

The UNA-NCA

Graduate Fellows Program

2022
Annual Report



UNA★NCA

The United Nations Association of the National Capital Area (UNA-NCA)

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 beneficiaries. Although 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



NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA

History of the GFP

Founded in 1991 by the former Dean of George Washington University's (GWU) Elliott School, Maurice East, and UNA-NCA past-president and volunteer, Ed Elmendorf, as a partnership between GWU and UNA-NCA, the Graduate Fellows Program invites select graduate students each spring semester to study the United Nations. Since its initial partnership with GWU, UNA-NCA leaders and staff have guided over **500 students** from a dozen Washington, DC, Maryland, and Northern Virginia (DMV) universities through an exploration of the United Nations system.

Since 1991, the Program, like the UN, has changed considerably, adapting to our ever more interconnected and decentralized global community. What has remained constant, however, is the Program's intense engagement in current UN issues, support for Fellows in their exploration of multilateral organizations, **weekly exchanges between Fellows and officials from UN-related organizations**, and leadership of the Program by UNA-NCA volunteers with deep UN knowledge and experience.

Letter from GFP Co-Directors

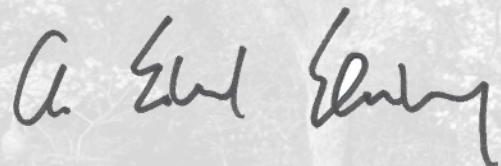
Welcome to the 2022 Annual Report of the UNA-NCA Graduate Fellows Program (GFP). The mission of the GFP is to provide the next generation of leaders in international affairs an unparalleled platform for understanding, and learning to navigate, the United Nations. The Program invites graduate student Fellows from universities in the Washington Metro Area to adopt a “UN Lens” – to view the world from the standpoint of the United Nations, whether this be the Secretary-General, the Security Council or another UN intergovernmental body, or an in-country UN Resident Coordinator. The GFP also provides career support to Fellows as they contemplate careers in UN-related organizations. The GFP experience leads Fellows to understand that alongside the UN’s political, financial, structural and bureaucratic realities there is a very human organization comprised of strengths, weaknesses, possibilities, and hopes for a better future. Fellows learn to appreciate the UN as a dynamic, evolving collection of organizations - a network of moving, interacting components that affect, and are affected by, a host of forces.

UNA-NCA’s GFP offers a semester-long engagement to graduate students competitively selected from DC-area universities. During the 2022 Program, GFP Fellows participated in training on the UN’s 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda offered to UN staff, engaged with volunteer mentors operating at senior levels in their fields, and participated in weekly explorations of global challenges confronting the UN system alongside current and former U.S. and UN officials. For the 2022 spring semester, the GFP pivoted to a hybrid format, and enjoyed virtual dialogue with UN personnel in DC and overseas. From early January until May, thirty students originating from fifteen countries shared in a journey towards better understanding the UN system, and how, as professionals, they can define their path towards UN-related careers.

Sincerely,



Nancy Donaldson, Co-Director



A. Edward Elmendorf, Co-Director

"I really enjoyed my time as a Fellow. The GFP faculty taught us things that I will take with me for years to come, thank you!"
-Anonymous Fellows Survey

GFP 2022 Leadership Team



A. Edward Elmendorf

Ed Elmendorf's career includes positions with the US Mission to the UN, the UN Secretariat, and the World Bank. Ed also served as President and CEO of UNA-USA in 2010, to negotiate the alliance between UNA-USA and the UN Foundation. Ed was co-author of *Better Health in Africa* (World Bank, 1994) and served as Study Director for the 2016 book by James Wurst, *The UN Association of the USA – A Little Known History of Activism and Advocacy*. With UNANCA, Ed has served as volunteer President and Board Chair and currently serves as Co- Director of its Graduate Fellows Program.



Nancy Donaldson

Nancy Donaldson served as the Representative to the United States and Canada for the international Labor Organization, a specialized UN agency, and Director of the ILO Washington DC office, from 2010 to 2017. She previously served as Co-Chair of the UNA-NCA Advisory Council and Co-Director of the 2022 Graduate Fellows Program. Ms. Donaldson also serves as the Chair of the Monitoring Committee of the Fair Labor Association. She has advised governments, unions, civil society organizations and corporations for 30 years.



