



University of Rochester

**School of Arts and Sciences,
Hajim School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, and
Eastman School of Music**

Student Alumni Ambassadors

2026-2027

Office of Alumni Relations and Constituent Engagement
Bloch Alumni and Advancement Center
300 East River Road
Rochester, NY 14627



Student Alumni Ambassadors

The Student Alumni Ambassadors (SAAs) are a select group of undergraduate students managed by the Office of Alumni Relations and Constituent Engagement to serve as liaisons within the University's alumni community. SAAs are passionate about all things URochester, eager to engage with the alumni community, and committed to promoting school spirit and URochester traditions across campus.

Recruited each spring semester, the SAAs are easy to recognize with their signature "R" cardigans and silver name tags. Members are selected because of their involvement and leadership roles on campus, their strong desire to connect and engage with the alumni community, and their love and pride for the University of Rochester.

Purpose:

- Provide a bridge between current undergraduates and alumni.
- Provide student presence and perspective at alumni, parent, donor, and prospective family events, visits, and meetings, as well as in Advancement and University publications and communications.
- Understand the impact and importance of staying connected and giving back to one's alma mater, and share this knowledge with fellow classmates.
- Create a pipeline for future alumni leaders and donors.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Assist with on-campus, local, and regional alumni events, including Meliora Weekend.
- Welcome alumni and prospective incoming families to campus and provide the student experience during meetings, events, visits, and private campus tours.
- Spread awareness to other undergraduate students about the alumni community and the programs and services offered by the Office of Alumni Relations and Constituent Engagement.
- Help direct the future of student-alumni programs by providing feedback and insights into current student interests, needs, and priorities.
- Build and strengthen connections between students and alumni.

Member Benefits:

The SAA program provides students with opportunities to acquire and sharpen leadership and communication skills while building their personal and professional networks with not only alumni but also other student leaders on campus.

- Developing networking skills through formal training and in-person and virtual opportunities
- Unique access to alumni, parents, and friends of the University
- Invitations to exclusive programs and events
- Potential opportunities to travel on behalf of the University
- Opportunity to attend an annual professional conference designed specifically for students in ambassador-like programs.

Interested in connecting with a Student Alumni Ambassador?

Please contact Jackie Adamo, Assistant Director of Student Engagement, at jacquelynn.adamo@rochester.edu.

Evie Afflerbach '27E

(EE-vee AFF-lur-bahk)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: New Bern, NC

Major: Vocal Performance

Studio: Nicole Cabell



Campus Involvement

- Orientation Leader

Career Interests

- I want to sing in opera houses all around the world and bring classical music to new and younger audiences.

Scholarships & Grants

- Marcia Baldwin Scholarship
- Minehan Family Scholarship
- FEO Grant

What made you select the University of Rochester and the Eastman School of Music?

I was immediately drawn to Eastman because of the wonderful opportunities and the welcoming community. I was made to feel so welcome by everyone here and it feels so great to grow as a musician surrounded by other people just as passionate as me.

If you were to describe your Eastman experience (so far), what would you say?

My Eastman experience has been the most wild ride so far. I've made so many lifelong friends here and through the ups and downs, I would say that going to Eastman is the most fun I've had at any school, whether it's being with my friends or being in the practice room. I truly wouldn't want to be anywhere else.

What is the most impactful thing you have learned since you arrived?

The most impactful thing that I've learned since arriving at Eastman is that growth is not linear, but dedication and diligence are what matter most. It's okay to fall short, as long as you're back at it again the next day striving to be "ever better".

Sophia Anderson '28

(so-fee-ah and-er-sun)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Concord, NH

Major: Chemistry

Minor: Music



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Campus Involvement

- Ellen Matson Lab
- Project Level the Field
- Sigma Delta Tau
- Medallion Program

Achievements

- Rising Leader Class
- Dean's List

Career Interests

- Chemistry research

Scholarships & Grants

- Joseph C. Wilson Leader of Change

What has surprised you the most about URochester?

Coming to the University of Rochester, I feared being lost in the sea of students, but I have been pleasantly surprised. There is never a time when I step outside and don't see a familiar face, while still meeting plenty of new people. The sense of community created by the professors and current students has made a new, daunting place just that much easier to call my home.

What is the coolest thing that you have learned since you arrived?

The coolest thing I have learned about the University of Rochester is that we have the largest laser at any university at our Laboratory for Laser Energetics. As someone so interested in research and science, hearing that we have something so unique and interesting at our university filled me with pride.

What URochester traditions do you enjoy?

My favorite University of Rochester tradition is the Candlelight Ceremony, which is held for first-year students during orientation week. The whole incoming class stands outside of the Rush Rhees Library on the Eastman Quad holding a candle, and as you look out amongst the crowd, you see each and every one of your peers, holding their light. This reminded me that we were all in the same boat, and it marked the beginning of our journey at the University of Rochester.

Elijah Bader-Gregory '26, '27 (T5)

(ee-ly-juh bay-der greh-goh-ree)

Pronouns: he/him

Hometown: Buffalo, NY

Major: Economics; Political Science

Minor: Business; Philosophy

Cluster: Science – Discovery, History, and Methodology



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Campus Involvement

- Meridian Society
- Medallion Program
- Information Center Attendant
- Admissions Interviewer
- iZone Consultant
- 2026 Class Council
- Resident Advisor

Achievements

- Andrew Fried Prize Award recipient
- Rob Rouzer Award recipient
- Dean's List

Career Interests

- Policymaking/Politician
- Consulting/Strategic Planning

Scholarships & Grants

- Simon Scholar (Case Competition Winner)
- Meliora Scholar
- Fenno Fellow

What made you select URochester as your university?

The community! The culture here is so welcoming and collaborative. It's the perfect place with rigorous and prestigious programs, but with a collaborative, not cutthroat, culture.

What has surprised you the most about URochester?

How much there is to do. There are so many organizations, and such a large share of students involved in extracurriculars, and in so much variety. Between student leadership, clubs, events, and more, there isn't a day that I am not doing something unique and interesting to me.

What is your favorite piece of URochester history?

Some of the connections we have to companies and historical figures in the area like Kodak, Xerox, Bausch + Lomb, and people like Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony.

Jelani-Rheá Baker '28

(jeh-la-ni rhee-uh bay-ker)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: St. Catherine, Jamaica

Major: Politics, Philosophy, and Economics

Minor: Legal Studies; Gender, Sexuality, & Women Studies

Cluster: Technology, Food, and Society



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Campus Involvement

- Student Organization for Caribbean Awareness (SOCA)
- Minority Pre-Law Society (MPLS), Founder
- Minority Business Alliance
- Teaching Assistant for Incarceration Nation
- Office of Admissions

Achievements

- Dean's List

Career Interests

- Criminal Defense Attorney
- Policymaking/ Politician
- Public Speaking/ Public Relations

Scholarships & Grants

- Albert Shanker Scholarship
- Alan and Jane Handler Scholarship

What made you select URochester as your university?

I chose the University of Rochester because of its diverse community and the strong support systems available to help students succeed. After my transition from Jamaica to New York, it was important for me to find a place where I felt supported and included. URochester stood out because of the opportunities, mentorship, and resources that allow students to grow both academically and personally.

How have you changed since your first day on campus?

Since my first day on campus, I have grown significantly by stepping outside of my comfort zone. When I first arrived, public speaking and leadership roles felt intimidating. However, through my involvement in student organizations, I pushed myself to take on more visible roles. During my first year, I helped host our annual Carifesta event and later led general interest meetings for several organizations I am involved in. These experiences helped me build confidence in public speaking and leadership. I have also improved my interview skills and learned how to manage my anxiety so it no longer holds me back from pursuing opportunities.

How do you think you'll stay connected with URochester after you graduate?

After graduating, I hope to stay connected with URochester by supporting students who share similar academic interests and career goals. As someone pursuing Politics, Philosophy, and Economics with interests in law and criminal justice reform, I would love to mentor students who are exploring those same paths and help them navigate opportunities in that field. Additionally, as a founder and active member of several organizations, I am committed to maintaining connections with future members so the communities we have built can continue to grow.

Jacob Bernd '28

(jay-cuhb burned)

Pronouns: he/him

Hometown: Saratoga Springs, NY

Major: Mechanical Engineering

Minor: Aerospace Engineering

Cluster: Art History



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Campus Involvement

- Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers
- The Meliora Collective
- Rocketry Club
- Varsity Cross Country

Achievements

- Dean's List
- Scholar Athlete

Career Interests

- Aerospace Engineering
- Engineering

Scholarships & Grants

- Dean's Scholarship

What made you select URochester as your university?

Ultimately what made the decision for me was the people I met on my first official visit for cross country. It seemed as though everyone on the team, and everyone I met in general, was very committed towards their future and getting there. There was no lack of passion and that's what made me commit to URochester.

What has surprised you the most about URochester?

Since coming to URochester my biggest shock has been the random spots I find myself doing work in. With classes being spread out and the library being stationary, I've been surprised at the amount of really quite pleasant nooks and crannies there are that have a nice seat and table to do work at.

If you were asked to describe your URochester experience (so far), what would you say?

I'd say I found the right place for me. It's a hardworking and fast environment but keeping with it and being a part of it is so rewarding. The friends that I've made will be my friends forever and the skills that I've learned are invaluable.

Lauren Bigley '27

(LAR-in BIG-lee)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Herndon, VA

Major: Psychology; Brain and Cognitive Sciences

Cluster: Bioethics



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Campus Involvement

- Research Assistant
- Teaching Assistant and Workshop Leader
- Medallion Program
- Campus Times
- LOGOS Art & Literature Journal

Career Interests

- Clinical Psychology
- Psychology Research
- Mental Health and Wellness

Achievements

- Dean's List

Scholarships & Grants

- Dean's Scholarship

What made you select URochester as your university?

I was immediately drawn to URochester's motto of Meliora, or "ever better." From the first time I set foot on campus, I could tell that the people here truly care about making a difference in the world, both as students and beyond. This spirit of Meliora and making the world "ever better" is extremely important to me, and it's something that I want to take with me throughout my life after undergrad. Meliora!

What aspects of URochester are you most proud of/regularly tell your non-URochester friends about?

The open curriculum! Every time one of my non-URochester friends complains about their school's restrictive general education requirements, I am reminded how grateful I am for the open curriculum. I've been able to take incredibly diverse classes in various fields that interest me, from philosophy courses to community engagement seminars — and I will still be able to graduate with two majors! This opportunity to explore courses that matter to me, without being forced to take certain classes just to "check the box," has been a defining feature of my academic journey at URochester.

What is your favorite piece of URochester history?

I am particularly proud that the biopsychosocial model, an influential framework in psychology and other disciplines, originated right here at the University of Rochester in 1977. It is so exciting that my university has contributed so instrumentally to my field of study!

Paxton Burke '29

(packs-tun burr-k)

Pronouns: they/them

Hometown: San Jose, CA

Major: Politics, Philosophy, Economics; German

Minor: Legal Studies

Cluster: Language and Cognition



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Campus Involvement

- Students' Association Government
- Medallion Program
- Committee for Political Engagement
- UR Model United Nations
- First-Year Fellow

Career Interests

- Public Service
- Policymaking
- Law

Achievements

- Dean's List
- Rising Leader Class

What made you select URochester as your university?

Coming into college, I wanted every opportunity to be proactive about my education. URochester's vast resources, mentor networks, and customizable pathways have allowed me to ask crucial questions and explore every opportunity for my future. The friendly and exciting community is an awfully nice bonus!

What is your favorite piece of URochester history?

In the basement stacks levels you'll find a beautiful collection of AIDS awareness posters. I later found out, after much admiration, how instrumental the School of Medicine was in researching HIV and spreading awareness during the AIDS crisis. As a member of the queer community, I feel so lucky to see my histories intertwine.

If you were asked to describe your URochester experience (so far), what would you say?

My time at URochester has been equally nurturing and healthfully challenging. Being able to expand my horizons and challenge my limits within the safety net of community is a balance few are so lucky to have, let alone at this stage of life.

How do you think you'll stay connected with URochester after you graduate?

The values of giving back, materially and emotionally, are close to my heart. Should I be so lucky, I would love to give back to the scholarships that have supported first-generation students like myself for many years. The first, but never the last.

Antoine Byers '28

(anh-twahn by-erz)

Pronouns: he/him

Hometown: New York, NY

Major: Financial Economics; Political Science

Cluster: Philosophy



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Campus Involvement

- Students' Association Government, President
- Refugee Student Alliance
- University of Rochester Taekwondo

Career Interests

- Investment Banking
- Law

Achievements

- QuestBridge Scholar

What made you select URochester as your university?

I chose the University of Rochester because of the countless opportunities it offers. Initially, I was considering paths in prelaw or investment banking, but I wanted the flexibility to explore new possibilities. URochester's open curriculum stood out to me because it allowed me to take courses that piqued my curiosity, helping me discover my true interests. Through this freedom and exposure to diverse networks, I not only explored my initial career interests but also found a deeper sense of purpose along the way just within my first year.

What URochester traditions do you enjoy?

I enjoyed Meliora Weekend the most because it gave me the opportunity to connect with so many alumni from Class Council. Hearing about how the school's trajectory has evolved over the years was incredible, and experiencing the strong sense of community around this tradition made it even more special.

Alexander Chatterjee '27

(AL-ig-ZAN-der CHAT-er-gi)

Pronouns: he/him

Hometown: Chatham, NJ

Major: Computer Science & Mathematics

Minors: Japanese & Political Science

Certificate: Mathematical Modeling



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Campus Involvement

- SAS & Hajim IT Center
- Robbins Library
- Resident Advisor
- 2027 Class Council
- Society of Asian Scientists and Engineers
- AI Teaching Assistant & Calculus Workshop Leader

Achievements

- Dean's List
- AP Capstone Diploma
- Study Abroad in Chiba, Japan
- 2 Published Research Papers
- CMU's picoCTF National 3rd Place Winner

Career Interests

- Cybersecurity Analyst
- Game Theory Professor

Scholarships & Grants

- Drucker Scholarship
- iZone Make It Happen Grant
- Xerox Award for Innovation and Information Technology

What made you select URochester as your university?

