

Gianni Thomas: Weill Cornell Medicine Student Fellow Candidacy Statement



Intro: Hi! My name is Gianni Thomas, and I am a medical student at Weill Cornell Medicine. During my time at Cornell, I have been grateful to serve as an advocate and student leader, working to ensure that the voices of my peers are heard. As MSEC Treasurer and member of the Continuous Quality Improvement Council, I have had the opportunity to coordinate with students and administrators to enhance both the student experience and institutional culture. On campus, I am also involved in the Accelerating BioVenture Innovation program, the Weill Cornell Community Clinic, and serve as an HPREP mentor for high school students. Working in these roles has exposed me to student leaders, administrators, and faculty in the broader WCM community. In these collaborative efforts, we have made significant progress, but nevertheless, there is plenty of work to be done.

Background: Prior to medical school, I worked as a healthcare and life sciences consultant in New York, where I advised biopharmaceutical companies and rare disease advocacy groups on drug reimbursement, R&D strategy, and market access. I also co-founded an international service organization with a presence in eight countries and conducted both translational and public health research. Leveraging my experiences in business, medicine, and research, I promise to lend a listening ear to all student concerns and be an assertive voice for student interests.

The Position: The Student Fellow represents a diverse student body with a range of perspectives across the WCM community. I plan on being an advocate for all Weill Cornell Medicine students. Thus, you will notice that my below initiatives for the next three years are beneficial to all members of the WCM community including medical students, PhD candidates, PA students, Master's students, and WCM-Qatar students.

The Plan:

1. **WCM Ventures:** Brilliant minds walk the halls of Weill Cornell Medicine. Yet, funding of graduate student innovations is lacking compared to peer institutions in Cambridge and San Francisco. I plan on creating WCM Ventures—a **student-led venture capital fund that invests in groundbreaking innovations** and startups **within the WCM community**, while simultaneously offering qualitative and quantitative due diligence skills to graduate students interested in pursuing careers in industry.
2. **Health & Wellness:** **Double the number of therapists** in the student mental health program, and if needed, provide **subsidized third-party therapy**. Simply put, a waitlist for therapy of 8-10 weeks is unacceptable and must change. Additionally, I plan on creating milestones for the gradual and **safe reopening of WCM gyms**.
3. **Diversity, Inclusion, & Equity:** Expand financial aid and **debt-free initiatives to improve representation across socioeconomic status** in the broader Weill Cornell community. Increase the number of student seats on the WCM Diversity Council beyond two in order to accommodate **a representative from each graduate school program**. Create an **alumni mentoring program** to pair students to alumni of similar backgrounds and career goals.
4. **Housing:** Ensure that **rebates are given** to students whose housing accommodations underwent construction, experienced nonuniform pricing increases, or created inadequate living standards (gas leaks, facility closures, etc.). **Increase the general capacity of affordable student housing** through new residence construction. **Reexamine the family housing and pet policies** for campus housing.
5. **Community & Communication:** Establish a **WCM-Qatar exchange and immersion program** that would allow members of the WCM community to conduct research or take elective coursework at each respective campus. Reinstate the **Student Fellow Social Hour** to encourage cross-program community building over drinks and appetizers. **Restructure institutional communications** to decrease spam while increasing valuable information messaging.

Notable WCM Work (2020-21):

- Obtained a record amount of semester funding for MSEC student groups despite pandemic budget limitations
- Converted reimbursement and credit card usage requests from paper to online
- Collaborated with admin to expedite the safe reopening of gyms (partial reopening expected in mid-April)

As Weill Cornell Medicine students, we have the ability to have a powerful voice and present that perspective to the governing body of this institution, the Board of Fellows. It would be a privilege to be the voice that represents future leaders, cutting-edge researchers, and industry pioneers at Weill Cornell Medicine. Thank you, and I would greatly appreciate further student input on future initiatives. Feel free to reach out at git4001@med.cornell.edu!