

MEET YOUR PEER ADVISORS

JUNE 2025



Marshall B.
KETCHUM UNIVERSITY

Enrollment and Student Services



WHAT IS A PEER ADVISOR?

Your Peer Advisors are second year students who have been selected for their academic excellence and student leadership. They are trained as your first level of support in transitioning to, and succeeding at MBKU. Peer Advisors provide informal advice from a student perspective about life and learning throughout your time at MBKU.

Though you are assigned a single Peer Advisor, you should take the time to get to know them all as they represent the best of what MBKU offers for students wishing to enhance their personal, professional, and leadership development.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRY



Laura Bautista



Hello everyone! Welcome to the start of your journey here at MBKU; I'm so excited that you get to join us! My name is Laura, and I am part of SCCO's class of 2028. I grew up in Mission Viejo, CA (~1 hour south of MBKU). I went to community college for 2 years before transferring and graduating from UCI with a B.S.

in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. Entering MBKU was very scary for me at first - it was the first time I moved out of my parents' house and I didn't take a gap year between undergrad and optometry school. It was adjustment for sure, but I have had so much fun ever since I started at SCCO. While school can be busy, also make sure to take your time to explore the area and have fun with all the wonderful people you'll meet! In my free time, you'll often find me trying out a new cafe and fueling my coffee addiction, going to the beach or Disneyland, running, playing video games, and going to concerts and conventions! I'm so grateful to be in this wonderful community here at MBKU, and I hope that you will as well. Don't be afraid to ask questions and use all the resources at your disposal - I know I did! Congratulations on making it to MBKU, we all look forward to seeing you soon!



Solyana Chan



Welcome to MBKU, Class of 2029! My name is Soly, and I am so excited to be a part of your journey in optometry school! I'm a part of SCCO's Class of 2028 and will be one of your peer advisors for the upcoming year. I grew up in Artesia, CA and graduated from UC San Diego

in 2024 with a degree in Human Biology and a minor in Psychology. When I'm not studying or working with my amazing classmates, you can usually find me trying out new cafes, adding to my ever-growing collection of Sonny Angels, or binge-watching the latest K-dramas. One piece of advice I'd love to share as you begin this new chapter: don't lose sight of yourself amidst the workload—make time for the things that make you happy. Whether it's a favorite hobby, a relaxing routine, or quality time with loved ones, those small joys will help you stay balanced and motivated throughout school! It'll be a new chapter in your life, but remember how hard you've worked to earn your spot here! You deserve to be in this class, and you're not alone—there's a strong, supportive community around you ready to uplift and cheer you on every step of the way. I can't wait to meet you all and be part of your journey into the world of optometry. Once again, congratulations and welcome to the family!



Kassidy Cortez



Hey everyone! I'm Kassidy, and I'm a part of the OD Class of 2028! I'm originally from Arcadia, CA and graduated with a BS in Health Sciences at Chapman University. I'm especially interested in contact lenses and can't wait to explore that specialty more this year.

On my free time, I love attending Lagree fitness classes and binge-watching crime TV shows. My favorite movie genres are romantic comedies and scary movies (but my guilty pleasure is Twilight LOL). I also have a huge love for Asian cuisine, so if you're ever looking for food recs or good matcha, I've got you covered.

I know optometry school can sound overwhelming at first, but trust me, it's totally manageable especially with the amazing support from your classmates and instructors. Everyone here truly wants to see you succeed, and you're never alone in this journey. One thing I've learned in my first year is that while grades are important, taking care of your mental and physical well-being matters just as much. Don't forget to carve out time for yourself, your hobbies, and your people.

Congratulations on joining the MBKU family and kicking off your optometry career! I'm here to help you navigate this first year and beyond, whether it's school-related or just adjusting to life at MBKU. Can't wait to get to know you!



Alec Faith

Hello SCCO Class of 2029! My name is Alec and I am extremely excited to meet you all! I am originally from Livermore, CA and graduated from UC Davis in 2023, taking one gap year before starting here last fall. I love all things music and sports and you can often find me with earbuds in

or perfecting my pickleball skills with friends! This is my first time living in SoCal, and while I do miss the NorCal fog I'm learning to love the year-round sunshine! As you all get ready to start this fall, take some time to enjoy the summer and know that you've made the right decision. From the faculty to the campus security guards, everyone you meet has a smile on their face! The professors and upperclassmen are here to support you and we know you're all going to thrive here. You belong here at SCCO and we can't wait to welcome you to this wonderful community!