My decision to attend was primarily shaped by two factors: the River Campus Libraries (RCL) and its cluster curriculum. As the son of a librarian, I grew up learning that a university is only as strong as its libraries, and the libraries here exemplify that standard. Moreover, the flexibility of the cluster curriculum has also been central to my academic experience, allowing me to pursue and major in a variety of my interests. Overall, the University of Rochester provided me an excellent space to grow and develop as both a student and as a scholar.

What is your favorite piece of URochester history?

One of my favorite pieces of University of Rochester history is the Rossell Hope Robbins Library in Rush Rhees. It houses one of the largest repositories of medieval literature in North America, with works spanning from the fifth to the fifteenth centuries. The collection originated in the 1980s when Rossell Hope Robbins donated his extensive library on the condition that the books remain together. Today, the collection not only preserves manuscripts and scholarship on figures like King Arthur, Beowulf, and Joan of Arc, but also helped pioneer early digital humanities projects like the Camelot Project, which made rare medieval texts accessible online to scholars around the world. That's why I love Robbins Library: one moment you're in Rush Rhees, and the next you're surrounded by centuries-old stories of knights, legends, and medieval worlds.

Pheamanda Chen '29

(fee-ah-man-da ch-en)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Long Island, NY

Major: Neuroscience; Psychology

Cluster: Bioethics



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Campus Involvement

- Active Minds
- Meliora Figure Skating Club
- Mt. Hope Family Center Research Intern
- Chi Omega Fraternity

Achievements

- Dean's List
- David T. Kearns Scholar

Career Interests

- Medicine
- Neurosurgeon

Scholarships & Grants

- Dean's Scholarship

What made you select URochester as your university?

I liked how flexible URochester is with its open curriculum. It gave me the freedom to explore different areas of study I might be interested in without worrying that I would fall behind other students if I didn't decide immediately what I wanted to do. Additionally, I love how pretty the campus is, especially in the spring and fall when everything is in bloom. The gorgeous floral arrangements really helped to make the campus environment seem peaceful and lovely.

What URochester traditions do you enjoy?

Celebrate URochester was one of the highlights of Welcome Week for me. I loved seeing the diversity in all the performances, and it made me super excited to become a member of such a multicultural and welcoming community! Additionally, although I've yet to experience these traditions myself, Meliora Weekend and Boar's Head Dinner both sound like really cool events, and I definitely plan on attending and experiencing both of these traditions in the future.

How have you changed since your first day on campus?

I feel like I've definitely become more outgoing and social. I used to stay in my room every single day when I first came to campus, but now, I'm much more likely to spend my time studying with friends, attending campus events, or just hanging out with other people instead of staying in my room. Overall, I've become more open to new experiences and more willing to take initiative socially, which has made my time on campus much more fulfilling and exciting.

Madeleine Christopher '27E

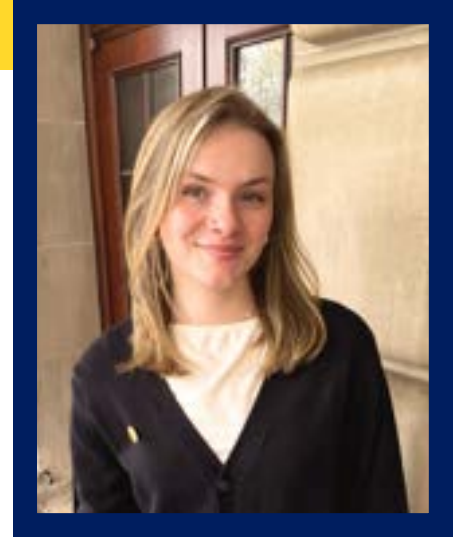
(MAD-uh-lin KRIS-tuh-fer)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: State College, PA

Major: Vocal Performance

Studio: Kathryn Cowdrick



Campus Involvement

- Orientation Leader
- ECMS Early Childhood Music Program Volunteer

Achievements

- Alto Soloist for Bach Cantata 100 (Eastman Bach Cantata Series)
- Desdemona for Othello (UR International Theatre Program)
- Witch for H&G, A Great and Terrible Story (Eastman Opera Theatre, Winter 2025)
- Ainadamar (Chorus of Niñas) (Eastman Opera Theatre, Spring 2025)

Career Interests

- Performance
- Travel

Scholarships & Grants

- Schmidt Vocal Arts Scholarship
- Dean's Performance Award

What made you select the University of Rochester and the Eastman School of Music?

I was born right here in Rochester while my dad was working on his DMA in Vocal Performance at Eastman. While I didn't grow up here in Rochester, I still felt so at home the moment I stepped on campus, and I knew Eastman was the place for me.

If you were to describe your Eastman experience (so far), what would you say?

The Eastman experience is incredibly supportive and community-based. I have never felt like I am competing with my peers, rather, we all learn and grow together and uplift each other every step of the way.

What is the most impactful thing you have learned since you arrived?

It's about the journey, not the destination!

Miyako Cornelius '27, '27E

(mee-YAH-koh kor-NEE-lee-us)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Westchester, NY

Major: Violin Performance and History

Studio: YooJin Jang



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Campus Involvement

- Eastman Office of Alumni Advancement - Office Assistant
- Eastman Students' Association
- EmpowHer Club
- Transportation Advisory Committee and Undergrad Curriculum Committee

Achievements

- Dean's List

Career Interests

- Law (Criminal, Construction, Civil rights)
- Orchestral Performance
- Similar careers abroad

Scholarships & Grants

- Eastman Artist Scholarship
- Barbara C. Zimmer Scholarship

What made you select the University of Rochester and the Eastman School of Music?

While there were many reasons why I felt Eastman was the right choice for me, the main two were the community and my teacher. As I visited other music schools, it was very clear that competition was a natural part of the community; however, at Eastman, I felt that it was a community that really supported one another and loved playing with each other! My teacher was also a super important part of why I chose Eastman because I instantly felt connected to her and felt that she would be able to guide me through the college journey!

How have you changed since your first day on campus?

From the first day on campus, I look back to see someone that had such a limited view on life and music. The biggest change has come from learning from the students around me in perspectives of performing, different art forms, and how to overcome similar obstacles that we all bond over. I appreciate music and the work that goes into different types of music much more than I did before, and I am grateful for the Eastman community to have helped me.

What is your favorite piece of Eastman history?

My favorite piece of Eastman history is interconnected with Kodak Hall and Kilbourn Hall. Both spaces hold such a strong history of legacies as thousands of musicians have performed and rehearsed where I play now. To me, keeping these spaces in their original state (artwork, architecture, seats) or true to the design within, is a reason why I treasure the music and musicians that have come before me.

RJ Cui '28

(are-jay tsu-ay)

Pronouns: he/him

Hometown: Rockville, MD

Major: Business: Finance

Cluster: Math



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Campus Involvement

- Alpha Kappa Psi
- Residential Advisor
- Meliora Finance and Investment Group
- UR Investment Banking Club
- Varsity Track and Field

Achievements

- Dean's List

Career Interests

- Investment Banking
- Private Equity
- Corporate Development

Scholarships & Grants

- Dean's Scholarship

What has surprised you the most about URochester?

What surprised me most about URochester is how collaborative the community is. I expected college to be more competitive, but students here are very willing to help each other succeed. Through clubs and alumni networks, people openly share recruiting advice and opportunities. That culture of mentorship made a big impact on my experience.

What is the coolest thing that you have learned since you arrived?

The coolest thing I have learned is how financial markets actually price risk and information. Through my finance and economics classes, I started understanding concepts like expected return, portfolio diversification, and how investors make decisions under uncertainty. It was interesting to see how the theory connects directly to real markets and investing. It made finance feel much more practical and intellectually engaging.

How have you changed since your first day on campus?

I have become much more proactive about creating opportunities for myself. When I first arrived, I was still figuring out what paths were possible, but URochester pushed me to take initiative through clubs, leadership roles, and internships. I also became more comfortable reaching out to people and building relationships through networking. That shift toward being more intentional and proactive has been the biggest change for me.

Naidhruva Deb '27

(Nai-dru-va Deb)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Austin, TX

Major: Microbiology; Medical Anthropology

Cluster: Philosophy



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Campus Involvement

- The Health, Outreach, Partnerships, and Equity Alliance
- Students' Association Government
- Rochester Bhangra
- Chi Omega
- Meridian Society
- Admissions Interviewer

Achievements

- Dean's List
- Phi Beta Kappa Book Award Recipient

Career Interests

- Bridging inequities in the healthcare system by improving equitable access to treatment
- Researching infectious disease transmission and prevention

Scholarships & Grants

- Dean's Scholarship
- Research and Innovation Grant

What made you select URochester as your university?

As someone who was looking for academic freedom, I was drawn to the University of Rochester because of the open curriculum. I have always been interested in public health equity and the broader social factors that shape access to care. At the same time, I am deeply interested in microbiology and infectious diseases. I wanted a program that would allow me to explore everything from the ethical implications of healthcare systems all the way to the scientific side of vaccines and treatments. For me, medicine has always felt like a multifaceted field that requires both scientific understanding and a commitment to making healthcare more affordable and equitable.

What has surprised you the most about URochester?

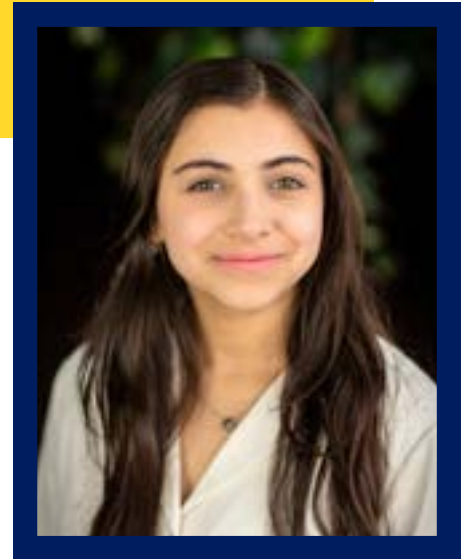
As someone who grew up in a very competitive environment, I was used to always feeling like I had to compete with the people around me. Here, I have felt the opposite. My professors have been incredibly kind and have helped guide me through the learning process, and I have made incredible friends and met people who are genuinely supportive of each other. That sense of community has made a huge difference in my experience and has helped me grow both academically and personally.

How have you changed since your first day on campus?

In high school, I often felt like a lot of what I did was focused on the end goal of getting into college. Since coming to the University of Rochester, I have learned to enjoy the process just as much as the finish. I have had so many experiences that have contributed to my growth and shaped who I am. Through my classes, leadership roles, and involvement on campus, I have become more confident in my interests and more thoughtful about the impact I want to have in the future.

Valeria Díaz Pérez '27

(vuh-ler-ee-uh dee-az perr-ez)



Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Caguas, Puerto Rico

Major: Molecular Genetics

Minor: American Sign Language



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Campus Involvement

- Medallion Program
- Leading Initiative for Greater Health Transparency (LIGHT), Founder
- Residential Assistant
- University of Rochester Red Cross volunteer coordinator
- International Genetically Engineered Machine (iGEM) Research Team
- Genetics Lab Teaching Assistant

Achievements

- Rising Leader Class
- Keidaeans Honor Society

Career Interests

- Pediatric doctor
- Genetics researcher

Scholarships & Grants

- Hispanic Scholarship Fund Scholar
- Hispanic Heritage Foundation–Gold: Community Service
- Burger King Scholar
- George Eastman Young Leaders Award
- Beca Kinesis

If you were asked to describe your URochester experience (so far), what would you say?

My time at URochester has been amazing and rewarding. The community has been very supportive. They actually care about your success, and there are lots of resources available for academic and professional development. My participation in a variety of groups and organizations has given me a strong sense of belonging to the active campus community, including Class Council, Salseros, and Photography Club, among others.

What has surprised you the most about URochester?

I was surprised by the cultural diversity at URochester. I initially worried about not speaking my native language much, but I soon found many Spanish speakers on campus, making me feel right at home. This diverse environment has not only helped me throughout my college experience so far but also created a sense of inclusivity and acceptance that I appreciate. I found a big community in the Puerto Rican Student Organization that has helped me adapt to college.

How have you changed since your first day on campus?

Since my first day on campus, I've grown significantly. I'm now more culturally aware, having learned about different traditions and languages, like sign language to communicate effectively with the deaf community. This exposure has deepened my appreciation for cultures and taught me the value of embracing who we are while being culturally sensitive.

Zeina El Madani '27

(ZAY-nuh el mud-DAH-nee)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Beirut, Lebanon

Major: Digital Media Studies; Business Marketing

Cluster: Mathematics



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- Undergraduate Film Club
- Sumud Dabke Team
- Student Association for the Development of Arab Cultural Awareness
- Event and Classroom Management Event Support

Achievements

- Dean's List
- Art New York Program

Career Interests

- Documentary Film Production
- Film Acquisitions and Distribution
- Marketing and Advertising

Scholarships & Grants

- Davis UWC Scholar

What aspects of URochester are you most proud of/regularly tell your non-URochester friends about?

I am proud of our community and student body that have built such a welcoming and supportive environment, engaging in respectful and thought-provoking conversations. They are the representation of what it means to be resilient and aspire for our world to be better, making the space a constant inspiration for change and growth.

What URochester traditions do you enjoy?

Dandelion Day has got to be my favorite URochester tradition! To me, it feels like a breath of fresh air and you get to destress with your friends a little before reading period starts. Everyone is out and the environment is just so alive, especially with the weather being a bit more merciful.

If you were asked to describe your URochester experience (so far), what would you say?

My URochester experience has been truly one of a kind. Like life itself, it has had its ups and downs, but through it all, I've gained invaluable lessons and a wonderful group of friends that I'm deeply grateful for.

