

ASU students win prestigious U.S. Department of State fellowships

[Home](#) / [News and Events](#) / [News](#) / ASU students win prestigious U.S. Department of State fellowships

Novel coronavirus information

[Barrett COVID-19 Information Site](#) |
 [Student Concern Form](#) |
 [Emergency Scholarship](#) |
 [Spring 2021 update](#) |
 [FAQ page](#) |
 [Novel coronavirus updates](#)

January 25, 2021

Two recent graduates and a senior at Arizona State University have won prestigious fellowships offered by the United States Department of State.

Tatum James and Jacqueline White Menchaca, both 2020 ASU graduates, have been awarded the Charles B. Rangel International Affairs Program Fellowship. Additionally, senior Cameron Vega has been awarded the Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship.

Both programs provide high-level internships with the Department of State and substantial financial support for graduate study leading to a career in the U.S. Foreign Service.

This marks the first time that ASU has produced multiple Rangel Fellowship recipients in one year, according to Kyle Mox, director of the Office of National Scholarship Advisement, which assisted James, Menchaca and Vega with their fellowship applications.

“This remarkable achievement illustrates the outcome of ASU’s commitment to inclusion and student success. Much like the university, both the Rangel and Pickering programs measure their success by whom they include and how they help them succeed,” Mox said.

The most recent ASU student to receive the Rangel Fellowship was [Paula Crawford](#) in 2018. A 2014 graduate of ASU and an alumna of the Fulbright U.S. Student program, Crawford is currently completing a Master of Public Administration degree with an emphasis in International Security Policy at Columbia University in New York. The most recent ASU recipients of the Pickering Fellowship are [Matthew Jernstedt](#) in 2019 and [Monet Niesluchowski](#) in 2017. Jernstedt is pursuing a master’s degree at Georgetown University, while Niesluchowski attends Indiana University.

“Our continued output in these prestigious programs underscores how prized the educational experience we provide our students really is. Many students don’t think of ASU this way, but we truly are a ‘global university,’” Mox added.

The Rangel and Pickering programs are administered by Howard University and are intended to attract and prepare young people for careers in international service and to promote greater diversity and excellence in the U.S. Foreign Service.

Every year, each program awards up to 45 fellowships for graduate study through a highly competitive nationwide process. In addition to up to \$42,000 over two years to support the completion of a master’s degree, the programs also provide federal internships, mentoring, and professional development activities. Fellows who successfully complete either program receive appointments as Foreign Service Officers, in accordance with applicable law and State Department policy. Fellows agree to serve five years in the Foreign Service.

The Fellowship Program is highly competitive and seeks applicants with a strong academic background, a commitment to service, and an interest in making a difference in the world around them.

Rangel and Pickering Fellows are currently representing the U.S. in 60 countries around the world, in areas as diverse as Africa, East Asia, Latin America, South Asia, Europe, Eurasia, and Canada. They are promoting human rights, helping American citizens in trouble overseas, enhancing prosperity and development, deepening ties between the United States and people in different countries, and supporting U.S. global values and interests in many different ways.

Brianna Miloz, ONSA program coordinator, worked closely with the students throughout the extremely competitive application process, which included drafting personal statements, completing a writing exercise and an official interview with representatives of the fellowship programs.

“Having a total of two Rangel fellows and one Pickering with only 45 fellows being selected per fellowship program each year speaks highly to the quality of the students at ASU,” Miloz said.

“The students have been heavily involved in various organizations, internships and work experiences throughout their undergraduate careers. Our fellows have certainly demonstrated unique skills and characteristics, such as integrity, compassion and leadership, which make them excellent individuals to participate in these fellowships.”

2021 Rangel Fellows



Jacqueline White Menchaca

Jacqueline White Menchaca describes herself as “a proud non-traditional, first-generation transfer student from Mesa Community College.”

Menchaca transferred from MCC to ASU through the Public Service Academy’s Next Generation Service Corps in 2018 with a full-tuition scholarship. She graduated ASU last December with a bachelor’s degree in public service and public policy with an emphasis on homeland security and emergency management. She has applied to several graduate programs and plans to pursue a master’s degree in public policy and international relations.

“Receiving such a prestigious fellowship that is committed to promoting diversity in the Foreign Service is a great honor,” Menchaca said.

“As a Mexican American woman, a historically underrepresented population in the Department of State, I am beyond proud of this accomplishment. As a future Foreign Service Officer, I look forward to advocating for American interests abroad and bridging the gap in representation that distinguishes the Latino community in the Foreign Service while doing so,” she said.

