFP volunteer leaders.

Fellows examined global issues with a "UN Lens", bringing perspectives within the UN to bear, to gain fresh insights into the challenges and opportunities facing the global community, encouraging the Fellows to see themselves subsequently engage professionally in UN-related organizations. Career support through mentoring and advice was an essential element of GFP23. Because the Fellows had such wide and varied prior experiences and came from so many different



university settings and programs, we promoted informal social contact among the Fellows. A Happy Hour with the late Ambassador Steven McGann, pictured at left, ensued.

The Fellows also enjoyed a visit to the United Nations in New York City for the

annual Global Engagement Summit of UNA-USA. Sitting in chairs where diplomats from around the world addressed the UN General Assembly moved us. As we deepened our learning about the United Nations, we encouraged and promoted supportive but critical and independent voices. We collaborated on preparation of future leaders for this crucial global organization and its wide network of partners.

This report provides information about the GFP Program Leaders and Volunteers, the 2023 Fellows and Alumni, our Guest Resource Persons, the GFP Career Program sessions and panels, the GFP mentorship program, highlights from an anonymous survey of the Fellows at the end of the Program, notes on the journeys of some former Fellows, and a look to the future in GFP24. We heartily thank the Fellows, our UNA-NCA colleagues, the many Volunteers who contributed to the Program, and our loyal and energetic Program Coordinator, Olivia Hille.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Edward Elmendorf".

A. Edward Elmendorf  
**Co-Director**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Katherine Marshall".

Katherine Marshall  
**Co-Director**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Calvin Williams".

John Calvin Williams  
**Co-Director**

# GFP Leadership



## **A. Edward Elmendorf**

Ed has been actively involved in UN organizations for over 50 years, including the UN itself, the World Bank, and UNA-USA and UNA-NCA. He served as President and CEO of UNA-USA prior to its alliance with the UN Foundation and is Past President and Board Chair of UNA-NCA. Ed served as a Co-Director of the UNA-NCA Graduate Fellows Program for 2023.



## **Katherine Marshall**

A senior fellow at Georgetown University's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, Professor of the Practice of Development, Religion, and Conflict in the School of Foreign Service, and Executive Director of the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD), following a long World Bank career, Katherine served as a co-director for GFP23.



## **John (Cal) Calvin Williams**

Cal Williams is a retired Senior Economist at the International Monetary Fund (IMF). During his IMF career he served as the IMF Resident Representative in Zaire (now the DRC) and in Mali. Prior to IMF, Cal was an international commercial lending with a major international bank. Cal served as a co-director for GFP23.



## **Tom Bradley**

Thomas Bradley has been assistant director of the UNA-NCA Graduate Fellows Program, 2018-present. After a career in the US Air Force he has served on the UNA-NCA Board of Directors 2009-2017 and 2019-present.



## **Stephen F. Moseley**

Stephen F. Moseley is Past Board Chair of the UNA-NCA Board of Directors, elected for the first Term in 2017. Previously he served as President Elect for one year, and prior thereto he served as Chair of the UNA-NCA Advisory Council, and member of UNA-NCA's Executive Committee and the Board of Directors.



## **Kristen Cordell**

Kristen A. Cordell is a Senior Advisor on Infrastructure and Investment at the U.S. Department of State and UNA-NCA's Vice Chair of Membership and Volunteer Engagement. Kristen Co-Directed the 2023 GFP Career Sessions.

