

Introducing the 2026 WFIRM Summer Scholars



Mehak Batra

Bioengineering

University of Illinois

Urbana-Champaign

Hi everyone! I am Mehak and I am a sophomore at University of Illinois Urbana Champaign majoring in Bioengineering and minoring in Material Science & Engineering. I am passionate about applying regenerative medicine concepts to problems like organ shortage & transplantation. I am currently working in two research labs on campus on cancer biomaterials and immunotherapy, and second harmonic generation microscopy of mice ovaries. I love research and innovation, and love taking part in clubs and events for that. Outside of bioengineering, I love dancing and I take salsa and bachata classes when I can. I also love to travel, be outdoors, do adventure activities, and go for hikes. I love trying out new places around town

for food, and binge-watching movies and tv shows. I am so excited to spend this summer doing some amazing research and meeting people from across the country!



Molly Beard

Biology

Guilford Technical Community College

Hello! I'm Molly Beard. While I was in high school, my mom and I moved my grandmother from Kentucky to live with us in North Carolina following her Alzheimer's-dementia diagnosis; her condition spurred my curiosity in neuroscience and neurodegenerative diseases. Growing up in the American Saddlebred Show Horse industry instilled in me a strong work ethic and drive. Before returning to complete my undergraduate studies in biomedical engineering, I worked as a personal trainer specializing in corrective exercise. Working with clients with limitations or restrictions placed on their ability to move further pressed me to study human physiology in my free time, eventually stumbling on the cutting-edge field of regenerative medicine. Theorizing how regenerative medicine technology could be applied to improve the lives of my clients came as a thrill; finding potential applications for a multitude of conditions I helped clients work through. Currently, I am a student at Guilford Technical Community College in Jamestown. Soon I plan on transferring to complete my undergraduate studies in biomedical engineering,

with emphasis on neuroscience, and minors in data science and entrepreneurship. In my free time, I enjoy hiking, weightlifting, reading, and feeding my newest interest in sports cars and supercars. Long term, I plan on founding my own biotechnology company, focused on treating neurodegeneration. I am grateful to be selected for the 2026 WFIRM Summer Scholars and am excited to see what the future holds for regenerative medicine.

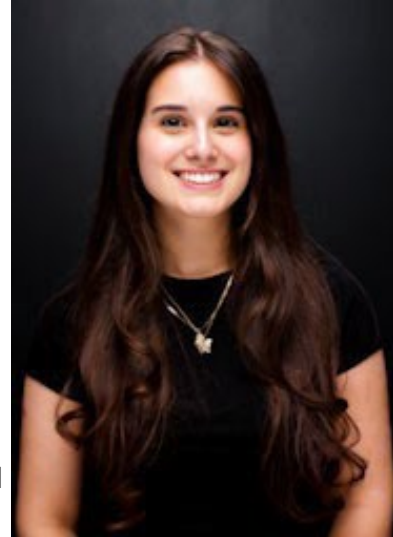
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Eva Cañas

Health & Societies

University of Pennsylvania

My name is Eva Cañas, and I am a first-year student at the University of Pennsylvania on the pre-medical track. My passion for research lies in the translation of immunology, infectious disease, and regenerative medicine into novel vaccine development. This interest was sparked during my time as a Student Researcher at WFIRM, where I studied how 3D lung organ tissue equivalents responded to Influenza A and Adenoviruses. Examining viral pathology in engineered tissues highlighted how regenerative medicine can serve as a critical tool for understanding infectious diseases. Currently, I work in the Vaccine Makers Program at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, where I audit educational materials on vaccine development and immunological concepts for scientific accuracy. Through this role, I explore the practical side of immunology—how we bring scientific advancements out of the lab and into the community. On campus, I am an active member of the Immunology Club, the Penn Science Policy and Diplomacy Group, and the Phi Delta Epsilon pre- medical fraternity. Outside of my academic interests, I enjoy staying active with yoga and the gym, taking outdoor walks, or discovering new coffee spots. I am incredibly excited to return to WFIRM this summer to further explore the intersection of regenerative medicine and translational techniques in developing novel immunological treatments!