Hanah Ho

Hello Class of 2029, welcome to MBKU! ^_^ I'm Hanah and I'm in SCCO's Class of 2028. I'm from Clovis, CA and I graduated from UC Irvine with a B.S. in Biological Sciences. I took 3 gap years before starting optometry school, working at a private practice by day and as a server by night.

Switching back to full time student and changing up how I managed my time was hard at first, but now I'm getting the hang of it and I'm still as excited as I was on the first day of school! It feels so rewarding that I am learning so many new, cool things. I'm excited for you too to delve into all the aspects of our future career. Your hard work has and will keep paying off! Another thing I resonate with though, is work hard, play hard! We are trying our best to become excellent health care providers, but we must not forget to take breaks and reward ourselves because, we deserve it. Get that sweet treat. Watch an episode of your current TV show. Go on a nature walk. Go dancing. Play your favorite game. Everything will be okay! You're going to do amazing here and everyone is rooting for you. Support is all around, so let's start this rollercoaster ride. See you all soon!



Catherine Ibrahim

Hello Class of 2029! :

Welcome to MBKU! My name is Catherine, and I'm so excited to be one of your peer advisors this upcoming school year. I graduated from UC San Diego in 2024 (Go Tritons!) and have since

spent some time working at an optometry office, rediscovered my love for reading, gotten into gaming, started exploring all the cute coffee shops around Fullerton, and, of course, started my journey in optometry school! I know this transition can feel both exciting and overwhelming, so please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns. I'm here to support you however I can. I can't wait to meet you all in a few months! Until then, take care and enjoy your summer! <3



Emily Jarvinen

Hello Class of 2029! Congratulations and welcome to MBKU! My name is Emily Jarvinen and I'm part of the SCCO Class of 2028. I'm super excited to meet all of you and help with your transition to SCCO! A little background: I grew up in the Bay Area and I graduated from UC Davis in

2024 with a B.S. in Neurobiology, Physiology, and Behavior. In my free time I like playing video games, baking banana bread (ask me for my recipes), getting sweet treats like matcha and boba, and traveling. More fun facts about me: I have a tuxedo cat named Luna who loves eating grass, my favorite animal is an otter, and I collect enamel pins. I know coming into first year I was pretty nervous, so my advice for you would be that you're not alone! You'll have so many people rooting for you and supporting you through this transition. Don't be too hard on yourself while you get used to the flow and find your work life balance. You've got this! Let me know if you have any questions about moving, optometry, or want sweet treat recommendations and cat photos! Congratulations again and enjoy your summer!



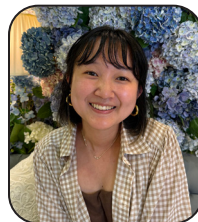
Madison Jew

Hello Class of 2029! Congratulations on your acceptance—I'm so excited to meet you all this fall! My name is Madison Jew, and I was born and raised in San Jose, California. I studied Genetics and Genomics at UC Davis for undergrad (Go Ags!).

Outside of studying, I love hiking, trying new restaurants, and traveling. One of my favorite adventures so far was going on safari in Tanzania! Fun optometry fact: my dog Maisy (pictured above) has intermittent strabismus.

Starting school can feel like a mix of excitement and nerves, but don't worry—we're all here to help you through the transition. One thing I've learned this past year is that time really flies, so don't forget to enjoy the journey. Studying is important, but so is rest—take care of your health and well-being along the way.

Feel free to reach out if you have any questions, and make the most of your summer. Can't wait to meet you soon!



Caitlyn Kadooka

Hello Class of 2029!! Congratulations and welcome to MBKU! My name is Caitlyn, and I'm a member of the Class of 2028. I am originally from Honolulu, Hawaii, and I graduated from University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington with degrees in Molecular and Cellular Biology

and Japanese Language in 2024! In my free time, I enjoy hanging out with friends, finding cute cafes (the sweet treats here are crazy!), and doing little crafts. I also played volleyball, clarinet, and taiko (Japanese drums) in undergrad, and I wish I had time for those activities now! My advice to you is to give yourself grace. Optometry school is tough, and, in the beginning, it can be especially daunting! Everyone has their off days, exams that they weren't prepared for, or even a proficiency that they may need to retake, but don't let that weigh you down! Take your moments of weakness as an opportunity for growth. After all, everything you learn from this point on will help you become a better doctor! Also, enjoy the time you have with your friends! You may not remember getting a B instead of an A on an exam, but you will remember the memories you make with your friends and future colleagues! Maintaining that balance certainly requires good time management skills, but you'll have plenty of time to make that adjustment during the fall and winter quarters. It's a stressful time, but I hope you all know you're not alone! You have a whole family of peers, upperclassmen,

faculty, and alumni that are willing to support you! Again, congratulations and good luck! I'm so proud of you all for making it, and I look forward to meeting you!



