

ADVANCING HEALTH EQUITY THROUGH MENTORING PROGRAM

Spring 2024 Mentor & Mentee Cohort

Meet our Mentees!

Catharina Kaftan

(she/her)

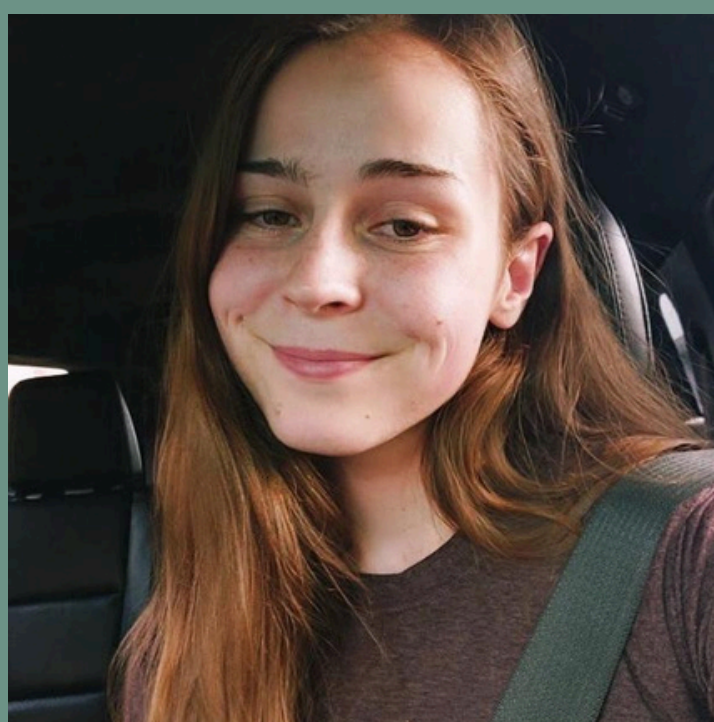


Pre-Nursing

I am from Havre, Montana and am completing my freshman year of college at the University of Montana. I have a love for statistics, anatomy and physiology, and other physical science classes. As a pre-nursing major, I have a desire to work as a pediatric or neonatal nurse upon graduating, and cannot wait to help others and make an impact where I can.

Isabelle Johnson

(she/her)



Human Biological Sciences & Psych & Biochemistry

I am a current undergraduate student at the University of Montana, graduating this month with a Degree in Biology with a concentration in Human Biological Sciences, along with Minors in Psychology and Biochemistry. I am originally from Kalispell and graduated from Glacier High School. This summer, I am attending WWAMI Montana in Bozeman and I am beyond excited! My current goal is to become a pediatrician in Montana, though I am not afraid of where this journey will take me! I've done research at MSU previously, with the Extreme Biofilms Research Experience for Undergraduates.

Faith You

(she/her)

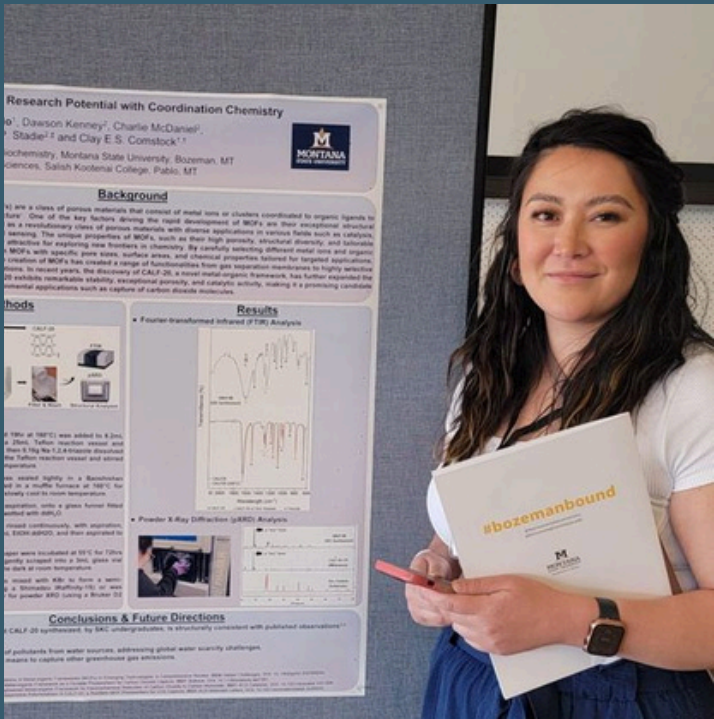


High School Junior & WMT-AHEC Intern

Faith You is a junior at Hellgate High School in Missoula, MT. She aims to mitigate healthcare disparities within her state by examining the situation through the intersection of research, policy, education, and of course, healthcare! She's excited to continue on this mission through her senior year and create tangible changes within her community.

Violet Pablo

(she/her)



Life Science, Cell Biology @ SKC

Violet is in the Life Science, Cell Biology program at Salish Kootenai College. As a mother, Violet prioritizes her education to be an example for her family. In her intake form Violet wrote, “ I am hoping to have someone for guidance whether that be for classes or for my own well being. I am hoping for that little push and drive to motivate myself to “reach for the stars” and to help me believe in myself.

