Kira Grant (M.A. ’16)

**Hometown:** Hampton, New Jersey

**Current and prior work/research experience:** Academic Affairs Coordinator for the Office of the Provost, Teachers College (current); Graduate Assistant for the Office of Student Services, Columbia School of Social Work; Director of College Counseling, Collegewise Ridgewood, NJ; Senior Assistant Director of Admission, Vassar College

**TC involvement:** As a student, I volunteered for open houses in multiple capacities, and I also served as a mentor for admitted students in the Higher and Postsecondary Education program. In my current position as Academic Affairs Coordinator, I have been given the opportunity to remain deeply (and daily) immersed in the TC community!

**Overview of personal goals/interest in Higher Ed:** After working in admissions for several years both during and after college, I knew I wanted to continue a career in higher education, but felt that I needed more context to achieve this in a manner that was meaningful and sustained. The HPSE program equipped me with the historical, theoretical, and contemporary context I had been seeking, while I concurrently gained access to an incredible network of classmates, colleagues, mentors, and resources that will continue to support my growth. TC also introduced me to new facets of higher education which helped to expand and evolve my professional goals.

Sam Ortiz (M.A. ’16)

**Hometown:** Bronx, New York

**Current and prior work/research experience:** Sam has had a wide variety of higher ed and student affairs work experience. Sam has worked as an assistant for a Vice President of Student Affairs at a community college; Student Trustee at a four-year research university; Freshman Seminar instructor; Graduate Assistant for Teachers College Government Relations office; Graduate Assistant at Columbia’s Graduate School of Engineering; at CUNY’s Central Office of Student Affairs under the Director of Student Conduct and Residential Life; and currently works at Brown University as a Community Director in the Office of Residential Life.

**TC involvement:** Sam was involved in two student groups, the Black Student Network and The Coalition of Latino Scholars, and was engaged in many of the events and programming put on by these groups. Sam was a member of the Student Senate Diversity Committee and led in organizing events such as the Black History Film Festival and The Diversity Discussions Series. Sam also worked with a group of student activists to enact change to improve the racial campus climate at TC and met with faculty and administrators to discuss various ideas and strategies.

**Overview of personal goals/interest in Higher Ed:** Sam hopes to continue working with students through the student conduct and Title IX process. Sam hopes to eventually get a Doctorate degree and study how students of color experience the conduct processes and how these processes and policies impact students of color.
Theresa E. Hernandez  (M.A. ’15)

Hometown: San Francisco, California

Current and prior work/research experience: I am currently working on my Ph.D. in Urban Education Policy with a concentration in higher education at Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California. Previously, I worked in a variety of administrative positions for Columbia University for several years.

TC involvement: Co-President, Higher and Postsecondary Education Association 2014-2015

Overview of personal goals/interest in Higher Ed: I started HPSE with the goal of working with underrepresented or marginalized students to access and succeed in college. Through several HPSE courses, I have gained greater insight to both the breadth and nuances of inequity that pervade educational systems, in general, and higher education, in particular. For instance, I now have a greater appreciation for the transition from K-12 to and through higher education from the perspective of students, educational practitioners, policy makers and researchers. The HPSE program provided me with a foundation of the higher education landscape while encouraging me to develop interests in research and an academic career. Thus, I decided to pursue a doctoral degree to study the impacts of education policy and practices in shaping equitable access to and success in higher education, particularly for first generation college students of color from low socioeconomic backgrounds. I am also interested in understanding the meaning and processes of diversifying academia more broadly. I look forward to earning my Ph.D. as the first step in fulfilling my long-term goals of research, mentorship, and teaching in praxis of education for empowerment and equity as a professor of higher education.
Diana Sousa (M.A. ‘16)

**Hometown:** Originally from Porto, Portugal; living in Newark, New Jersey.

**Current and prior work/research experience:** I am currently the Manager of the International and Intercultural Student Programs at Barnard College, where I previously worked as a graduate assistant. I have also worked as a Freshman Seminar Instructor at Baruch College (CUNY) and as an office assistant at TC’s Office of Access and Services for Individuals with Disabilities.