Hannah Marine



Welcome class of 2029!! My name is Hannah, and I am so excited to be a part of the team welcoming you to SCCO! I've been a SoCal resident for all my life and am from Hermosa Beach, California. I graduated in 2023 from UC San Diego with a major in general biology and minor in business –

Go Tritons! Outside of school I enjoy playing pickleball, Nintendo switch, relaxing with some TV, and being outside in the sun at the beach or park with my friends. I also love to try different restaurants and cafes around Fullerton/OC so let me know if you need any recommendations- Making the transition from undergraduate to optometry school can be daunting, but it is such a fun and exciting process and you won't be going through it alone. Whether you are coming to SCCO right after graduating or taking a gap year(s), enjoy your time with family and friends and give yourself some time to reset into the mindset of a future optometry student. Also, put yourself out there! Start connecting with your future classmates or other upperclassmen, we are all so excited to meet you. Once again, congratulations and welcome to SCCO! You did it! And we are so happy to become your peers and future colleagues. Feel free to reach out anytime, otherwise I will see ya around campus!



Matthew Martinez-Diaz



Hello SCCO Class of 2029, congratulations and welcome to MBKU! My name is Matthew Martinez-Diaz, and I am a part of the SCCO class of 2028. I grew up in Hacienda Heights, which is about 25 minutes from campus, and graduated from UC Irvine with a degree in Biology in 2023. I took a

gap year before attending SCCO to gain more experience working in an Optometry office and to work on my application. Outside of school, I like to watch and play basketball, try new coffee and food places, and spend time with friends and family.

I advise you all to take advantage of your free time in fall and winter quarters. Although it may not seem like you have much free time, use it to work out your studying strategies and time management skills. Use these first two quarters to figure out what works and what does not work for you in terms of studying and the clinical skills you learn. I also advise that you make time to prioritize your mental health. Graduate school can be tiring and stressful, make time to do the things that make you happy or relieve stress.

Feel free to reach out to me if you ever need help or advice about school, commuting, or any other advice you need.



Janet Nguy



Hello and Congratulations to the Class of 2029! Welcome to MBKU! My name is Janet Nguy and I am a part of SCCO Class of 2028! Before coming to MBKU, I got my undergraduate degree in Psychobiology from UCLA and took a gap year. I'm from San Diego, CA and in my free time, I love to

photosynthesize, hang out with dogs at the dog park, go to the gym, or go to concerts!

Optometry school will be a challenge that will build your character and stimulate your mind in ways you've never done before. But I assure you, it will all be worth it! It's normal to be nervous, but just know that everyone here is here to support you throughout your journey and we KNOW you

can do it! Take it one day at a time and remember that progress is not linear. Take care of yourself and don't be afraid to ask for help. You've got this!

I am excited to see what you all do next :) Congratulations and see you in the Fall!



Emily Nguyen



HELLOOOOOOOO CLASS OF 2029!!! Welcome to MBKU! My name is Emily and I am a second year at SCCO! I grew up in San Jose, CA, and graduated from UC Berkeley in 2024 with degrees in Integrative Biology and Molecular Cell Biology! If I'm not studying in the Low Student Union, you'd

find me exploring local cafes searching for the best matcha or trying out new restaurants that came up on my fyp! In my free time, I love to explore nearby green spaces (studying and touching grass!!), going on adventures with my friends, playing video games, making niche spotify playlists, pretty much doing anything to exercise free will! But enough about me, let's get to the real part... starting grad school. I jumped in head first after graduating, and it was honestly really daunting! You all have the drive and passion to be successful but it is so easy to be sucked into this void of endless academia. I cannot express how important it is to take care of yourself throughout this process. Make the time to be with the people that recharge you, say "yes!" to that random weekend adventure, sit around and bed rot if you have to! Finding moments where you can recharge and be a human, not just a student, is crucial if you want to thrive, not just survive, in school. Optometry school is a team sport and you have just become a part of the greatest communities that I have gotten to experience. Everyone here, your classmates, faculty, and upperclassmen, believe in you and are going to have your back through all of the highs and lows. So get ready for the adventure of a lifetime!! I hope you all have a great summer and I will see you in August!



