

# The Yale Ciencia Academy welcomes a new class of young science leaders <sup>[1]</sup>

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The 2023 and 2022 YCA Fellows at Yale

This summer, 16 young science leaders [3] from 15 institutions across the U.S. and Puerto Rico kicked off their year as fellows of the NIH-funded Yale Ciencia Academy (YCA) for Career Development [4]. Led by Yale University's Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, in collaboration with the non-profits Ciencia Puerto Rico and Science Communication Labs, YCA equips biomedical and health sciences PhD students from historically marginalized backgrounds with the knowledge, skills, and networks they need to find great postdoctoral positions that will further their academic interests and career goals.

Fellows are competitively selected from a pool of nationwide applicants to participate in the year-long, hybrid program where they will join a diverse community of supportive peers and role models to develop career planning, mentoring, communication, and networking skills. Selected fellows are within two years of completing their biological or biomedical graduate programs and demonstrate a commitment to inclusion and social impact, the ability to persevere and overcome roadblocks, a willingness to receive and incorporate feedback, and a good understanding of their strengths and weaknesses.

"Our goal is to complement traditional graduate training to help our fellows become the scientists they want to be. Our current cohort of fellows is impressive for their scientific accomplishments, as well as their leadership," remarked Dr. Giovanna Guerrero-Medina, Principal Investigator of YCA.

The new cohort of Fellows participated in an all-expenses paid trip to Yale University on June 19-23, 2023, where they were joined by the 2022-23 cohort of YCA fellows [5] to participate in workshops, community building, networking, and mentoring activities. Both incoming and outgoing fellows met to share experiences, expectations, and accomplishments while building their networks and developing their peer mentoring skills. Furthermore, fellows tackled subjects such as impostor syndrome, belonging, and strategies for self-care by participating in discussions with mental health professional Shawniel Chamanlal. Incoming fellows developed trust and a sense of community through improv, led by theater expert Boyd Branch while outgoing fellows learned how to craft personal narratives to communicate their scientific and personal identities to different audiences, with the guidance of science communication expert Liz Neeley. Additionally, fellows could participate in industry and postdoc panels with previous alumni and meet with Yale faculty to discuss postdoc opportunities.

Over the upcoming year, the 2023-2024 fellows will gather once a month for online conversations and workshops with role models and experts who will share advice and insights to help them develop important career planning, mentoring, and scientific and interpersonal communication skills and products. Although all activities are specifically designed to help fellows successfully transition to a post-PhD position matching their career goals, interests, and values, the skills developed through YCA will continue to serve them at every stage of their scientific career. At the end of the program in the summer of 2024, the cohort will meet again in person at Yale for final workshops and to welcome the next cohort of YCA fellows.

"The opportunity to bring together the incoming and outgoing YCA cohorts is very special. It is a chance for these young leaders to pass off the torch and impart wisdom, along with establishing a feeling of unity and a roadmap for the incoming group," said Dr. Steven Paniagua, Research

## Associate for YCA

With this new class, the YCA program has trained eight cohorts since 2016 for a total of 244 young scientists from approximately 80 institutions across the United States and Puerto Rico. An evaluation of the program indicates that students leave the program more sure of the career they want to pursue, with improved professional development and mentoring practices, and a higher science identity and confidence in their ability to navigate graduate school and career transitions successfully. You can meet the full class of [2023 YCA Fellows here](#) [3].

“YCA provided tools to help me finish my PhD and apply for and secure a postdoc position. It also helped me to find what I wanted in a mentor and express confidence in the research that I wanted to conduct,” expressed Dominique Tanner, YCA 2022 fellow

Students interested in the next YCA application cycle should [sign up here](#) [6].

**Tags:** • [yale ciencia academy](#) [7]

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