



# The Kreisman Graduate Fellows Program

Training  
the Next  
Generation  
of Housing  
Leaders



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
CHICAGO

Mansueto Institute  
for Urban Innovation

**“Housing insecurity is one of the most challenging issues of our time, in the U.S. and around the globe. Solving this challenge requires leaders who are able to bring together points of view, concepts, and methods that can form new systems of thinking and acting. The Kreisman Graduate Fellows will be those future leaders, simultaneously generating cutting-edge ideas and informing transformative change.”**

**Luís Bettencourt**

Inaugural Director, Mansueto Institute for Urban Innovation  
Professor of Ecology and Evolution and the College  
Associate Faculty, Department of Sociology



## To understand the role of housing in the transformation of cities, students and researchers must take an interdisciplinary, systems-based approach.

Interdisciplinary thinking is central to the Kreisman Graduate Fellows program, positioning these future leaders to build a career that will transform the field - whether as a researcher, a builder, or a policymaker. The program brings together students from across the University of Chicago's professional schools and research programs to explore interrelated challenges within housing policy, law, and markets. Through this experience, Fellows are poised to conceptualize and lead sustainable housing solutions through their future work in academia, civic agencies, housing finance, community development, and beyond.

The Kreisman Fellows themselves offer a rich and diverse set of skills and subject matter expertise, creating a critical blend of housing research and practice. The interdisciplinary cohort challenges each Fellow to look beyond his or her own specialization and internalize best practices and techniques from other disciplines. Through the rigorous inquiry and debate that is signature to the University of Chicago, Fellows gain novel insights that will ideally position them to address systemic challenges in sustainable ways.

Through the program, Fellows gain exposure to the vast spectrum of housing interventions and professions, from place-based revitalization to public financing of affordable housing. Students meet with housing policy leaders and thinkers in Chicago and beyond, such as city commissioners, real estate developers, policy advocates, and neighborhood-based organizations. These interactions with experts provide an unfiltered look at the complexities of the field, as well as the tools needed to affect structural change and improve long-term stability in communities.

The Kreisman Initiative is creating a pipeline of University of Chicago-trained talent who will lead scientific advancement and expand the state-of-the-art in the housing field, locally and around the world. They will approach housing as a system with social, economic, and environmental levers, and apply this lens to address complex questions in industry and scholarship for generations to come.

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Professor of Ecology and Evolution and the College  
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## MEET OUR FELLOWS

# Coming together to understand the complexities of housing research and practice, and how the intersection of housing perspectives can inform new, innovative solutions.

## Our students serve society and have the knowledge and skills to drive transformative change.

The Kreisman Initiative for Housing Law and Policy brings together students, faculty, and professionals from multiple disciplines to develop new integrative knowledge, data, and policy about housing.

The Kreisman Graduate Fellows Program is a cohort of University of Chicago graduate students from across fields of study who are committed to pursuing careers in housing research or practice. The initiative is a partnership of the University of Chicago Law School, UChicago GRAD, the Office of Civic Engagement, and the Mansueto Institute for Urban Innovation,

which brings programs and scholars together to study the fundamental processes that drive, shape, and sustain cities.

The Graduate Fellows Program runs for one academic year and supports graduate and PhD students in law, policy, social services, social sciences, and business. During the program, Kreisman Fellows take part in a range of professional development activities, including intimate lunch-and-learn meetings, site visits, a two-day trek to a major metropolitan area to meet with housing experts, and an internship or research project of their own design.

### The goals of the Graduate Fellows Program are to:

- Expose fellows to a wide array of perspectives within the field of housing, from policy to advocacy, real estate to research.
- Foster interdisciplinary discussions around key issues and opportunities facing the broad field of housing.
- Support Fellows' exploration of where they may have the greatest impact through their own work and facilitate a hands-on experience in the field.
- Help Fellows build professional skills and contacts to bolster their future careers in housing research or practice.
- Build an enduring network of housing scholars and practitioners, driving innovative change at the University of Chicago and beyond.