Matthew Nguyen



Congratulations Class of 2029 and welcome to MBKU! My name is Matthew Nguyen and I am part of the SCCO Class of 2028. I grew up in the Orange County area my entire life and am currently commuting. I went to Irvine Valley College for three years to complete all

the prerequisites, transferred to UC Irvine but only went for one quarter because I decided to enroll directly to SCCO without completing my Bachelor's degree. If you have any questions about how transitioning into graduate school without a degree is, feel free to reach out! Outside of school, I like hanging out with friends and family by getting food, playing games, and watching shows. I remember what it was like transitioning into graduate school and how stressful that time can be, but with that being said there is also so much to look forward to! My biggest piece of advice is to cherish each day of your first year and to be intentional about finding time to make memories and have fun. Life can get busy, so I would also recommend hitting the ground running because it is always better to be ahead than to try and catch up. Once again, congratulations and remember that you got accepted for a reason and you got this!



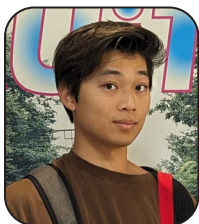
Peter Nguyen



Hello and welcome to SCCO, class of 2029! My name is Peter and I'm part of SCCO's class of 2028! I grew up in Riverside, California and went to UCLA for undergrad, majoring in Biology. In my free time I like to draw, paint, play video games, watch new shows (mostly animated), bake, hike,

and of course spend quality time with my friends and family! I took a couple gap years where I worked and travelled before starting optometry school

at SCCO. The transition into grad school was definitely challenging, and requires you to develop good time management skills amongst other regulatory skills. However, I think it's important to realize that you're not alone in this journey! My favorite part about MBKU is its community; from classmates, to professors and faculty, everyone is there to see you succeed! My advice to you is to keep up with your hobbies and friendships; grad school can be overwhelming, so having things in your life outside of school really helps with the stress that comes with it. Lastly, I would like to say congratulations on making it this far, this is a huge step in your career and life and I'm so excited to meet you all in the coming Fall!



Timothy-Thinh Nguyen



Hi and welcome to MBKU!! My name is Timothy-Thinh Nguyen and I'm part of SCCO's Class of 2028. I was born and raised in San Jose, CA and spent a few years living in San Diego for school and work. I attended UCSD and graduated with a B.S in biology. For fun, I enjoy playing lots of sports (badminton and volleyball are my favorites so please reach out to play), gaming, gardening, and cooking. Regardless, hanging out with friends makes anything fun. For advice, graduate school is going to be a lot of work, but it's super manageable. Properly pacing yourself will let you flow by with ease. Don't forget to take care of yourself, be it mentally or physically! But for now, enjoy your summer and relax! The tools for striving in the program are already yours. I'm excited to see you all soon!



Megan Nguyenbui



Hello class of 2029! Congratulations on your acceptance and I'm so excited for your journey to begin here at MBKU! My name is Megan Nguyenbui and I'm a member SCCO's Class of 2028! I was born and raised in So Cal and attended UCR in undergrad before joining SCCO. Some things I like to do for fun are arts and crafts, collecting plushies and hair clips, and playing games. School can get challenging and being a student again is not easy but, it's important to make time for yourself as well. Some things I do to take care of my health are taking walks, spending time with my family and friends, and just dedicating some of my time to doing whatever I want to do (usually doodling or listening to music). Before your journey officially begins in the fall, this is your sign to not hesitate on plans this summer and just go for it! It will be a challenging journey ahead so it's important to be able to balance academics and your personal life. I struggled with that at times and something I learned was to just talk to your friends and classmates. You are not alone and some of the struggles you go through don't have to be bottled up inside. It's okay to feel overwhelmed at times but remember that we're all here for a reason and to reach out to someone if you ever need it. Remember, there is a learning curve to get used to but that doesn't mean you have to dedicate all your time to your studies! For now, enjoy your break! Spend time with the people who matter the most, and I can't wait to meet all of you soon!



Tina Pham



Welcome and congratulations Class of 2029! My name is Tina and I'm part of Class of 2028. I am from Huntington Beach and went to undergrad at UC Santa Cruz where I majored in Human Biology and minored in Spanish Studies. When I am not studying, I spend my free time bouldering, dancing, and playing tennis/pickleball. I also love trying new restaurants and cafes in the area so don't hesitate to reach out if you need recs! One piece of advice that I would offer is to go to everything and join everything, especially while

you have the free time! There are so many clubs and events that the school has to offer and you can gain a lot from becoming involved. Whether it's meeting new students or doctors, interacting with different people helps you learn a lot when navigating your way through optometry school. It is also difficult, if not impossible, to be successful all on your own so it's nice to be friendly with your peers. That being said, I look forward to meeting you all this upcoming year and enjoy the rest of your summer!