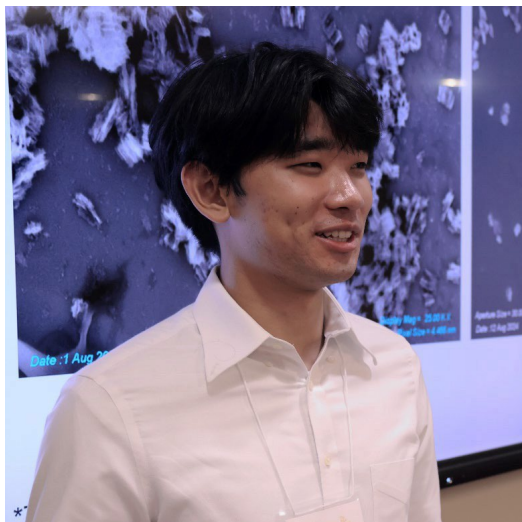
Evelyn Clemens

Biology/Classics

Bowdoin College

My name is Evelyn Clemens, and I am a rising senior at Bowdoin College majoring in both Cellular & Molecular Biology and Classical Studies. I love biology as a field and everything that entails, from entomology to immunology! I am incredibly excited to work in a research lab and get hands-on experience with innovative technologies and research that will serve me well as I look towards my post-graduate future. I am most interested in how understanding lab-grown organoid cell cultures can help us work towards a reality where nobody will have to rely on organ donations for life-saving care.

Introducing the 2026 WFIRM Summer Scholars



Matthew Choi

Biomedical Engineering

California State University, Long Beach

Hello, my name is Matthew Choi, and I'm a senior majoring in Biomedical Engineering at California State University, Long Beach. My interest in regenerative medicine developed while leading my home lab's first 3D bioprinting project. During the process of literature review and experimental design I became fascinated by the potential of such technology to address limiting issues facing regenerative medicine such as the complexity of models and scalability of tissue engineering solutions. In my current project, I am developing alginate- GelMA bioinks to produce aligned skeletal muscle models. My background in biomaterials was further expanded upon during my time at UC San Diego where I contributed to a study investigating the efficacy of various loading conditions for drug- encapsulated porous silicon nanoparticles. After graduation, I plan on pursuing a PhD and eventually a career in R&D. Outside of the lab, you can find me drawing, working out, and playing video games.

Lillian Douglass

Biochemistry

University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Hi! My name is Lillian Douglass (Lily), and I am a rising senior at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro majoring in Chemistry with a concentration in Biochemistry. I grew up in New England but now live just outside the Winston-Salem area. My undergraduate research in natural products focuses on discovering bioactive metabolites in native plants and conducting metabolomics comparisons. This work has developed into an independent, genus-specific project that I plan to prepare as a manuscript for publication as I apply to PhD programs in Chemistry next fall. Outside of the lab, I am a Division I student-athlete competing in cross country, indoor track, and outdoor track, which keeps me busy year- round. When I'm not in school or training, I'm usually with my two cats, Muffin and Bagel. I enjoy running, eating good food, reading, exploring new places, and spending time outdoors. I'm excited to join WFIRM this summer and get to know everyone!



Introducing the 2026 WFIRM Summer Scholars



Clark Eglund

Biochemistry

Augustana University

Hi! I am Clark Eglund, and I will be a junior this fall at Augustana University in Sioux Falls, SD. I am a biochemistry major with a minor in physics. After college I hope to go into research and pursue a PhD or MD-PhD. Last summer, I worked in an organic chemistry research lab, where I modified contact lenses so they could deliver ocular drugs. I have also worked at a biotech company where I purified human antibodies made from transgenic bovine. I have wanted to learn more about regenerative medicine for a while. Part of my inspiration to pursue regenerative medicine comes from reading science fiction books. My favorite author is Neal Shusterman, and I also love classical books like the Iliad. In my free time I enjoy star gazing, running, weightlifting, and listening to music. Right now, my favorite albums are *The Black Parade*, *Epic: The Musical*, and *Hadestown*. I also play tenor/bari sax and piano. If I have free time this summer, I hope to get better at cooking and go hiking in the forests around Winston-Salem. I can't wait to start research at WFIRM this summer and meet everyone!

