

## Christine Mirzayan Science and Technology Policy Graduate Fellows 2001 Winter Biographical Sketches



**Avital "Tali" Bar-Shalom** (Winter 2001, IOM/NCPB) earned a PhD in biochemistry at Brandeis University, where she also completed coursework in health policy at the Heller School. She holds a bachelor's degree in biochemistry/chemistry from the University of California, San Diego. She began her policy training while at Brandeis, serving in several student leadership positions, including as a graduate student representative to the Brandeis University Board of Trustees. Following the science and technology policy graduate fellowship with the National Cancer Policy Board at the Institute of Medicine, Tali remained with NCPB as a research associate through August 2001. As the 2001-2002 American Association for the Advancement of Science Risk Policy Fellow, she worked at the Joint Institute for Food Safety Research, then at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). Tali became a federal employee at the end

of her AAAS Fellowship and continued to work for the OSTP as a policy analyst in homeland security until November 2005. From November 2005 to January 2007, Tali was professional staff for the House Science Committee where her responsibilities include oversight over the Department of Homeland Security's Science and Technology Directorate and the National Science Foundation. In June 2007, Tali joined the Public Health Branch at the Office of Management and Budget, where she is responsible for all HHS programs related to biodefense and emergency preparedness, including pandemic influenza. Tali enjoys traveling to adventurous places, most recently to South Africa and Mozambique. She also practices yoga, scuba dives, cycles, and enjoys cooking. (Updated 02/2011)

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**Michelle Bragg** (Winter 2001, DBASSE/BCYF) is has been working on a PhD in public policy at George Mason University. Her BA in business administration is from Prairie View A&M. She earned an MS in applied economics from the University of North Texas. Michelle was recently a Congressional fellow for the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc. in Washington, where she worked on women's, children's, and family issues. Michelle credits her success and drive to her faith and family, especially her great-

grandparents. She is very community oriented and hopes to make community activism an integral part of her career. Michelle worked for the Board of Children, Youth, and Families, and hoped that her Mirzayan Fellowship would help her gain practical experience in promoting and expanding the national dialogue on family issues, particularly those that center and have significant impacts on African American and Latino families. (Updated 04/2009)

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**Emily Buehler** (Winter 2001, NAS/OPUS) is an independent editor with a focus on science reports and academic research papers. After her Mirzayan fellowship and finishing her PhD in physical chemistry, she took a break from science to work as a bread baker. The break lasted six years, during which time she taught bread-making classes and wrote and published a book on the science of bread. Emily continues to pursue her own writing between editing assignments. (Updated 4/2016)



**Abby (Cohen) Schneider** (Winter 2001, DELS/OSB) is a federal legislative representative for the Association of California Water Agencies. She covers a variety of issues including the energy/water nexus, the Safe Drinking Water Act, climate change, and invasive species and represents ACWA's before Congress and federal agencies. Before joining ACWA in 2005, she was a science fellow in Senator Dianne Feinstein's office where she was first introduced to California water issues. She has also worked as a Mirzayan Fellow for the Ocean Studies Board of the National Research Council. Abby received her PhD in environmental chemistry from the University of Maryland. Her research focused on contaminant/sediment interactions and she spent lots of time on the Hudson River. Abby received her BS in environmental engineering from MIT. (Updated 9/2009)



**Susan Daniels** (Winter 2001, DELS/BLS) is Acting Director of the Office of Autism Research Coordination at the National Institute of Mental Health, within the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Susan's office does strategic planning, communications and policy for autism research and manages the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC), a federal advisory committee that provides advice to the Secretary of Health and Human Services on matters related to autism. Susan is also the Executive Secretary of the IACC and all of its subcommittees. Formerly, Susan served as Deputy Director of OARC, and prior to that, as a Health Scientist Administrator at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), where she did strategic planning and program evaluation for the extramural biodefense and infectious disease research programs and managed a portfolio of conference, training and diversity grants. She also previously worked as a Scientific Program Analyst at the NIH National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS), where she conducted portfolio analysis and managed training grants for the Parkinson's Disease Program. Prior to coming to NIH, Susan was a Christine Mirzayan Science and Technology Policy Fellow and consultant at the National Academies, where she worked on agricultural biotechnology and human cloning policy. She received her bachelor's degree in biology and French from Wheaton College, and her PhD in molecular and cell biology from Brandeis University. Her doctoral research focused on sensory neurobiology in the soil nematode, *C. elegans*. In her spare time, Susan enjoys playing with her two little boys, hiking, bird watching, gardening, choral music and travel. (Updated 10/2011)

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**Scott Jenkins** (Winter 2001, DELS/BCST) has a master's degree in chemistry from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His bachelor's degree in chemistry is from Colgate University. After doing some graduate work in science journalism at Texas A&M University, he worked as an affairs assistant and science writer for Argonne National Labs outside Chicago. He has written many published articles about the science community. Scott's other interests include music, basketball, tennis, playing guitar, and reading. Scott had his Mirzayan Fellowship at the Board on Chemical Sciences and Technology.