COLLEGE OF PHARMACY



Matthew Ghilarducci



How's it going class of 2029! Congratulations on making it to pharmacy school, and welcome to Marshall B. Ketchum University! My name is Matthew Ghilarducci, and I will be one of your peer advisors. I can't wait to meet all of you this coming Summer and Fall. A bit about myself: I was born and raised in Bakersfield, California where I grew up playing both baseball and soccer throughout my childhood. In high school, I would go on to play soccer and compete in high school robotics. After high school, I would attend my undergraduate school there at California State University, Bakersfield where I would get a bachelor's degree in biochemistry. While there, I conducted research in the field of analytical chemistry and met the campus pharmacist where we would talk about the field of pharmacy. Those years are where I would develop my knack for chemistry, and the passion to pursue pharmacy. From there, the story speaks for itself as I am here writing to all of you. Another thing about me is that I am a huge nerd when it comes to Star Wars, and I'm down to talk about it anytime. I'm excited for all of you to tackle this next Herculean task in your life. Some days, it may seem like the sky is falling, but I know that all of you are equipped for the task at hand and will perform excellently. I know that this is a might be a huge next step in life for some of you and seemingly small for others, but I say this to all of you: take whatever steps you can to broaden your horizons. You never know the friends you'll make doing so, or the opportunities that will present themselves. Congratulations, and see you all soon!



Lanie Jackson



Welcome, Class of 2029! First off, congratulations on making it to pharmacy school! My name is Lanie Jackson, and I'm part of the COP Class of 2028. A few of my favorite hobbies are playing pickleball, going to the movies, and playing video games. I was born and raised in the Central Valley and graduated from CSU Bakersfield before making my way to MBKU.

Believe it or not, pharmacy wasn't always the plan for me. I didn't decide to pursue it until my last year of undergrad. With no prior experience in pharmacy, I expected the transition to be tough. But thanks to the incredible faculty, staff, and the amazing friends I've made, I quickly found my confidence and knew I had made the right decision.

As you start your own journey, my advice is simple: be confident in your abilities, stay open-minded, take advantage of opportunities, and most importantly, take care of your physical and mental health. I know juggling all of this can feel overwhelming at times, but don't worry — I'll be here to support you and help make your transition as smooth as possible. We are so excited to have you here at MBKU, and I can't wait to meet each and every one of you! Congratulations again on making it to pharmacy school — I'm so excited to see all that you'll accomplish!



Kazi Maimuna



Class of 2029!!! My name is Kazi Maimuna. If you're reading this, then I made it to my second year and I can't wait to help you get to yours! Congratulations on getting into pharmacy school!

I remember being exactly in your shoes and feeling all the emotions that come with starting pharmacy school. Don't worry, it's totally normal to overthink at first, but just know that we Peer Advisors have your back and I'm especially excited to meet you!

I want to share a little bit about my journey to MBKU. I was born and raised in Los Angeles, California and later moved to South Pasadena for middle and high school. After that, I attended a few community colleges before completing my undergraduate degree in Biology at the University of California, Riverside.

You'll come to find a balance here at MBKU with all the activities and exams. Some of the things I enjoy most are watching sports (Go Dodgers, Lakers, and Seahawks!), going to concerts, being outdoors, and staying active. I love doing pilates, snowboarding, surfing, beach cruising, and traveling whenever there's a school break. Most of all, I love spending time with my dog, Koda. He's an Australian Shepherd full of love and he's been a huge motivator for me these last few years.

If I could give you one piece of advice as you arrive to campus, it would be to go for every opportunity while staying true to who you are. There is so much room to grow here, with support from faculty, student organizations, and clubs to help guide you along the way. You will find your balance as you go.

Grad school is no doubt challenging but don't forget, you are capable of more than you think.

Welcome to MBKU! Welcome to the Pharm-ily!



Matthew McDonnell



Hello everyone, welcome to the Pharmily! My name is Matthew McDonnell and I am a COP student for the class of 2028. I was born and raised in Orange County, California, and I graduated from California State University of Fullerton with my bachelors in Biochemistry - so I have not traveled very far for school. When I am

not studying for school, I am out rock climbing! I am a sponsored climber so my schedule can get very busy at times. Grad school can be pretty challenging, so it's important to have a good school/life balance so that you don't burn yourself out! Your mental health is important and if you are ever feeling overwhelmed, always feel free to contact me or find me on campus (I practically live here). You also have the support of your classmates, faculty, and all of your upper classmen. We have all passed your courses before so we know all the tips and tricks behind your future exams. This is going to be a fantastic opportunity to shape your future and learn everything it takes to be a pharmacist. Congratulations class of 2029! I look forward to meeting you all very soon!



