

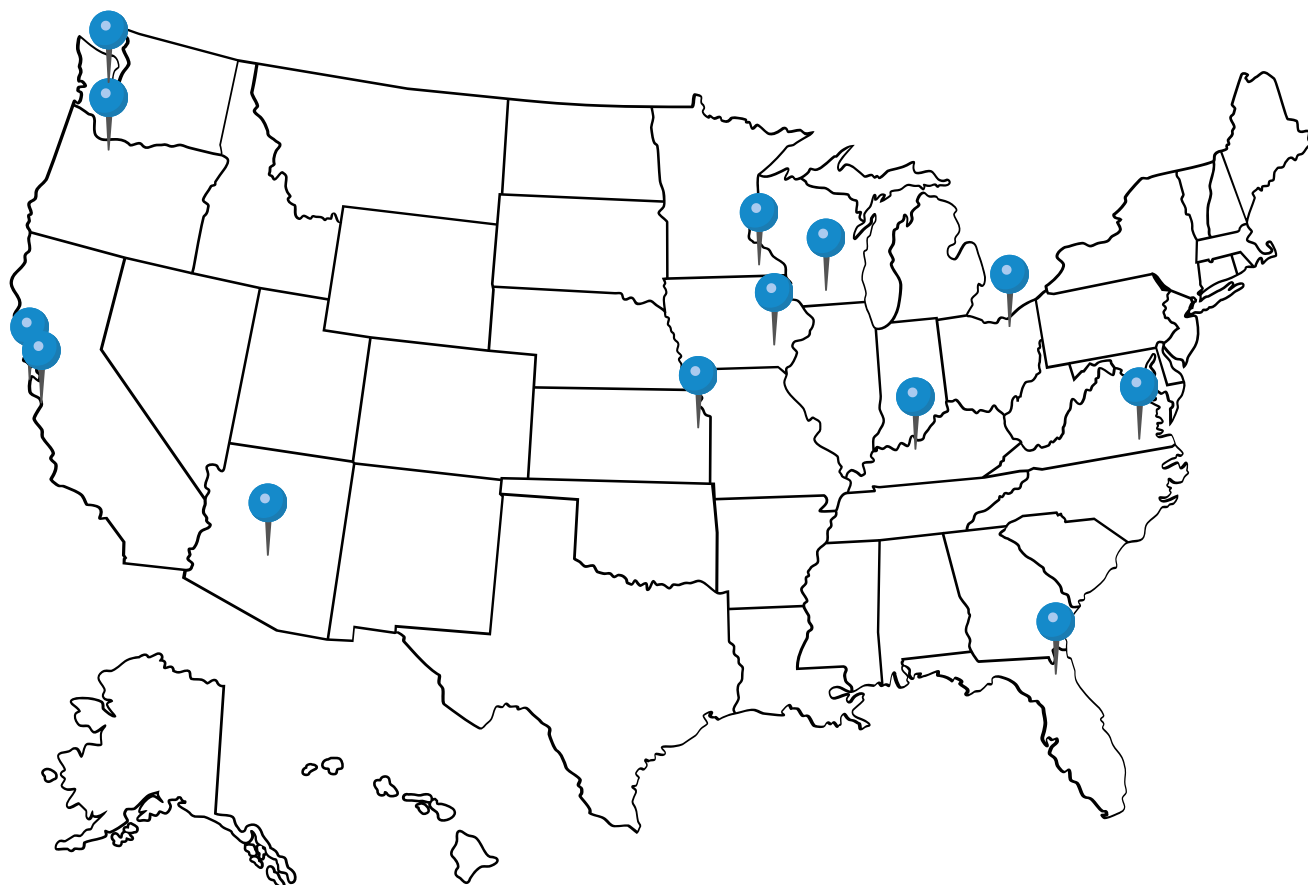
NATIONAL
PROPEL
ANNUAL REPORT



2025 - 2026

NATIONAL MOVEMENT

We're proud to report National PROPEL gained six additional programs in 2025. We now boast 11 sites from across the nation. This year added programs at University of Wisconsin-Madison, Oregon Health and Science University, University of Louisville, Virginia Commonwealth University, Case Western Reserve University, University of Kansas, and the Mayo Clinic. Many of our new PROPEL programs are former or continuing NIH PREP programs, which brings a wealth of knowledge and experience in postbac training. We are hopeful to find additional partner programs in the new academic year!