Ryan Finegan '27E

(RIH-yun FIN-neh-geun)

Pronouns: he/him

Hometown: Dobbs Ferry, NY

Major: Jazz Studies and Contemporary Media

Instrument: Jazz Saxophone

Studio: Charles Pillow



Campus Involvement

- Peter Foley Big Band
- Coalescence student ensemble

Career Interests

- Saxophone performance
- Music education

Achievements

- Eastman Jazz Lab Band
- Eastman New Jazz Orchestra
- Played with Buddy Rich Big Band

Scholarships & Grants

- Dean's Scholarship Award
- CCC Scholarship Award

What aspects of Eastman are you most proud of?

I'm most proud of the community that Eastman has fostered. It's incredibly inclusive and supportive, offers opportunities for collaboration, and is a safe space that promotes personal growth.

How do you think you'll stay connected with URochester after you graduate?

Staying connected to Eastman after I graduate offers the chance to support the future generations of students. Giving back is essential and sharing wisdom with the younger generations as someone that was once in their shoes can be very meaningful.

What is the most impactful thing you have learned since you arrived?

One of the most impactful things that I've learned in my time here is patience. This musical process is about recognizing that growth and learning take time, and focusing on progress rather than perfection is essential.

Azul Garcia '28

(ah-sool gar-see-ah)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Houston, TX

Major: Psychology

Minor: Legal Studies

Cluster: American Sign Language; Brain and Cognitive Sciences



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- Mexican Students' Association (MESA)
- Women's Rugby
- MiSo Lab Research Assistant
- Meridian Society
- Medallion Program

Achievements

- David T. Kearns Scholar

Career Interests

- Clinical Psychology
- Developmental Psychology
- Forensic Psychology
- Criminal Justice

Scholarships & Grants

- Alan and Jane Handler Scholarship
- Dean's Scholarship

What aspects of URochester are you most proud of/regularly tell your non-URochester friends about?

I am extremely proud of the University of Rochester's multidisciplinary approach within the open curriculum. Being able to have clusters in different academic regions that interest me outside of my major has been such an amazing way to deeply grasp what it means to constantly be in the pursuit of knowledge. Thanks to this approach, enlightenment lives on outside of pure academics. I believe URochester's encouraging efforts to fuel all facets of us are what make it a remarkable place.

How have you changed since your first day on campus?

Many of my perspectives have expanded to make me a more introspective, evolving, and self-assured person. Meeting new people and branching out has gifted me valuable experiences that have taught me how to take rejection as redirection, set boundaries, and advocate for myself in both my personal and academic life.

If you were asked to describe your URochester experience (so far), what would you say?

It's been truly eye-opening. As a first-gen student, my experience is pretty unique compared to my family's, so coming to a new place all on my own was definitely challenging, especially when I felt like everybody around me already had a guidebook on how to navigate college. It takes time to understand that usually that's not really the case, as everyone is going through the same things. Finding support systems within the URochester community that uplift and motivate me has been incredibly refreshing, worthwhile, and truthfully, my favorite experience so far.

Jake Gates '28

(Jayk Gayts)



Pronouns: he/him

Hometown: Swansea, Wales

Major: Business (Analytics); Economics

Cluster: Calculus; Media, Culture & Communication



[LinkedIn](#)

Campus Involvement

- Student Consultant, Barbara J. Burger iZone
- Medallion Society
- Consulting Club
- Economics Teaching Assistant
- 2028 Class Council

Achievements

- Dean's List
- Certified Scuba Diver

Career Interests

- Consulting
- Strategy & Operations
- Business Development
- Sales
- Entrepreneurship

Scholarships & Grants

- Davis UWC Scholar
- International Baccalaureate Scholarship

What has surprised you the most about URochester?

It feels like a small university where everyone knows everyone and you're only one person away from someone. It's easy to get involved on campus as there are so many opportunities for jobs, internships, research, different clubs - it's really fantastic and it's a great community.

What aspects of URochester are you most proud of/regularly tell your non-URochester friends about?

I'm working with URochester graduates who are ex-McKinsey partners and startup founders. The fact that I can work two jobs, study abroad, and possibly graduate in three and a half years shows how flexible the academic structure is as well as getting really involved on campus.

If you were asked to describe your URochester experience (so far), what would you say?

I'd say it's been very unique. Studying abroad in my sophomore second semester isn't what most people do. URochester gave me the freedom to pursue what I'm interested in, whether that's working for a venture capital company, working for the campus library, engaging with alumni, or choosing classes I'm genuinely interested in. It's really amazing all of the things that you're able to do, and working closely with professors and helping out as a teaching assistant has been great.

Elijah Gebers '27E

(ih-LY-juh GEH-bers)

Pronouns: he/him

Hometown: Cazenovia, NY (originally from Denver, CO)

Major: Vocal Performance

Studio: Joshua Conyers



Campus Involvement

- Eastman Hispanic and Latino Student Association
- George Walker Center Office Assistant
- Eastman Ambassador at the Office of Admissions
- Student National Association of Teachers of Singing

Career Interests

- Opera Performance
- Private Vocal Teaching Studio

Achievements

- Dean's List

What made you select the University of Rochester and the Eastman School of Music?

I chose Eastman for a large number of reasons, chiefly due to the fact that I absolutely love my professor, Joshua Conyers, the recital halls are wonderful to sing in and gorgeous to look at, the academic structure is rigorous while also allowing me to grow as a musician. The ensembles and opera productions are on a whole another level than any other school I applied to.

Share an on-stage memory that will stay with you through graduation.

This past year, I had the wonderful opportunity to perform the lead role in the fall opera here at Eastman, entitled CLICK! which was written by Eastman alum Steve Bramson about the life and times of Hungarian photographer Andre Kertesz. This was a world premiere of an opera, which doesn't happen that often, but with the help of my opera directors, the stage managers, the student orchestra, and my fellow cast members, we performed such a memorable show that will stick with me forever. We even got to meet some relatives of Andre who came to see the show and they were thrilled we did this show!

What aspects of Eastman are you most proud of?

I am most proud of all the extra resources this school provides to students, from the Institute of Music Learning, which has multiple classes and courses for students on the areas of music business, to the George Walker Center (which I work at) that does an incredible job of providing platforms for students and works of music that come from marginalized communities and who usually don't get the attention the GWC so graciously gives them through various concert series, recitals, and lectures.

Sophie Girgis '28

(so-fee gur-giss)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Rochester, NY

Major: Neuroscience

Minor: Psychology

Cluster: Arabic



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- 2028 Class Council
- Pan-Orthodox Christian Students
- Medallion Program

Career Interests

- Neurology/Neurosurgery
- Clinical Psychology
- Organizational Psychology

Achievements

- Dean's List

What made you select URochester as your university?

Growing up in Rochester, the University of Rochester had always been in the back of my mind. When my older brother, Michael, started his first year at URochester in fall 2020, I had decided that I wanted to go somewhere different and branch out on my own. However, over the next couple of years, I slowly started falling in love with the campus whenever I visited and studied in the library with him and his friends. By the start of my senior year, URochester had quickly shot up to the top of my list of schools I hoped to attend. This sentiment was further solidified when I went on a formal tour and had opportunities to connect with students other than my brother. Sitting at commencement in May and watching Michael graduate made me realize how grateful and lucky I would be to continue on my brother's legacy for the next four years at URochester.

What has surprised you the most about URochester?

I knew there were many different ways to get involved on campus, but I was shocked at the sheer amount of student organizations we actually have. With over 250 clubs to choose from, it's so easy to find something you want to be a part of, with options including club sports, community engagement, academic and professional societies, performing arts, Greek life, and so much more! You have the opportunity to try something new and truly find your group of people. As corny as it may sound, there really is something for everyone. You just have to find it!

How have you changed since your first day on campus?

Since coming to campus, my social skills have increased tenfold. I find myself meeting and talking to new people almost every day, including peers, professors, and other various staff. I think it's fascinating to hear different people's stories and perspectives on life and being able to share my own. I believe that in doing so, I grow closer to and feel more connected to my community. Plus, it's always fun waving to or smiling at people in passing!

Pauline Gordula '26, '27 (T5)

(paw-leen gor-doo-la)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Queens, NY and Quezon City, Philippines

Major: Political Science

Minor: Journalism; Legal Studies

Cluster: Science and Sustainability



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- Mock Trial
- Students' Association Government
- Meridian Society
- Admissions blogger
- Admissions interviewer
- Department of Political Science research assistant
- Chi Omega Fraternity

Achievements

- Truman Scholarship campus nominee
- Award for Campus Contributions
- Dean's List
- David T. Kearns Scholar

Career Interests

- Immigration Law
- Public Service and Government

Scholarships & Grants

- Joseph C. Wilson Leader of Change Scholarship
- Rochester National Grant
- Meliora Scholar

What made you select URochester as your university?

I fell in love with URochester when I visited for Admitted Students' Day. As a New Yorker surrounded by skyscrapers, I really appreciated the easy access to nature with the green spaces and the Genesee River. If I wanted to get a city feel, I could hop on a shuttle to downtown and feel at home! URochester gives me the best of both worlds! I also saw how collaborative the students were, and I knew I wanted to be in a supportive community in college.

What URochester traditions do you enjoy?

Dandelion Day is my favorite university tradition. I always describe it as URochester's end-of-the-year bash, where the campus community gets together and has fun under the sun before finals season. This day is for eating local Rochester food, going on carnival rides with friends, and listening to a good concert!

If you were asked to describe your URochester experience (so far), what would you say?

My URochester experience has been extremely enriching. There are so many ways to get involved on campus, and I really appreciate that the campus community encourages exploration and growth. From being the president of Mock Trial to conducting research, I can confidently say that URochester has helped me grow as a person!

Pilar Guido '27

(pill-are gweed-oh)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Paramus, NJ, and New York, NY

Major: Political Science

Minor: Italian

Cluster: Sustainability



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- Students' Association Government
- Alpha Phi Fraternity
- Women's Club Soccer

Achievements

- Dean's List
- Alpha Phi International Outstanding Marketing Award

Career Interests

- Government Administration
- Law

Scholarships & Grants

- Dean's Scholarship
- Nancy A. Lieberman Scholarship

What is the coolest thing that you have learned since you arrived?

Since arriving I have learned that I.M. Pei, most famous for being the architect behind the glass pyramids in front of the Louvre, designed the University of Rochester's Wilson Commons. As someone who loves art history and has wanted to go to the Louvre ever since I was a little kid, finding out that Pei helped with our very own WilCo has given me an even greater appreciation for our university and a personal connection to my love for art history.

What aspects of URochester are you most proud of/regularly tell your non-URochester friends about?

I love the freedom of our open curriculum! I have so many academic interests, and I was initially scared that declaring a major would limit my ability to fully explore them. However, the University of Rochester's open curriculum has given me the opportunity to take courses in history, philosophy, earth science, psychology, and Italian classes, all while additionally pursuing my major in political science. When I discuss my course load with my hometown friends during breaks, they get extremely jealous of the academic freedom that the University of Rochester students are given.

How have you changed since your first day on campus?

Since my first day coming to URochester, I have grown in so many ways. I have had the opportunity to take on more leadership roles, becoming more confident in myself and strengthening my leadership and academic skills. I've also become more independent and able to embrace so many new experiences that allow me to step outside of my comfort zone. URochester has given me the ability to develop a deeper sense of who I am and grow into a well-rounded person!

Yein Han '29

(yane hahn)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Los Angeles, CA

Major: Philosophy; Psychology

Cluster: Brain and Cognitive Sciences



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Campus Involvement

- Students' Association Government
- Campus Times
- Mock Trial
- Pre-Law Society
- Medallion Program

Achievements

- Dean's List

Career Interests

- Immigration Law
- Property Law
- Real Estate

Scholarships & Grants

- Prince Street Scholarship for Excellence in Arts

What made you select URochester as your university?

I was drawn to the University of Rochester because it's so different from my hometown. I wanted to go across the country and experience a new environment, especially one with a more close-knit, campus-centered community.

What aspects of URochester are you most proud of?

The open curriculum! I love the freedom to dive into subjects I'm genuinely interested in right away, even as a first-year. Instead of spending most of my first year on general requirements, I can start exploring my majors early and build a more intentional academic path.

If you were asked to describe your URochester experience (so far), what would you say?

I'd say it's defined by how much you choose to invest in it. You really do get out what you put in. I try to show up to classes, to conversations, and to random opportunities, because you never know what's behind that door. There's also a kind of freedom here that I didn't fully understand before coming. I can explore almost anything I'm curious about and pursue it without boundaries. It's possible because the people you surround yourself with are the wall-breakers. In a way, it feels like I can do anything I want here.

Sophia Hasseler '28

(soh-FEE-uh HASS-uh-ler)



Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Newark, NY

Major: Clinical and Translational Sciences

Minor: Legal Studies

Cluster: Sustainability and the Environmental Humanities



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Campus Involvement

- Roots and Shoots: The Jane Goodall Institute, President
- Pediatric Cardiology Undergraduate Researcher
- Students' Association Government

Career Interests

- Medicine
- Pediatrics
- Public Health Policy and Advocacy

Achievements

- George Eastman Young Leaders Award

What aspects of URochester are you most proud of?

My favorite things to share about URochester are the scope and quality of the experiences here. Regardless of your field of study, there is always a new and exciting opportunity available. Whether it be academic, social, professional, or even just a hobby, there is a club, workshop, or internship available. If there's not, you have the resources and support here to create that opportunity for yourself and those around you.

What is your favorite piece of URochester history?

URochester has so much interesting history and many fun facts, but one of my favorites is that the Biopsychosocial model was developed here by George Engel in 1977. This theory is now widely used and considered a foundational framework in healthcare and psychology. By considering biological, psychological, and social factors of a patient's life, a more comprehensive approach is taken to treatment, which can lead to better outcomes.

How do you think you'll stay connected with URochester after you graduate?

I hope that after I graduate I am able to act as a mentor for undergraduates in my field and also by returning to campus for Meliora Weekend and reunions!