Aimen Elahi

Polymer Science and Engineering

University of Southern Mississippi

My name is Aimen Elahi and I am a sophomore at the University of Southern Mississippi majoring in Polymer Science and Engineering. I had a rather international upbringing, being born in Dubai and living in Qatar, Pakistan and the USA now for university. I work in two labs currently, one on synthesis and the other on antimicrobial surfaces using bacteriophages. I have been passionate about regenerative medicine since high school and the opportunity to work on the bleeding edge with WFIRM is elating. Beyond academics I have a passion for music and sports. I play three instruments and spent the majority of my life playing soccer. I look forward to a summer of research and community at WFIRM!



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Lauren Hillin

Biology

Trine University

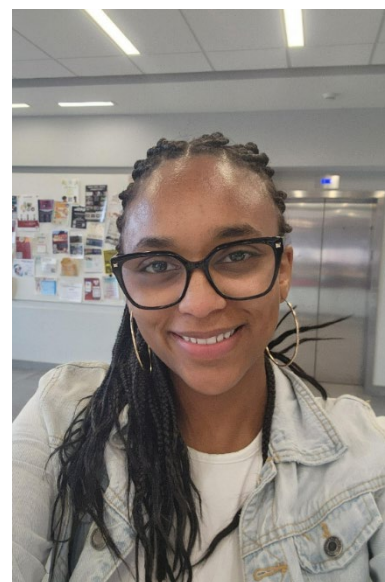
Hi! I am a Junior at Trine University studying Biology on the pre- medicine track, minoring in Chemistry, Psychology, and English. I will be applying to medical school this upcoming cycle! I am originally from Charlotte, North Carolina, so I am excited to be close to home this summer. Currently, I am a researcher at a lab at the University of Michigan doing basic science research on pre-eclampsia and Ehlers- Danlos Syndrome (EDS). Through this lab, I have had the opportunity to present my work at the 2025 Cardiovascular Research Symposium and am writing my first ever publication. I am incredibly interested in orthopedics, and excited to see first- hand how regenerative medicine will play a role in this field. My love for orthopedics stems from being a student-athlete in NCAA acrobatics and tumbling, where I have helped win a national event title and hope to win a few more this season! I am also the President of my University's Chapter of Morgan's Message, a student-athlete mental health awareness organization, and hold roles in several other organizations on campus. I love to lift, spend time with my friends and am also training for my first half- marathon! I am always ready to try something new and am excited to explore Winston - Salem and make new friends!

Makayla Johnson

Biomedical Engineering

Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology

Hello everyone! My name is Makayla Johnson, and I am a junior at Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology with a major in Biomedical Engineering, specifically a concentration in tissue engineering. Originally, I am from the Twin Cities area in Minnesota but have lived in various parts of the country. I am interested in regenerative medicine research and after graduation, I intend to apply for graduate school to participate in a Ph.D. program. My past research experiences have been focused on biomaterial development with hydrogels and extracellular matrix gels. With WFIRM, I am excited to explore more research related to translation and large scale biomanufacturing. Outside of research and class, I am a movie lover, runner, and like to try new foods. Excited to get to know everyone!



Introducing the 2026 WFIRM Summer Scholars



Charlotte Kirschner

Biomedical Engineering

Purdue University

Hi! My name is Charlotte Kirschner, and I just completed my Junior year at Purdue University where I study Biomedical Engineering. Even though I go to school in Indiana I am originally from Michigan and spent the last semester studying abroad in Madrid, Spain. Throughout my classwork and hand-on experiences, I've become interested in the way tissues interact with implantable devices. A big part of this interest stems from a design project where I had to create a meniscus implant, which got me thinking about how engineered materials can support the body's natural healing processes. I also had the chance to shadow an orthopedic surgeon, which gave me a better sense of how these kinds of devices are

used and the difference they can make for patients. Outside of school I enjoy traveling, playing soccer, and spending time outdoors. I am excited to learn even more from the talented scientists at WFIRM and gain experience to help shape my path toward a career in biomedical research.

