Aissata leads her life with the motto “never take anything for granted. Always help and love as much as you can, while remaining true to yourself.” Aissata is a Fulbright scholar pursuing a Master of Arts in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. A native of Mali, she received a Bachelor of Arts in English and Arabic studies and a Master of Arts in Teaching from the University of Bamako, Mali. Aissata’s dedicated her service to organizations that advanced the rights of women in Mali. She served in several leadership positions in a committee in the Association of Women’s Leadership and Sustainable Development (AFLED). Aissata is also an active member in several organizations that seek to advance positive youth development. She founded and led a youth organization that focused on the mentorship and empowerment of youth. Aissata employed theatre and digital media to mobilize youth and activate their civic engagement. She used her creative writing talents to develop and disseminate youth-sensitive messages on the importance of civic participation. She gave back to her community by organizing community development trainings and workshops on different topics that were relevant to her community. Aissata has been named as a role model in the 2016’s 30 Days, 30 Women Campaign organized by the US Embassy in Mali. She volunteered as a teacher at her hometown’s Middle School, and as a librarian her university's School of Education. She is a poet who wrote unpublished manuscripts on a wide range of topics addressing the intersections of gender, class and race as well as love. Domestic violence prevention emerged as a topic that Aissata is most passionate about. At NYSCDV, she wishes to study models of prevention and intervention that can be successfully adapted and adopted in Mali.

EMILY BADALAMENTE
MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
ROCKEFELLER COLLEGE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS & POLICY, UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY
POLICY FIELD PLACEMENT: NYS OFFICE FOR CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES (OCFS)

Emily is pursuing a Master of Public Administration with a concentration in policy analysis. Emily graduated from SUNY Oneonta with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Women and Gender Studies. During her undergraduate career, Emily completed an internship with Congressional Candidate Sean Eldridge and United States Senator Kirsten Gillibrand. These experiences, as well as a service trip to Bolivia volunteering with Save the Children, further solidified her commitment to pursue a lifelong career in public service. Emily also completed an internship with the Office of Governor Andrew Cuomo. Emily is a graduate of the Center for Women in Government & Civil Society’s NEW Leadership™ New York Summer Institute. At OCFS, Emily hopes to strengthen her knowledge about the inner workings of New York State government to position herself for a career in state government following her graduation in May 2018.
AKUA BOAKYE-YIADOM  
MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH, UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY  
POLICY FIELD PLACEMENT: NYS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Akua aspires to apply public policy and advocacy strategies to effectively address minority health issues. She received a Master of Public Health (MPH) with a concentration in Social Behavior and Community Health and a Certificate in Health Disparities from the University at Albany. She holds a Bachelor’s in Human Development from Binghamton University. While pursuing her MPH, she received the Birkhead Scholarship and William Randolph Hearst Fellowship in recognition of her enthusiastic dedication to promoting health equity, advocacy on the behalf of underrepresented populations, and active engagement in public service. Akua completed internships at a Village, AARP, and most recently the NYS Department of Health, Division of Family Health where she focused on interventions to address maternal opioid use, infant sleep practices, and maternal morbidity and mortality disparities. Her direct experiences serving her community include educating older adults in Albany about breast and prostate cancer, administering community health surveys to assess residents’ health status, and advocating for social and environmental justice in Albany’s South End. She participates in local minority health taskforce and community meetings where she explores practical ways to improve the health and well-being of diverse populations in Albany. At the New York State Department of Health, Akua is working on policies, regulations, and initiatives that focus on aging, caregiving, and long-term care.

LEANNE EVANS  
MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
ROCKEFELLER COLLEGE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS & POLICY, UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY  
POLICY FIELD PLACEMENT: NYS ASSEMBLY – OFFICE OF ASSEMBLY MEMBER AMY PAULIN

Leanne is from Ilion, NY, a small village outside of Utica, nestled within the Mohawk Valley. In 2013, she graduated cum laude from St. Lawrence University (SLU) with a B.A. in Government and English. Her interest in women-centered policy was sparked by Gender and Sexuality Studies classes she completed at SLU. She was drawn to public service after working at AmeriCorps VISTA, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oneida and Herkimer Counties, where she promoted and facilitated entrepreneurialism within Utica’s vast refugee and immigrant communities. With many prominent female role models around her in the City of Utica, Leanne became convinced that women’s leadership, including her own, is critical to advancing meaningful and sustainable change. Leanne applied to the Rockefeller College of Public Affairs & Policy after hearing about the Center for Women in Government and Civil Society’s Fellowship on Women & Public Policy. When not working, or attending classes, she enjoys the company of her cats, quality eating establishments, new breweries, antique shops and record stores.
Maria Camila Gomez is pursuing a Master of International Affairs with a concentration in diplomacy and global governance. Her focus areas are migration, immigration, and refugees. As a first generation immigrant, she has keen understanding of the struggles facing new Americans in uprooting their lives and replanting them in a new adopted country. Camila has witnessed firsthand experiences working with refugee and immigrant populations to alleviate the trauma of migration and create a welcoming environment for new comers. As a case manager for undocumented youth, she facilitated interagency collaborations which she recognized as critical to effectively and efficiently serving new Americans. She also developed a deepened sense of responsive public policies that enable successful integration of immigrants into the social, political and economic fabric of the country. Camila recognizes the urgent need for international development that is informed by the needs of local population and that relies on diverse and local leadership. She holds a bachelor’s degree from Buffalo State College in Political Science with a concentration in International Relations.

