

INTRODUCING RETURNING PPOHA AAO FELLOW

Amanda Barrera

Masters in: Geology

Hometown: San Antonio, TX

PRIOR EDUCATION:

Sul Ross State University
~BS in Geology

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS:

PPOHA Fellow (Fall 2023)
Julius Dasch Outstanding Undergraduate (2017-2018)
Robert P. Amacker Memorial Scholarship (2017-2018)
Dean's List (2016-2018)
Xerox STEM CCRAA Title V Endowed Scholarship (2015-2016)
Semmes Foundation Scholarship (2014-2015)



PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS:

Student Member, Geological Society of America- South Central Section
Student Member, Association for Women Geologists

INTERESTING FACTS & HOBBIES/INTERESTS:

When I have spare time, I enjoy spending time with my husband and our three dogs. I love crafting, painting, and playing piano, all of which I look forward to spending more time doing after I graduate.

BIO:

I'm originally from San Antonio, TX, but have been living in Alpine the last few years with my husband and our three dogs. I am looking forward to being a fellow this semester, and I'm thankful for the opportunity, since completing the MS Geology program is one step closer to accomplishing my educational goal.

SUMMER '26

INTRODUCING NEW PPOHA AAO FELLOW

Jesse Cano

Masters in: Public Administration

Hometown: Conroe, TX

PRIOR EDUCATION:

University of Houston- Victoria
~BA in Psychology

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS:

PPOHA Fellowship (Summer 2026)
Currently pursuing a Master of Public Administration with an emphasis on public service, economic development, and local government.



PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS:

Texas Real Estate Broker
Texas Notary Public
Texas Right-of-Way Agent License
Member, Houston Association of Realtors and Texas Realtors

INTERESTING FACTS & HOBBIES/INTERESTS:

I love learning history, Jeeps, the Houston Texans, and college football. I have a strong interest in economic development, law, and local government.

BIO:

I am pursuing a Master of Public Administration with a strong interest in public service, economic development, and local government. As a licensed Texas Real Estate Broker and entrepreneur, I bring experience in real estate, property management, and community development. My long-term goal is to become an attorney and serve in local government, where I hope to help communities grow and improve quality of life through thoughtful leadership and public service. Outside of work and school, I enjoy spending time with my family, following the Houston Texans, and all things Jeep and college football.

SUMMER '26

COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

INTRODUCING RETURNING PPOHA AAO FELLOW

Asia Cornelius

Ph.D. in: Range & Wildlife Mgmt

Hometown: San Antonio, TX

PRIOR EDUCATION:

Sul Ross State University

~BS in Biology

~MS in Range and Wildlife Management

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS:

Don Pendleton Memorial Graduate Oral Presentation Award (2024)

Outstanding Student in Range Management (2026)



PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS:

Member, the Society for Range Management

Member, the Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society

INTERESTING FACTS & HOBBIES/INTERESTS:

Beyond my academic career, I have a passion for the outdoors. In my free time, I enjoy exploring nature through activities such as hiking and camping. I also enjoy tending to my garden, where I grow mainly vegetables. Gardening is not only a way to connect with plants outside of research, but is also a very mindful practice for me. In my spare time, I love to knit. It provides a creative outlet that helps me focus and maintain well-being alongside my academic work.

BIO:

I was born in Fort Worth, TX and spent much of my childhood growing up abroad in England and Japan before settling in San Antonio, TX. During my time in San Antonio, I worked as a greenhouse manager, which shaped my understanding of plant systems and helped shape my interest in ecology. I later moved to Alpine, TX, where I focused on desert and rangeland ecosystems.

SUMMER '26

COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

INTRODUCING RETURNING PPOHA AAO FELLOW

Sarah "SG" Gilbert

Masters in: Range & Wildlife Mgmt

Hometown: Plainfield, NJ

PRIOR EDUCATION:

Sul Ross State University
~BS in Biology

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS:

Cum Laude, SRSU (2025)
Curatorial Internship, SRSU Title III STEM LTS
Presenter, SRSU Tafoya McNair Research Symposium (2023)
Presenter, Texas Academy of Science Annual Meeting (2024)
Dean's List, SRSU (2022-2024)

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS:

Member, Beta Beta Beta Biological Honors Society
Member, SRSU Range & Wildlife Club
McNair Scholar, SRSU (2023)
Secretary, SRSU Biology Club (2023-2024)

INTERESTING FACTS & HOBBIES/INTERESTS:

Outside of school and work, I love being outdoors- whether it's camping, hiking, gardening, exploring new places, or walking around the neighborhood. I also LOVE puzzles, cooking, and listening to music.

