



# Loyola Law School Loyola Marymount University

The Coelho Center for  
Disability Law, Policy and Innovation

## THE COELHO CENTER LAW FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM



**Central to the mission of The Coelho Center for Disability Law, Policy and Innovation is bringing together and fostering the development of leaders from our disability community.**

In particular, we believe in creating a strong pipeline of law students with disabilities who will go on to serve as attorneys, judges, public policy professionals and politicians. Our ultimate goal is to increase representation in policy spaces where decisions are being made. In order to do so, we need to strengthen the pathway into law school for students with disabilities.

**Too often, students with disabilities are discouraged from attaining higher education.** Educational barriers, along with negative assumptions and attitudes, dissuade our community from reaching careers in law and policy.

**This must change.** The Coelho Center Law Fellowship Program, the only one of its kind, targets college students with disabilities to intervene and provide encouragement, support and mentorship that is crucial to success. The Coelho Center program includes a one-week summer intensive course at Loyola Law School; an academic-year-long virtual course; a mentoring program between the fellows and law students and attorneys with disabilities; academic planning and support through the law school application process; and a \$1,000 stipend to be used for school supplies.

Learn more at [lls.edu/CoelhoCenter](https://lls.edu/CoelhoCenter).

### 2019-2020 COELHO CENTER FELLOWS



**Abdurazak Kedir Abdu** worked for the Ethiopian Institution of the Ombudsman as an attorney and the Ethiopian Radiation and Nuclear Regulatory Authority as Director of Legal Services. Abdu received his LL.M. at the University of Pretoria in Human Rights and Democratization in Africa. He helped draft the African protocol on disability rights. Abdu interned at the African Union headquarters, assisted in the development of the Continental Action Plan on Disability Rights and Policies, and helped launch a project designed for disability inclusion. In India, Abdu drafted a disability inclusion strategy for the Allianz Insurance Captive Office. In 2017, Abdu resettled in the United States, where he currently is a law student at Capital University Law School in Ohio.



**Alice S. Bruns** is a second-generation American by way of Uruguay. Shortly after birth, Alice was diagnosed with Spina Bifida. Alice graduated from California State University, Long Beach, with a degree in sociology and a graduate degree in Public Administration. Alice worked as a Policy Advisor at the United States Department of Labor, Office of Disability and Employment Policy, through a prestigious internship. Alice collaborated with her peers to highlight programs that would enhance employment opportunities for disabled people. On returning home to Southern California, Alice volunteered at Disabled Resources Center Inc., a nationally recognized Independent Living Center. Alice was soon asked to join the staff, and was quickly promoted to Employment Services Supervisor.



**Allilsa Fernandez** graduated magna cum laude from Stony Brook University in December 2018 with a B.A. in psychology, despite being told she would never be able to attend school because of her struggles with psychosis. Allilsa is currently a legal intern at the Anti-Violence Project in NYC. She has completed an internship at the Daniels Initiative, where she tracked policies on the criminal justice system and voting rights, as well as researched mental health legislation. She founded Peer Mental Health Alliance, an organization that provides resources, peer-to-peer support and creative arts programming, which aims to end the stigma. Through her activism, Allilsa fought for and assured ADA compliance at Stony Brook.



**Alyssa Reign Simmons** attends high school and is an advocate, author and teen-spokesperson for sickle cell disease. Alyssa has made several public advocacy appearances on the "Trinity Broadcast Network Show" and "The John Kerwin Show," and appeared in several publications. She has discussed sickle cell disease in radio interviews, local newspapers, community and educational events, and health care forums. Alyssa has volunteered through tutoring, hospital visitations, raising funds and helping to raise several hundred gallons of blood donations. She has visited Congress, where she spoke about implicit bias. Alyssa would like to become a civil rights attorney to represent those like her who strive every day to be treated equally.



**Anyssa D. Egans** was diagnosed with ADHD at 12 years old. She is currently studying Social Work/Pre-Law as a rising senior at Mount Saint Mary's University. Anyssa is currently an intern for the City of Los Angeles Councilwoman Nury Martinez, 6th District. This past summer Anyssa worked for Omar Gastelum and Associates, a private practice law firm specializing in family and immigration law. She is active with the Young People for Fellowship and the University of Pennsylvania Law School Fellowship. As a fellow, Anyssa has developed a Blueprint for Social Justice to address police brutality within the black and brown communities. Being bi-racial, she sees the pain and suffering that both communities endure.



**Arielle Swinehart** is from Ohio and currently a sophomore at the Ohio State University. She is majoring in Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies. She is passionate about disability justice and an advocate to end stigma around psychological disabilities. Arielle is a Morrill Scholar, which is a scholarship for students passionate about social justice. After graduation, Arielle hopes to attend law school and learn how to best advocate for victims/survivors of sexual assault.



**Carla Lehmann** is interested in a legal education to better advocate for her son. Currently a leader in the parent advocacy community, she has participated in various community trainings, seminars and parent support groups, and speaks publicly with local disability organizations. Carla created various social media support groups, in both English and Spanish, to help educate, inform and provide outreach services to parents of children with disabilities in California. Carla is currently completing her degree in Paralegal Studies with honors at the L.A. Trade-Technical College (LATTCC). Before her advocacy work, Carla managed accounts and projects within the online marketing and advertising corporate world for over 10 years.