Elli Clark

(she/her)



Integrative Physiology

Hello! My name is Elli Clark, I am currently a sophomore in college, and I am from Eugene Oregon. At the University of Montana I am studying Integrative Physiology with a concentration in Applied Human Physiology and a minor in Spanish, with plans to graduate in June 2026. Right after graduating, my plans are to head to graduate school to obtain an Occupational Therapy Doctorate degree. I am always looking for more opportunities to shadow in different therapy environments as well as volunteering jobs. I love interacting with and helping all ages of people, but I especially love my jobs as a summer-school reading teacher for kids in Eugene and a university tutor to students peers in need of study help.

Bree Knutson

(she/her)



Communicative Sciences & Disorders

I am Bree and I am currently a 3rd year. I hail from Colville which is in northeast Washington State. My major is Communicative Sciences and Disorders, and I aspire to be an audiologist. I am curious about culture, languages, and neuroscience.

Cara Harding

(she/her)



Communicative Sciences & Disorders

My name is Cara, I am currently a Junior in the Communicative Sciences and Disorders program. I'm excited to be learning about Speech pathology because my daughter was born with a cleft lip and has been in speech therapy off and on since she was 18 months old. Helping others is a huge passion of mine as I have worked with many populations including disabled, adults, and children. My dream job is to help kids learn how to communicate with others.

Sarah Krout

(she/her)



Sarah Krout

I'm a senior in the pre-professional Integrative Physiology Undergraduate program at the University of Montana. I hope to become a pelvic floor physical therapist, so that I can help advocate for and support women's health information and resources in rural communities. I am particularly interested in the integration of health and communication, and how better patient-provider relationships can improve health outcomes. Outside of school, I am enjoying gaining experience in PT as I work as a PT Aide at Alpine Physical Therapy, and I support my family business as a school bus driver on the side. I am from Victor in the beautiful Bitterroot valley, where I still love to play in the mountains with my dog, Huckleberry. When I'm not at school or work I enjoy training for back-country ultramarathons, fly fishing, rafting, skiing, and practicing yoga.

Brinn Rogers

(she/her)



Social Work & Substance Abuse Counseling

I'm a senior in the School of Social Work at the University of Montana. I live in Kalispell, Montana with my husband and seven, soon-to-be eight children. My passion for social work is deeply rooted in a desire to support families, particularly women and children. Motherhood has instilled in me a strong sense of empathy, patience, and the ability to connect with people from diverse backgrounds. I plan to continue my education by pursuing a Masters of Social Work (MSW) and obtaining my LCSW and LAC credentials.

Jenna Schabacker

(she/her)



Pharmacy

I grew up in Billings, MT and moved to Missoula after high school to study at the University of Montana. I chose to get a bachelor’s degree in biology with an emphasis in genetics. After that, I spent a number of years working with a molecular biology lab, studying wildlife populations. Healthcare had always been an interest of mine, especially after reading Atul Gawande’s book, Being Mortal. Now, I am about to enter my 4th and final year of pharmacy school. As I look ahead, the possible roles of a pharmacist seem vast, and I don’t yet know where I fit in. In my career, I hope to find innovative ways to work with people in rural settings. I hope to be creative enough to work around the outdated formats of healthcare in favor of methods that better honor and serve individuals and communities.

Jenna Severson

(she/her/they)



Pharmacy

Jenna is a second year pharmacy student from Rapid City, SD. She currently works for OSRX, a compounding pharmacy specializing in eye drops. Areas of interest include compounding, access to healthcare, and health equity.

Marin Welch

(she/her)



PharmD

My name is Marin Welch and I’m a first year student in the PharmD program at the UM Skaggs School of Pharmacy. I was born and raised in North Pole, Alaska and studied at the University of Alaska Fairbanks for 2 years before moving to Montana. I’m hoping to eventually study infectious disease pharmacy.

Meet Our Mentors!

Lauren Kingsford

(she/her)



BSN, RN

Hey there! My name is Lauren , I am a registered nurse and University of Montana as my alma mater. I have my Bachelor's of Science in Nursing degree from Montana Tech. I began my career on the Medical-Surgical floor at Saint Patrick Hospital in Missoula, and began travel nursing during the pandemic. After a couple years I came back to Missoula and began pursuing a new specialty in pre-operative and post-operative nursing. Additionally, I am working on the development of a non-profit that supports Indigenous and rural communities within Montana. I would love to hear more about your aspirations in allied health, and am more than happy to help in any way I can.

Mackenzie Jones

(she/her)



MPH, CHES

Mackenzie Jones, MPH, CHES, is the program manager for the Montana Disability and Health Program (MTDH) which is housed at the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. MTDH is a CDC funded program that aims to increase health and wellness opportunities and healthcare access with and for people with disability through community empowerment; policy, systems, and environmental changes, and health education. Mackenzie started working with MTDH after she graduated from Indiana University with a MPH in Health Education in 2019. Mackenzie is also the Accessibility Liaison for the Disability Section of the American Public Health Association and has been on the executive board for six years. Outside of work life, Mackenzie enjoys trail running, playing cribbage, and performing in musical theater productions.