Along with this expansion comes recognition of National PROPEL in the form of fee waivers to our scholars when they apply to graduate school. Currently National PROPEL is listed on four university fee waiver eligibility lists and we plan to pursue more to prepare for the 26/27 application cycle.

PERFECT MATCH

This year marked the first National PROPEL Matchmaking Event, a milestone for our new organization. Five participating partner programs (UCSF PROPEL, OHSU PROPEL, ICARE, iDREAM, and Badger PREP) shared resources to recruit scholars and mentors for this one-of-a-kind, virtual, mass hiring event. Scholars were matched with hiring faculty based on requests and science interests.

4

Participating
Universities



5

PROPEL
Programs

69

Hiring
Faculty

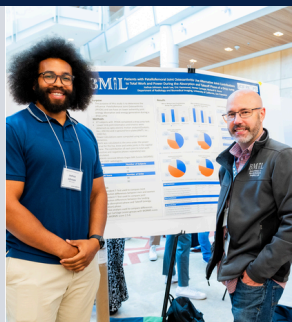


158

Participating
Scholars

513
Interviews

scheduled based on direct
requests from faculty and
scholars, or by overlapping
research interests



1

Massive, Virtual,
Hiring Event

Badger PREP and PROPEL NW hosted their own independent matchmaking events in April of 2026.

We are excited to grow this event each year by adding more participating partner programs, more faculty, and more scholars, and leveraging UCSF PROPEL's experience managing this style of event.

NEXT STEPS

For the 2025-26 academic year...

35

PROPEL scholars
matriculated to
grad school

2

PROPEL scholars
found biotech
positions

30%

of our scholars matriculated to their
home university, demonstrating the
recruitment power of PROPEL

ENGAGE + CONNECT

We're proud to announce our second round and third round of program awardees for the \$10,000 Postbaccalaureate Education Support Fund, offered in partnership with Solving for Science:



OHSU PREP

- Funds will be used to produce scholar external science communication workshop, registration at scientific conferences, doctoral career-awareness programming and industry site visits. Funds will also be used for community building activities and mentor training guest speakers. The OHSU Office of Research and Innovation have agreed to expand salary support to program staff to continue this program.



UL-DRIVE

- Funds will be used to establish new courses, welcome events and community building, local symposium, graduate student mentors, and website development. Monetary hiring incentives are supported by the chairs of the 5 UL departments. Matching funds provided by the Dean of the School of Medicine and the Cancer Center at University of Louisville.



MAYO CLINIC PREP

- Funds will be used to host a National PROPEL Symposium via their trainee-led Scientific Innovation Through Diverse Perspectives (SITDP) program. We hope to offer attendance to this event to all PROPEL scholars in the coming academic year.



KU PROPEL

- Funds will be used to support transition to the PROPEL model. This includes combining PREP and RaMP programs, mentor communications and surveys, recruitment and onboarding, and revamping science and professional development curriculum. KU PROPEL has secured support from several KU STEM departments and KU's Office of the Provost.