**TC involvement:** I was a Zankel Fellow during the 2014-15 academic year. TC’s Zankel Fellowship provides stipends for students to contribute their expertise to programs that serve disadvantaged inner city youth in NY. I have also volunteered for International Education Week, Admitted Students Day, the HPSE Internship Fair and to be a Peer Advisor for the HPSE program.

**Overview of personal goals/interest in Higher Ed:** I had worked as an ESL teacher for many years with an adult population as diverse as this country is. I was passionate about my job, but felt the need to educate myself better about student services, and found there were different ways I could be of service to others. One very important factor in choosing TC was the reputation for quality and the fact that TC graduates were being hired for the jobs I was applying for and not getting! My ultimate goal is to work in International Student Services (immigrant, socio-cultural programming, and academic advising). I would say my biggest dream is to become an International Student Counselor. Additionally, I have the dream of creating a project or associating with a non-profit that finds financial resources to provide underprivileged students from developing countries with educational opportunities in the U.S.

Julius Moyo (M.A. ‘16)

**Hometown:** Boston, Massachusetts

**Current and prior work/research experience:** Currently a College Success Counselor for the Goddard Riverside Community Center of New York’s Options Center. Previously Program Coordinator for Student Involvement & Leadership Development at New York Institute of Technology, and Study Abroad Program Manager for CAPA: The Global Education Network.

**Overview of personal goals/interest in Higher Ed:** I came to Teachers College as a part-time student intending to gain a deeper understanding of college student development theories and the impacts that college and university structures, as well as political and cultural systems, have on the retention and success of some of the nation’s most underserved college-going populations. TC’s socially just approach to its academic offerings and co-curricular programs opened my eyes to numerous societal injustices that pose themselves as barriers to equitable opportunities to earning post-secondary credentials for many people in the country. Since graduation, I have continued to grow in my role as an advisor to a diverse cohort of NYC students primarily attending public institutions. My hope is to eventually focus my work on increasing awareness around and access to study abroad and overseas experiential learning opportunities in historically marginalized communities on college campuses.
Corey Earle (M.A.)

**Hometown:** Ithaca, New York

**Current and prior work/research experience:** I spent the last nine years in a variety of roles at Cornell University, including originating the position of Associate Director of Student Programs in the Office of Alumni Affairs. I also advised a variety of student organizations and developed and taught a history course titled “The First American University” as a Visiting Lecturer.

**TC involvement:** I'm assisting with Professor Noah Drezner’s research on philanthropy and higher education.

**Overview of personal goals/interest in Higher Ed:** One thing that drew me to TC was the breadth of the curriculum. My interests and experiences ranged across student affairs, teaching, policy, mentoring & advising, fundraising, and beyond. TC has courses and faculty that give me the opportunity to explore the full range of opportunities in higher education, and I’ve appreciated the chance to immerse myself in classes that provide a strong theoretical background for my work experiences. I’m passionate about higher education philanthropy, as well as student leadership development and the impact that faculty and staff can have on student growth as mentors and advisors.

Charlen H. McNeil (M.A.)

**Hometown:** Hoboken, New Jersey (Currently living in Jersey City, New Jersey)

**Current and prior work/research experience:** Columbia University, Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science; Industrial Engineering and Operational Research Department-Graduate Assistant; Fairleigh Dickinson University, Student Union Building-Associate.

**TC involvement:** Black Student Union-Member

**Overview of personal goals/interest in Higher Ed:** My short-term goal is to be a Student Affairs Professional at a college or university. As a student who graduated from a Community College, then went onto a four-year university, I believe more attention must be paid to students transferring from two-year colleges to four-year colleges and universities. So often these students are forgotten and not supported throughout their college career. It is my goal to fix that. My long-term goal is to open my own boarding school, that specializes in working with at risk youth. I believe that to disrupt the “school to prison pipeline,” which primarily affects students of color, the student needs to be in a safe educational environment, free of the disruptive elements in their neighborhoods.
Crystal Wilson (M.A. ’16)

Hometown: Brea, California

Current and prior work/research experience: Coordinator of Student Engagement, Manhattan School of Music (Aug 2016-Present); Student Engagement Intern, Manhattan School of Music (July 2015-May 2016); Office Assistant, Registrar’s Office, Teachers College (Oct 2015-May 2016); ESL Instructor, Cleverlearn English Language Institute, Vietnam (Oct 2009-June 2014)

TC involvement: Although I was not formally involved in a student organization on campus, I took advantage of numerous events and activities that were held throughout the year. I attended workshops, events with guest speakers, movie screenings, and other programs that enriched my experience at TC. In the spring semester I was an HPSE Peer Advisor for Fall 2016 admitted students, in which I answered questions, gave advice, and helped prospective students better understand the HPSE program and life in New York City.