Haley Cote

(she/her)



PharmD, CPP, AE-C, BCACP, BC-ADM

I obtained my board certification ambulatory care pharmacy (BCACP) in 2016, clinical pharmacist practitioner (CPP) designation in 2017, asthma educator certificate (AE-C) in 2018, board certification in advanced diabetes management (BC-ADM) in 2020, and hold additional certifications in insulin pump training, continuous glucose monitoring, and cardiovascular care. I am the finance leader of MT ADCES Coordinating Body and an active participant on the MT DPHHS Diabetes Advisory Coalition and Cardiovascular Health Learning Collaborative.

I am a faculty affiliate at the University of Montana Skaggs School of Pharmacy and continues to deliver lectures to pharmacy students in the areas of diabetes management and technology, remote patient monitoring, and population health

Sara Schmidt

(she/her)



MBA, RN, RYT

With 24 years of diverse healthcare experience, I began my career as an ICU nurse before transitioning into corporate patient affairs and working for a national quality improvement firm. I then moved into end-of-life care, working in hospice operations and beginning policy work. After obtaining an MBA, I developed an interest in social philanthropy and public health, while also starting an entrepreneurial journey. Currently, I am an AHEC scholar and enrolled in a dual DNP program to become a Family Nurse Practitioner and a PhD program focused on Rural & Indigenous Health. In addition to being a business owner, I work with undergraduate nursing students on the Kalispell campus and research grants with the Montana Office of Rural Health.

Anita Santasier

(she/her)



PT, PhD, OCS, Retired

Dr. Santasier is presently retired (May, 2022) and was formerly an Associate Professor and Chairperson in the School of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Science at the University of Montana where she taught in the musculoskeletal and clinical reasoning threads. She received her Physical Therapy degree from The University of Delaware, her Masters degree in Allied Health Administration from the City University of NY at Hunter College and her PhD from Temple University in Philadelphia, PA. Dr. Santasier has over 40 years of clinical experience and continues to treat patients out of her home pro bono. She is an APTA Certified Orthopedist Specialist, and is active in the Qualitative Research SIG in the Research Academy of the APTA. She has presented both locally and nationally, as well as published on issues of education, diversity and qualitative research. She received her highest honor in 2015 from the Education Section of the APTA: the 2015 Education in Leadership Award.

Katie Karas

(she/her)



LCSW, MSW/Assistant Director of Field Education, Clinical Assistant Professor

After years of working at the Poverello Center and Youth Homes in Missoula I returned to school to get my MSW degree. It was never my plan to pursue a clinical career, but while getting my degree I discovered a passion for clinical social work and upon graduation I began working as a child and family therapist at an outpatient clinic. Since then I've transitioned to working full-time at UMT where I teach courses focused on integrating theory into practice and working with youth and families. I also maintain a small private practice where I see adolescents and young adults with Complex-PTSD, along with their families. My practice incorporates attachment-based interventions along with components of Internal Family Systems and Emotion-Focused Therapy.

Kerry Haney
(she/her)



PharmD

I grew up in central WY in a small town. Our science training was really good through middle school and high school, but I really wasn't very aware of the healthcare training programs and career pathways and explored those more during early years in college. After researching options, I selected Pharmacy. In 1995, I completed a BS in Pharmacy from the University of Wyoming and started a hospital PGY1 residency in Bellevue, WA. After completing that program, I worked in a geriatrics primary care clinic for 8 years which was a team-based practice model. (SW, RN, physicians, APRNs, etc)

In 2006, I moved to Missoula and in 2007 began working at the University of Montana. During that time, I have had a few different positions. I began as the IPHARM program clinician. Then moved to an adjunct faculty role at the Missoula College teaching pharmacology classes for a variety of the health programs. In 2011, I started as a faculty member for the Skaggs School of Pharmacy with a practice site at Partnership Health Center. In 2013, I started working part-time with the Family Medicine Residency Program of Western Montana and are now fully working for this program.

Laurel Chambers
Haskins
(she/her)



Mineral Community Hospital
PA-C, CEO

I am born and raised in Montana and returned to my hometown to practice as a Physician Assistant 23 years ago. While at Mineral Community Hospital I have worked in the clinic, ER and hospital providing patient care. Three years ago I stepped into the CEO role at our hospital. I still work the floor on occasion as well. In addition, I serve as the Public Health officer in Mineral County.

Shayna Killam
(she/her)



PharmD, MS (Pharmacist, RpH)

I am a pharmacist and postdoctoral fellow researching pharmacogenomic testing implementation and health equity at the University of Montana's L.S. Skaggs Institute for Health Innovation. I am privileged to work with a group that advocates for equitable access to innovative health care technologies among underserved groups such as rural and tribal patients. I also work as a community pharmacist in Missoula. While I'm not working, I love to spend time with my children biking, hiking, and camping in the beautiful mountains around Missoula.