SITE HIGHLIGHTS



BADGER PREP
University of Wisconsin-Madison

CasePREP
Case Western Reserve University

ICARE
University of Iowa

iDREAM
University of Iowa

OHSU PROPEL
Oregon Health & Science University

KU PROPEL
University of Kansas

PROPEL NW
University of Washington/Fred Hutch

**STANFORD MEDICINE
POSTBACCALAUREATE
EXPERIENCE IN
RESEARCH PROGRAM**
Stanford University

UCSF PROPEL
University of California, San Francisco

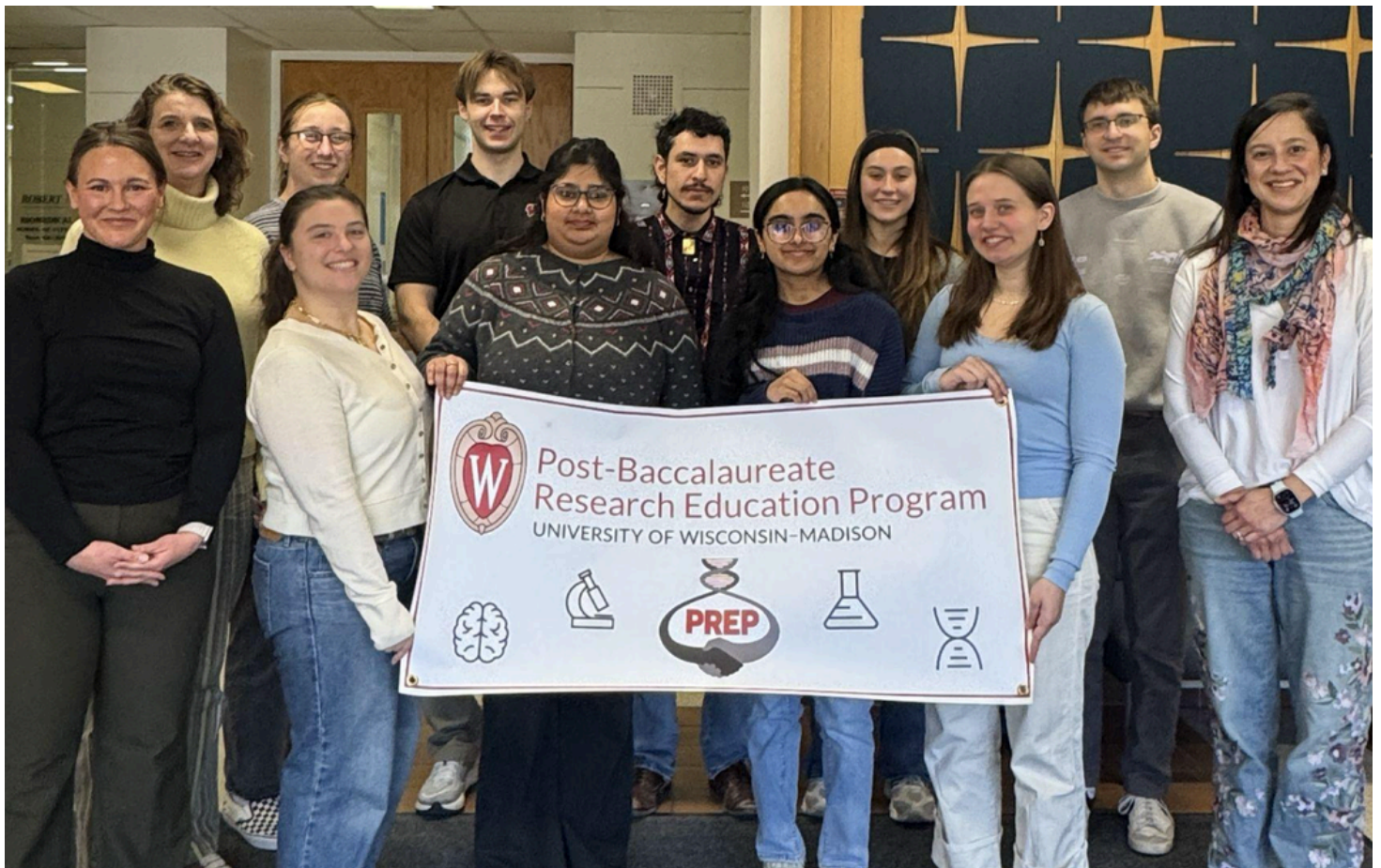
UL-DRIVE
University of Louisville



BADGER PREP

University of Wisconsin-Madison

In our first year of implementing the PROPEL model, Badger PREP at the University of Wisconsin-Madison has successfully included 8 PROPEL scholars in our cohort of 16 scholars. These scholars are actively participating in our newly redesigned Badger PREP seminar series. This series is the cornerstone of the program providing essential professional and scientific skill development along with support and community. Scholars also have multiple opportunities to practice and receive feedback on various forms of science communication, such as poster presentations, seminar talks, and grant proposals. This coming Spring, Badger PREP will host its first university matchmaking event to recruit both PROPEL and NIH PREP scholars for our next cohort. We are excited to continue growing our program and support more scholars on their scientific career journeys.