Caleb McDaniel

Biomedical Engineering

NC State University

My name is Caleb McDaniel, and I'm a rising fourth year student studying Biochemistry and Biomedical Engineering with a concentration in Regenerative Medicine, with minors in Microbiology, Genetics, and Tissue Engineering at North Carolina State University. I was born and raised in Mocksville, North Carolina, only 20 minutes from Wake Forest University. I am pursuing a career in Regenerative Medicine Research, specifically the growth, testing, and application of new tissues and organs. On top of my academic life, I am also the president of the NCSU Club Track, Field and Cross Country team. I'm thrilled to participate in the 2026 WFIRM Summer Scholars Program and I'm looking forward to an amazing summer!



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Aron Mills

Biology

Howard University

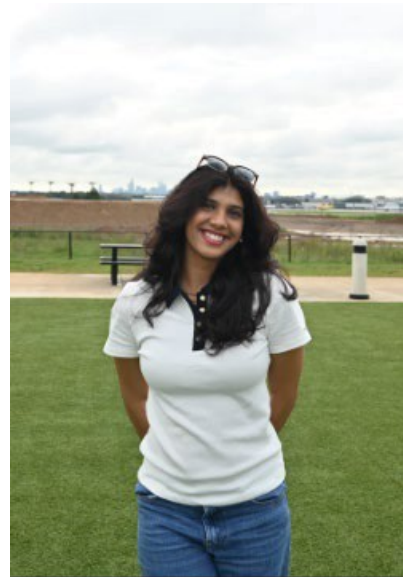
My name is Aron Mills, and I am a rising junior at Howard University majoring in Biology with a minor in Chemistry on the pre-med track. I plan to attend medical school in the near future and ultimately pursue a career as an orthopedic surgeon. Currently, I work in the Farina Lab at Howard, where I conduct research on fish biomechanics and functional systems; an experience that has strengthened my analytical skills and deepened my interest in the mechanics of movement. I am also passionate about regenerative medicine and its potential to improve patient outcomes. Through my academic, research, and clinical experiences, I continue to build a strong foundation for a career in medicine. Outside of academics, I enjoy playing soccer, video games, exploring new activities, spending time at the beach, and dabbling the piano.

Gauri Mishra

Biology

University of Toledo

Hello, my name is Gauri Mishra, and I am from Morrisville, NC. I am a sophomore at the University of Toledo majoring in Biology with minors in Chemistry and Health Humanities, and I am part of the BACC2MD program, a direct pathway to medical school. I'm excited to join the WFIRM Summer Scholars Program and contribute to research in regenerative medicine. I have had the opportunity to engage in diverse research experiences spanning neurodegeneration and molecular immunology, allowing me to explore different facets of biomedical science. Currently, I work as an undergraduate researcher in the Krishnamurthy Lab, where I study host antiviral response mechanisms and innate immune pathways using molecular and cell culture techniques. My academic interests lie at the intersection of molecular biology and patient-centered care, and I am particularly interested in how advances in immunology and molecular signaling can be translated into innovative therapies for chronic disease. Through this program, I am excited to explore a new dimension of research in regenerative medicine and its potential applications in developing targeted and translational therapies. Outside of academics, I enjoy dancing (Bhangra, Bollywood, and hip-hop), swimming, and spending time with friends and family. I'm looking forward to learning from the researchers at WFIRM, connecting with fellow scholars, and gaining hands-on experience that will help shape my path toward a career as a physician-scientist.