**Kirsten Moffatt** (Winter 2001, PGA/CSTL) earned her PhD in experimental pathology at the University of Colorado Health Science Center. Her bachelor's degree in molecular biology and biochemistry is from the University of Colorado. During her studies, Kirsten helped conduct research on a drug that would decrease the growth of prostate cancer cells. This research led to a Phase II clinical trial sponsored by Bristol-Myers Squibb. She is hoping to broaden her molecular biology background by learning about law and technology issues as they pertain to science and how they come together to make policy. Ultimately, she has been hoping to use the experience of her Mirzayan Fellowship to bridge the gap between academia and business.



**Carl A. Picconatto** (Winter 2001, PGA/COSEPUP) is a principal scientist of the MITRE Corporation and the deputy director of the MITRE Department responsible for supporting science and technology programs across the intelligence community. Prior to this position, Dr. Picconatto founded and served as Director of MITRE's Nanotechnology Experimental Laboratory. His research efforts include nanotechnology for energy and power systems, carbon nanotube separation, and theoretical investigations of the electronic characteristics of single molecules. In addition, he led MITRE's development of methodologies for the design and simulation of novel nanoelectronic memories and processors, which were critical to the physical realization of the world's first prototype nanoelectronic computer systems. Prior to joining MITRE, Dr. Picconatto served in the United States Congress as the chief science advisor to Congresswoman Constance A. Morella, a senior member of the House Committee on Science. He also has worked for the Committee on Science, Engineering, and Public Policy at the National Academy of Sciences. Dr. Picconatto holds a PhD in chemistry from Columbia University and a BS from the University of Notre Dame. (Updated 10/2011)

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**Dahlia Sokolov** (Winter 2001, DBASSE/COSE K-12) is the Democratic staff director for the Research & Technology Subcommittee of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology. In this role, Dahlia advises committee members on oversight and legislative issues regarding the National Science Foundation; the National Institute of Standards and Technology; major interagency R&D initiatives; STEM education; international S&T cooperation; federal policies for university research; competitiveness and innovation broadly; and R&D at the Departments of Transportation and Homeland Security. During her first two years with the committee, Dahlia worked on energy issues, including nuclear energy R&D. Dahlia joined the committee staff as an American Institute of Physics Congressional fellow in 2004 and joined the professional staff in 2005. She previously served under the leadership of former Chairmen Boehlert and

Gordon, and is now serving under the leadership of ranking member Eddie Bernice Johnson. Dahlia completed a postdoctoral research fellowship at the National Cancer Institute. She has a Ph.D. in bioengineering from the University of Washington and a B.S. in engineering physics from the University of California, Berkeley. (Updated 2/2016)



**Kara Suzuka** (Winter 2001, DBASSE/MSEB and USNCMI) is a STEM Liaison at the University of Hawaii's STEM Pre-Academy. As part of the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation, she forges partnerships with the University's research centers and academic units, with public schools and teachers, and among others who support and serve Hawaii's teachers and students. She also works with these partners to identify and create new resources for teachers. In addition, Kara is a researcher at the University of Michigan School of Education. She has more than two decades of experience collecting and producing classroom documentation for use in education and research. She has developed a variety of multimedia materials for teacher professional learning, taught teacher preparation courses, worked with novice teachers in field placements, and coordinated and led school-based professional development programs

for teachers. She is currently serving as principal investigator (PI) on a project that develops educational materials and serves as co-PI on a research project studying the re-use of classroom videos and other records of educational practice. (Updated 4/2016)



**Sylvia K. Vitazkova** (Winter 2001, PGA/CHR and DELS/BANR) earned a PhD in ecology, evolution and environmental biology from Columbia University, where she also completed a certificate in International Environmental Policy. Her BA in neurobiology & behavior is from Cornell University. Sylvia's interest in policy led her to apply for a Christine Mirzayan Science and Technology Policy Fellowship while still in graduate school. She worked with both the Board on Agriculture and Natural Resources and the Committee on Human Rights during the Winter 2001 session; she then returned to Columbia to complete her doctoral degree, which she earned in 2005. Her other professional experience includes field research in Ecuador, Venezuela, Belize and Mexico, and laboratory research in neurobiology at Harvard Medical School and in veterinary parasitology at the New York State School of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell

University. Sylvia spearheaded the development and implementation of a new Master of Marine and Environmental Science degree program at the University of the Virgin Islands between 2006 and 2008. She returned to the Washington, D.C., area in January 2009 to take a position at George Mason University, where she is the Director of the Zoo and Aquarium Leadership Masters program, Director of the Mason Center for Conservation Studies, and an Assistant Professor of Conservation Studies within New Century College. Her research is on wild black howler monkeys in Belize, focusing on disease transmission between humans, domestic animals and wildlife and the illegal pet trade. Sylvia has extensive international experience in Europe, Africa, Central and South American, Australia, and Asia, practices and teaches yoga, and enjoys dressage, SCUBA diving, and attending the local farmers' markets with her husband and three rescued dogs. [Contact via email](#). (Updated 10/2011)

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Nikki



**Williams** (Winter 2001, IOM/BGH) earned a master's degree in public health at Loma Linda University of Public Health.