WISCONSIN
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

CasePREP

Case Western Reserve University

CasePREP is co-directed by Drs. Dana Crawford and Hua Lou at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) School of Medicine in Cleveland, Ohio. CasePREP officially joined National PROPEL in March 2026. While we only recently joined, CasePREP implemented parts of the PROPEL model during the 2025-2026 academic year. That is, we offered the one credit hour graded course “PREP-aring for Success in a Biomedical PhD Program” to CWRU rising seniors and Cleveland-area research technicians who were interested in applying to PhD programs this academic season. The fall semester class followed the lifecycle of the graduate school application process, offering opportunities for Scholars to develop the professional skills needed and expected of a biomedical research scientist. We had four Scholars take the fall 2025 course, two of whom were accepted into PhD programs (CWRU Biomedical Scientist Training Program and Health AI at Cedars-Sinai) for the 2026-2027 academic year. We look forward to following them through the years as well as welcoming new Scholars through our expanded recruitment efforts as part of National PROPEL for the 2026-2027 academic year.



CASE WESTERN RESERVE
UNIVERSITY

School of Medicine

Postbaccalaureate Research Education Program

ICARE

University of Iowa

Iowa Cancer Research Experience (ICARE) Postbaccalaureate Fellowship Program at University of Iowa Holden Comprehensive Cancer Center (HCCC) had 12 fellows, including 7 newly recruited fellows, for the 2025-2026 academic year. These fellows all participated in career development activities including extensive career coaching, attending the Iowa Cancer Summit and HCCC Annual Scientific Retreat, attending external conferences, Bootcamp Skill Building Series, and Career Development Series. The fellows also had several community building events. These events were in partnership with the iDREAM Postbaccalaureate Program in the Iowa Neuroscience Institute. The ICARE fellows gave oral or poster presentations at several conferences including the ICARE & iDREAM Program Completion Event, and HCCC Annual Scientific Retreat, and attendance for networking at American Cancer Society (ACS) Postbaccalaureate Annual Meeting. Several fellows are leaving the program this summer for other opportunities, including one who will matriculate into the Medical Scientist Training Program at The Ohio State University. We expect to have 7 returning fellows and recruit 6-8 new lab-funded fellows for the 2026-2027 academic year. In addition, the ICARE program has received a grant from the PROPEL/Solving for Science to establish a CIMER mentor training program for the 2025-2026 fiscal year. In November 2025, 8 faculty members, who are also ICARE program mentors, completed CIMER mentorship training. In spring 2026 we are planning two CIMER trainings for near-peer mentors, one for graduate students in labs who will have an ICARE postbac matriculate in late summer 2026 and the other training for postbacs who will serve as near-peer mentors for a two-week virtual high school program we facilitate.



IOWA

iDREAM

University of Iowa

Discovering Research Experiences and Mentorship (iDREAM) had eight fellows during the 2025-26 academic year—three in the second year of the two-year program and five beginning their first year in summer 2025. The program begins with a two-week full time “boot camp” that covers research basics, organizational tools, and life skills essential for success. They meet with a dozen lab teams to learn about research opportunities and day-to-day life in the lab. Following those sessions, trainees and PIs submit their preferences to program directors, who match trainees with labs. The three members of the second-year cohort continued in their labs and began preparing to apply to graduate school in the 2026 application cycle. As of February 2026, this group secured two interviews, one acceptance and one wait list spot. All eight iDREAM fellows participated in monthly career development seminars and community-building social events, held in partnership with the ICARE postbaccalaureate program. The fellows traveled to San Diego in November 2025 for the Society for Neuroscience Annual Meeting, presenting posters and networking at the Friends of Iowa gathering. NIH funding for iDREAM will end in 2027. The Iowa Neuroscience Institute has secured funding from a private donor as well as internal funds to continue offering support to postbaccalaureate scholars in neuroscience.



IOWA

KU PROPEL

University of Kansas

In May 2026, The Office for Advancing Success in Science (OASiS) at the University of Kansas received a \$10,000 seed grant from Solving for Science and National PROPEL to transition our PREP program into a PROPEL postbaccalaureate model. KU PREP trained 120 postbaccalaureates between 2007 and its termination in 2025; almost one-third of our scholars were alumni of our partner institution, Haskell Indian Nations University. We will begin recruiting PROPEL scholars immediately, and these scholars will join the 10 postbaccalaureate trainees in our NSF RaMP program beginning in July. In this first year of KU PROPEL, we anticipate recruiting 2-4 scholars. OASiS will also be working to disseminate information about PROPEL to STEM departments at KU and the University of Kansas Medical Center in addition to continuing to secure institutional support for the program. To that end, we are pleased to announce that the University of Kansas has agreed to offer fee waivers to PROPEL scholars nationwide who apply to a KU STEM PhD program.