Menchaca grew up in Arizona, near the U.S.-Mexico border. Her mother emigrated from Mexico to the U.S. at the age of 17 and her father worked in the Foreign Operations Branch of the U.S. Border Patrol. She believes this family history and her multi-cultural background gives her a unique perspective on foreign relations.

In 2013-14, she was a Rotary International Youth Exchange Ambassador in Ecuador. As an undergraduate, Menchaca received a Boren Scholarship to study abroad in Tanzania. She worked as a staff assistant for U.S. Congressman Ruben Gallego, participated in the McCain Institute’s Policy Design Studio and completed internships with the German Marshall Fund and Search For Common Ground-Tanzania.

“This fellowship provides me a pathway into the Foreign Service as well as financial support for a graduate degree from the school of my choice. After completing the required five years of service through the fellowship agreement I plan to stay in the Foreign Service and dedicate my career to promoting narratives of peace, championing human rights, and working to create equitable opportunities for women and marginalized groups globally,” she said.



Tatum James

Tatum James graduated ASU last May with a bachelor’s degree in global studies and Spanish with a concentration in linguistics and honors from Barrett, The Honors College at ASU.

“I spent the last couple of years trying to prepare myself to be a good candidate, and much to my delight, I won. It’s an opportunity of a lifetime! I still can’t quite believe it and I feel so grateful,” she said.

“I always knew I wanted to work in the field of international relations, but it wasn’t until I learned about this fellowship that I realized I could live out my dreams in the Foreign Service: serving my country, traveling the world and learning languages— it just fit.”

As an undergraduate, James studied abroad in Barcelona, Spain with the Benjamin J. Gilman International Scholarship, a State Department program funded by the U.S. government.

She also interned with the Department of State Virtual Student Federal Service Program, in which she mentored Albanian high school students. She recently was awarded a U.S. Department of State Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship to North Macedonia. She speaks Spanish and Albanian and has studied Portuguese and Catalan.

James has the next few years mapped out. In May, she will begin a congressional internship in Washington, D.C. as a Rangel Fellow. In July, she will go to Tetovo, North Macedonia as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant to teach English to university students for a year. In June 2022, she will begin a second internship as a Rangel Fellow at a

U.S. embassy abroad.

She is interested in pursuing a Masters of Public Diplomacy at the University of Southern California and hopes to be admitted there and begin coursework in the fall of 2022. In May 2024 she expects to be sworn into the U.S. Foreign Service.

2021 Pickering Fellow



Cameron Vega

“I am honestly still in disbelief,” Cameron Vega said about being selected for the Pickering Fellowship.

“It is hard to imagine that my life plans became solidified overnight after being selected for the Pickering. I also feel extremely proud to represent the state of Arizona and Arizona State University within the fellowship cohort.”

Vega, a student in Barrett, The Honors College, is double majoring in civic and economic thought and leadership and political science with a minor in history and certificates in human rights, political economy, religion and conflict, and Russian and East European studies.

He is hoping to attend Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies this fall to pursue a Master of Arts in International Relations with a focus on security, strategy, and statecraft.

“My future goal is to enter into the Foreign Service and work in international organization affairs,” he said.

“Fortunately, the Pickering Fellowship provides a direct pathway into the Foreign Service upon completion of graduate school, so my goal is within reach.”

Vega said that as an undergraduate at ASU, he has made the most of every opportunity he could. He has been involved with several student organizations, serving as president of the Alexander Hamilton Society and a participant

in Model United Nations. He also was a research fellow at the Center on the Future of War and the Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict.


His extracurricular work included interning for the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and U.S. Department of State Office of UN Political Affairs, both in Washington, D.C.







Vega believes his involvement in student organizations, research experience and internships were critical to his application. In addition to that, the classical liberal education that he received from the School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership helped him stand out among other candidates, Vega said.

“I am thankful that ASU has put such an emphasis on fostering a positive environment for student organizations on campus,” he said.

Ranjani Venkatakrishnan, a May 2020 Barrett, The Honors College graduate who is currently pursuing a master’s degree at ASU’s Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, contributed to this article.

Tags: News, ONSA, Student Story
[Printer-friendly version](#)



<p>Contact us</p> <p>Contribute</p>	<p>Academics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barrett Signature Courses Thesis and Creative Project Scholarships, Fellowships, Grants and Awards Research Project Excellence 	<p>Connect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advising Team Faculty Directory Staff Directory Honors Digest Tempe Room Requests Poly Room Requests Barrett Intranet Calendar 	<p>Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barrett Emergency Fund Invest in Barrett Service Arts and Culture
---	--	---	---