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**This program is made possible by the generous support of David Kreisman, AB '60, JD '63, and his wife, Susan.**

**LEFT** The 2020 Kreisman Graduate Fellows (l to r, top to bottom) Emma Sperry, Virginia Murillo, Stephen Crano, Grey Pierce, Seongjin Park, Bhargavi Ganesh, Nick Olsen, Jen Bisgaier, Keyira Jones (not pictured: Laurel Chen)

# The 2020 Kreisman Graduate Fellows



Specializing in real estate and housing law, including transactions, finance, and land use

## Jennifer Bisgaier

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**Jen Bisgaier** is a law student focused on real estate and housing law. She is part of the University of Chicago Law School's Housing Initiative Clinic and has taken coursework at the Law School pertaining to real estate transactions, state and local finance, land use, and the Fourteenth Amendment. In summer 2019, Jen worked as a summer associate in Goulston & Storrs's DC office, where she performed numerous assignments for the firm's real estate transactions and land use groups. The previous summer, she interned for the Poverty and Race Research Action Council, where she wrote a memo to support litigation strategies related to changes in HUD's approach to disparate impact, supported an Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing assessment in Contra Costa County, and co-authored a research and advocacy guide on environmental justice. Jen currently performs foreclosure intake services for Chicago Volunteer Legal Services. She also enjoys traveling with fellow law students to learn about legal and housing issues in other parts of the country. This past spring break, she worked with public defenders in Knoxville, Tennessee. During her first year of law school at George Washington University, Jen spent part of her winter break volunteering in New Orleans with the housing unit of Southeast Louisiana Legal Services. Outside of her studies, Jen enjoys training for triathlons with UChicago's triathlon club, doing yoga, listening to podcasts, trying new recipes of baked goods, and volunteering. ■



Exploring community-driven decision making in urban planning and community-controlled housing models

## Laurel Chen

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**Laurel Chen** is a Social Service Administration graduate student focused on affordable housing and neighborhood development. She is interested in community-driven decision making in urban planning and community-controlled housing models. Before attending graduate school, Laurel worked for Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness, focusing on a range of homelessness prevention strategies, including the expansion of affordable housing through a \$37 million bond, the improvement of employment services for the homeless population, and the development of a statewide inventory of affordable housing units. During her first year of graduate school, Laurel interned with Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing. Working in collaboration with attorneys and eviction court judges, Laurel was integral in the development of the city's first Eviction Diversion Program, allowing tenants to access funding to prevent eviction. During the summer between her first and second year of graduate school, Laurel was awarded a Graduate Global Internship with the East Bay Permanent Real Estate Cooperative (EB PREC) in Oakland, CA. There, she immersed herself in learning and creating materials about EB PREC's innovative housing model, which leverages community investment to purchase community-controlled housing. Laurel enjoys storytelling through film and writing. She has produced short videos, including one on the experiences of students of color in predominantly white schools. ■



**Interested in the intersection of housing, social service delivery systems, and education**

## Stephen Crano

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-  **EDUCATION** B.A., History, Politics & Philosophy, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA

**Stephen Crano** is pursuing an M.P.P. at the Harris School of Public Policy with a focus on organizational management, data analytics, and public finance. Prior to attending Harris, Stephen worked as Director of Basic Needs Services at Community Action Network, a small nonprofit organization in Ann Arbor, Michigan. There, he managed multiple teams across a range of service areas, including after school programs, county-wide food distributions, and eviction prevention programs for residents of subsidized housing. Interested in working at the intersection of housing, social service delivery systems, and education, Stephen has been an AmeriCorps VISTA, Teach For America corps member, and an Education Pioneers Summer Fellow. In the latter position, he worked with Chicago-based Education Systems Center to build workforce development pipelines across Illinois, targeting high needs employment areas. As a Kreisman Fellow, Stephen is working on an independent study project examining accessibility to public resources for residents of Chicago Housing Authority properties. When he isn't working on evidence-based policy solutions, Stephen is usually cooking, rock climbing, playing piano, or biking along Lake Michigan (weather permitting). ■