Tom Bradley

Thomas Bradley retired as a senior officer in the United States Air Force, having served 30 years on active duty. Tom has also served as Executive Director and CEO of a non-profit educational association and consultant to the US Department of Defense. Tom earned a master's degree in peace operations in 2018 from the Schar School of Policy and Government, George Mason University. Tom serves on the UNA-NCA Board of Directors, and previously on the Executive Committee as Vice Chair of Programs and is an Assistant Director of the Graduate Fellows Program (2018 to present).



Soonhoon Ahn

Soonhoon Ahn is a career strategist who has spent 30 years across the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and private career consulting, with clients such as the United States Department of State. Soonhoon is the Founder, Founding President, and a Legacy Member of the APCDA (Asia Pacific Career Development Association) and a Legacy Member of DACOR (U.S. Diplomat and Consular Officers- Retired). Soonhoon serves as Director of Career and Mentorship with the Graduate Fellows Program.



Damla Zeybel

Damla Zeybel, originally from Turkey, is a former Finance Director at the International Finance Corporation. She is now President CEO of ARYA Effective, a consulting firm. She is a passionate leader with global expertise leading teams and building capacity. Recent projects include workforce planning and organizational re-design, supporting improvements to diversity & inclusion (and belonging) and coaching, including for the World Bank and IMF. For GFP 2022 she served as advisor on the career sessions and mentoring.

“The exposure to subject matter experts, experienced professionals around the UN system, and learning the structure of the UN and its operations is priceless!”

-Anonymous Fellows Survey

GFP 2022 Fellows

The Program usually admits around 30 applicants from DMV universities. Students enrolled elsewhere, but currently studying in the DMV area, are also encouraged to apply. Eligible applicants must be pursuing a graduate level degree at the time of the Fellowship semester and will be considered regardless of their academic concentration, citizenship, age, race, or other personal characteristics. The Program provides reasonable accommodations for those invited to participate.

For 2022 the GFP faculty admitted 33 Fellows, and 30 completed the Program. Thanks to the hybrid form of interaction, this year's program was able to engage fellows within as well as outside of the DMV area.

Featured Guest Speakers



Amb. (ret.) Mark P. Lagon

Chief Policy Officer Chief
Policy Officer Friends of the
Global Fight Against AIDS,
Tuberculosis and Malaria



Gillian Bowser

Associate Professor, the
Department of Ecosystem
Science and Sustainability at
Colorado State University



Richard Ponzio

Director of the Global
Governance, Justice &
Security Program, Stimson
Center



Amb. (ret) Keith Harper

U.S. Ambassador and
Former Permanent
Representative to the UN
Human Rights Council in
Geneva