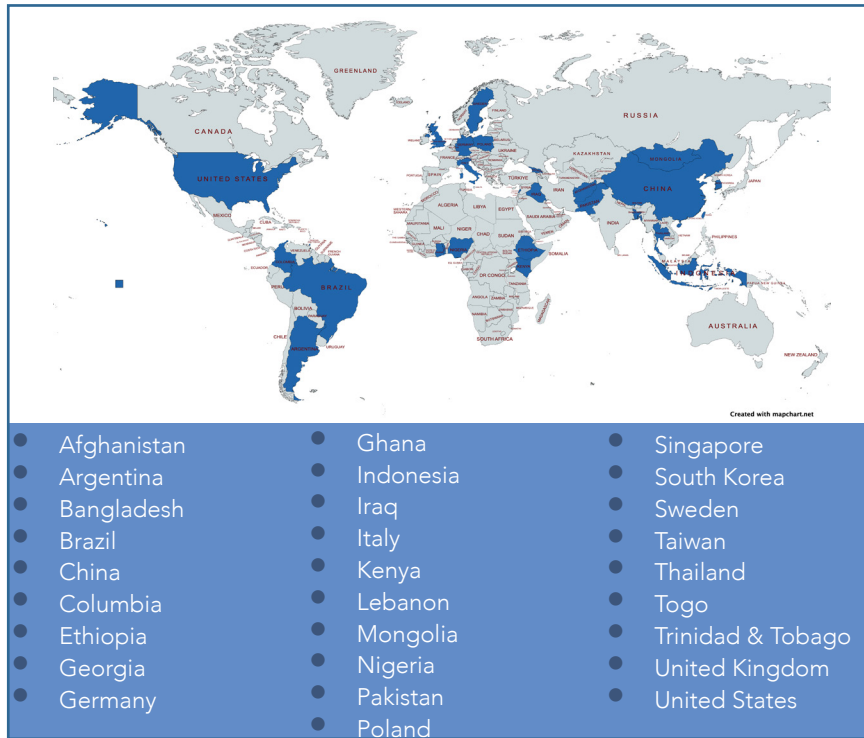


## **Olivia Hille**

GFP Program Coordinator, Graduate Candidate at America University, School of International Service, International Peace and Conflict Resolution. Olivia was elected to the UNA-NCA Board of Directors as the Student Representative in June 2023.

# The GFP 2023 Fellows

## 28 Countries of Origin of GFP23 Fellows



Members of the 2023 cohort at the front of the UN General Assembly hall in February 2023.

## Participating Universities



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY



# The GFP 23 UN Lens & Topics



The “UN Lens” highlights the consistent program theme of looking at globally important topics, issues, and conflicts with a focus on what the UN is doing, what it has done, and what it should be doing. That means issues are seen from within the UN, as an actor on the UN stage, as a UN official might see them within the UN secretariat or one of the agencies and programs collaborating directly with the UN. GFP23 Fellows, and GFP Program leadership alike, needed to dive into the Program from the perspective of the UN, to write week-to-week backgrounders, to expand the UN knowledge of all engaged in the GFP, and to write proposals for potential UN action. For example, for the GFP23 session on UN Financing, Fellows examined a database maintained by the UN Chief Executives Board and proposed new approaches for funding individual UN agencies and programs in which they had special interest. The UN Lens required us also to engage with professionals in the fields being discussed, whether they are in the UN system today, were in the UN system for a long time, or interacted with the UN agencies, organizations and programs throughout their career.

As a professional Fellowship, the Program split the career sessions into two parts: Careers in UN Organizations and Careers in UN Network Organizations. This allowed all to look at opportunities in a wide range of fields where UN and UN Network organizations are engaged.

# GFP 23 Topics and Partners

## The UN Today: Looking Out at the Wider World, and its Challenges and Risk

Guest: Brenden Varma, Deputy Director of the UN Information Center in Washington, DC

## The UN and Global Health: A rapidly changing Environment of new Challenges and Opportunities

Guest: Prof. John Monahan, McCourt Chair at the McCourt School of Public Policy, Georgetown University

## The UN and Prevention and Reduction of Violence: Case study of Ukraine

Guest: Richard Gowan, UN Director, International Crisis Group

## The UN and Human Rights: A Country Case Study of Limits, Voice, and Accountability in Myanmar

Guest: Felice Gaer, Executive Director, Jacob Blaustein Institute, American Jewish Committee; Human Rights defender; former Chair of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom

## The UN, Climate Change, and the Environment: COP 27 Achievements, Failures, and A Wider Perspective

Guest: David Waskow, Director of World Resources Institute's International Climate Initiative

## A UN Resident Coordinator Field Perspective on the UN: What UN looks like in the Field, at the Country Level in Guyana

Guest: Yesim Oruc, UN Resident Coordinator in Guyana. She previously served as UNDP's Deputy Director in Washington and with UNDP in Albania in Romania

## A UN Lens on How the UN System Responds to The Ever-Increasing Number of Humanitarian Crises with A Look At the Challenges of Experience in Syria

Guest: Sam Worthington, Chair, UNA-NCA Advisory Council and former CEO of InterAction

## Financing the UN and its Programs: A Headquarters Perspective getting beyond Accounting to Policy and Challenges

Guest: Andrew Hyde, Senior Fellow of the Stimson Center Multilateral Financial Diplomacy and Powering Peace

## The UN Faces Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Challenges, Threats, and Opportunities, both internally and externally

Guest: Doudou Diène, former United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; former UNESCO official

## The United Nations and the Future of Global Governance

Guests: Elizabeth (Liz) Hume (Executive Director, Alliance for Peacebuilding), Ms. Eveline Herfkens (Former Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation in the Netherlands), Ms. Marilou Uy (Executive Director, Group of 24 Task Force on Financial and Monetary Issues), and, Amb. George E. Moose (Chair of the Board at the United States Institute of Peace)



# Career Sessions

Endeavoring to equip the Fellows with means to make an impact on the UN and UN issues, GFP 23 considered its Career Strategy sessions and its semester-long mentorship program essential to its programming. Career Strategy sessions invited Fellows to discuss the changing international careers landscape and the recruitment practices of international organizations with human resources professionals and hiring managers, while the Program's mentorship program offered Fellows an invaluable opportunity to learn from mid-career and senior international affairs practitioners.

## 1st Career Session: Careers in UN and World Bank Institutions

### **Moderator:**

**Kristen A. Cordell** is a Senior Advisor on Infrastructure and Investment at the U.S. Department of State and UNA-NCA's Vice Chair of Membership and Volunteer Engagement. Kristen Co-Directed the 2023 GFP Career Sessions

### **Panelists:**

**Brenden Varma:** Deputy Director of the UN Information Centre in Washington, DC

**Sarah Jackson Han:** Senior Adviser, Communications, Partnerships, & Policy, UNDP Washington DC Office

**Yumiko Kaizuka:** Senior HR Officer and HR program Lead of Talent and Incentives at IFC, the World Bank Group

**Damla Zeybel:** Founder and CEO, Arya Effective; former senior IFC executive

**Ousmane Diagne:** HR Business Partner, IFC

## 2nd Career Session: Careers in the UN Network

**Candy Ho** aided the GFP23 Fellows to consider their educational and life experiences and to achieve their short- and long-term goals from the perspective of her teaching at Kwantlen Polytechnic University in British Columbia, Canada.

### **Moderator:**

**Stephen F. Moseley** is a past Chair of the UNA-NCA Board of Directors and senior NGO executive. Steve Co-Directed the 2023 GFP Career Sessions

### **Panelists:**

**Elizabeth Hume:** Executive Director at the Alliance for Peacebuilding

**Rachel Locklear Hall:** CARE's Associate Vice President of U.S. Government Advocacy

**Sam Worthington:** Former President & CEO of InterAction, current Chair of UNA-NCA's Advisory Council.

**Dr. Richard Ponzio:** Senior Fellow and Director of the Global Governance, Justice and Security Program at The Stimson Center; former GFP Fellow.



# The GFP23 Mentorship Program

A key part of GFP 23 was connecting the Fellows with mentors who have a wide range of experiences and fields of expertise. Mentoring provided the Fellows raw advice and experiences outside the "GFP Classroom". Mentoring also provided the Fellows ways to get involved in UNA-NCA activities. The UNA-NCA network provided the GFP excellent opportunities to identify potential mentors. Fellows were provided an opportunity to establish their top three choices from an extensive list for a mentor. Mentors were then assigned based upon Fellow interest, mentor expertise, and in-person vs virtual preference. Co-Director Cal Williams and Program Coordinator Olivia Hille took the lead on the GFP mentoring program.