Owen Hatungimana '28

(Oh-wen Hah-toong-ee-mah-nah)



Pronouns: he/him

Hometown: Rochester, NY

Major: Business Finance

Minor: International Relations

Cluster: American Sign Language; Economics



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Campus Involvement

- Black Student Athlete Coalition
- Students' Association Government
- Varsity Track and Field Team

Career Interests

- Policy Development
- Banking
- Investments

Achievements

- University Letter Recipient

Scholarships & Grants

- Rochester Promise Scholarship
 - Action For Better Community Scholarship
-

What made you select URochester as your university?

Being from the city of Rochester, there's a certain attitude and sense of prestige tied to the University. In the Rochester area, if you mention the University, people immediately recognize the reputation it holds. That familiarity, combined with its academic strength, made it an easy choice for me.

What is your favorite piece of URochester history?

My favorite part of URochester's history is its impact on the city of Rochester. Over time, the University has played a major role in shaping the community both economically and culturally. That connection between the University and the people of Rochester is something I really appreciate, because it shows how a school can extend beyond campus and make a lasting difference.

How have you changed since your first day on campus?

The campus has created an environment that's allowed me to grow my interpersonal skills and my want to be more involved. Gone is the youth of yesterday who was afraid to meet new people and put himself out there.

Sonia Irakoze '28

(soh-nee-uh ee-rah-koh-zay)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Kigali, Rwanda

Major: Mechanical Engineering

Minor: Computer Science

Cluster: French; Business



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE)
- Model United Nations
- University of Rochester Christian Fellowship
- IT Center Help Desk student technician
- Dining Services assistant

Achievements

- Dean's List
- Winner of the 2022 East African Community Essay Competition (regional level)
- Top performer in Rwanda's O-Level National Exams

Career Interests

- Mechanical Engineering
- Mechatronics Engineering
- Aerospace Engineering
- Product Design

Scholarships & Grants

- Alan and Jane Handler Scholarship

What made you select URochester as your university?

During my college search, I was inspired by the University of Rochester's mission "to Learn, Discover, Heal, Create—and Make the World Ever Better," and its powerful motto, "Meliora." My dream is to create a space that addresses Africa's challenges, particularly in Rwanda, by creating technology-driven solutions and supporting youth and vulnerable families who lack access to quality education. I am indebted to this mission and am motivated to make a positive impact on my community and beyond.

Being honored as a Handler Scholar has only strengthened my drive to contribute to the "ever better" spirit that defines URochester. I am always looking for ways to give back, and I believe this is the ideal place to pursue this. I am excited by the unique research opportunities here, particularly in technology, engineering, and social impact, and I look forward to learning from the university's collaborative environment and using my experiences to help drive positive change for the world.

How have you changed since your first day on campus?

I just started my University of Rochester journey, and the growth I've experienced so far is already so remarkable. I've grown professionally, and my confidence has skyrocketed. I've been exposed to so many opportunities for growth and constantly pushed out of my comfort zone. From classrooms and interactive workshops to the amazing clubs (like NSBE!) that I'm part of and the different workplaces where I get to work with people of all ages and backgrounds, I've matured so much. I've become more adaptable, resourceful, and driven to achieve my goals. I love how URochester continues to shape me into the best version of myself, and I can't wait to see the woman I will have become after four years.

Sierra Jefferson '27

(see-AIR-uh JEF-er-suhn)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Washington, D.C.

Major: International Relations; Black Studies

Cluster: Computing for Social Sciences



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- Black Students' Union
- Resident Advisor
- Student Life Assistant
- Medallion Program
- Admissions Overnight Ambassador

Achievements

- McNair Scholar
- Study Abroad in Beijing, China

Career Interests

- Foreign Service
- Diplomacy
- International Policy Analyst

Scholarships & Grants

- Posse Scholar
- Research and Innovation Grant

What made you select URochester as your university?

I chose the University of Rochester because of the flexibility of its curriculum and the opportunity to explore multiple academic interests while still pursuing a clear path. As someone interested in international relations, policy, and social impact, URochester's open curriculum allowed me to combine fields like International Relations and Black Studies in ways that felt meaningful and intentional. I was also drawn to the community-oriented environment and programs that support leadership and civic engagement. Being a Posse Scholar especially made URochester feel like a place where I could grow academically while also building a strong support system.

If you were asked to describe your URochester experience so far, what would you say?

My experience at URochester has been dynamic and deeply formative. It has been a balance of academic exploration, leadership, and community building. I've had opportunities to engage with global perspectives through my studies and programs like the China Deep Dive with Peking University, while also investing in the campus community through student government and cultural organizations. Overall, my time here has been about growth, learning how to lead, how to advocate, and how to think critically about the world around me.

How do you think you'll stay connected with URochester after you graduate?

I see myself staying connected to URochester through mentorship, alumni engagement, and continued involvement with the communities that shaped my experience. Programs like Posse and McNair emphasize long-term networks of support, and I hope to give back by helping future students navigate opportunities the way mentors helped me. I would also love to stay connected through events, alumni initiatives, and supporting the work of student organizations that continue to foster community on campus.

Kevin Johnson '27

(KEV-in JAHN-suhn)

Pronouns: he/him

Hometown: Chicago, IL

Major: Clinical and Translational Sciences

Minor: French; Psychology



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- French Toast, President
- River Campus Medical Emergency Response Team (RC MERT)
- The Learning Center Tutor

Achievements

- Pi Delta Phi, National French Honor Society
- French Book Award

Career Interests

- Clinical Research
- Emergency Medicine
- Psychiatry

Scholarships & Grants

- Gilman Scholar
- Make it Happen

What made you select URochester as your university?

I chose URochester because of its strong alignment with my goal of becoming a physician-scientist. It was the only university offering Clinical and Translational Sciences as an undergraduate major, giving me the opportunity to study how research directly informs patient care. I was also drawn to URochester's emphasis on global engagement, especially the accessibility of studying abroad. Being able to study abroad as early as my first-year summer was a unique opportunity that strongly influenced my decision.

What is your favorite piece of URochester history?

One of my favorite pieces of URochester history is that Wilson Commons was designed by the same architect behind the Louvre's glass pyramid. I love that connection because it reflects how URochester blends tradition with innovation, bringing a piece of globally recognized design into everyday student life.

What URochester traditions do you enjoy?

Dandelion Day is one of my favorite URochester traditions. It marks the end of classes, and there's a shared excitement across campus as everyone comes together to enjoy the food trucks and activities. What stands out most to me is the generosity. People often go out of their way to offer tickets so others can get food. It's one of the few days where you can truly feel how vibrant and connected the campus community is.

Ntakwinja (Julia) Kahamire '28

(Nta-kween-juh Joo-lee-uh Ka-ha-mee-rhay)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Bukavu, Democratic Republic of Congo

Major: Biomedical Engineering

Cluster: French Literature



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- Ma'frisah
- National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE)
- Newman Catholic Community

Achievements

- Dean's List

Career Interests

- Prosthetics
- Clinical engineering
- Medical devices design

Scholarships & Grants

- Davis UWC Scholar
- The Harper Scholarship

What made you select URochester as your university?

The University aligns closely with my aspirations and values. In addition to its excellent Biomedical Engineering program and vibrant community of international students, I was excited to discover the University's school of music. As someone from a family of choir singers, knowing there is a place on campus to enjoy performances makes me feel at home. Moreover, the University's strong emphasis on leadership is an aspect I am eager to explore and develop further.

What has surprised you the most about URochester?

One of the most remarkable aspects of the University is the abundance of opportunities it offers students to succeed professionally. Arriving on campus with little professional experience, I was pleasantly surprised by the wealth of resources available to help students gain real-world exposure. Whether through my classes or involvement in organizations like the National Society of Black Engineers, I found numerous ways to develop valuable skills and prepare for my future career.

How do you think you'll stay connected with URochester after you graduate?

Mentorship is one way I would stay connected with URochester. This is because, I was able to benefit from the guidance and advice provided by upper-level students, and alumni I have been in touch with. I think helping a student who is facing the same challenges I had throughout my first year would be a great way of giving back to the community.

Ariadni Kambouroglou '28

(A-ree-odd-knee kam-boor-oh-gloo)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: New York, NY

Major: Marketing; Psychology

Cluster: Spanish



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- Econ 207 Teaching Assistant
- Sigma Delta Tau
- 2028 Class Council
- Sibir Belly Dance Ensemble
- Medallion Society

Achievements

- Rising Leader Class

Career Interests

- Hospitality
- Food Industry
- Clinical Psychology

What made you select URochester as your university?

I selected URochester as my university because it had one thing that I felt no other place had: people who genuinely cared. I had always been afraid that I would end up at a university that was filled with people who didn't care about the success, growth, and learning of the student, but URochester proved me wrong. Being here, I have learned so much about myself and grown in ways I could never imagine because of the people who surround me. Both my professors and peers have helped me feel nurtured while also pushing me to always work my hardest and do my best.

What has surprised you the most about URochester?

The clubs and all the student organizations. There are a tremendous number of student groups on campus that allow students to pursue their passions, both new and old. I have personally found a new community of individuals through joining the Sibir Belly Dance Ensemble that will forever be part of my life. I have learned so many new things through dance, a new culture that I had never explored, and through working with other campus organizations and sharing our passions amongst ourselves.

What aspects of URochester are you most proud of/regularly tell your non-URochester friends about?

I LOVE talking about the open curriculum; it makes me very excited. Having the opportunity to not know what you want to study and it being okay is one of the most amazing things. As a student who came in with lots of uncertainty about what my future might look like, let alone what I would be majoring in, the open curriculum has allowed me so many opportunities to explore and try new things. Through this, I have gained interests in areas I would've never explored otherwise and it has helped broaden my perspective as a student and as a person.

Christine Kelly '27E

(krihs-TEEN KEL-ee)

Pronouns: she/her

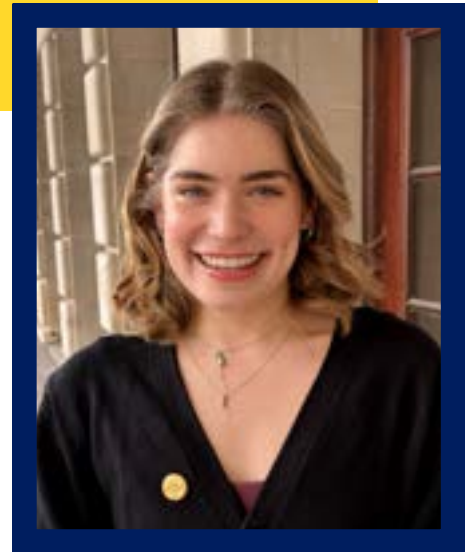
Hometown: Geneva, IL

Major: Vocal Performance

Studio: Nicole Cabell



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- Eastman EmpowHer, President
- ECMS Early Childhood Music Education Teacher
- Head Usher
- Office Assistant for Eastman Advancement

Achievements

- Dean's List

Career Interests

- Opera Performance

Scholarships & Grants

- Eastman Artist Scholarship

What aspects of Eastman are you most proud of?

I am most proud of the Eastman community. Eastman is a prestigious university filled with students that are the best at what they do, yet there is not an ounce of unhealthy competition, animosity, or toxicity in our hallways. We are encouraged to learn from those around us and lean into their talent in order to make ourselves better musicians. I am proud to be a part of a university that exemplifies the idea that another person's success is not your own failure.

What is your favorite piece of Eastman history?

Being on the admissions team here at Eastman has been an incredible way to get to know my school better. My favorite fun, tidbit of knowledge has to be the creation of the URochester Philharmonic Orchestra. Kodak Hall used to be used for silent films, but every Thursday, George Eastman would have an orchestra play in an attempt to spark interest in classical music. That same orchestra that played many years ago is now the RPO that I have the honor of watching every Thursday evening. The excitement never fades, and I continue to be blown away every time I watch them perform, just as George Eastman intended.

What is the most impactful thing you have learned since you arrived?

Before Christmas break last year, I mentioned to my professor how I had some nerves about going home for break. Following countless days of constant practice, it was unnerving walking away from such an intense program for a full month. I had not yet experienced a break from my study and wondered, would my singing decline? Could I keep up on my own? My professor simply replied, "Christine, go live life so that you have something to sing about." I will always remember this piece of advice and take it with me everywhere I go. It is easy to get lost in the music as a conservatory musician, but ultimately we have to be fully-feeling humans so that when we stand on stage, we have something to say.

Javlonbek Khamzaev '27

(jahv-lon-bek hamzah-yev)

Pronouns: he/him

Hometown: Qarshi, Uzbekistan

Major: Computer Science; Business: Finance

Cluster: Spanish; Economics



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- iZone Venture Vibes
- Simon Business School IT Help Desk
- Informational Technology Center

Achievements

- Ain Center – URNextGen second place
- iZone – Make It Happen Grant

Career Interests

- Software Engineering
- Product Management
- Consulting (Finance)

Scholarships & Grants

- Davis UWC Scholar
- International Baccalaureate Scholarship

What has surprised you the most about URochester?

What surprised me the most about the University of Rochester was how international the community is. It made me love the University of Rochester even more. I've had the opportunity to connect with people from all over the world and learn about diverse cultures and backgrounds.

What URochester traditions do you enjoy?

My favorite tradition is definitely Meliora Weekend. It's a unique opportunity for alumni to reconnect with classmates after years apart. I love hearing their experiences, and the whole spirit around it is amazing. It's truly my most memorable experience from my first year!

How have you changed since your first day on campus?

Since my first day on campus, I've grown both personally and professionally. I've become more independent, confident, and open to new experiences. Connecting with diverse people and taking on new challenges has broadened my perspective and helped me develop valuable skills for my future.