Van Nguyen



Congratulations and welcome to MBKU (or as my little sister like to call it: M'Baku!) My name is Van Nguyen, but please feel free to call me Vani! I graduated from UC San Diego with a BS in Pharmacological Chemistry in 2022. I'm a Gemini, I know 3-ish languages: English, Vietnamese, and French. I'm a big reader and

book tok girlie (take it how you will), I love to draw and write short stories, and I'm a big nerd. My favorite show at the moment is the Rookie, my favorite movie series and book series right now is Lord of the Ring. You will most likely see me on campus on the weekend, and if you do, feel free to say hi! You will also find me in the lower student lounge playing pool so join in if you are interested. I am also a big foodie, so I know most, if not all of the boba place in the area so come to me if you would like recommendations. Entering a medical grad program is terrifying and

nerve-wracking enough as it is, but also be proud of yourself for getting in. This is a big step in your life and you will face many challenges, but just know that you are not alone in this. You have your cohort and us upperclassmen to help support you, so don't be shy in asking for help. I can't wait to meet you all and I hope to see you soon! Congratulations once again!



Kyle Yep



Congratulations, Class of 2029! Welcome to the Pharmily! My fellow Peer Advisors and I are so stoked that you are all starting your pharmacy careers here at Ketchum. My name is Kyle Yep, and I am a part of the COP Class of 2028. I have lived in Southern California for most of my life, with a brief stop in San Luis

Obispo where I earned my BS in Chemistry. My MBTI is INTJ (although sometimes an ENTJ) and a proud third-generation Chinese-American, where I ironically knows more Korean and English than Mandarin. When I'm not at Ketchum, you can find me shooting hoops at local parks, binge-watching the latest shows and K-dramas on Netflix, eating my way around Orange County, or working on my musical arrangements. A big passion of mine (or my close friends jokingly call my "second job") is following and watching sports, specifically the Dodgers, Lakers, and Chargers. Starting pharmacy school less than three months after finishing my undergraduate was definitely intimidating, especially with my limited experience in pharmacy. But no matter your background, the professors and your fellow students at Ketchum will support you and set you up for success throughout pharmacy school and professional career. My biggest advice: work on your time management and make time for yourself. Balancing pharmacy school, work, family, and life can seem overwhelming, but with these two things in place, even the toughest days will seem to be more manageable. I'm here to help make your transition into Ketchum as smooth as possible and to help you start building your community. I can't wait to meet you all on campus soon and to get to know you as future pharmacists!

SCHOOL OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES



Tida Chen



Hi Friends! Congrats on your acceptance and welcome to the MBKU family! I'm sure you're excited to begin this next chapter of your life, and your peer advisors are just as excited to walk alongside you! My name is Tida Chen, and I'm part of the SPAS Class of 2026. I graduated from Cal State Fullerton with a degree in

Psychology and worked as a Starbucks barista for a few years before transitioning into healthcare as a Unit Secretary at Kaiser Permanente. Later, I became certified as an anesthesia tech and worked at Children's Hospital Los Angeles, where I had the privilege of caring for a vulnerable but resilient (and hilarious) population. Outside of healthcare, I am a (highly) caffeinated, self-proclaimed foodie/ coffee snob who enjoys traveling and going to spin class.

As you get your bearings, remember: lean on your people. PA school is hard, but you're not doing it alone. Walking 100 miles with your friends will feel like 10 (...maybe 20 if it's exam time, but you get the point). You were chosen for a reason. You bring something only you can bring to this class, and I'm genuinely excited to meet you and learn what that is! If you ever need a study buddy, a pep talk, or someone to cry-laugh with over a whiteboard full of confusing pathophysiology, I'm just a text or email away! You've got this- and your peer advisors got you! Congrats and welcome, SPAS Class of 2027!