A 2023 Fellow wrote that "Getting the opportunity to choose a mentor whose career aligned with my career goals [was] amazing. Through this mentorship I have had the opportunity to learn, engage in activities in my field and make meaningful connections [for] which I am very grateful".

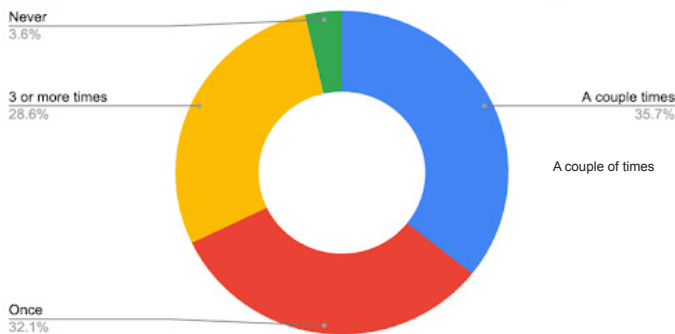
Some mentors have talked with us about their continuing contacts with Fellows. While our Program for GFP23 lasted only a semester, mentoring relationships may last longer, even a lifetime!

## Comment from GFP Anonymous Survey:

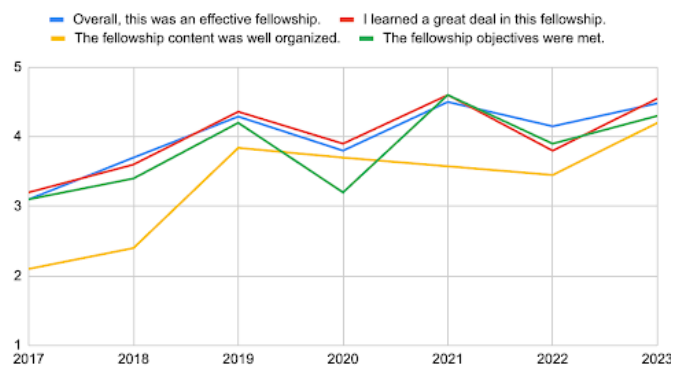
"The mentorship experience is arguably the best part about the GFP experience."

"I learned through my mentor that there is more than one career path. My mentor helped me ask the right questions for my professional development. I learned more about myself through the process and will continue to build our relationship."

*To what extent did survey respondents engage with other UNA-NCA activities during the Fellowship?*



*GFP Anonymous Survey Results Over time (Scaled 1-5)*



## GFP23 Outside the Classroom

Every year, Fellows join other UNA-NCA members and hundreds of their peers at the UNA-USA Global Engagement Summit in New York City at the UN Headquarters in its General Assembly Hall, where statespersons from around the world speak to their global and local constituencies. At the Global Engagement Summit the Fellows listened to UN and other speakers on the Humanitarian Crisis in Ukraine; Actualizing the SDG's; International Peace and Security; and many other pressing topics. A Happy Hour allowed Fellows to interact with participants interested in particular topics.

Since Fellows are full members of UNA-NCA, during the 2023 Program they had access to other UNA opportunities, including joining UNA-NCA committees, such as the very active UNA-NCA Human Rights Committee and the annual UNA-USA Leadership Summit on Capitol Hill.

Maryam Rayed, a GFP '23 Fellow, spoke at the UNA-NCA Annual Meeting in June on her experience and journey as an Afghani refugee. Her statement was widely considered a highlight of the meeting.