KU THE UNIVERSITY OF
KANSAS

OHSU PROPEL

Oregon Health & Science University

The Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) PROPEL program launched in September 2025, welcoming a cohort of eight scholars representing a broad range of research interests in cancer biology, immunology, cellular and molecular biology, bioengineering, and neuroscience. This successful launch builds on a strong foundation established over eight years through our former postbaccalaureate research education program.

Our professional development curriculum provides structured, individualized support that complements laboratory research. Research methods workshops led by faculty strengthen technical knowledge and experimental design skills. Scholars present peer-reviewed articles at a monthly critical reading seminar led by research faculty, strengthening their ability to critically evaluate published biomedical research. As a capstone to their time in the lab, scholars will present their research in a poster session during OHSU's annual Research Week and as a short talk to the PROPEL community. Support from the Solving for Science grant has enabled OHSU PROPEL to expand its programming to include a five-session workshop series focused on values-driven, strategic science communication that centers wellbeing, identity, and community. Together, these offerings reinforce key competencies developed through coursework, workshops, and laboratory research, enabling scholars to build confidence as independent scientists. This year, five of our scholars applied to doctoral programs, each receiving offers at top institutions across the US. We are excited to support our scholars as they transition into their doctoral studies this fall and await their final matriculation decisions. It has been such a joy to help PROPEL them toward successful training and careers in biomedical sciences!



PROPEL Scholars 2025-26 (7-8 pictured) and staff (3rd from right)

PROPEL NW

University of Washington/Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center

Over the past year, PROPEL NW has continued to grow and adapt as a new postbaccalaureate training program. The program currently supports 9 trainees across four different UW departments, all of whom participate in monthly workshops focused on graduate school preparation and strengthening mentor-mentee relationships.

With support from Solving for Science, six PROPEL NW Scholars attended the International Cytokines & Interferon Society (ICIS) Cytokines conference in October. They presented their research, expanded their professional networks, and summarized their conference experiences to be published in the ICIS newsletter.

PROPEL NW is also proud to share that all three scholars who applied to graduate school were accepted into graduate programs, including one scholar who will attend the Max Planck Institute in Germany.

Our collaboration with Fred Hutch continues to expand, with several PROPEL NW Scholars presenting in the Fred Hutch Research in Progress Seminar series and we are planning a joint postbaccalaureate symposium for Spring 2026. PROPEL NW remains grateful for funding from Solving for Science and is pleased to have recently received additional financial support from the Washington Research Foundation.



UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON



Fred Hutch
Cancer Center

STANFORD MEDICINE POSTBACCALAUREATE EXPERIENCE IN RESEARCH PROGRAM

Stanford University



The Stanford Medicine Postbaccalaureate Experience in Research program (previously known as REACH) provides research opportunities to enable participants to become successful graduate or medical students. This program will provide essential experience needed to advance students in their career goals and build a diverse research community. To date, we have admitted 75 participants over 4 different cohorts from across the U.S.A, including Puerto Rico, as well as internationally. More than 70% of our postbacs have racial/ethnic backgrounds that are under-represented in STEMM fields and over 50% of our postbacs are the first in their family to graduate from college. Over 95% go on to pursue further education towards a PhD, MD, or MD/PhD at institutions like Harvard, Yale, Weill Cornell, Stanford, and UCLA. Katya Vera (cohort 1) remarks, “A lot of us were first-gen and I think there’s a lot of imposter syndrome in that community. But I learned how to network, how to understand what I really want. REACH gave me so many friends and mentors in medicine. I feel like REACH has so much to offer to people like me.” Katya is now enjoying her 2nd year of medical school at Stanford Medicine.

A major component of our program is to build a more equitable community within Stanford through intentional social programming aimed at growing postbacs’ networks amongst students, faculty, and the broader community. Our postbacs engage scientifically by participating in national and international conferences presenting the research performed while in our program.

Our postbacs are also incredibly devoted to giving back to the Stanford and surrounding communities that are facilitated by our networking events. For example, our scholars initiated their own community serving event to provide essentials for the local unhoused communities as part of the Street Care California chapter of Bright Mind Enrichment. Our postbacs remain passionate and heavily engaged with broader community impact.