**Kevin Choi**

Hello and welcome to the MBKU family, SPAS Class of 2027! My name is Kevin, and I'm part of the SPAS Class of 2026. I'm so excited to meet you all very soon! Here's a quick background about me. I immigrated from South Korea in 2010 and grew up in Yorba Linda, where I lived until I graduated high school. I attended CSUF

as a Kinesiology major with a concentration in Clinical Movement Science. During college, I began my healthcare journey working as a medical assistant. I've had the opportunity to work in various specialties, including hematology/oncology, internal medicine, family medicine, and pediatrics. Outside of school, I love traveling! My favorite trip so far was visiting Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan right before starting PA school. (I wish I had visited even more places while I was there D:) If you have any travel recommendations, please share them with me. I'd love to hear where you think I should go next! So far, my time at MBKU has been nothing short of amazing. Although the days can be long and tiring, my cohort inspires and motivates me every day. I'm incredibly grateful for them—they make me laugh, support me, and push me to be a better person everyday. (Love yall, SPAS 2026! <3) At times, you may feel lost and confused, but always remember that most people will feel the same, so do not be afraid to ask questions or be embarrassed! This is the final step in becoming the PA you've worked so hard to become. Cherish and enjoy every moment that you will have throughout your journey at MBKU. Always remember that you have more potential than you think. Trust yourself, be yourself, and you got this. :)

**Jordan Clay**

Hi everyone, welcome to MBKU! My name is Jordan Clay, and I'm part of the SPAS Class of 2026. I was born and raised in San Diego and earned my BS in Kinesiology from Point Loma Nazarene University. I've played soccer my entire life and was lucky enough to be recruited to play in college! Staying active is a huge part of who

I am, I find time to move my body each day and encourage you to find moments for movement, especially once school starts. After graduating, I worked as a physical therapy aide to gain patient care hours, then briefly as an emergency department scribe and medical assistant at a functional medicine practice. I also juggled jobs in waitressing, retail, and babysitting—my poor family could never keep track of where I was working!

My perfect day includes an early morning workout, coffee with friends, and reading outside in the sun (lathered in sunscreen, of course).

Starting PA school was one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences I've had. I vividly remember the first week thinking, How the heck am I going to do this? You might feel that way too, but trust me, you are capable, and you belong here. It's normal to feel excited, overwhelmed, motivated, and exhausted all at once. Let yourself feel it all, but never forget why you started.

Take care of what you can control. Keep moving forward one day at a time. Celebrate the little wins, whether that's a Costco pizza run or finally getting some quality couch time. Give yourself credit for the hard work you're doing, and grace when things get tough.

You now have a new family here at MBKU and we can't wait to support you. I'm so excited to meet you all!

**Krystal Le**

Congrats CO 2027 and welcome to MBKU!!!! My name is Krystal and I'm in the SPAS CO 2026. I'm from Fountain Valley, CA and graduated UC Santa Barbara in 2020 with a B.S. in Biological Sciences. I worked as an MA in Hematology-Oncology for 4 years and in behavioral therapy for patients with autism for 1 year. I'm currently

serving as secretary in our Pre-PA Mentorship Club, social chair for our SPAS CO 2026 student government, MBKU student ambassador, and now I get to serve you all as a peer advisor! Besides enjoying seeing my wonderful classmates everyday, I also love to go to yoga & pilates

classes. I like baking, cooking, exploring different food places (because I'm a huge foodie), going for walks along the beach/hiking trails, and watching movies! I'm also a HUGE matcha lover! I'm a travel addict and try to travel during any breaks I have - my favorites have been Cinque Terre in Italy and Japan! My biggest piece of advice is to manage your time well! Make sure to squeeze in study breaks when time permits. You NEED your sleep and enough of it too to function well. Plan out your studying efficiently so you can divide up certain topics and study a little bit of each everyday, rather than devoting too much time to one and not having enough time for the others in the end. You are so much more capable than you think! You may have heard that PA school is extremely tough and quite honestly the hardest thing that you'll ever do, BUT with the right management, resources, and support, you really can do it especially if you have gotten this far already. We can all do hard things and I believe in you all! Welcome to the MBKU family!!!

**Jonathan Lopez**

Hi everyone, first off I just wanted to say congrats on your admission and welcome to MBKU! My name is Jonathan Lopez, and I am part of the SPAS Class of 2026. I grew up in La Mirada, California, and graduated from La Mirada High School in 2011. After high school I attended Fullerton College for a couple years before

deciding to join the Army at 21. I served 4 years on active duty as a combat medic and deployed to Afghanistan in 2018. I am thankful for my service and the opportunities it has given me, but I am happy to have my civilian life back. With whatever free time I get I love going to sporting events, and Dodger games are my favorite. I also love being outdoors, during the winter I go snowboarding, and when it starts warming up I try to go on hikes or to the beach as much as I can. Some advice I would like to offer incoming students is that grad school and undergrad are very different. Some things or study habits that might have worked in undergrad may not work in grad school and that's okay. It just means you have to make some adjustments, so be flexible and remember that you deserve to be here. Also don't forget to set aside free time for yourself during your studies, mental health and your overall well being are more important than you know. Enjoy the rest of your break, relax, and I look forward to meeting you all in the Summer!

