

Naira Abou-Ghali: Weill Cornell Medicine Student Fellow Candidacy Statement



Hi! My name is Naira Abou-Ghali and I am a first year PhD student studying Pharmacology. Although I have been a student at Weill Cornell for a short time, my experience was shaped by social isolation and the uncertainty brought on by the pandemic. This circumstance required me to be adaptable enough to consistently reimagine the norm and proactive enough to utilize institutional resources and see the ways they can be improved. Along the way, I've seized opportunities to advocate for my peers, and support the following institutional efforts to improve the student experience at Weill Cornell:

- **COVID Management:** Represented the Pharmacology cohort and voiced support for the implementation of institution-wide surveillance testing to Dean Choi.
- **Health & Wellness:** Participated in a Resilience Training pilot program, designed to help graduate and medical students improve their mental health with practical strategies, and supported the quality of this program by giving feedback.
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** Reimagined the structure of mentorship and supervision in biomedical research and medical training to enhance its quality, promote the interpersonal development of mentors and mentees, and take preventative action against harassment and discrimination. These novel strategies, [summarized here](#), were proposed to and supported by a Co-Chair of the Social Justice and Anti-Racism Task Force.
- **Career Development:** As GSEC Career Liaison, I am working to shape the content of this year's Tri-Institutional Career Symposium and am spearheading a program dedicated to connecting graduate and medical students with mentors from industry and non-traditional career paths through informational interviewing.

The Student Fellow represents the diverse needs of students at WCM, and should work to implement creative solutions to urgent issues. Including your viewpoints in this process is crucial, and I am eager to learn more about the challenges you have endured and continue to endure as our community emerges from such a challenging time. At such a critical turning point, our institution is rapidly evolving to build a culture of strong mentorship and foster an environment that is equitable and inclusive. In line with these goals, here are my ideas:

- **Education:** Regulate the quality of medical and scientific training by implementing direct mechanisms to give research and clinical faculty feedback about the quality of their mentorship. This system, [outlined here](#), is designed to convert feedback and grievances from student trainees into action items for faculty to improve as a proactive approach to achieving equitable work environments.
- **Rebuilding Community:** Safely re-engage students in local and in-person community building events by utilizing current volunteer and outreach opportunities. Connect students with their cohorts by developing institution wide mentorship programs enabled by a virtual platform or app. Connect the medical colleges in New York and Qatar through a research symposium and joint MSEC meetings.
- **Student Wellness:** Expand the student wellness initiative within the medical and graduate colleges, including the Qatar campus. Support students as access to therapists is improved by widely implementing Resilience Training and implementing the use of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy apps with little to no cost.

If elected Student Fellow, I promise to be connected, passionate, and proactive in advocating for you. I would appreciate your vote – if you have any thoughts about the above, please reach out at naa4014@med.cornell.edu. Thank you!