Melinda Kimble

Senior Fellow, the Executive
Office of the UN Foundation



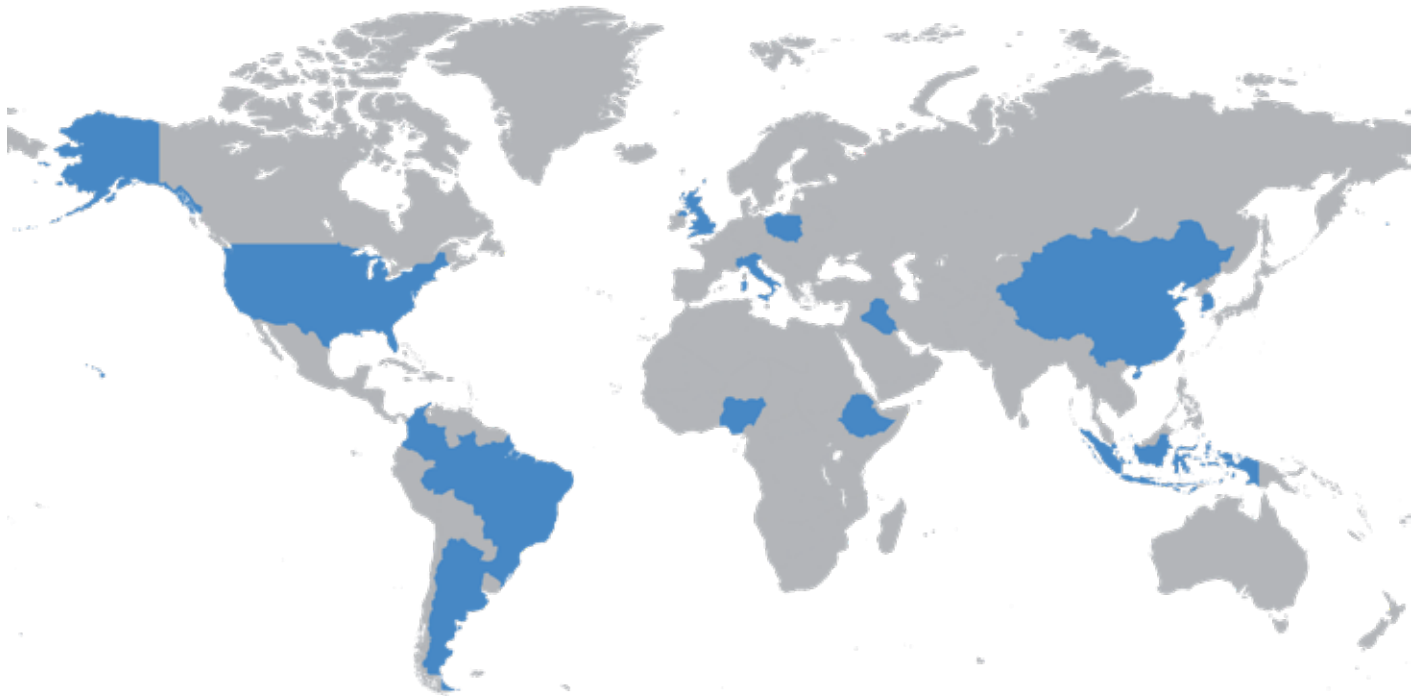
Richard Gowan

UN Director of the
International Crisis Group
(ICG)

“A rich social experience during a barren pandemic”

-Anonymous Fellows Survey

Hailing From



- Argentina
- Brazil
- China
- Colombia
- Ethiopia

- Indonesia
- Iraq
- Italy
- Korea
- Mongolia

- Nigeria
- Poland
- Singapore
- United States
- United Kingdom



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

WASHINGTON, DC



**"My career development benefited tremendously, and I found the areas that need improvement."
-Anonymous Fellows Survey**

GFP Priorities

Through a UN Lens

"The GFP use of a UN lens means that we learn to look at global challenges from the perspective of UN leadership - from the inside. It means that whether our concerns touch a global pandemic, the challenges of human rights, the management or reduction of violence, or the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, we see issues from the standpoint of the global community, rather than from the perspective of an individual country or interest group. It means that we work together to envision new strategies, partners and possibilities for international cooperation where others may only see obstacles."

– Nancy Donaldson & A. Edward Elmendorf, GFP Co-Directors

An Engaging Experience

The Program offers Fellows a highly interactive experience by prioritizing a conversational approach to its weekly sessions, a robust mentorship program, and opportunities to participate in unique events. Also, Fellows participated in the UN Staff College's 2022 SDG Primer - a training course designed for UN staff. Fellows were also required to complete an open-book test of their knowledge of the UN prior to starting the Program.



GFP Director of Career and Mentorship Soonhoon Ahn (right) with former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (center) and guest.

Career Support

Endeavoring to teach the Fellows about the UN, as well as equip them with the means to make an impact upon the UN and the issues it addresses, the Program considers its Career Strategy sessions and 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 develop a professional connection with mid-career and senior international affairs practitioners with relevant experience. Interested Fellows also participated in a series of UN career programs sponsored by the UNA-USA New York City chapter.

"The level of discourse we experienced was so very impressive. I will truly miss the exchanges with my cohorts and the Program management team."

-Anonymous Fellows Survey

GFP Priorities

Distinguished Guests

Vital to gaining a realistic, nuanced understanding of the UN is to learn from those who've worked closely with, and in, the Organization. Drawing upon UNA-NCA's extensive network of members and supporters, the Program invites current and former senior U.S. and UN officials to attend each weekly session. Fellows and guests observe Chatham House Rules, allowing all participants to speak freely about their UN experiences. Guests from dozens of international public and non-governmental organizations have joined with Fellows to share their UN experiences and insights.

Fellows in the 2022 cohort gather at the end of the program for a celebration of their accomplishments



Diversity and Inclusion

In 2022, 30 graduate students from ten universities completed the Program. This cohort consisted of six Fellows from Asia or of Asian ancestry, six African-American Fellows, four Latina Fellows, one Middle Eastern Fellow, and 13 Caucasian Fellows. six identified as males and 24 as females. Fifteen Fellows were born and raised outside of the United States.