Olivia Krimin '27

(oh-liv-ee-ah krih-min)

Pronouns: she/her

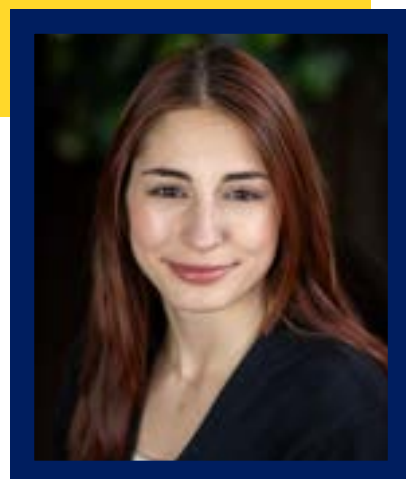
Hometown: Indiana, PA

Major: Neuroscience

Minor: Psychopathology; American Sign Language



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- Medallion Program
- Gorbunova & Seluanov Lab
- University of Rochester Celtic
- Program of Dance and Movement
- Rising Leadership Class
- Fall 2024 Math 141 teaching assistant

Achievements

- Dean's List
- Certified Crisis Text Line counselor
- Emergency Medical Technician certification
- Published author

Career Interests

- Medicine: Neurology, Neuropsychology, Behavioral Medicine
- Forensics
- Physician assistant

Scholarships & Grants

- Bausch & Lomb Scholarship
- Rochester National Grant

What made you select URochester as your university?

I initially became aware of the University after receiving the Bausch & Lomb Honorary Science Award in high school. I then delved deeper into the school, learning about its values, all of the resources offered, and its community. I fell in love with what it meant to be Meliora. I toured the school, and something about the campus felt like home. Upon attending one of the admitted student days, I remember listening to all of the speeches that made me feel as if I could change the world. I'm also here because of my passion for research and the open curriculum, as those were what drew me in, but it was the little details in between that really sealed the deal.

How have you changed since your first day on campus?

Admittedly, I was rather nervous first coming on campus. I felt I didn't have my footing and was fumbling around trying to figure out what worked and what didn't. I did my best to step out of my comfort zone, being made all the better for it. I gradually became more discerning as to what I wanted and how to achieve balance. I'm definitely more tired compared to my first day on campus, though I also feel better able to navigate situations that would have challenged me before! I feel I'm more able to make my own decisions without worrying about whether it was the right one, and slowly but surely, I feel I'm becoming more secure within myself. It ebbs and flows, but one of the most useful things I've learned is that I just have to keep an open mind about my future, where I'm going, and where I'm at now. All in all, striving to be ever better.

Cyrus Kuester-Ha '28, '28E

(SIGH-rus CUE-ster-Hah)

Pronouns: he/him

Hometown: Washington, D.C.

Major: Jazz Double Bass Performance; Economics

Studio: Jeff Campbell



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Campus Involvement

- Head Usher
- Director of PR with OSSIA New Music
- Eastman Chamber Orchestra
- Empire Film and Media Ensemble
- Graduate Composers Sinfonietta

Achievements

- Southern Virginia state-level campaign, Intern
- DC-based life insurance trade association, Intern
- Clean energy trade association, Intern

Career Interests

- Public policy work related to international trade, clean energy, and financial services
- Music performance (all genres)
- Arts management

What made you select the University of Rochester and the Eastman School of Music?

I chose Eastman and the University of Rochester for the unique opportunity to pursue an intense liberal arts and music performance curriculum. Nowhere else in the US would I have been able to pursue an economics degree and a jazz bass degree at this level while receiving support to complete this unique combination of curricula from professors at both campuses.

Share an on-stage memory that will stay with you through graduation.

Playing Titanic live-to-picture with the EFAME Orchestra on Kodak Hall in the spring semester of my first year. I fondly remember how full of energy the hall was that evening and how everyone on that stage was equally committed to performing at the highest level.

What aspects of Eastman are you most proud of?

The amazing work that alumni do all around the world, which continue to help make Eastman a household name in the music world. Be it back home in DC or abroad, I have met countless Eastman alumni that make me proud to be a part of this community and encourage me to be ever better.

Rebecca Lash '28

(ruh-beh-kuh laah-shh)

Pronouns: she/they

Hometown: Fredonia, NY

Major: Epidemiology; History

Cluster: The Classical Tradition



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- River Campus Medical Emergency Response Team (RC MERT)
- The Opposite of People (TOOP)
- Student Activities Board
- Hillel

Achievements

- Health and Epidemiology Advanced Learning Scholar

Career Interests

- Disaster Epidemiologist
- Medical Historian

Scholarships & Grants

- Joseph C. Wilson Leader of Change Scholarship
- Meliora Scholars Program

What made you select URochester as your university?

I chose URochester because the flexibility in the curriculum here is so rare. I always wanted to explore a number of different fields in university, and URochester allows me to do so very easily. I also really appreciated the collaborative environment at URochester. There's not a sense of heavy competition between peers, and everyone wants to see each other succeed.

What has surprised you the most about URochester?

Growing up in Fredonia, New York, a small town just under two hours from the University of Rochester, I had no idea that we had so much academic opportunity. It wasn't a place we were told about growing up, and in my area there was more of a sense that if you were going to college, you were probably going to a local SUNY school. Coming to URochester was a real shock, and it helped me realize how incredible the resources here have always been. The sheer amount of information and support available through the University still amazes me.

How do you think you'll stay connected with URochester after you graduate?

After I graduate from the University of Rochester, I want to come back to campus and mentor others in my programs! Getting advice from people who understand your specific major/path is huge, and there's so many tips and tricks I've been taught by alumni, faculty, and older students that have been incredibly useful to me. I'd love to pay that forward.

Hazel Leung '27

(HAY-zuhl Lee-uhng)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: San Francisco, CA

Major: Biological Sciences: General Track

Minor: Psychology

Cluster: Korean



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- River Campus Medical Emergency Response Team (RC MERT)
- Meliora Fitness
- Residential Advisor
- Meridian Society
- Research Assistant

Career Interests

- Medicine
- Health and Global Policy

Achievements

- Andrew Fried Prize Recipient
- Dean's List

What made you select URochester as your university?

I always knew I wanted to attend a college on the East Coast. URochester is the perfect blend of city and nature, and of course, as someone who hails from the Bay Area, I love the opportunity to experience all the seasons. Above all, I was blown away by the kindness of the students here. Everyone is uplifting and never hesitates to support others. Additionally, the fervent passion URochester students have for academics and their extracurriculars has shown me that the sky's the limit. The flexible curriculum here truly values the unique combination of student interests and has allowed me to explore my wide range of interests, from medicine to classical guitar to immersing myself in language learning.

What URochester traditions do you enjoy?

Two of my favorite URochester traditions are Celebrate URochester and Winterfest Weekend. When I was a first-year, watching the Celebrate URochester performances during Welcome Week was such a fulfilling and beautiful experience. It highlighted the epitome of this University: the wonderfully diverse culture of the student body. I also enjoy participating in the Winterfest activities that occur right after winter break. There is something so special about roasting marshmallows over the crackling fire on a cold winter day with your friends at URochester.

How do you think you'll stay connected with URochester after you graduate?

After I graduate, I will continue to foster the Meliora spirit by getting involved with the Bay Area Regional Network, returning to celebrate Meliora Weekend, and mentoring future students through The Meliora Collective.

Julianna Lyons '27

(Joo-lee-ann-uh Lie-unz)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Rochester, NY

Major: Biochemistry; Economics

Cluster: Spanish



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Campus Involvement

- Varsity Softball
- URMH Halterman Lab Research Assistant
- Fu Biochemistry Lab Undergraduate Researcher
- Varsity Student Athlete Advisory Committee
- Parkinson's Pals

Achievements

- Medical Internship Abroad-Barcelona, Spain
- Provost Circle Scholar
- NFCA All-America Scholar-Athlete
- Dean's List

Career Interests

- Medicine

Scholarships & Grants

- Meliora Alumni Scholarship
- Masonic Scholarship Grant

What URochester traditions do you enjoy?

Meliora Weekend is my favorite URochester tradition! My parents are alumni, so I love spending the weekend on campus with them, attending the football game and events on the Wilson Quad. It is also such a great time to reconnect with past softball teammates that have since graduated.

How have you changed since your first day on campus?

Since my first day on campus, I have become more academically curious and eager to learn. My classes are all incredibly engaging and make me want to know more about the topics we study. Particularly in my biochemistry classes, I look forward to learning new content to expand my knowledge on topics I find so fascinating.

If you were asked to describe your URochester experience (so far), what would you say?

My URochester experience has been overwhelmingly positive and has allowed me to grow in my knowledge, friendships, and passions. The supportive and collaborative culture pushes me to become a better version of myself every day. The URochester community is truly one of a kind, and I have met many people here who will be part of my life for years to come.

Samantha Magowo '27

(suh-man-thuh muh-goh-woh)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Harare, Zimbabwe

Major: Biomedical Engineering

Cluster: Gender and Women Studies



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Campus Involvement

- National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE)
- Biomedical Engineering 101 teaching assistant
- Special Collections researcher
- University of Rochester Medicine Wojtovich Lab research assistant

Achievements

- The Phi Beta Kappa Suzanne J. O'Brien Book Award
- Dean's List

Career Interests

- Regenerative Medicine
- Biotechnology
- Pharmaceutical Industry

Scholarships & Grants

- Rush Rhees Scholarship

What has surprised you the most about URochester?

The collaborative environment. Coming into a top research institution, I expected a highly competitive and individualistic atmosphere. Instead, I found a space that fosters both healthy competition and collaboration, where students genuinely support and uplift each other.

What aspects of URochester are you most proud of/regularly tell your non-URochester friends about?

The diversity. My friend group alone represents six different countries and four religious backgrounds. That speaks volumes about how inclusive and welcoming the University of Rochester community is. It's inspiring to be in an environment where people from such diverse backgrounds coexist, learn from one another, and celebrate each other.

How do you think you'll stay connected with URochester after you graduate?

I'm passionate about increasing representation and support for Black women in engineering, especially given the low retention rates in my major. I plan to stay involved with the National Society of Black Engineers through alumni engagement events and talks. Additionally, I want to remain connected with the Biomedical Engineering department by participating in alumni discussions, Meliora Weekend, and mentorship initiatives like the Real Reader Program and The Meliora Collective.

Sofia Mains '27E

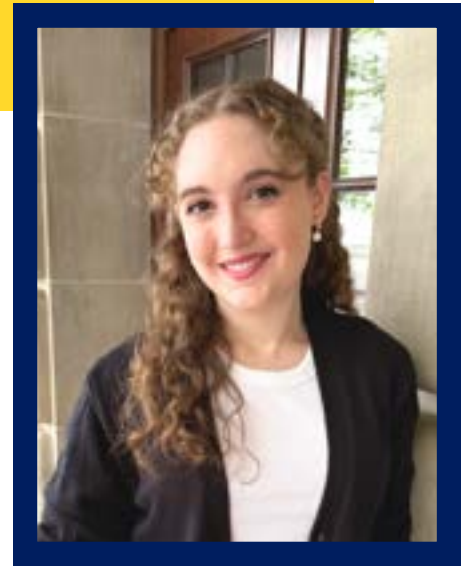
(so-FEE-uh MAYNZ)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Mechanicsburg, PA

Major: Vocal Performance

Studio: Katherine Ciesinski



Campus Involvement

- Sigma Alpha Iota Sigma Theta Editor
- Eastman's Student National Association of Teachers of Singing chapter

Achievements

- Finger Lakes Opera Apprentice Artist
- Barbarina (Le Nozze di Figaro) with Wiener Festspiele
- Papagena (The Magic Flute) with Arizona Lyric Theatre
- Soloist in Eastman's Bach Cantata Series
- Soloist with Eastman Repertory Singers

Career Interests

- Opera performance
- Working abroad in Germany

Scholarships & Grants

- Eastman Artist Scholarship

What made you select the University of Rochester and the Eastman School of Music?

When I auditioned for Eastman, I was so impressed by the positive, supportive environment fostered by all the students I met. This environment, plus my incredible professor, were the main reasons I was so strongly drawn to Eastman and chose to come here!

How have you changed since your first day on campus?

Since arriving at Eastman, I have become more confident in my growth as an artist. I learned to live in the process and love the day-to-day work that we do as we seek constant improvement. I'm confident that I grow as a musician every day and will continue to do so through graduation.

How do you think you'll stay connected with URochester after you graduate?

I hope to collaborate with many other Eastman students throughout my career, as well as support the work of my peers. I also hope to give back to the University by returning for Meliora Weekend and interacting with students who are having the same experiences I'm having now. Community starts at every level, and I hope to remain connected to my Eastman/URochester community for many years to come.

Albert Mejooli '28

(AL-burt Me-jh-oo-li)

Pronouns: he/him

Hometown: Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania

Major: Computer Science; Business

Cluster: French



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Campus Involvement

- Minority Business Alliance
- Ma'frisah
- National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE)
- University of Rochester Christian Fellowship
- Colorstack

Achievements

- Dean's List
- Nomination for Phi Beta Kappa O'Brien award

Career Interests

- Software Engineering
- Product Management

Scholarships & Grants

- Davis UWC Scholar
- Joseph C. Wilson Leader of Change Scholarship
- Rochester National Grant

What is the coolest thing that you have learned since you arrived?

You can go to the fourth floor of Douglas and basically learn any language during conversational hours. For example, if you go every day during French hour, you could become close to fluent in a few months.

How have you changed since your first day on campus?

I've moved from being someone who would shy away from conversations or rarely approach people, worried there might be a cultural barrier or miscommunication because of my accent, to someone who now knows how to approach others, find community wherever I live, and embrace my diversity as something people value and want to learn about.

If you were asked to describe your URochester experience (so far), what would you say?

It has been a fever dream. Some days go by and so much happens that I still can't fully comprehend it, from URochester's simple traditions during heavy midterm season, to random walks by the pitch with friends that end in a diverse photograph, to bonding moments in a business organization.