BIO:

I grew up camping in the Appalachian Mountains and spending summers along the Atlantic Ocean coast, where I fell in love with the outdoors and developed a deep curiosity about the natural world. I've always loved exploring wild places, watching how plants and animals interact, and noticing the subtle changes in landscapes and seasons.

Before moving to Alpine, Texas and going back to school full time, I lived in Central Texas and attended Austin Community College while working full time. During that time, I built skills in merchandising, inventory management, and vendor relations. I was even a butcher for a while. It wasn't directly tied to science, but it helped me grow professionally and gave me tools that still support me as a student and researcher today.

My curiosity about nature eventually led me to earn my Biology degree at Sul Ross State University, where I started developing my skills in ecology and field research. Now that I call Alpine home, I'm excited to contribute to vegetation monitoring and habitat restoration research with Borderlands Research Institute.



SUMMER '26

COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

INTRODUCING NEW PPOHA AAO FELLOW

Halli Lovell

Masters in: Range & Wildlife Mgmt

Hometown: Harper, TX

PRIOR EDUCATION:

Texas Tech University

~BS in Natural Resources Management: Wildlife Biology

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS:

TPWF Women in Conservation Science Scholarship (2025)

Dan L. Duncan Houston Safari Club Foundation Scholarship (2025)

Krista Simpson Agricultural Achievement Scholarship (2024)

Ex-Student Range and Wildlife Endowed Scholarship (2024)

San Antonio Livestock Exposition, Inc Scholarship (2024)



PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS:

Member, Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society (TWS)

Member, Mule Deer Foundation (MDF)

Member, Range and Wildlife Club, SRSU

INTERESTING FACTS & HOBBIES/INTERESTS:

Outside of the classroom, I enjoy spending time outdoors, playing music, and quality time with my pups. I have always loved fly fishing, hunting, and exploring new places when the opportunity arises. I have also been playing acoustic guitar for about ten years now, so you can find me trying to serenade my dogs, June and Jasper, in my free time!

BIO:

Growing up in a small Texas Hill Country town (no stoplights, small), my passion for the outdoors developed quite early, as I was raised around cattle, hunting, and barefoot adventures. I was also fortunate to spend my summers at a youth hunting camp, where I grew my love for the outdoors even more. As I got older, I returned as a counselor to help younger kiddos experience the same opportunities that had such a profound impact on me. These experiences ultimately inspired me to pursue a career in wildlife biology and management.

During my time at Texas Tech University, I worked as a research technician and was fortunate to contribute to a variety of projects, including tagging monarch butterflies, sampling ring-necked pheasants, and assisting with a desert bighorn sheep translocation. Today, I am proud to be part of the team at Borderlands Research Institute, where I work on a pronghorn habitat project investigating how brush encroachment impacts habitat quality. Being involved in this project and working alongside dedicated professionals and fellow students has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my career and serves as a daily reminder of why I fell in love with this field in the first place.

SUMMER '26

INTRODUCING RETURNING PPOHA AAO FELLOW

Tina Neufeld

Masters in: Geology

Hometown: Seminole, TX

PRIOR EDUCATION:

Sul Ross State University
~BS in Geology

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS:

PPOHA Fellow (Spring 2025 – Summer 2026)
GSA Warren Hamilton Field Trip Grand Award (2025)
NAGT/USGS Cooperative Summer Fellowship (2024)
Cum Laude (2023)
McNair Scholar (2022 – 2023)
Society for the Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science Travel Scholarship (2022)
Julius Dasch Memorial Outstanding Undergraduate Student (2022)
Dean's List

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS:

Member, Geological Society of America
Member, Mule Deer Foundation (MDF)
Member, Geology Club, SRSU

INTERESTING FACTS & HOBBIES/INTERESTS:

I enjoy baking and cooking my favorite meals, taking care of my plants, and spending time with my boyfriend and cat. I also love ceramics, and I am always working on creating bigger and brighter pieces. In my spare time, I enjoy running, camping, and reading books – my current favorite being thriller and historical fiction.

BIO:

I was born and raised in Seminole, TX. I grew up working in cotton and peanut fields, running under irrigation systems, and riding with my dad in semi-trucks hauling cotton bales, dirt, and cottonseed to dairy farms in New Mexico. I was always fascinated with irrigation systems, wanting to know where our water came from and the relationship between agricultural communities and their water resources. Since moving to Alpine, TX, I fell in love with the desert, shifting my interest from farming communities and their water to communities reliant on water in the desert. My thesis research focuses on transient groundwater use in Brewster County and its effects on the minor aquifers in the Big Bend Region of Texas. I am working on a longitudinal study to determine the overall rate of short-term rental property developments in Brewster County, performing calculations on annual transient groundwater use associated with the short-term rentals, and conducting interviews with county residents to gain their perspective on groundwater use and tourism in the region. Following my masters, I intend to obtain my Ph.D. in sustainability and then attend law school focusing on Texas water law. My career goal is to work with a state agency to promote science communication aiming to help communities engage in practical and localized conservation efforts.