Introducing the 2026 WFIRM Summer Scholars



Chloe Mootz

Regenerative Bioscience

University of Georgia

My name is Chloe Mootz, and I am a rising senior at the University of Georgia studying Regenerative Bioscience. I was born in Wisconsin but have spent most of my time in the south in Georgia. In high school, I worked at veterinary hospitals, dreaming of becoming a veterinarian. I loved the fast-paced, spontaneous nature of animal work; however, I noticed a significant gap in the availability of effective treatments for patients. I also became frustrated with the standard of care for my loved ones. That led me to dual-enroll at the University of Georgia, and I discovered the field of regenerative medicine. My time at university has been focused on research, whether in agriculture or regenerative bioscience. Learning how to bridge these two research focus areas has been challenging; however, I have learned that regenerative medicine has many applications. My field research with plants gave me insight

into how plant-derived extracellular vesicles could be used to deliver drugs, and my work with animals and on the farm helped me understand how regenerative therapies could be applied in field settings. In my current research, I am interested in how extracellular vesicles and their cargo modulate skeletal muscle regeneration. Outside of lab work, I enjoy being creative! I like painting and designing scientific illustrations. I will also take any opportunity to be outside, whether it's taking a walk in the park or playing volleyball!

Uditi Patil

Biomedical Engineering

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

My name is Uditi Patil and I am a third-year at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill majoring in Biomedical Engineering. I am currently on a pre-PhD path. My research experience includes working with recombinant protein expression, protein isolation and characterization. Then conjugating these proteins to therapeutic Extracellular Vesicles. I am currently also evaluating nanoparticle-based delivery systems as scalable therapeutic platforms. These experiences along with others have strengthened my interest in biomaterials and translational research. I am excited for the opportunity to learn, develop my skills and become a better researcher through this program. Outside of the lab I enjoy going on hikes and runs, as well as spending time with my family and friends.



Introducing the 2026 WFIRM Summer Scholars



Fabian Phillips

Biology

Forsyth Tech Community College

My name is Fabian Phillips, and I am currently studying at Forsyth Technical Community College with plans to transfer to a North Carolina university as a biology major. I am a student and a veteran of the United States Marine Corps, with the goal of becoming a physician and continuing a life of service to those around me. I have a strong interest in regenerative medicine, with a particular focus on tissue engineering and stem cell research. I am especially interested in how these areas can be translated into clinical treatments to restore function and improve patient outcomes. Programs such as the Armed Forces Institute of Regenerative Medicine (AFIRM) have further reinforced my interest in advancing therapies that support recovery and rehabilitation, particularly for those affected by traumatic injuries and chronic disease. I am eager to work and learn alongside industry leaders while gaining valuable research experience. Outside of my academic pursuits, I enjoy volunteering in my community, hiking in the nearby mountains, and maintaining an active lifestyle.

Yasmeen Quraishi

Neuroscience/Biochemistry

University of Nevada, Reno

Yasmeen Quraishi is pursuing a dual Honors Baccalaureate Degree at the University of Nevada, Reno in Neuroscience, BS, and Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, BS. Her dream is to become a Physician-Scientist who treats and studies neurodegenerative and neurodevelopmental conditions. She currently works in the Kidd Laboratory, under Dr. Thomas Kidd and graduate student Sahara Harrington, focusing on the fat and immune cells of *Drosophila melanogaster* larvae. She is currently focusing on cell culture experiments involving transfections, cell lysis, immunoprecipitations, and cell counting. She has created several DNA constructs that are essential to the lab for important metabolic and cellular experiments. Yasmeen has also been trained in high-resolution fluorescence imaging, larval dissections, immunohistochemistry, bleeding and buoyancy assays, genetic crossing, and several molecular biology techniques. She loves to attend scientific seminars and symposiums to learn about current research in and out of her field. Outside of research, she is the Director and Co-founder of the Nevada Medical Research Consortium, an organization dedicated to supporting bright undergraduate researchers. She is also the President of the UNR Gray for Glioblastoma (GFG) Club, an organization with the mission of fundraising money for research of the aggressive and unforgiving astrocytic cancer, Glioblastoma Multiforme.