Reward Mulauzi '27

(Re-ward Muh-lah-uuh-zee)

Pronouns: he/him

Hometown: Gweru, Zimbabwe

Major: Chemical Engineering

Cluster: Economics; Religion



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Campus Involvement

- Track and Field
- Ain Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation
- National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE)
- American Institute of Chemical Engineers (AIChE)
- Research Assistant, Basdogan Lab
- Sustainability through Engineering

Achievements

- Business innovation and Pitch Hackathon
Grand prize
- Dean's List

Career Interests

- Entrepreneurship and Consulting
- Technical Sales Engineer
- Chemical & Process Engineering
- Biotechnology

Scholarships & Grants

- Dean's Merit
- Davis UWC Scholar

What has surprised you the most about URochester?

How quickly strangers turn into your people. One minute you're meeting someone from a completely different part of the world, next thing you're sharing food, arguing about music, and somehow ending up chilling in Gleason at 2 am, pondering your life decisions together.

What aspects of URochester are you most proud of/regularly tell your non-URochester friends about?

I tell people this is a school where everyone is doing something. For example, you'll meet someone and think they're just a student, and then casually find out they're running a startup, doing research, and training for a marathon. It keeps you humble very quickly.

How have you changed since your first day on campus?

Taking more action. Step by step, keep it moving. I've gone from 'I hope I'm doing the right things; if it's not, I can't do it' to 'I'll try it and adjust if it goes sideways.' A lot less overthinking, a lot more action. I'm still stressed, but now it's the kind of stress that actually gets things done, not the kind that just stares at the ceiling at midnight.

Sofya Narayan '27

(so-fya nah-rah-yahn)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Cairo, Egypt

Major: Brain and Cognitive Sciences; Statistics

Minor: Psychology

Cluster: Russian



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Campus Involvement

- Gamma Phi Beta
- Celtic
- Outing Club
- Medallion Program
- PSYC161 and CSC 161 teaching assistant
- URM (CCPL) research assistant

Achievements

- Dean's List

Career Interests

- Sleep and dream research
- Law
- Animal welfare

Scholarships & Grants

- International Baccalaureate Scholarship

What has surprised you the most about URochester?

The incredible amount of opportunities and things to do on the campus. I was beyond thrilled to learn about the many clubs I could join, the research I could get involved in, and the various ways to get more involved with the campus. Although our school is small, the possibilities are endless.

What aspects of URochester are you most proud of/regularly tell your non-URochester friends about?

Having the different types of opportunities available, as well as having a smaller and more tight-knit school! It is nice always seeing a friendly face even when just walking to class. I also think that the atmosphere makes it much more welcoming to get involved in different organizations and programs.

How do you think you'll stay connected with URochester after you graduate?

I am beyond excited to attend the reunion events and visit the campus during events like Meliora Weekend and Yellowjacket Weekend. In addition, I hope to someday become a mentor on The Meliora Collective.

Adaugo Nwoke '28

(ah-do-go n-woke-eh)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Columbus, OH

Major: Neuroscience

Cluster: Black Studies



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Campus Involvement

- Students' Association Government
- Pan African Students Association (PASA)
- Minority Association of Pre-Medical Students (MAPS)
- Medallion Program

Career Interests

- Orthopedic Oncologist
- Pediatric Orthopedic Surgeon
- Childhood Cancer Researcher

What made you select URochester as your university?

I selected URochester because of the career advancement opportunities. As a pre-med student, I really wanted a school where I could be doing things in my undergrad to prepare me for medical school and afterward. Through the Minority Association of Pre-Medical Students (MAPS) and other connections I have made, I am very excited about my future and believe I am setting myself up well for it.

What aspects of URochester are you most proud of/regularly tell your non-URochester friends about?

I am very happy that I can experience some of the graduate school spaces even as an undergraduate. Whether it's working with residents and medical students at the University of Rochester Medicine or simply having access to study in Simon Business School, being able to enter these environments makes me feel more connected to graduate students and gives me comfort about my future here if I choose to stay.

What URochester traditions do you enjoy?

I really love Dandelion Day. The food trucks and games are always really good, and the performer at the end of the night is always something to look forward to. Even when it wasn't the nicest weather out, the vibes of the day are always high, and my friends and I always make the most of the day!

Zoe O'Kane '28

(zo-ie oh-kayne)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Stratham, NH

Major: Molecular Genetics

Minor: Spanish

Cluster: World Politics



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Campus Involvement

- 2028 Class Council
- Mora-Kepfer Uy Laboratory, Undergraduate Researcher
- Creative Arts Club
- Medallion Program

Achievements

- International Internship Recipient

Career Interests

- Molecular Genetics & Gene Editing
- Environmentalism and Preservation
- Scientific Policy & Regulation

Scholarships & Grants

- Joseph C. Wilson Leader of Change Scholarship
- Harry Rosenblad Scholarship

What made you select URochester as your university?

I take commitment very seriously, so I've always wanted to invest my time and learning in a university I trusted would give me as many opportunities as possible for the work I put in. At URochester, I've been able to engage in programs and take on responsibilities I never would have had access to as an undergraduate at another university, which has allowed me to embrace my potential as both a current student and a future scientist.

What has surprised you the most about URochester?

What has surprised me the most about the University of Rochester has been the diversity of student interests. I know of very few other schools in which students can pursue their passions in such different fields without sacrificing one subject for another, which is a trait I find remarkably valuable. Allowing students to invest their time in the myriad of subjects that interest them is what makes for a flexible and engaging student body, and part of why I have come to love URochester so much.

What aspects of URochester are you most proud of?

Some of the qualities of the University of Rochester I find myself the proudest of are the opportunities I have gained access to through my education at this institution. Having been a student here for under two years, I have been able to apply for competitive scholarships, make meaningful relationships with professors, TA classes, join a lab, and run for competitive undergraduate positions. All of these roles have helped me discover who I am academically and explore all that I am capable of, experiences which few other universities can provide for their students.

Meleah Perez '29

(muh-lee-uh peh-rez)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Boulder, CO

Major: Epidemiology

Minor: Spanish

Cluster: Chemistry



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Campus Involvement

- Alpha Phi Fraternity
- Greene Center student staff
- Leading Initiatives for Greater Health Transparency (LIGHT) club

Achievements

- Dean's List
- Health and Epidemiology Advanced Learning Scholar

Career Interests

- Public Health
- Injury Epidemiology
- Preventive Medicine
- Occupational Health and Safety

Scholarships & Grants

- Research and Innovation Grant (RIG)
- Rochester National Grant
- Dean's Scholarship

What aspects of URochester are you most proud of/regularly tell your non-URochester friends about?

At URochester, I am extremely proud of all the impactful and important research that is conducted here. The majority of students here are involved in some sort of research, across all disciplines. Research is being done in all different fields, from medicine to business, and there is always an opportunity for any student to get involved!

What URochester traditions do you enjoy?

I love the Celebrate URochester event. Celebrate URochester is a series of performances by many different dance, performance, and musical groups at the University of Rochester, including some from the Eastman School of Music. Each group performs or showcases what they do. It's a really fun way to see how students on campus are being creative, and find groups that you might want to join.

How do you think you'll stay connected with URochester after you graduate?

After graduation, I am so excited to continue engaging with students, attending events and maintaining my connection to the URochester community. Even though graduation is still a few years away for me, I have seen the genuine and significant impact that meeting and speaking with alumni has on current students, myself included. Getting to interact with alumni helps give students a glimpse into all the possibilities the future has to offer, and I know that as an alumni I will want to help motivate and support students here however I can. Additionally, I know I will always look forward to coming back to visit for Meliora Weekend, and keeping up with all the changes and development the university goes through over the years.

Chelsea Pham '27

(Chels-ee Famm)



Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Manchester, NH

Major: Epidemiology; Microbiology

Cluster: Ethics and Values



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Campus Involvement

- River Campus Medical Emergency Response Team
- Perfect Pair
- Vietnamese Students' Association
- 2027 Class Council
- Admissions Vlogger

Achievements

- Health Epidemiology Advanced Learning (HEAL) Scholar
- Meliora Scholar

Career Interests

- Physician

Scholarships & Grants

- Research and Innovation Grant (RIG)
- Joseph C. Wilson Leader of Change Scholarship

What made you select URochester as your university?

I chose URochester because of the opportunities given to me from day one. There are not many universities that give students full autonomy over their coursework, as well as provide resources such as research grants.

What has surprised you the most about URochester?

The amount of people that come back! I spend a lot of time in the Medical Center and always find myself conversing with URochester alumni about URochester Traditions and organizations that we were both part of. I even learned how to scrub into surgery with the Class Council President of the Class of 2018 (who is now a resident at URochester Medicine).

How have you changed since your first day on campus?

When I first arrived on campus, I was quite introverted and not as involved in activities that concerned school spirit. Since coming to URochester, I have dived into every opportunity to connect with my peers, as well as the faculty on campus because of the positive reinforcement that I have gotten from people at URochester.

Sarah Pirzada '27

(sa-ruh pur-za-duh)

Pronouns: she/her/hers

Hometown: New York, NY (Queens)

Major: Financial Economics; Business

Cluster: Media, Culture and Communication; Business Computing



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Campus Involvement

- Campus Information Center front desk attendant
- Language Center program assistant
- Students' Association Government
- 2027 Class Council
- Teaching assistant

Achievements

- David T. Kearns Scholar
- Medallion Leadership Society

Career Interests

- Private Equity
- Consulting
- Entrepreneurship

Scholarships & Grants

- Chalo College Scholarship
- Rochester National Grant

What is the coolest thing that you have learned since you arrived?

The coolest thing I've learned is how capable I actually am. Between juggling leadership roles, two jobs, and academics, I had to figure out time management fast. It was tough at first, but now I know I can handle a lot more than I ever thought I could.

How have you changed since your first day on campus?

Since my first day on campus, I've become more driven and learned how to balance multiple responsibilities. Taking on leadership roles in student organizations while working two jobs was definitely a challenge at first, especially when it came to keeping up with my grades. Over time, I figured out how to manage everything without feeling overwhelmed, and now I feel more confident in my ability to handle whatever comes next.

How do you think you'll stay connected with URochester after you graduate?

I'll stay connected by keeping in touch with the friends I've made and returning for Meliora Weekend. Being a mentee in The Meliora Collective has shown me the impact of mentorship, and I'd love to give that back by guiding future students. The University of Rochester has shaped me in so many ways, and I know it'll always be a part of my life.

Aurora Rahman '27

(uh-ROHR-uh RAH-mahn)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Dhaka, Bangladesh

Major: International Relations

Minor: Computer Science

Cluster: German



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- Students' Association International Students' Affairs Committee
- 2027 Class Council
- ROC Reading Partners tutor
- Students' Association Government

Achievements

- Modern Language and Culture (MLC) Book Award
- Dean's List

Career Interests

- Law
- Domestic and foreign policy

Scholarships & Grants

- Rochester National Grant
- Federal Pell Grant
- Federal Supplemental Opportunity Grant

What made you select URochester as your university?

The open curriculum and the community here! During my interview for the school, I recall an alum telling me about one of her favorite memories with her friends. I wanted to be in a community where folks uplift each other and always encourage people to be the best authentic versions of themselves!

What URochester traditions do you enjoy?

Meliora Weekend and Dandelion Day are my favorites! I love the sense of community and the joy on everyone's faces. Plus, there's tons of good food and great ways to make memories and connect with people.

If you were asked to describe your URochester experience (so far), what would you say?

It has helped me grow as an individual in a multitude of ways. Being at the University of Rochester has helped me realize the importance of community and how important it is to be involved in making a positive impact in the spaces we occupy.

Aya Raji '28, '28E

(EYE-uh RAH-jee)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Brooklyn, NY

Major: Political Science & Guitar Performance

Minor: Legal Studies

Studio: Nicholas Goluses



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- Gamma Phi Beta Sorority
- Planned Parenthood Generation Action
- Eastman Concert Office Program Typist
- Admissions Overnight Ambassador
- Early Connection Opportunity Program Assistant

Achievements

- Alpha Alpha Alpha First Generation Honor Society
- Dean's List
- David T. Kearns Scholar
- Co-Founder of College Feminists Women's Leadership

Career Interests

- Copyright Entertainment Law
- Music Business
- Higher Education Administration

What made you select the University of Rochester and the Eastman School of Music?

I began my URochester journey primarily as a River Campus student, but during my first year of fall semester was when I realized I was at a university that wouldn't force me to choose between my academic and music passions. Transferring into Eastman made that truth even clearer. URochester gave me the rare opportunity to grow as both a scholar and an artist, and that made it feel like home.

If you were to describe your Eastman experience (so far), what would you say?

My Eastman experience has been full of long days, late rehearsals, and more shuttle rides than I ever could have predicted, but it has shaped me in some of the most meaningful ways. Being a dual-degree student has pushed me to grow in discipline and resilience, but it has also reminded me how much is possible when you have a strong community behind you.

What aspects of Eastman are you most proud of?

Everyone here is incredibly talented, but what stands out even more is the passion, discipline, and care that students bring to their work every day. From 9 a.m. theory to hours spent practicing in the Annex to the performances that bring all of that work to life, there is a shared dedication that comes from loving the art.

Meredith Ryan '29

(meh-rih-dihth rye-in)



Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Binghamton, NY

Major: Biomedical Engineering

Minor: Bioethics



[LinkedIn](#)

Campus Involvement

- Biomedical Engineering Society
- Society of Women Engineers
- Medallion Program
- Alpha Phi International Fraternity
- Club Field Hockey

Career Interests

- Research & Development
- Professional Engineer

Achievements

- Graduate Engineering at Rochester (GEAR) Scholar
- Dean's List

Scholarships & Grants

- Research and Innovation Grant (RIG)
- Rochester National Grant
- George Eastman Circle Scholarship
- Dean's Scholarship

What made you select URochester as your university?

I chose URochester because it really felt like a place where I wouldn't have to limit myself to just one path. There are so many different opportunities, especially for research, which is something I definitely want to get involved in early since I'm thinking about pursuing a higher-level degree in the future. I also liked that I could explore different interests while still focusing on my major, instead of feeling stuck in one track. On top of that, there are so many student organizations and ways to get involved, so it feels like I can have a good balance between academics and enjoying college. Overall, it's a place where I can grow both as a student and as a person.

