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Student Affairs Administrators  
in Higher Education

## 2020-2021 Emerging Faculty Leader Academy Cohort

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Max Schuster  
Assistant Professor, Higher Education  
University of Pittsburgh School of  
Education

Natesha Smith  
Assistant Professor of Student Affairs  
Administration  
Binghamton University

*More information about this program can be found here:*  
[https://www.naspa.org/images/uploads/main/Emerging\\_Leaders\\_Overview.pdf](https://www.naspa.org/images/uploads/main/Emerging_Leaders_Overview.pdf)



Varaxy Yi  
Assistant Professor, Educational  
Leadership  
California State University, Fresno

Varaxy Yi is an assistant professor of Educational Leadership at the Kremen School of Education and Human Development at California State University, Fresno. She also coordinates the Higher Education, Administration, and Leadership pathway. She is a first generation college graduate, child of refugees, and Central Valley native. Varaxy conducts research to advance equity, access, and opportunity for historically underserved communities, such as racially minoritized, Southeast Asian American, and refugee populations. Her dissertation was a phenomenological exploration of the racialized experiences of Southeast Asian American community college students. She earned her doctorate in Higher Education from the University of Denver.



Jason Castles  
Assistant Professor of Higher Education  
Leadership  
Maryville University

Jason Castles is an Assistant Professor of Higher Education Leadership at Maryville University in St. Louis, Missouri, and works with students in the Doctor of Education program in Higher Education Leadership. Prior to Maryville, he served in various areas of student life for 13 years, most recently as Assistant Dean of Students at Union University. He received his Ed.D. in Higher Education Leadership at Union University and his M.Ed. in College Student Affairs at University of South Florida. Jason specializes in a number of areas related to higher education leadership including theory, research, and frameworks. During his time at Maryville, he has taught courses in organizational leadership in higher education, understanding data and analysis, the college student experience, performance and accountability, reflective practice, and educational inquiry. Intercultural competence continues to be the area of research and service Jason is most passionate about exploring. He enjoys administering the Intercultural Development Inventory and walking people through their results and creating an action plan for continued development. Serving as the Missouri Membership Coordinator for Region IV-W is one way Jason seeks to serve the profession.



Antonio Duran  
Assistant Professor, Administration of  
Higher Education  
Auburn University

Antonio Duran (he/him/el) is an assistant professor in the Administration of Higher Education program at Auburn University. Antonio's research primarily investigates how historical and contemporary legacies of oppression influence the experiences and development of college students. Namely, his scholarship leverages critical frameworks (e.g., intersectionality, queer of color critique, queare theory) to complicate research on college student identity and to comprehend how institutional structures impact those with multiple minoritized identities. Antonio is especially interested in the interconnections between racism, heterosexism, and trans oppression on college campuses. As a queer Latino man, Antonio is passionate about shedding a light and uplifting queer and trans people of color communities in higher education.



Rachel Friedensen  
Assistant Professor of Higher Education  
St. Cloud State University

Rachel E. Friedensen is an assistant professor of higher education at St. Cloud State University. She uses discourse analysis and other qualitative methods to explore vectors of inequality and inequity in higher education and the ways that some voices and sources of knowledge are deemed more legitimate than others. Her dissertation explored discursive constructions of diversity in institutional policy. Recent research has focused on engineering identity and associated discourses as well as experiences in STEM learning environments for students with disabilities and LGBTQ+ students. In her spare time, Rachel enjoys exploring Minnesota, walking in the woods, and tweeting a lot about academic writing.



Delma Ramos  
Assistant Professor of Higher Education  
University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Delma Ramos is an Assistant Professor of Higher Education in the Teacher Education and Higher Education department at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Her research examines the experiences of minoritized populations in college and is primarily concerned with shedding light on and identifying tools to disrupt structures that perpetuate inequity in education. With these goals in mind, Delma studies (1) the role of parents and families in the college experience of their children, (2) institutional policies and practices that exclude underrepresented populations from their participation in post-secondary education, and (3) paradigms and ideologies that prevent the disruption of inequity by perpetuating the status quo in access, persistence, and completion of a college degree. Her work employs critical methodologies and theories and has been presented at the annual national meetings of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, NASPA, and the American Educational Research Association and published in journals including the ASHE Higher Education Report Series, JCOT, and JCSCORE. Delma holds a Ph.D. in Higher Education with a concentration in Research Methods and Statistics from the University of Denver, a Master's of Science in Student Affairs in Higher Education, and Bachelors of Social Work from Colorado State University.



Max Schuster  
Assistant Professor, Higher Education  
University of Pittsburgh School of  
Education

Maximilian T. Schuster is an assistant professor of higher education in the Department of Educational Foundations, Organizations, and Policy at University of Pittsburgh, where he also coordinates the master's program in higher education and student services. Max's scholarly activities broadly explore the lived experiences of college students with minoritized identities, drawing heavily on campus climate, organizational culture, identity development, and critical frameworks. Max has received several research grants and awards from student affairs professional associations. Prior to joining the faculty, Max enjoyed seven years of professional experience in student affairs. Max completed a PhD in Higher Education Management at the University of Pittsburgh, and his dissertation was selected for the Outstanding Research Award from NODA, the Association for Orientation, Transition, and Retention in Higher Education. Max also holds an MEd in Higher Education Management from the University of Pittsburgh and BA in English and French from Washington & Jefferson College.



Natesha Smith  
Assistant Professor of Student Affairs  
Administration  
Binghamton University

Natesha L. Smith, Ph.D. (she/her/hers), is an Assistant Professor of Student Affairs Administration at Binghamton University, with experience working in Middle Eastern, East Asian, Caribbean, and North American higher education settings. She received her doctoral degree in Counseling and Personnel Services from the University of Louisville, with an emphasis on College Student Personnel. Her research interests include the internationalization of higher education, the influence of organizational culture on student and faculty development, and the scholarship of teaching and learning. Natesha has edited journal special issues, authored articles and book chapters, and received NASPA and ACPA grants to support her research. Recently, she was selected as one of twelve State University of New York (SUNY) Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) Venezuela Faculty Fellows for the 2019-2020 academic year. Prior to her current faculty role, Natesha worked in academic advising at Zayed University (UAE) and career and transition services at Centre College, the American University of Afghanistan, and the University of Louisville. Natesha's teaching areas include student cultures, organizational culture, global leadership, advising, and helping skills. She approaches the field of student affairs with a scholar-practitioner lens and believes in creating opportunities for students to engage in critical inquiry and research.