# What Are We Hearing From Alums?



## **Stephanie ('Ash') Asher, A GFP '17 Fellow**

I've spent the last 10 years focused on creating things that matter. I am a founding business design and venture lead at Healthworx Studio, the innovation and investment arm of Care First. My goal is to launch companies in health care delivery, health insurance technology through online platforms, and aging-in-place spaces that will have a profound impact on the way our population seeks and accesses care. I do that through the lens of human centered design - which means I intentionally co-create solutions with the populations who will use them. In the past two years I've helped launch over 12 new businesses that support under-resourced communities in accessing health insurance, preventative care, and housing. I've spent over 2,500 hours listening to new mothers, refugees, and others traditionally overlooked - helping bring their voices to the table.



## **Yohanis Lamere, A GFP '21 Fellow**

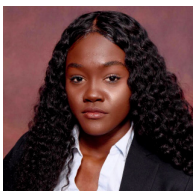
I was the first Indonesian to participate in this Fellowship, and I am constantly excited to share with my Indonesian community about it. I feel one of the most significant benefits after finishing this Fellowship was to open the door to more Indonesians to this global opportunity.

Despite the fact that the Program was taught online during Covid, it gave me the opportunity to engage in a range of sessions that helped me learn vital skills, particularly regarding employment at multilateral organizations, which is something I wanted to pursue. One of my favorite programs was the mentoring program. My mentor was Soonhoon Ahn, a member of the faculty with years of expertise in recruiting at various development institutes, which I really admire.



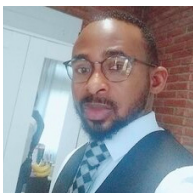
## **Emma DeCaro, A GFP '22 Fellow**

Emma, Fellow from Gallaudet University, writes that her GFP mentor "was critical to opening up a network of people who could advise and encourage me as I go through the US State Department Foreign Service selection process." For Emma, a key lesson of her GFP experience is "Don't be afraid to invite yourself to the party." This, she writes, is the essence of networking. Show up for events, ask your parents or teachers for contacts in a company of interest to you. Reach out, she advises.



## **Radia Mbengue, A GFP '22 Fellow**

From the GFP experience, Radia writes that she got a better understanding of how the UN works, key advocacy issues, and the importance of networking. "I also really appreciated the guest speakers who came to talk to us and would love to be reunited with the cohort."



## **John Sunday Ojo, A GFP '22 Fellow**

John finds that the Graduate Fellows Program gave him not only insights into the UN and its related bodies but also into how they actually operate. In his writings he has drawn upon his learning from the GFP. Among the lessons that John reports learning through the Program: "Take on challenges and push yourself beyond your comfort zone. Professional growth and learning depend on accepting challenges. View failures as opportunities for learning and growth, and do not be afraid to take on new tasks."

# Looking Ahead to GFP24

In 2024 UNA-NCA expects to maintain the central emphasis of GFP23 on in-depth examination of a limited number of then current burning global issues and how they are being addressed by and at the United Nations. Because the world is rapidly changing, the GFP24 list of topics may well differ from GFP23! GFP 24 is expected to continue the career focus of GFP for many years, with sessions on UN-related careers and job opportunities, and selection by the Fellows of a seasoned professional mentor from the UNA-NCA network. A visit to the UN in New York City is planned, and informal contacts among the Fellows will be encouraged. Lessons learned from the anonymous survey of GFP23 Fellows conducted at the end of the Program will be taken into account. Cal Williams and Kathrine Marshall will continue to serve as GFP co-directors, and Tom Bradley will step up to the role of co-director with special responsibility for GFP operations.



*2023 Graduate Fellows at the end of the program.*

UNANCA is deeply grateful to those current and future donors who are making it possible for UNANCA to support the GFP to serve the students needs to understand and celebrate the role of the UN in sustaining its founding goals and mission for future international professional leaders.

Please contact the UNANCA President at [President@UNANCA.org](mailto:President@UNANCA.org), to explore how you as a donor can participate in, and strengthen through your tax deductible donations, this highly successful international leadership development program for young professionals in the decade ahead, and while celebrating the 75th anniversary of the founding of the UN.

Thank you for an outstanding year of  
engagement and learning about the  
United Nations!



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