UCSF PROPEL

University of California, San Francisco

We're proud to announce that UCSF PROPEL is still going strong, thanks to exceptional support from UCSF's School of Medicine, community support from our PROPEL mentors, a dedicated leadership team, and a robust and ambitious scholar cohort spanning the entire university. Despite the chaos of this year, we've welcomed 15 scholars in the first six months of the 25-26 academic year. UCSF PROPEL was also proud to partner with other National PROPEL programs to found the first ever National PROPEL Matchmaking Event. UCSF faculty interested in hiring for spring and summer 2026 represented over 60% of faculty matchmaking applicants this year. We hope to see a new wave of hires through the 26-27 academic year as a result of this event.

UCSF PROPEL maintained its tradition of evolving based on student needs, with new supports developed to guide CV drafting for PhD-bound scholars and preparation for the AMCAS application for MD/PhD-bound scholars. We thank our scholar cohort for continued engagement in identifying new ways to improve.



UCSF

University of California
San Francisco

UL-DRIVE

University of Louisville

The University of Louisville-Developing Researchers through the Innovation, Vision and Exploration (UL-DRIVE) program received a grant from PROPEL to establish a PROPEL style postbaccalaureate program. We started recruiting fellows in Summer 2025 for the academic year 2025-2026. Due to a hiring freeze, most of them started at the end of the Fall semester, beginning of Spring semester or will start in March 2026, while two fellows were already working as technicians at the School of Medicine. We currently have eight fellows. These fellows have participated in a virtual workshop to develop the skills necessary for applying to and being successful in PhD programs. In addition, they have attended a virtual Metacognition skills bookclub and have participated in a monthly Career Research Advancement Focused Training seminar. They have also participated in a community building event, and will participate in a in-person monthly Research in Progress starting in March and in a Molecular Biology workshop late Spring. Two fellows who started earlier were able to present a poster at Research!Louisville in the Fall, and one of them also presented orally at the Autumn Immunology Conference in Chicago and will present a poster at the AAI meeting in the Spring 2026. The other fellow will also present a poster at the ASM Microbe meeting this coming Summer.

Three fellows have applied successfully to PhD or MD/PhD programs. So far one has been admitted in the MD/PhD program at UL, one has been admitted in the Immunology PhD program at UL and one has been admitted in the Pharmacology and Toxicology PhD program at UL. One fellow applied to DO school and was admitted. We expect to have 4 returning fellows and recruit new fellows for the 2026-2027 academic year. We also applied in the Fall for a postbaccalaureate grant from the American Cancer Society, which if funded will allow us to recruit additional fellows.





LEADERSHIP TEAM



K. Mark Ansel is Professor of Microbiology & Immunology and an Investigator of the Sandler Asthma Basic Research Center. He completed a B.S. at Virginia Tech, a Ph.D. at UCSF, and postdoctoral training at the Immune Disease Institute at Harvard Medical School. His lab studies RNA regulation in the immune system and cell programming involved in allergic inflammation and asthma. Mark is a former director of BMS and the director-elect of ImmunoX.



Paola Betancur is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Radiation Oncology. She received her B.S. from Stony Brook University, her PhD from Caltech, and performed her postdoctoral work at Stanford. Her lab studies the genomic mechanisms that activate pro-tumorigenic and immune suppressive programs in cancer cells. Paola co-chairs the Radiation Oncology DEI committee and was named John A. Watson Faculty Scholar in 2021.



Jessica Allen is the Program Administrator of PROPEL and chief strategist for National PROPEL. Before joining PROPEL, she coordinated science enrichment programming for public school students at UCSF Science & Health Education Partnership. She's taught science and engineering at USF, Berkeley City College, and the Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá, Colombia. She completed her B.S. at the University of Florida and her Ph.D. at UCSF/UCB Joint Bioengineering Program.



Izzy Garcia is the Administrative Assistant of PROPEL and National PROPEL. Before joining PROPEL, she served Santa Clara County's Department of Public Health as a Management Aide on the Administrative Services Support team. She completed her B.S. at Santa Clara University with a degree in Public Health and a concentration in Health and Society.

Our mission is to promote diversity and inclusion for all in the scientific workforce by providing research experiences and career development opportunities for postbaccalaureate scholars, including those from historically excluded backgrounds as well as those with a demonstrated commitment to promoting diversity in science.

Interested in partnering or contributing to our transformative model?
Visit propelscholars.org to learn more.