Elizabeth Helmer is pursuing a Master in English at the University at Albany and is currently writing her thesis on demons in literature. After receiving a Bachelor’s degree in French and English Languages and Literature from Fordham University, Elizabeth spent a semester in Paris taking graduate coursework in comparative literature at the Sorbonne and l’Ecole Normale Superieur. During her time in Paris she also worked as an English tutor. While she has always had a passion for literature and academia, she developed a strong interest in public policy, public service, community building, and community development through public education. Most recently, Elizabeth worked at the Office of Student Engagement at the University at Albany where she supported the University’s efforts to provide students with learning opportunities within and outside the classroom. She hopes to become an English professor one day, but she also wishes to combine this passion for literature and teaching with an ability to be actively engaged with positive social change through public policy and community development.
EMILY HETZEL
MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
ROCKEFELLER COLLEGE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS & POLICY, UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY
POLICY FIELD PLACEMENT: NYS OFFICE OF MENTAL HEALTH (OMH)

Emily is completing a Master of Public Administration with a concentration in public economics and financial management. She became involved in public service at a young age and through her experiences became passionate about equity and women’s issues. Emily earned her undergraduate degree in political science at the University at Albany where she graduated Magna Cum Laude. She was involved in a variety of leadership roles and received the President’s Award for Leadership in recognition for her contributions as a Senior Resident Assistant. Emily credits her participation in two relief trips to New Orleans immediately following Hurricane Katrina to fueling the flames of public service and solidifying her dedication to poverty alleviation and advancing social justice policies. Emily served as an AmeriCorps VISTA Fellow in North Albany. In this capacity she acted as a community organizer and advocated for additional resources and services for children. Emily worked professionally for several years as a contract manager and became interested in the impact budgeting and financial oversight on public policy. She aspires to become a public servant in NYS government where she can contribute to implementing sound fiscal policies.

KAREN KIRSTEIN
MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
ROCKEFELLER COLLEGE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS & POLICY, UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY
POLICY FIELD PLACEMENT: NYS DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Karen received a Master in Public Administration in December 2017. She served as a public school teacher in Schenectady for ten years. Her experiences as a teacher exposed her to the struggles of the working poor and the systemic and systematic challenges poor families face. She cultivated a strong passion and dedication to serving poor families. Most recently, Karen has been employed at City Mission of Schenectady where she served as an employment coach. She then moved to the employment division; Schenectady Works, where she conducted data analysis and ensured HIPAA compliance to effectively manage Empower Health, an innovative DISRP-funded healthcare initiative. She hopes to continue to reap the tremendous rewards of public service at a macro, statewide policy-making/implementation scale where she can contribute to addressing poverty at a system level. Karen believes that micro, grassroots community development efforts must be supported by macro-level policies that sustain change and address root causes of the problems. Karen points out that “poverty can only be lifted through policy-level interventions. Anything else constitute Band-Aid and temporary measures.”
MIKALA MCCAULEY
MASTER OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND LEADERSHIP
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY
POLICY FIELD PLACEMENT: NYS OFFICE OF CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES (OCFS)

Mikala is completing a Master of Educational Policy and Leadership with a concentration in higher education. She is a strong advocate for providing young girls access to STEM fields, and for bringing vulnerable populations quality college preparedness opportunities. Mikala completed an internship at Management & Training Corporation (MTC) in Centerville, Utah, where she conducted research to provide efficient, high quality learning tools for MTC to train Job Corps instructors across the nation. Mikala is also a certified rape crisis counselor. She volunteers at the Albany County Crime Victim and Sexual Violence Center where she provides both emergency room accompaniment for sexual assault survivors and hotline crisis assistance. During her undergraduate career, she was a member of UAlbany’s Division I Volleyball Team and a member of the Middle Earth Peer Assistance Program, where she assisted students with career preparation.

KATHRYN MISHKIN
DOCTORATE OF PUBLIC HEALTH
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH, UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY
POLICY FIELD PLACEMENT: NYS ASSEMBLY, OFFICE OF ASSEMBLY MEMBER AMY PAULIN

Kathryn (Kate) is currently pursuing a Doctorate in Public Health (DrPH) in Health Policy, Management, and Behavior. A Fulbright alumna and returned Peace Corps volunteer, she has cultivated a strong passion for maternal and child health, women’s empowerment, and women’s rights through work in the United States, Morocco, Indonesia, Cameroon, Ethiopia, China, and Bulgaria. Since starting her Doctorate, Kate has worked on the Maternal Mortality Review Project at the Division of Family Health of NYS Department of Health, where she analyzed the prevalence of mental illness among maternal mortality cases in New York State. She has also worked as a Consultant with CDC’s Division of Reproductive Health, studying the relationship between maternal mortality, mental illness, suicide, substance use, and developing recommendations for surveillance. Kate is involved with research related doulas and the promotion of women’s health and reproductive justice in domestic and international settings, and her work has been selected for publication in a book entitled Reproductive Ethics II-New Ideas and Innovations. She is also a national Maternal and Child Health Fellow with the American Public Health Association, working with the Global Maternal and Child Health Committee. Kate is a pursuing a Certificate in Women and Public Policy through Rockefeller College. She holds a Masters in Public Health from Emory University and a Masters in Sustainable International Development from the Heller School at Brandeis University. She completed a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and East Asian Languages and Literatures at Smith College.
Valerie is pursuing a Master of Public Health with a concentration in Environmental Health Sciences. She is a staunch advocate for environmental justice who appreciates the beauty of nature, and believes in human responsibility, to protect and preserve it for future generations as well as to effectively mitigate the impact of human activity on environmental health and public health outcomes. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Biology with an environment concentration from SUNY New Paltz. Valerie developed a deepened understanding of adverse health effects of air and water pollution on a wide range of health conditions, and solidified her commitment to advocate for sustainable and responsive public policies. She studied the intersection of environmental and reproductive health and researched the impact of environmental pollution on maternal and child health. Her academic and professional experiences ideally position her to become an influential voice in the environmental justice movement.