Overview of personal goals/interest in Higher Ed: I entered the HPSE program with an interest in international students and international higher education. The best part of the HPSE program was that it introduced me to a multitude of higher education topics and issues, encouraged me to broaden my interests and perspectives, and allowed me to deepen my understanding of the issues. My research interests included and are not limited to: access and equity for underrepresented minorities; first generation college students; mental health; and identity issues. At times my interests seemed unrelated, but through my current position, I am learning that the issues of higher education are interrelated. On a regular basis I use the information I gleaned from the program to help me fulfill my goal of building supportive and inclusive communities that encourage student success and well-being. Although I plan to continue working in student affairs for the foreseeable future, I also see myself combining my interests in international and higher education to obtain a terminal degree, and subsequently take on the role of scholar-practitioner in an effort to make contributions to the field.

Tom D’Onofrio (M.A. ’14, Ed.M.)

Hometown: Utica, New York

Current position: Director of Academic Administration and Finance, Columbia University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences

Overview of personal goals/interest in Higher Ed: After finishing my M.A. in the HPSE program, I knew I wanted to continue on to the Ed.M. degree to further my studies. When looking for master’s programs in higher education, I was struck by TC’s focus on the scholar-practitioner. I’m very much interested in connecting research with practice, which is what led me to choose our program. My research interests include undergraduate career development and faculty development. I’m particularly interested in the experience of LGBT adjunct and tenure track faculty.
Roza Nalbandyan (Ed.M.)

**Hometown:** Vardenis, Armenia

**Current and prior work/research experience:** “TIMSS-PISA storm” of 2016 research team member, College Educational Quality research team member, specialist at the department of “Education Reforms and Quality Assurance” at the Armenian State Pedagogical University [ASPU], specialist at the department of “Development Planning and Monitoring” at ASPU, research on “Strategic Plan Development and Implementation Issues at the Armenian Higher Education Institutions,” study on “Methodics of Formatting Abilities and Skills in Solving Trigonometry Equations and Inequalities”, “Mathematical Symmetries in the Cross Stones” research team member.

**TC involvement:** “TIMSS-PISA storm” of 2016 research team member, College Educational Quality research team member

**Overview of personal goals/interest in Higher Ed:** After receiving my undergraduate degree in Mathematics, supplementary education in Economics, master’s degree in Education Management, and volunteering at different organizations I realized that I want to devote the rest of my career to the field of higher education because this is a field that needs reformation in Armenia and the field that I am most passionate about. While working at my university, I realized that if good effective change is going to be made in the Armenian education system, we need outside thoughts and ideas to design new processes. These concerns brought me to the HPSE program where I met faculty who are extremely passionate about their work and genuinely want to assist their students to succeed in the higher education field. After completing my studies at Columbia University, I intend to use my knowledge, competencies and skills to help make real changes in the Armenian education system.

Milagros Castillo-Montoya (Ed.D. ’13)

**Hometown:** Jersey City, New Jersey

**Current and prior work/research experience:** Currently an assistant professor of higher education and student affairs at University of Connecticut

**TC involvement:** Everything! I was involved with all things HPSE when I was a student there.

**Overview of personal goals/interest in Higher Ed:** To engage in practice and research that advances what we know and how we engage in work that supports equity and inclusion in higher education. My research focuses on equitable experiences and outcomes for traditionally underserved college students. I primarily study teaching and learning in racially and ethnically diverse college classrooms. I have particular interest in the learning and development that first-generation African American and Latino students may experience during their undergraduate years. I also focus on the culturally relevant teaching practices that support the learning of racially and ethnically diverse students.
Kat Stephens-Mothudi (Ed.M.)