**Genevieve Rogers**

Hello future PAs!

My name is Genevieve and I'm so excited to meet you all! A little bit about me - I grew up in Claremont, CA and went to Pepperdine University where I got my degree in biology.

While there, I was a Biostatistics tutor, involved in the Pre-PA club, played intramural volleyball, and studied abroad in Shanghai, China. My clinical experience includes working as a CNA in long term acute care, short term rehabilitation, and the hospital on an Ortho/Onc med-surg floor. Most recently, I was a medical assistant in outpatient dermatology. Currently, I live in San Dimas with family and commute to campus.

In my free time, I enjoy going on walks, reading, going to the movies, trying new restaurants, and traveling! Working out is my primary form of stress relief - everyone in PA school needs something to take the edge off! I also enjoy spending time with my nephew, hanging out with my cat, and going to the beach!

Since I've started the PA program at MBKU, I've become a student ambassador, pre-PA club mentor, and serve as the treasurer for SPAS SGA. My favorite module has probably been cardiology! This program has truly become my family and I'm so excited for you to join us! I can't wait to connect with you all! Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions. See you soon!



Daniela San Gabriel



Hello, SPAS CO 2027! Congrats and welcome to MBKU. My name is Dani San Gabriel and I am a part of SPAS CO 2026. I grew up in Diamond Bar, CA but spent 4 years at UC Berkeley (Go Bears!), where I majored in Health Sciences. Before PA school, I volunteered as an EMT, both with my university's reserve corps and at a local

organization that staffed concerts around the Bay Area. After graduating in 2020, I worked as an ophthalmology technician and scribe at clinics in the IE and OC. In my spare time, I like to find new food/drink places to try, hike, crochet, and watch TV shows. I am beyond excited to welcome you all to the SPAS community here at MBKU. Not too long ago, I was introduced to 39 strangers, all with a passion for the PA profession. These strangers have since become my second family, and each one of them are now so dear to me. Now, it's your turn! I can't wait for you all to get to know each other and form similar bonds. And I'm looking forward to meeting a new cohort of future PAs (that's you!). I bet you all are highly anticipating the start of your PA journey, but I hope you take your remaining weeks before the start of school to enjoy time with yourself, your family, and your friends. Travel the world! Get brunch with your friends! Have a game night with your family! And be ready to embark on the wildest, most rigorous, and most rewarding journey of your educational career. There will be some ups and downs, but your SPAS faculty and peer advisors are here to help you ride the wave. Again, my sincerest congratulations to you all; we're thrilled to have you here!



Madalyn Wenger



Hello new SPAS students! Congratulations and welcome to MBKU! I'm so excited for you and all that lies ahead. My name is Madalyn, and I'm in the SPAS Class of 2025.

I'm originally from Denver, Colorado, and completed my undergraduate degree at Vanguard University in Costa Mesa, CA. During

college, I worked as a neurofeedback technician in behavioral health, and after graduating, I moved back to Colorado, where I worked as a clinical research coordinator in vaccines and rheumatology. Both roles were incredibly rewarding and gave me valuable insight into the patient experience. They've deeply shaped the way I approach my learning in PA school.

Being back in Southern California feels like coming full circle. While I miss the mountains and skiing (forever a Colorado girl at heart!), I've loved returning to the sunshine, beach towns, and of course, the coffee.

When I started PA school, I was hopeful and excited, but I've been genuinely surprised and grateful for the friendships I've formed and the inspiring community of peers and professors I get to be part of. Our professors are not only knowledgeable but also deeply gracious and supportive, and that makes all the difference.

My biggest piece of advice is to be intentional about who and what you surround yourself with. Positivity becomes the lens through which you'll experience PA school. While it's undeniably hard, it's also such a privilege. We're living the dream we once worked so hard to even imagine. Celebrate the wins—yours and others'. Each one is a step forward and a reminder of your 'why.'

Know that I'm here cheering you on every step of the way. I'm not just your peer advisor, but your champion. Whether you need encouragement, perspective, or a reminder that you're capable of doing hard things, I've got your back. We're all in this together, and you belong here more than you know.