**Understanding the impact of data and technology on housing outcomes for working families**

## Bhargavi Ganesh

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**Bhargavi Ganesh** is a graduate student focused on understanding the impact of data and technology on housing outcomes for working families. This past summer, she interned at the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, within the Division of Consumer and Community Affairs. While at the Fed, she worked on projects in a number of policy areas, including student loans, housing, and fintech. At the University of Chicago, she has been applying statistical and machine learning methods, creating databases, and learning how to use data science to both highlight issues in public policy and build solutions to these problems. For example, last year, she worked with a team to build an affordable housing locator to help individuals with housing vouchers more easily find properties that accept these vouchers. In her machine learning class, she worked on a group project to predict recidivism in the state of North Carolina. Prior to joining the University of Chicago, she was a research analyst at the Urban Institute's Housing Finance Policy Center, where she contributed research and data visualization on a number of projects related to minority and low-income housing outcomes and disparities. Outside of school and work, Bhargavi is a passionate musician and loves performing vocal concerts in a range of genres including Indian classical music, jazz, and soul. ■



Using a clinical approach to policy and program development to promote population wellbeing

## Keyira D Jones

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**Keyira Jones** is a third-year graduate student at the University of Chicago’s School of Social Service Administration, with a concentration in Social Administration. Her interest is in using a clinical approach to policy and program development to promote population wellbeing. She has an academic focus on studying spirituality, resilience, and mental health among those most impacted by criminal justice and public benefits policies. She is trained in Trauma Informed Care from SSA and certified in Mental Health First Aid. Keyira is a full-time Research Specialist at the University of Chicago’s Center for HIV Elimination (CCHE), as well as a Quality Assurance intern there. In this capacity, she serves as a case manager and interventionist for various research projects. She is also responsible for conducting needs assessments, developing protocols/manuals, and central databases for CCHE’s data management team. Keyira has also developed and implemented a quality improvement project to understand barriers to transplant evaluation in UCMC’s Nephrology Clinic and there conducted research on enhancing communication and CKD (chronic kidney disease) outcomes. Keyira has volunteered as a Skilled Assessor to enroll various shelter residents in Chicago’s Coordinated Entry System. Currently, she is a member of the HIV Housing Task Force, a committee of service providers advocating for housing for people living with HIV or AIDS. For fun she likes reading books on dystopian societies, mental health, and esoteric spirituality. ■



Focusing on municipal finance, social policy, and policy analysis

## Virginia Murillo

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**Virginia Murillo** is a public policy graduate student at the Harris School of Public Policy focused on municipal finance, social policy and policy analysis. At Harris, Virginia serves as the Director of Finance for the Urban Policy Student Association and the Inter-Policy School Summit. Recently, she was a Community Development and Policy Studies Intern with the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, where she drafted a memo on policies for economically distressed areas in Cook County and researched opportunities for banks and non-profit hospitals to collaborate in community development activities. Prior to Harris, Virginia worked as a transportation planner for the Transportation Agency for Monterey County. There she administered the County’s bus funding programs, and she served as project manager for the development of a regional 28-mile trail. She was involved in the Women’s Transportation Seminar Monterey Bay Chapter and helped organize several professional events focused on the region’s transportation and affordable housing issues. Virginia is a first-generation college graduate, and now the first person in her family to be in a professional graduate program. She is passionate about urban planning, social policy and being a mentor for other first-generation students. She enjoys admiring Chicago’s architecture and cooking for her family and friends. ■



Connecting city and regional planning with housing affordability

## Nicholas Olsen

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**Nick Olsen** is a Master of Public Policy Candidate at the University of Chicago Harris School focused on city and regional planning and housing affordability. His experience in housing policy began as an undergraduate at Vassar College, where he worked with the Hudson Valley activist organization Nobody Leaves Mid-Hudson, fighting foreclosures and organizing for increased utilities access. Following graduation, he served two consecutive terms as an AmeriCorps VISTA with NeighborWorks Blackstone River Valley, a non-profit community development corporation focused on affordable housing construction in northern Rhode Island. In the summer of 2019, he worked as an Executive Intern with the Housing Authority of Champaign County, working on re-entry housing for formerly incarcerated individuals, and as a Community Planning intern with Coles County Regional Planning and Development Commission, administering rehabilitation grants for low-income homeowners. He received a B.A. from Vassar College in Film Studies and continues to utilize his video production background to tell the stories of communities. ■