**Expected Graduation Date:** May 2018

**Hometown:** Guyana, South America

**Current and prior work/research experience:** I am privileged to serve as an academic advisor for the ASAP program at Borough of Manhattan Community College. I support a diverse student body from their first semester until they graduate and transfer to a four-year college. I have work experience in Admissions, Student Life, Residential Life & External Affairs. I was also an instructor for a freshman year seminar at Baruch College. I’ve presented and published work on the urban community college students’ transfer experience, and immigrant student experiences. I’ve presented at both regional and national ACPA & NASPA conferences.

**TC involvement:** I am a member of Dr. Bruce’s research team, & committee member of HPSE’s Black Lives Matter year-long programming team. I’m also a member of Kappa Delta Pi at Teachers College and the ACPA graduate student ambassador for TC.

**Overview of personal goals/ interest in Higher Ed:** My interests in Higher Ed originate from the emphasis placed on it when my family left our country to move to America, with a specific focus on education as the vessel toward greater social mobility. I wish to use my practitioner experiences in the community college space to inform future research questions relating to diverse student groups and their outcomes after community college enrollment. Specifically, I am interested in the pre-transfer choices, identities and lives, & post-transfer choices, identities and lives of highly achieving underserved and underrepresented students from two-year institutions. This also includes interest in first generation, non-traditionally aged, immigrant, and minority students as they thrive in the academy. My future goals are to enroll in a doctoral program that allows me to study these groups, but also join the professoriate, and continue to serve community college students in a transfer oriented capacity, whether through research and/or practitioner work. My final personal goal is to serve as the president of a community college.
Maria Anderson-Long (Ed.D.)

**Hometown:** Fitchburg, Massachusetts

**Current and prior work/research experience:** I currently work at TC in Residential Services, as a Residence Director. Prior to coming to TC, I worked at Barnard College as a Hall Director for two years, and before that I was at Brandeis University working in Student Activities.

**TC involvement:** I serve as a TA for Dr. Noah D. Drezner, and I advised the MA students in the HPSE program for the last academic year.

**Overview of personal goals/interest in Higher Ed:** My research interests are in organizational response to normative disruption of the gender binary, particularly examining the creation and implementation of Gender Inclusive Housing policies. I am interested in understanding decision-making processes at colleges and universities in response to the need to serve and support transgender students. I don’t quite know where I will end up once I graduate, but I hope to remain working in housing or in student affairs. I see my research interests as a means of grounding my professional experience in supporting students, particularly students from underserved or underrepresented backgrounds.

Diana Chadi (Ed.M. ’15, Ed.D.)

**Hometown:** Passaic, New Jersey

**Current and prior work/research experience:** My career in higher education began at my alma mater, Yeshiva University, where I served as a Presidential Fellow in the Office of Student Affairs. As this fellow, I created programming for new students who came to campus. After my fellowship, I joined the Office of the Registrar as an assistant registrar and progressed successively over the next ten years until I became the university registrar. Over the course of my time in the Registrar’s Office, I further developed my interest in student’s academic experiences and how they served to help them make decisions in their lives. I recently stepped down from my position to better focus on my doctoral work. Over the course of my time at YU, I earned a Master’s in Social Work from Wurzweiler School of Social Work and my Ed.M. in Higher and Postsecondary Education at Teachers College.

**TC involvement:** I currently serve as the Internship Coordinator for the HPSE program. Additionally, I am a research assistant for Professor Corbin Campbell’s College Education Quality Research Team, which has served to broaden my experience and interest in institutional methods used to assess college learning. I also serve as a course assistant for Professor Campbell’s course on College and University Organization and Administration.

**Overview of personal goals/interest in Higher Ed:** Aside from being a mother to an adorable (No, I’m not biased ;-) ) two and a half year old son, my research interests are focused on teaching and learning in higher education, both within and outside the classroom. I am particularly interested in how varying classroom experiences contribute to first generation college students’ career choice.
Ty McNamee (Ed.D.)