The Program has led the way in UNA-NCA's accessibility efforts, providing Fellows the resources they need to participate fully. While needs may vary greatly, requiring the procurement of various services and technologies, the Program is committed to ensuring equitable access.

Engaging with UNANCA

Fellows are offered a variety of ways to engage with UNA-NCA during execution and once the Program comes to an end. UNA-NCA's large and active membership affords Fellows a wealth of opportunities to connect with international affairs professionals while UNA-NCA and GFP alike benefit from Fellows serving as members of the Board of Directors, writers of blogs, researchers, and UNA-NCA volunteers in other roles.

GFP Sessions 2022

“I deeply valued any opportunity that I had to engage with the other Fellows”
-Anonymous Fellows Survey

Beginning in mid-January of 2022 and running until late April, the Fellows met weekly for a total of 14 two-hour sessions each Friday afternoon. Included among them were a combined orientation to the program and introduction to career strategy, four combined hours of career strategy sessions, ten substantive sessions supplemented by special guests, and a concluding celebration during which Fellows and faculty shared their personal learnings from the semester and visions for the future of the UN. Interactions among the Fellows were encouraged, and Ambassador Steven McGann joined interested Fellows at an informal social hour on a bracing cold spring day. Following the 2022 Program, Fellows provided feedback in an anonymous survey. Survey results have been taken into account in this report and will be used in design of GFP 2023. Globally, the survey showed a high level of satisfaction, with particularly high ratings for the career strategy and mentoring dimensions of the Program.

Background Notes

In advance of each Friday session, GFP Co-Directors supplied Fellows with informal **background notes** – original works ranging in length from 10-30 pages related to the week's topic. The notes are continually drafted and revised up to the time of their release, ensuring each is as timely and accurate as possible.



Following a Friday session during the GFP 2022 program, Fellows and members of the Management Team socialized to better get to know each other outside of the classroom.

Session Design

Sessions center upon Fellows' interactions with guest(s), faculty, and with one another. Sessions are **structured to be conversations**, occurring first in plenary with guests and then often within small groups that guests rotate amongst.

Topics Included:

- The UN and Climate Change
- Global Geopolitics in the UN and the Rise of Autocracies
- The UN, Human Rights, and a New Social Contract
- Financing the UN System
- Global Health, Pandemics, & Inequality
- A Field Perspective on the UN
- The UN and Global Economic Management

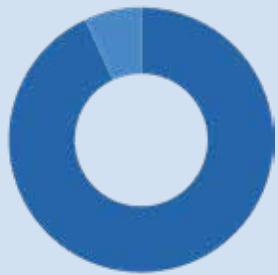
“It's been amazing! I've learnt so much and the mentor program has been so valuable to me”

-Anonymous Fellows Survey

Value of the GFP

While UNA-NCA found it challenging to keep in touch with GFP alumni, during the year the GFP team received anecdotal updates from a number of former Fellows. A metric widely used in commerce, the Net Promoter Score, GFP 2022 received an outstandingly high score of 87 in the anonymous survey.

“Incredible! I was able to use my mentor for fantastic career advice and ended up getting an internship through her recommendations.”
-Anonymous Fellow Survey



93% of surveyed fellows felt the guest speakers added value to the program



100% of surveyed fellows would be interested in participating in a UNA-NCA Graduate Fellows Alumni Network

Richard Ponzio ('03)

In his role at the Stimson Center, helping to design and prepare the UN Summit planned for 2023

Haoran Sun ('15)

Employed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China

Stephanie Asher ('17)

Designing innovation opportunities for health-related insurance programs for CareFirst

Victoria Durgana Latortue ('18)

Active U.S. Foreign Service Officer, with recent assignments in Algeria and Israel

Alexandra Marksteiner ('19)

Working as an Associate Political Affairs Officer for United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs in New York, after co-authoring a July 2022 Foreign Affairs article titled “The Great Global Rearmament: Ukraine and the Dangerous Rise in Military Spending”

Anthony Orlando ('19)

Program examiner working in the International Affairs Division of the US Office of Management and Budget

Lisa-Carolin Petersen ('21)

Researching financing for UN human rights activities at the Stimson Center, and currently engaged in legal studies at the University of Connecticut



To learn more and explore how you can get involved,
please send an email to:
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