Introducing the 2026 WFIRM Summer Scholars



Jayden Ramnarace

Biomedical

Engineering

Boston University

Hi everyone! My name is Jayden Ramnarace and I'm currently studying Biomedical Engineering at Boston University. I love to watch and play sports, but growing up in Brentwood, NY, the only Boston teams you'll ever catch me rooting for are BU's. Playing football for 13 years and even coaching young players myself is what sparked my deep interest in neuroscience, which I'll be formalizing by pursuing a dual degree starting next semester. My primary academic interests center on disease, particularly neurodegenerative conditions, and I'm excited to explore how regenerative medicine intersects with that space. I'm thrilled to be joining WFIRM as an

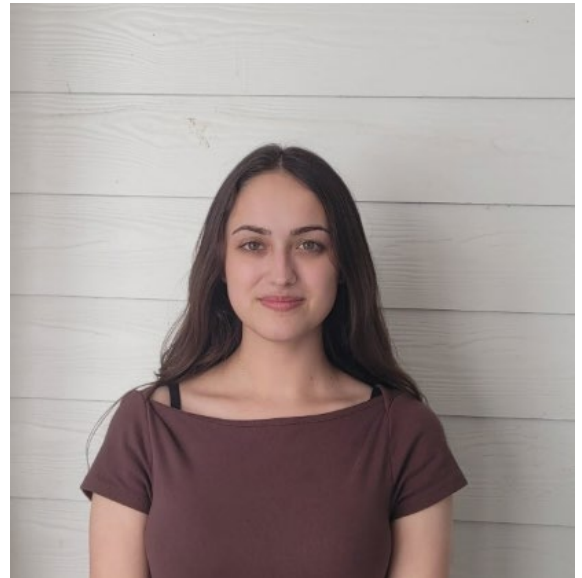
NSF COMPASS-sponsored Summer Scholar and can't wait to meet everyone!

Zofia Sabolsky

Biomedical Engineering

West Virginia University

My name is Zofia Sabolsky, and I am a rising senior at West Virginia University, majoring in biomedical engineering with a minor in molecular medicine. After graduation, I plan to pursue a master's degree to further my education in the field. I have gained research experience in a toxicology lab, where I studied the effects of smoke pit exposure using a rat model, as well as in a NASA-funded microgravity lab, where I analyzed printing methods for silver-silicone coaxial wires designed to mimic nerves in artificial muscles. Outside of academics, I am an active member of the Biomedical Engineering Society (BMES) and Society of Women Engineers (SWE). In my free time, I enjoy reading, watching movies and TV shows, listening to music, and I'm always happy to connect over shared interests. I also like to stay active—this past semester, I joined an intramural soccer team and went on multiple hikes with friends.



Introducing the 2026 WFIRM Summer Scholars



Ryan Seaberg

*Biomedical Engineering, Pre-Med
(Biomechanics)*

University of Colorado Boulder

My name is Ryan Seaberg and I'm a Biomedical Engineering Pre-Med student with an emphasis in Biomechanics at The University of Colorado Boulder. I am originally from Denver, Colorado and plan to attend medical school in the future with emergency medicine, orthopedics, oncology, and anesthesiology, being my current interests. Most recently, I participated in research focusing on Laponite-loaded macrophage backpacks for therapeutic protein delivery and have also just completed my EMT certification. I balance my academic pursuits with my passion for traveling with my latest excursion being a study abroad experience in Lisbon, Portugal. While I was there, I learned more about European

culture and connected with many people from diverse backgrounds which I hope will make me a more versatile future healthcare provider. I've also spent a summer volunteering where I cycled from San Francisco to Washington D.C. over the course of two months to raise awareness and support for the disabled community. This was an empowering experience that showed me how much I enjoy helping others and supporting underserved communities. In my free time, I enjoy being active through running, weightlifting, cycling, and skiing as well as listening to music, cooking, and spending quality time with friends and family.

Taisiia Smirniagina

*Biochemistry
Skidmore College*

Hi, my name is Tai (they/them). I attend Skidmore College in upstate New York, and I am a third-year chemistry major with a biochemistry concentration. I am an international student who is originally from Russia and Kazakhstan. At my home institution, I do research related to the integration of pyroglutamate into *E. coli*'s genetic code. Last summer, I worked on a project for in-situ surgical bioprinting at the Wake Forest Department of Biomedical Engineering, which shaped my interest in biomaterial research. I intend to pursue a PhD in biomedical engineering, and I hope that WFIRM's program will provide me with more exposure to the different fields within biomaterial/tissue engineering research. Outside of school, I engage in a variety of creative hobbies, including silversmithing and fiber arts. I am also on the e-board of Skidmore's Foundry Club.