SUMMER '26

INTRODUCING NEW PPOHA AAO FELLOW

Joseph Rangel

Masters in: CJ- Cyber Security

Hometown: San Antonio, TX

PRIOR EDUCATION:

Sul Ross State University
~BS in Criminal Justice

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS:



PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS:

PPOHA AAO Fellowship (Summer 2026)

INTERESTING FACTS & HOBBIES/INTERESTS:

I enjoy playing sports, video games and dropshipping.

BIO:

My name is Joseph Rangel and I am 20 years old about to receive my Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice and I am also starting my Master's in Cyber Security. After I turn 21 years old, I will be joining the police academy and my overall goal is to be an investigator in the FBI.

SUMMER '26

INTRODUCING RETURNING PPOHA AAO FELLOW

Hayley Shultz

Masters in: Range & Wildlife Mgmt

Hometown: Carlisle, PA

PRIOR EDUCATION:

Texas Tech University
~BS in Natural Resources Management

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS:

Lone Star College President's List (2020-2021)
Dean's List, Texas Tech University (2023-2024)
Alpha Zeta Alumni
National Science Foundation Research Contribution
Cum Laude, Texas Tech University (2024)



PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS:

Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society
Texas Wildlife Association
Range & Wildlife Club, SRSU

INTERESTING FACTS & HOBBIES/INTERESTS:

I love going on outdoor adventures with family and friends as well as trying out new activities! I like to draw, read, and hang out with my pup in my free time.

BIO:

My name is Hayley Shultz, and I was born in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, where I discovered my admiration for nature and wildlife. At the age of eight, my family packed up and moved to South Carolina. I spent 10 years trying to fit in and think of a future career for myself. The day after I graduated high school in 2019, my family moved us to Houston, Texas. Once again, I had no friends and no idea of what I wanted to do. I started college thinking I'd follow in my parents' footsteps into the medical field. After I transferred to Texas Tech University in Lubbock a year later, I knew I wasn't passionate about the field of study I was in, and I still had the feeling that I didn't fit in with anyone. I started exploring other majors offered and discovered the Natural Resources Department. I immediately changed my major and haven't looked back. I have made the closest lifelong friends, and I've been a part of the most amazing experiences imaginable. I couldn't be more grateful to be at Sul Ross State University researching scaled quail movement with the Borderlands Research Institute!

SUMMER '26

COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

INTRODUCING RETURNING PPOHA AAO FELLOW

Ryan Smith

Masters in: Geology

Hometown: Allen, TX

PRIOR EDUCATION:

Sul Ross State University
~BS in Geology

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS:

Best Geology Non-Traditional Undergraduate, SRSU (2023)



PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS:

Student Member, Geological Society of America

INTERESTING FACTS & HOBBIES/INTERESTS:

I play the saxophone

BIO:

I was raised in Allen Texas, where I graduated highschool in the top 10 percent. Initially I went to school for computer engineering, but after breaking due to Covid I switched majors to Geology and transferred to Sul Ross in 2022 and received my bachelors in 2024. Currently I am working on my masters with a thesis on "Lesser Known Trackways of West Texas".

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COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

INTRODUCING NEW PPOHA AAO FELLOW

Adrian "Ian" Soto

Masters in: Theatre

Hometown: El Paso, TX

PRIOR EDUCATION:

Sul Ross State University
~BFA in Technical Theatre

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS:

KCACTF Regional and State recognition in Light Design

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS:

Theatrical Society, SRSU (Vice President & Treasurer)
Theatre of the Big Bend



INTERESTING FACTS & HOBBIES/INTERESTS:

Outside of theatre, I enjoy traveling whenever the opportunity arises. I love exploring new places and discovering local restaurants and cuisines. One of my favorite interests is wine tasting and food pairing, particularly learning from sommeliers and exploring wines from diverse regions around the world. I enjoy studying the stories behind winemakers, their techniques, and how wine can enhance the dining experience.

When I am at home, I enjoy cooking and baking, taking walks with my dog, Watson, listening to music, reading books, plays, screenplays, and playing video games when time allows. These hobbies provide a balance between creativity, exploration, and relaxation, while continually inspiring new perspectives that influence my artistic work.

BIO:

My name is Adrian Soto, though I often go by Ian when I am working in a creative capacity. I grew up primarily in El Paso, Texas, and spent much of my life in Marathon, Texas. What drew me to the region was the beauty of West Texas and the opportunity to connect with the diverse people who pass through it. Living and working in Marathon taught me discipline, adaptability, and an appreciation for creativity—qualities that continue to influence my work and studies in theatre.

SUMMER '26