Researching housing market policies that prevent excessive mortgage-credit buildups and the housing market collapses

## Seongjin Park

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**Seongjin Park** is a graduate student in the finance doctoral program at the Booth School of Business. Motivated by the Great Recession that started from the expansion of residential mortgage credits, his research focuses on housing market policies that prevent excessive mortgage-credit buildups and housing market collapse. Seongjin's most recent work studies unique natural experimental settings induced by the macroprudential policy in South Korea and identifies the causal impact of the regulation on growth in residential mortgage credits and housing prices. He is currently interested in how macroprudential policy interacts with mortgage delinquency, homeownership, and housing speculation. Before attending Chicago Booth, Seongjin received a master's degree in economics from Duke University, where he broadened his interest in housing markets through advanced coursework and research assistantship. He also worked as a research professional at the Initiative on Global Markets and engaged in a wide range of research on household finance and consumption. The research included mortgage credit and business cycles, fraudulent mortgage lending, gasoline consumption, and unemployment during the Great Recession. Seongjin is originally from South Korea. Beyond the academy, he is interested in the poverty transition and education of disadvantaged younger generations. He once served a non-profit institution in South Korea as a volunteer math teacher for middle and high school students who needed educational assistance and mentorship. ■



**Examining the relationship between social networks, health, and issues related to aging**

## Grey Pierce

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**Grey Pierce** is a doctoral student in the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago. Grey's primary focus is on aging, health, urban studies, and gender and sexuality. Stemming from earlier work in American history, built environment, and activism, his attention is drawn to work that combines both theoretical and applied realms. Grey's most recent work focused on a study with clinicians to examine the impact of the built environment on clinical care for transgender populations in urban underserved settings. He is currently interested in the relationship between social networks, health, and issues related to aging. Prior to attending the University of Chicago, Grey received his undergraduate degree in history from Oberlin College. There he focused on the urban history of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) communities. As a college student he interned with the American Civil Liberties Union and Habitat for Humanity. In 2015, he earned a Master of Science in Historic Preservation from the University of Pennsylvania's Weitzman School of Design. He wrote a thesis on the history and preservation of gay bathhouses. Working with the National Park Service, Pierce co-authored the second-ever LGBT-related National Historic Landmark that was confirmed in 2016. Pierce's volunteer work includes community projects related to the built environment. Grey also trains for mid-distance races with his wife and recently ventured into CrossFit. ■



**Considering the ways in which the legal system can address social injustices caused by harmful environmental conditions**

## Emma Sperry

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**Emma Sperry** is a law student and public policy graduate student focused on the ways in which the legal system can address social injustices caused by harmful environmental conditions. More specifically, Emma studies the ways in which environmental degradation from climate change, polluted water, air, soil, and failing infrastructure adversely and disproportionately affect low-income individuals. Before coming to the University of Chicago, Emma improved campus recycling and composting as an intern with the Indiana University Office of Sustainability. At the University of Chicago, Emma worked in the Abrams Environmental Law Clinic at the Law School where she helped a group of individuals living on lead-contaminated property in a Superfund site advocate for the EPA to complete a more thorough cleanup of their properties. She also worked with a nonprofit that aims to increase the prevalence of community solar programs in low-income communities in Detroit. In addition to her work in the clinic, Emma interned at the Natural Resources Defense Council where she wrote a policy memo on regulating pesticides and assisted with a public comment related to national energy policy and regulation. She also interned at the Shriver Center where she assisted with a housing eviction case and wrote a policy memo on the effect of traffic fines on low-income individuals in Chicago. In her spare time, Emma enjoys biking, playing the piano, and seeing comedy. ■

## PAST PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Previous years of the Fellowship have featured an eclectic mix of speakers, skill-building topics, and experiential learning. All Fellowship activities emphasize an interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral approach to connect ideas and people in unexpected ways—ultimately to promote a better understanding of housing opportunities and solutions. Fellows apply insights gained during speaker and professionalization workshops toward a research project or internship of their own design, further solidifying their ability to approach the housing field from a systemic perspective.