**Hometown:** Shoshoni, Wyoming

**Current and prior work/research experience:** Current position - Teachers College Higher and Postsecondary Education MA Student Advisor/Faculty Assistant and Barnard College Hall Director | Past positions: Teachers College Office of Admission Administrative Fellow, UConn Center for Career Development Programming Graduate Assistant, Graduate Practicum Intern at UConn Undergraduate Admissions, UConn William Benton Museum of Art, and Yale University Office of International Students and Scholars, Intern at Office of U.S. Senator Mike Enzi

**TC involvement:** Research Assistant for Professor Noah D. Drezner, Higher and Postsecondary Education Association, HPSE Social Events

**Overview of personal goals/interest in Higher Ed:** Growing up as a rural student on a farm/ranch in Wyoming, I worked hard to gain access to higher education. This experience as a rural student greatly influenced my research and professional interests, which focus on equity and access for underrepresented groups in higher education, specifically for rural students and undocumented students. My current and future scholarship examines financial and cultural barriers these students, as well as other underserved populations, face when applying to and attending colleges and universities. My goal in higher education is to pursue the tenure-track faculty route in a Higher Education program.

Alvaro Cabrera Maray (Ed.D.)

**Hometown:** Santiago, Chile

**Current and prior work/research experience:** Independent Arts Producer; Team Director at University of Chile’s Department of Undergraduate Studies; Team Director at Chilean Ministry of Education’s Higher Education Division; Fulbright Commission grantee.

**TC involvement:** College Educational Quality (CEQ) research team member; Higher Education Academic Research Discussion (HEARD) group member; Coalition of Latino Scholars (CLS) member.

**Overview of personal goals/interest in Higher Ed:** In Chile, I worked in areas such as university access, faculty development, classroom research, quality assurance, and higher education public policies. I entered the HPSE program seeking to refine my research skills and to broaden my theoretical knowledge, besides experiencing life in New York City. Here I found an atmosphere of rigorous thought and openness to current debates that has greatly enriched my understanding of the challenges that American society is facing. My current interests are focused on social justice pedagogy, assessment of student learning, and LatinX students postsecondary experiences in the US. Upon returning to Chile I expect to work in the public higher education sector, contributing to achieve greater social justice in my country.
Abdul Abad (Ed.D.)

Hometown: Union City, New Jersey

Current and prior work/research experience: Currently, I am an advisor at Hudson Community College, and I teach a College Student Success course (first-year seminar). Additionally, I am the Ed.M/Ed.D. Inquiries Coordinator for the HPSE program.

TC involvement: I am a research assistant for Dr. Corbin Campbell’s College Educational Quality research team.

Overview of personal goals/interest in Higher Ed: My journey in higher education began in Hudson County Community College as a peer tutor, as well as at Rutgers University as a resident assistant. Through these experiences, I developed an interest in improving educational outcomes for underserved communities. I pursued my M.A. in Higher Education and Student Affairs at the University of Connecticut to work towards becoming a scholar-practitioner and to use research to improve outcomes. At the University of Connecticut, I took a year-long assessment, evaluation, and research course and then served as a teaching assistant for it the following year. I also spent a year assessing the quality of an online education certificate program. All of these opportunities have coalesced into my current interests around online education, teaching and learning, assessment, and data science methods in higher education. Specifically, I am interested in how or whether online education courses can be developed to ameliorate issues of social stratification, and I am especially interested in how to measure teaching and learning in the online context. I am also interested in how data science techniques can be leveraged to improve academic interventions in both online and face-to-face contexts. The HPSE program at Teachers College, Columbia University provides me the perfect ecosystem to develop my interests, and I feel quite fortunate to be here.

Leslie Williams (Ed.D.)

Hometown: Bronx, New York

Current and prior work/research experience: Leslie served as the HPSE Internship Coordinator for the 2015-2016 academic year. He has also served as a research assistant to Prof. Monica Christensen on her research projects on the HPSE Internship Program and American military veterans in college and university Greek letter organizations, as a teaching assistant for Prof. Janice Robinson for her seminar on affirmative action in higher education and as the HPSE graduate assistant for programming and professional development. In his professional career he has held positions as a research and program consultant on higher education access and success, and K-12 education reform at the Ford Foundation in New York City and as the Assistant Dean of the College for Multicultural Affairs at Connecticut College in New London, CT.

Overview of personal goals/interest in Higher Ed: Leslie’s research focuses on the access, inclusion and success of underrepresented racial and ethnic minority, low-socioeconomic status and first-generation groups in higher education in the United States. He is currently collecting data for his dissertation study, Beyond College Enrollment: Exploring the Relationship between Historically Underrepresented Students’ Prior Participation in College Access Programs and Their Undergraduate Success, under the supervision of Prof. Anna Neumann.