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Julia Sullivan

Engineering

Wake Forest University

Hello! My name is Julia Sullivan, and I'm from Winston Salem, NC! I am a junior at Wake Forest majoring in engineering and minoring in biology. I have previous research experience studying the electrophysiology of red blood cells and glioblastoma multiforme as well as experience developing human body computational models to study injury biomechanics. My goal is to go to graduate school and pursue a career in biomedical engineering. Outside of academics, I am involved in Alpha Phi Omega national service fraternity, tutoring in engineering, and I enjoy playing sports, and reading. A fun fact about me is I am currently studying abroad in Venice, Italy! I am looking forward to meeting everyone!

Jackie Walker

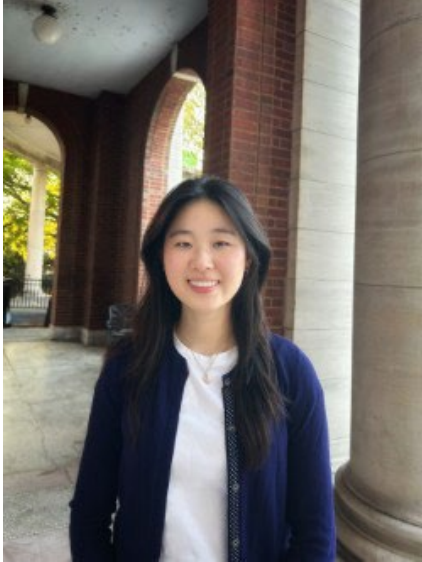
Biology

University of North Carolina Greensboro

My name is Jackie and I am currently a student at UNCG. I am in my final year completing a B.S. in Biology. My personal experience as an ESRD patient and transplant recipient has fueled my interest in tissue engineering. I plan to pursue a PhD when I graduate and hope to go into research to improve treatment options and quality of life for CKD patients. Outside of my passion for science I am also an artist. I work primarily in traditional media and people are my favorite subject matter. I am incredibly excited to meet everyone this summer and get actively involved in a research lab!



Introducing the 2026 WFIRM Summer Scholars



Emily Xu

Neuroscience

Vanderbilt University

Hi! My name is Emily Xu, and I am a junior at Vanderbilt University studying Neuroscience with a minor in Climate Studies. I am currently a member of the Nobis Lab at Vanderbilt, where I research epilepsy and neural circuitry. My previous research experience in drug discovery exposed me to new treatments for neurodegenerative disorders, and I look forward to continuing to explore innovative therapeutic strategies. I am excited to participate in the WFIRM summer program, learn new techniques in regenerative medicine, and discover how these treatments can be applied to patients.

Outside of research, I enjoy making ceramics, hiking, and cooking new dishes. I look forward to immersing myself in a new environment and meeting new friends at Wake Forest this summer!

Bhavana Yeedubilli

Biomedical Engineering

Arizona State University

Hi everyone! My name is Bhavana Yeedubilli, and I am a sophomore studying Biomedical Engineering at Arizona State University. Most recently, I have lived in Hyderabad, India, but I grew up in several different places across the United States. At ASU, I work as an undergraduate researcher in Dr. Vincent Pizziconi's Bioinspired Complex Adaptive Systems (BioCAS) Laboratory, where I work on a project in collaboration with the Mayo Clinic focused on developing tunable, regenerative orthopedic surgical hardware using Bombyx mori silk fibroin. Beyond research, I serve on the executive boards of DIYbio, a synthetic biology and art club, and the Biomedical Engineering Society (BMES) chapter at ASU. In my free time, I love reading, all things art, spending time outdoors, hiking, and trying new things. In the future, I hope to pursue a PhD, so I'm excited to be part of the WFIRM Summer Scholars Program, explore new areas of research, learn more, and meet everyone this summer!