**Elayne Ostot** is the author of Public Health Girl, a website detailing public health in our current political climate. She holds a B.S. in Public Health from University of Texas at Arlington, where she has written for the university's newspaper and served as a representative for the Office of Students with Disabilities. Elayne addressed issues with transportation and safety, as well as advocated for an increase in the number of counseling and support staff on campus to aid students. She has worked with the American Cancer Society on its HPV Cancer Free program to design and present an accessible and educational seminar to students about the importance of HPV awareness and address barriers to vaccinations.



**Jaron Pensinger** is from Chambersburg, PA, and a student at Georgetown University, where he majors in International Relations and minoring in Russian and Entrepreneurship. In high school, Jaron was the co-chair of the Youth Advisory Board and worked with his peers to bring community awareness to youth delinquency and poverty. He was an active member of Youth Court, where he was a student advocate. At Georgetown, he founded the club wrestling team and is involved in the university's Prison Outreach Program. Jaron tutors individuals who are incarcerated and who are passionate about learning. Jaron is currently an intern at the Office of Congressman Conor Lamb in Washington, D.C.



**Jesus Macias** is a LatinX senior hailing from California State University Fullerton. He plans to graduate in spring 2020 with a triple concentration in Social Inequalities, Deviance and Crime, and Health and Social Welfare. His previous research, focused on programs that used physical activity to increase the quality of life for people living with visual impairments. Macias' current research observes the experiences of people living with visual impairments as they transition to and navigate through higher education. As a student who understands vision loss firsthand, Macias strives to fight for people with visual impairments or blindness by being an activist.



**Jose Gutierrez** was born in Mexico and came to the United States when he was nine months old. He grew up in Los Angeles, where he joined the United States Army after graduating high school. Jose served for eight years and was deployed four times. He now has his bachelor's degree in business, an M.B.A, and a Master of Studies in Law. Jose suffers from bipolar disorder, PTSD and a traumatic brain injury from his time in the military. These disabilities have been a daily struggle but do not hold him back. Jose's lifelong dream is to attend a top law school. Armed with a law degree, he believes he can make a difference in the lives of many disabled veterans.



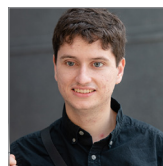
**Kenna Chick** is a senior at Georgetown University studying International Relations and minoring in Disability Studies. As the Vice President of her student government, Chair of the GU Mental Health Policy Coalition, and President of Project Lighthouse, Kenna worked to increase mental health resources. Kenna's mission is to defend the rights of people with mental illness. She previously interned at the U.S. Senate HELP Committee and will intern at the U.S. House of Representatives Education and Labor Committee this spring. Upon graduation, Kenna aims to pursue a law degree to further her advocacy in mental health and disability rights."



**Matthew Yanez** earned his degree in Political Science at CSU - Northridge in 2019. Civic engagement and community outreach became the cornerstone of Matthew's undergraduate experience during his time campaigning in his local district. Matthew's desire to uplift underserved communities was further developed during his time working with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute in Washington, D.C. Matthew's goal is to pursue a career in law to one day bridge the gap between communities of color, the disability community and accurate representation in government. Matthew now works as a law clerk at an established law firm in Los Angeles



**Sandria Tran** is a first-generation student studying Comparative Literature, Gender & Sexuality Studies, and Media Arts and Practice. As someone with bipolar disorder and generalized anxiety, she is excited to advocate for radical disability recognition through understanding inclusive infrastructures and spaces. In an ideal world, she sees a compassionate, altruistic learning future where she can combat ableism through academia and libraries. Sandria finds herself at odds with the rigid formalities and ableist academic discourses and would like to become a kind, generous scholar who can bring provocative ideas about including those who struggle outside the privileged spaces of academia.



**Vejas Vasiliauskas** is a senior at Loyola Marymount University, where he is studying English. He has been blind since birth due to Norrie's disease. Vejas has been an avid Braille reader from a very young age and has participated various times in the National Braille Challenge. After graduating high school, Vejas attended the Louisiana Center of the Blind in Ruston, LA where he had classes in skills such as Braille, technology, travel, cooking and wood shop, which made it easier to transition into college. Vejas has a passion for both reading and writing and is a staff writer for his college newspaper, The Loyolan.

## About The Coelho Center for Disability Law, Policy & Innovation

The Coelho Center, an interdisciplinary center intersecting all Loyola Marymount University colleges and housed at LMU Loyola Law School, pursues a unique multi-pronged mission: convening thought leaders to pursue positive change on disability issues; leveraging technology to advance the lives of people with disabilities; creating a pipeline of lawyers with disabilities to populate the bench and hold elected office; and fostering a university-wide dialogue on disability-rights issues. The Coelho Center also draws on multiple areas of expertise from other LMU colleges. Founded by former congressman, disability rights icon and LMU alumnus Hon. Tony Coelho (LMU '64), The Coelho Center is the only organization of its kind at a Catholic university in America and the only one housed at a top U.S. law school. Details about The Coelho Center are available at [www.lls.edu/coelho-center](http://www.lls.edu/coelho-center).