## FEATURED SPEAKERS

- **Ghian Foreman**, Executive Director, Greater Southwest Development Corporation, a CDC focused on the improvement of the Southwest Side of Chicago through entrepreneurial, commercial, and residential development
- **Terri Lee**, Atlanta Chief Housing Officer, the first person named to this position to centrally manage the City's various affordable housing initiatives
- **Juan Carlos Linares**, Former Executive Director, Latin United Community Housing Association (LUCHA), a Chicago-based affordable housing development agency which offers housing counseling, foreclosure prevention, and legal assistance; Current Chief Engagement Officer for the City of Chicago, leading efforts to build stronger ties between city services and neighborhoods
- **Carol Naughton**, President, Purpose Built Communities, a community revitalization nonprofit working to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty in neighborhoods across the country
- **Marisa Novara**, Former Principal at Metropolitan Planning Council, Current Commissioner of Housing for City of Chicago, overseeing housing and community development policy for the City

## FELLOWS' WORK EXAMPLES

- **Building predictive models** for housing abandonment in Chicago
- **Creating educational resources** for providers serving homeless youth about available HUD funding for youth-targeted programs
- **Exploring housing as a human right** through non-academic writing
- **Interning at Enterprise Community Partners** helping communities realize the benefits of transit-oriented development
- **Serving the Chicago Housing Authority** as Planning Analyst, part of a new team enhancing the agency's spatial and data analytics to better inform decision making and resource allocation

## CONNECT WITH US

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# The Path Ahead Building Partnerships and Expanding Opportunities

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**The Mansueto Institute for Urban Innovation** is a hub for urban science and practice, training the next generation of urban scholars. We study the fundamental processes that drive, shape and sustain cities. Our researchers come from the social, natural, and computational sciences, along with the humanities. Together, we pursue innovative, interdisciplinary scholarship, develop new educational programs, and provide leadership and evidence to support global, sustainable urban development.

The Mansueto Institute serves as an intellectual destination at the University of Chicago for urban scholars, students, policy makers, and practitioners to generate the best knowledge and practices around urban development, while training the next generation of urban scholars and practitioners. Our work is organized to create a fundamental science of cities, based on an interdisciplinary approach that makes the most of the data and knowledge that cities embody.

**The University of Chicago Law School** offers a rigorous and interdisciplinary professional education that blends the study of law with the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences. Learning is participatory. UChicago Law does not seek to impose a single viewpoint or style of thought on its students. Instead, our faculty exposes students to contrasting views, confident in students' abilities to choose their own paths.

UChicago Law aims to train well-rounded, critical, and socially conscious thinkers and doers. A UChicago legal education prepares students for any professional role they might choose – legal practice or legal education, entrepreneurial ventures, international private or public law practice, corporate practice, government service, alternative dispute resolution including arbitration and mediation, or work with non-profit organizations. Graduates do many things in their careers, and they all take with them the analytic skills emphasized during their years at the Law School.

**UChicagoGRAD** is leading the national movement to provide dedicated, effective resources and opportunities to complement our students' academic rigor and excellence in scholarship. The long-standing hallmarks of graduate education at UChicago – impact across fields of knowledge and human endeavor – are now woven together with the mission and work of UChicagoGRAD.

At UChicagoGRAD, we equip our graduate students to thrive in an infinite variety of careers and settings. They are prepared to become the next generation of gifted scholars; knowledgeable government officials; astute leaders in business, nonprofit, and think tank organizations; and dynamic change agents in any profession. We provide groundbreaking initiatives like the GRAD Global Impact Internship Program, GRADTalk training in public speaking, career exploration training and workshops, and employer roundtables and treks.