What has surprised you the most about URochester?

What's surprised me the most about URochester is the level of research happening here and how accessible it feels as a first-year. I didn't expect to be surrounded by so many people doing high-level, impactful work—from labs tackling real medical problems to professors who are leaders in their fields but still be encouraged to get involved this early on. It's made me realize how many opportunities there are to actually contribute to meaningful research, not just learn about it in class.

What is the coolest thing that you have learned since you arrived?

The coolest thing I've learned so far is in BME 101, learning how medical devices are designed for low-resource settings. Seeing how engineers rethink designs to make them affordable and usable really showed me the importance of accessibility in biomedical engineering.

Egbert Sackey '29

(EH-g-burt Sah-kii)



Pronouns: he/him

Hometown: Accra, Ghana

Major: Electrical and Computer Engineering

Minor: Computer Science; Philosophy



[LinkedIn](#)

Campus Involvement

- National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE)
- Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE)
- Meliora Finance and Investment Group (MELFIG)

Achievements

- Dean's List

Career Interests

- AI Engineering
- Quant Research
- Systems Software Engineering

Scholarships & Grants

- Davis UWC Scholar
- Whipple Science and Research Scholar

What made you select URochester as your university?

Honestly, it started with a TikTok. A student said that at URochester, you genuinely cannot tell what someone studies just by looking at them. No one is boxed in. That stuck with me because it described something I had been looking for: the freedom to build your own path rather than fit into a shape someone else decided for you.

How have you changed since your first day on campus?

I have learned to prioritize. Coming from a world where ambition and daydreaming could feel like a full-time occupation, it is easy to get swept along by endless possibilities. Here, time moves faster than expected. You grow constantly, and at some point you have to decide what to actually pursue.

However, I am also taking risks I would not have taken before. I am testing new classes, leaning into unexpected interests, and letting myself be surprised by what I am drawn to. URochester has given me both the urgency to focus and the freedom to explore. I am still figuring out which ideas are worth chasing, but I am learning what it means to choose with intention.

How do you think you'll stay connected with URochester after you graduate?

URochester invested in me in ways I did not expect and will not forget. Staying connected is the natural continuation of that relationship. I want to give back financially when I am in a position to do so, particularly to the Basic Needs Hub, which was there for me during some of the harder moments of my first semester. My success, in part, belongs to the people who made it possible.

Isabella Saldaña '27E

(is-uh-BELL-uh sahl-DAHn-yah)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: O'Fallon, IL

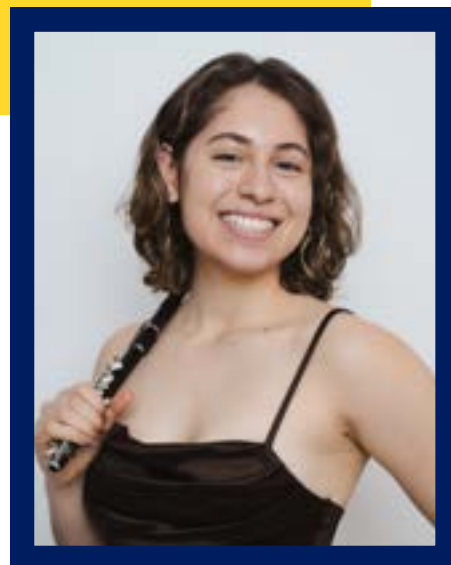
Major: Flute Performance

Minor: Spanish

Studio: Bonita Boyd



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- Student Association of Vegan and Vegetarian Youth (SAVVY)
- Mexican Students' Association (MESA)
- Eastman Latino and Hispanic Students' Association (ELHSA)
- OSSIA New Music
- Eastman Wind Ensemble
- Eastman Philharmonia

Achievements

- U.S. Army Field Band Finalist (2025)
- "Pershing's Own" Ceremonial Band Finalist (2025)
- Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps Finalist (2024)

Career Interests

- Mentoring
- Touring
- Performing in large and chamber ensembles

What made you select the University of Rochester and the Eastman School of Music?

The Eastman School offers unparalleled musical training and support for its students, and I was most excited to study with my private instructor, Bonita Boyd. On my audition day, I felt cared for by the administration and was astonished by the quality of student rehearsal in Kodak Hall.

What aspects of Eastman are you most proud of?

I am so proud of my friends, who constantly inspire me and ground me. Our student culture is warm, kind, and incredibly hard-working.

How do you think you'll stay connected with URochester after you graduate?

I aim to stay connected with my professor, utilize resources from the Institute of Music Leadership, and mentor in The Meliora Collective program. I would love to support future students through genuine connection.

LayVon Scott '28E

(Lay-VON Skaht)



Pronouns: he/him

Hometown: Albany, NY

Major: Music Education - Voice

Studio: Joshua Conyers

Campus Involvement

- Black Students' Union
- Campus Board Activities
- ECMS Early Childhood Music Education Teacher

Career Interests

- Teacher/Professor
- Performer
- Advisor

Achievements

- Eastman Merit Scholarship
-

What made you select the University of Rochester, Eastman School of Music?

I selected Eastman because it has been my dream school since my first year of high school. My old voice teacher went to Eastman and introduced me to the excellence of Eastman. When I came here for All-State chorus during my senior year of high school, I fell in love with it. As I did more research, I became fascinated with the faculty that work here and the reputation that the school had as a whole.

How have you changed since your first day on campus?

Since my first day on campus, I have fallen in love with classical music so much more than I thought. At the beginning of my music journey, I never claimed classical music as my favorite genre of music but I knew that I had to do it if I wanted to study music in school. Being here at Eastman and being surrounded by classical music every day has made me LOVE it so much more than I thought I could. I feel more like myself than ever before being at Eastman.

If you were to describe your Eastman experience (so far), what would you say?

I would say that my Eastman experience has been so much better than I could have ever imagined. I was really scared coming here and I thought that I would feel very homesick and find out that this is not the place for me. I have become so comfortable here and it truly feels like a second home.

Benjamin Small '27E

(BEN-juh-min SMAWL)



Pronouns: he/him

Hometown: Sinking Spring, PA

Major: Classical Saxophone Performance; Music

Minor: Theory

Studio: Chien-Kwan Lin



[LinkedIn](#)

Campus Involvement

- Eastman Saxophone Project

Achievements

- Institute for Music Leadership - Catherine Filene Shouse Arts Leadership Certificate of Achievement

Career Interests

- Saxophone/Music Theory professor
- Performance

Scholarships & Grants

- Eastman Artist Scholarship
- Reading Musical Foundation Scholarship

How have you changed since your first day on campus?

I think that Eastman has had a large hand in shaping me into the person I am today. I've become much more accountable for myself, more attentive to small details, and tenacious in my studies.

Share an on-stage memory that will stay with you through graduation.

After some pieces in concerts, the conductor has soloists stand after the piece is over for recognition. I remember the first time I had a solo and stood - it made me realize how supportive everyone is of every single person here. The cheers and applause for each soloist, including me, was an incredible feeling, and one I will not forget.

If you were to describe your Eastman experience (so far), what would you say?

Incredible! The community here is one that cannot be compared, and the fact that we can focus on the things that we love most is amazing. Everyone here is so passionate about the things they do, and that inspires me every day to keep working hard.

Hannah Smith '27

(han-nuh sm-ith)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Alexandria, VA

Major: English: Language, Media, and Communications

Minor: Digital Media Studies; Music

Cluster: Gender Studies; Sonic Arts and Tech



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- Campus Times
- Social Media Strategist and Content Creator for University Marketing/Communications and Office of Admissions
- WRUR-TV

Achievements

- Internships at News 8 WROC-TV and WXXI Public Broadcasting
- Study Abroad – German Language and Culture in Berlin, Germany

Career Interests

- Broadcast Journalism
- Communications/Marketing

Scholarships & Grants

- Prince Street Scholar
- New York Women in Communications Scholar

What is the coolest thing that you have learned since you arrived?

The coolest thing I've learned is how to bring ideas to life through media. Whether it's sound design, video production, or storytelling, I've developed both the technical skills and creative confidence to produce meaningful work. Seeing a project go from concept to completion has been incredibly rewarding.

What is your favorite piece of URochester history?

I really love URochester's connection to Susan B. Anthony and the women's suffrage movement. As a student with a Women and Gender Studies cluster, it's inspiring to study these issues in a place where so much of that history actually happened. It makes what I'm learning feel more real and reminds me that URochester has always been a place connected to social change.

How have you changed since your first day on campus?

I've become much more confident in myself and my technical abilities through my cluster in Sonic Arts and Technology. I've stepped outside of my comfort zone — taking on new creative challenges, building technical skills in the studio, and engaging with new communities. I've also grown more independent and intentional about the opportunities I pursue.

Sanchit Somani '27

(sun-chit soh-mah-nee)

Pronouns: he/him

Hometown: New Delhi, India

Major: Computer Science; Economics

Cluster: Portuguese



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- Meridian Society
- International Students' Admissions
- The Learning Center - Tutor and Study Group Leader
- Computer Science Teaching Assistant
- Resident Advisor

Career Interests

- Quant Trader/Researcher
- Software Engineer
- Data Analyst

Achievements

- Dean's List

Scholarships & Grants

- Continuing Student Scholar

What has surprised you the most about URochester?

We have the world's largest university-based laser systems, we founded WebWork used across North America, and textbooks written by professors here are being used across the world. We're a small school making a big impact!

If you were asked to describe your URochester experience (so far), what would you say?

I'd describe it as unexpectedly personal. I came in thinking I'd just focus on academics, but URochester has been much more about the people — professors, peers, alumni — and the relationships I've built. It's one of those places where the more you put yourself out there, the more you get back.

What aspects of URochester are you most proud of/regularly tell your non-URochester friends about?

The school size and student-to-faculty ratio are honestly great. You meet new people easily, but still keep seeing familiar faces around campus. It's also really easy to reach out to professors and advisors, whether it's for academics or just a conversation, which isn't something you get everywhere.

Apostle Sowell '26

(uh-paa-sl so-well)

Pronouns: he/him

Hometown: Rochester, NY

Major: Computer Science

Minor: Physics



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- Students' Association Government
- National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE)
- Grassroots
- Greene Center student staff
- River Campus Libraries student staff

Achievements

- Associate of Science degree in computer science
- Phi Theta Kappa membership

Career Interests

- Software engineering
- Project management
- Quantum software engineering
- AI sustainability research
- Quantum computing research

Scholarships & Grants

- Phi Theta Kappa Honors Society Scholarship

What is your favorite piece of URochester history?

As a library student staff member, I may be a little biased, but the evolving history of the library itself is what fascinates me the most. On the River Campus, the library has always been a hub of knowledge, a place to gather, and a symbol of the University since it was first established. That alone has led to some amazing photos and articles from the past. From alumni sharing stories about their time in the library, to the notes left on the old stacks walls, it's all incredibly intriguing to me.

What has surprised you the most about URochester?

The potential within the University and how achievable things feel. Before coming to the University, I wasn't sure I was prepared or had what it took to meet all the goals I had in mind. But now, I feel much more hopeful. I've managed to secure two on-campus jobs and met a lot of amazing people I'm lucky to call friends, and the schoolwork is manageable. This realization has made me feel more determined to work hard and achieve more goals.

What made you select URochester as your university?

I was born at a University of Rochester hospital and had the chance to compete in FIRST Lego League (FLL) tournaments and basketball tournaments hosted by the University, so URochester has always been a part of my life. The University of Rochester has quietly influenced me growing up, representing a high standard of education, research, and diversity. That's what ultimately made me want to attend here.

Sam Sung '27

(sam s-uh-ng)

Pronouns: he/him

Hometown: Seoul, South Korea (born in Taiwan)

Major: Business

Cluster: Computer Science; Japanese



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Campus Involvement

- Meliora Finance and Investment Group
- Undergraduate Finance and Economics Council

Career Interests

- Investment banking
- Entrepreneurship

Achievements

- Dean's List

What aspects of URochester are you most proud of/regularly tell your non-URochester friends about?

Whenever I talk to my friends from other schools, I always mention how welcoming and supportive the University of Rochester community is. One place that really helped me experience that was the gym—I go there often, and it's where I've made some of my closest friends. Every person I met there was kind and friendly, and I never felt out of place. That kind of atmosphere isn't something you find everywhere. I also talk about how accessible leadership roles and campus events are because of the smaller class size. It's easy to feel like you can make a difference here, whether that's through clubs, volunteer work, or just participating in university life. The campus might be smaller than some other schools, but that's part of what makes it feel like a close-knit and supportive environment. I'm proud to be part of a place that really values community.

How do you think you'll stay connected with URochester after you graduate?

After I graduate, I definitely want to stay involved with the University of Rochester community, especially through the alumni network and platforms like The Meliora Collective. I think that staying connected with current students and other alumni can be really meaningful—not just for networking, but for continuing the sense of community I've experienced here. I'd love to be a mentor someday and help students who are trying to find their own path, just like I did. Whether it's offering advice, attending alumni events, or even just sharing my experiences, I want to give back to the school that gave me so much. The University of Rochester has shaped who I am today, and I see staying connected as a way of carrying that spirit forward even after I leave campus.

Roger Thoma '27

(rah-jer toh-mah)

Pronouns: he/him

Hometown: Cleveland, OH

Major: Biological Sciences; Spanish

Cluster: Psychology



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- Best Buddies, Co-Founder
- Bioethics Society, Co-Founder
- Meridian Society
- Emergency Department Research Associate
- ROC Reading Partners

Achievements

- Publication in Neurobiology Journal
- Study Abroad in Granada, Spain
- Dean's List

Career Interests

- Medicine
- Research

Scholarships & Grants

- Dean's Scholarship
- Meliora Scholar

What has surprised you the most about URochester?

I am most surprised about the collaborative environment here at the University of Rochester. Coming into college, I was nervous about having enough resources to succeed in classes. But quickly I realized that both my peers and professors supply a substantial amount of materials to ensure success on problem sets and exams, which has allowed me to be comfortable with content for classes.

What aspects of URochester are you most proud of/regularly tell your non-URochester friends about?

Besides the open-curriculum aspect of URochester, I regularly talk about the amount of drive each student has. Whether it's research or performance, every single person I know on campus has motivation to excel and give their best. Also, I talk about how so many people are involved on this campus and how they contribute to the "ever better" vibe here at URochester!

How have you changed since your first day on campus?

Since my first day on campus, I have learned how to properly complete and organize my activities/classes to prevent burnout and increase productivity. I became more efficient with actively completing tasks rather than waiting until the last minute and simultaneously balancing school, work, extracurriculars, and social life.

Cagla Zeynep Tutar '27

(Cha-la Z-ay-nep Too-tar)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Istanbul, Turkey

Major: Biomedical Engineering

Minor: Materials Science

Cluster: Introduction to Spanish Studies



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- Society of Women Engineers
- Biomedical Engineering Society
- University of Rochester Medical Center Chu Lab Research Assistant
- ROC Reading Partners Team Leader
- LEAP Tutor
- Muslim Students' Association

Achievements

- Tau Beta Pi and AEMB Member
- Dean's List

Career Interests

- Biotechnology
- Biomedical Devices
- Regenerative Medicine

Scholarships & Grants

- Patrick P. Lee Scholarship

What aspects of URochester are you most proud of/regularly tell your non-URochester friends about?

The freedom we have in our choice of courses for our majors, and the cluster program. A lot of my non-URochester friends have a set trajectory of classes, preventing them from venturing out, whereas we get to explore different fields. This autonomy in our course choices allows us to shape our futures the way we want.

What URochester traditions do you enjoy?

One of my favorite URochester traditions is Winterfest Weekend. Not only does it fall around my birthday, but I also get to build my own plushie with my friends. I hope to have made four by the time I graduate, one for each year I'm at URochester. Trying out the carnival games in Winter Wonderland is also a bonus.

How have you changed since your first day on campus?

I am a more confident person than I was on my first day on campus. When you move somewhere new, it's natural to take a step back and let others lead while you figure out where you fit and whether you're on the right path. But as you become more familiar with your surroundings and find communities that align with your interests, your confidence grows. Through my coursework, I've developed stronger engineering skills, and through my involvement in clubs and organizations, I've built meaningful interpersonal skills. Together, these experiences have shaped who I am today, and I feel far more prepared to step out into the world than I did when I first arrived.

Yu-Tang Wang '27

(you tay-ng way-ng)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Taiwan, China

Major: Data Science; Brain & Cognitive Sciences

Cluster: American Sign Language; Economics



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- Taiwanese Student Association
- Medallion Program
- International Student Affair Council
- Teaching Assistant

Achievements

- Rising Leader Class
- Dean's List

Career Interests

- Data Scientist/Analyst
- Machine Learning/AI Engineer
- Behavioral Data Science

Scholarships & Grants

- Davis UWC Scholar
- International Baccalaureate Scholarship

What has surprised you the most about URochester?

What surprised me the most is how supportive the educational environment is at URochester. Most professors I've had are incredibly supportive and offer help beyond the classroom. Even professors I haven't taken classes with are willing to meet and provide guidance, including graduate-level faculty. As long as you take the initiative to reach out, there's a high chance you'll receive support. This makes URochester a place where no one should be afraid to ask for help.

What URochester traditions do you enjoy?

Springfest Weekend and Dandelion Day are some of my favorite traditions. It's the perfect time for everyone to enjoy outdoor activities as the weather finally gets warmer. Students come together to spend time with friends, explore campus events, and see different clubs and organizations in action. It really strengthens the sense of community and makes URochester feel like home.

If you were asked to describe your URochester experience (so far), what would you say?

The leadership experience at URochester has been one of the most impactful parts of my journey. The University offers leadership programs, classes, and many opportunities for students to take on leadership roles. Through these experiences, I've not only developed important skills but also met passionate and driven people who inspire me to grow.

Nathan Ward '28E

(NAY-then WAH-rd)

Pronouns: he/him

Hometown: Scotch Plains, NJ

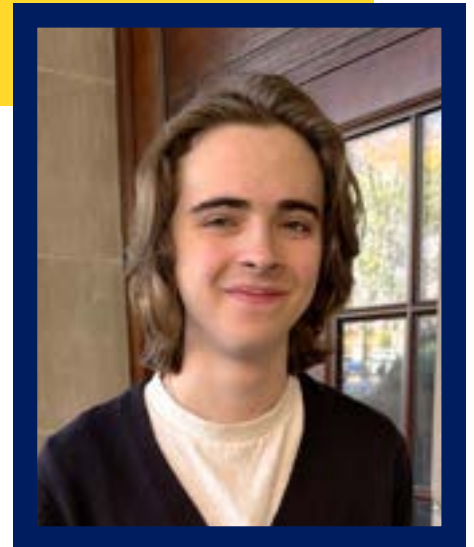
Major: Jazz Studies & Contemporary Media; Music Education

Instrument: Guitar

Studio: Bob Sneider



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- Peter Foley Big Band
- Coalescence student ensemble

Career Interests

- Marketing
- Guest Experience
- Music Business
- Teaching

Achievements

- Jazz Lab Band

Scholarships & Grants

- Dean's Scholarship Award
- First United Methodist Church of Westfield Scholarship
- Muriel Phillips McCarl Memorial Fund Scholarship

Share an on-stage memory that will stay with you through graduation.

One of my favorite memories while playing concerts in general at Eastman is the support from friends. I'm someone who gets nervous on stage, but playing with my friends and talking to them after the concert always helps me.

How do you think you'll stay connected with URochester after you graduate?

I would love to stay in contact with Eastman by guiding and mentoring students who are trying to establish themselves in a career after college. Sharing the knowledge I gain in my career experience would be a great way to give back to the community.

What is the most impactful thing you have learned since you arrived?

Since getting to Eastman, the most impactful thing I have learned is how to organize, structure work, and use my time meaningfully. Eastman has taught me how to work smart, and this will stick with me for the rest of my education and career.

Annaliese White '27E

(Ahn-a-LEEs WA-ihT)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Rochester, NY

Major: Double Bass Performance

Studio: James VanDemark



Campus Involvement

- New Music Collective, Founder
- Eastman Ambassador at the Office of Admissions

Achievements

- New Music Collective Founder
- Eastman School Symphony Orchestra Principal
- Dean's List
- Eastman Philharmonia Principal

Career Interests

- Orchestral Performance
- Private Studio

Scholarships & Grants

- Eastman Artist Scholarship
- Margaret and Stephen Weber Memorial Scholarship

What made you select the University of Rochester and the Eastman School of Music?

The foundation that Eastman provides to help me become a well rounded member of society, alongside becoming a skilled musician is something that I strongly value. Having access to both Eastman classes and URochester classes has opened up so many opportunities for me to meet new people and try new things.

How have you changed since your first day on campus?

I've become so much more confident in myself and my performances since coming to Eastman. I feel more prepared than ever to tackle challenges that arise as I pursue my goals.

What is the most impactful thing you have learned since you arrived?

Learning how to see a process through and not back down from challenges when I face them. In my time here I have tried many new things that I have found intimidating, but the reward for seeing it through is significant.

Alexander Wilks '27

(al-ig-ZAN-der wilks)

Pronouns: he/him

Hometown: Fairfax, VA

Major: Business; Politics, Philosophy, & Economics

Minor: Economics, Digital Media Studies



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- Student Admissions Associate
- Admissions Interviewer
- Meridian Tour Guide
- Club Operations Coordinator, Simon Business School Office of Student Life
- Student Engagement Associate, Simon Business School Office of Student Life
- Marketing Teaching Assistant
- Marketing Research Assistant
- Study Abroad Program Participant, Florence Italy

Achievements

- Dean's List

Career Interests

- Project Management
- Consulting
- Corporate Social Responsibility

Scholarships & Grants

- Continuing Students Scholarship
- Dr. Arnold Lisio Merit-Based Scholarship

What is the coolest thing that you have learned since you arrived?

One of the coolest things I've learned is that URochester is home to the Omega Laser Facility, which the most powerful high-energy laser systems in the world. When they're running, they're the most powerful points on Earth, which is just wild to think about.

What made you select URochester as your university?

I selected the University of Rochester largely because of my family's connection to the school. My grandfather attended medical school here 50 years ago, and I'm now the eighth person in my family to attend. My twin brother, Aaron, is also a student here, which made the decision even more meaningful. Coming to URochester felt like continuing something that's been part of my family for generations.

If you were asked to describe your URochester experience (so far), what would you say?

I'd describe my experience as incredibly immersive. Between my on-campus job at the Simon Business School, which truly feels like a professional role, studying abroad in Florence, Italy, delivering presentations to hundreds of prospective families as an Admissions Associate, and taking classes where I work directly with real business clients on meaningful, high-stakes deliverables, I've had so many opportunities to apply what I'm learning in real-world settings. Each of these experiences has challenged me in different ways, and all of it has been hands-on from day one. URochester has given me the chance to learn by doing in ways that feel real, exciting, and deeply rewarding, all while being part of such a supportive and fun community.

Chloe Yokitis '28

(CLOH-ee yoh-KYE-tiss)

Pronouns: she/her

Hometown: Alexandria, VA

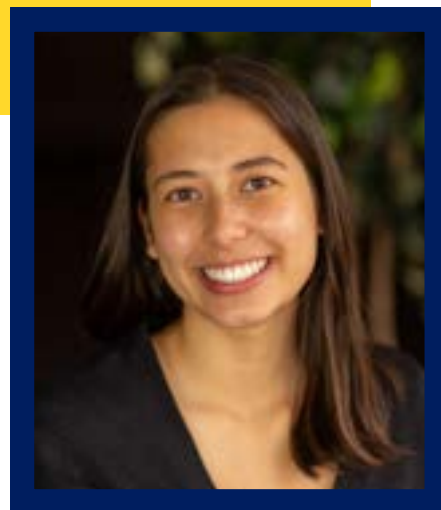
Major: Political Science

Minor: American Sign Language

Cluster: Optics



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- University Marketing & Communications Student Social Media Team
- Campus Times
- Perfect Pair
- Sailing Club

Achievements

- 40 Under 40 Youth Honoree, Alexandria, VA Chamber of Commerce

Career Interests

- Political Communications
- Nonprofits
- Public relations

Scholarships & Grants

- Posse Foundation Leadership Scholarship
- Research Innovation Grant (RIG)

What made you select URochester as your university?

I heard about the University of Rochester through Washington, DC's Posse program, which pairs students from metropolitan areas to Posse's partner colleges. After researching the school, I loved everything I learned about it, like the involvement of students both on- and off-campus, students' academic drive, and the curriculum that gives us the opportunity to explore whatever subjects we'd like. I read about current students' experiences online and felt like I would fit in perfectly—and it absolutely worked out.

What has surprised you the most about URochester?

Coming into URochester, I figured that because so many students study STEM subjects, there wouldn't be any creative folks (or even just people who were good communicators!) on campus. But I've met so many amazing writers, musicians, and artists since being here. I love attending the theater department's amazing shows and have read some brilliant pieces by reporters on the Campus Times. Once noticing the creativity at the University of Rochester, you can't unsee it!

What aspects of URochester are you most proud of/regularly tell your non-URochester friends about?

I think I'm a little too obsessed with the groundhogs! I love spotting them around campus and can't help but taking a few photos every time I spot one. Most of my hometown friends talk about how they always see squirrels or bunnies (both of which we have too) on their campuses, but I love being able to brag about our groundhogs.

Owen Zhao '27

(oh-wen zh-ow)

Pronouns: he/him

Hometown: Beijing, China

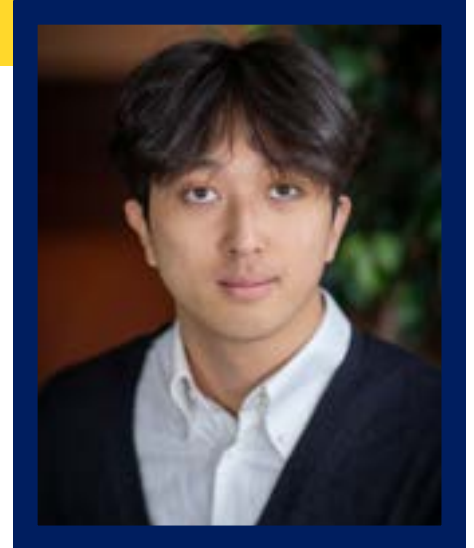
Major: Applied Mathematics

Minor: Philosophy; Computer Science

Cluster: Psychology



[LinkedIn](#)



Campus Involvement

- The Meliora Collective
- Medallion Program
- Rock Climbing Club
- Google Developer Student Club

Career Interests

- Financial Consulting
- Financial Analyst

What made you select URochester as your university?

I chose URochester because it's a private university with a smaller class size, which offers numerous benefits. It allows for more interactive classes, where I have the opportunity to engage directly with professors and participate in meaningful discussions. Additionally, the smaller class size exposes me to a wider range of opportunities. Another reason is the flexible class selection system, which enables me to explore and pursue my interests at a professional level without many limitations, something that is quite rare at other universities!

How have you changed since your first day on campus?

I believe I've changed significantly in interacting socially and building friendships. Meeting people from all over the world has broadened my perspective on making meaningful connections. The countless opportunities for group discussions and projects have also pushed me out of my comfort zone, helping me become more confident and engaged in collaborative environments.

How do you think you'll stay connected with URochester after you graduate?

I plan to stay connected with the University of Rochester by participating in alumni programs and sharing my experiences with future students. I hope to give back to the community in the same way I have benefited from alumni support, fostering our shared values and strengthening the University of Rochester network.



University
of Rochester

Student Alumni Ambassadors

**Interested in connecting with a
Student Alumni Ambassador?**

Please contact Jackie Adamo,
Assistant Director of Student Engagement, at
jacquelynn.adamo@rochester.edu.