

SCHOLARS

Students and Faculty Leading the Way



Asha Saxena, MS, adjunct professor of Health Policy and Management (far left), underwrites the pitch competition first prize.

COLUMBIA HEALTHCARE VENTURES BUILDS ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS

AS STUDENTS RETURN TO CAMPUS EACH FALL, THE COLUMBIA HEALTHCARE VENTURES (CHV) PITCH COMPETITION SWINGS INTO HIGH GEAR. The student-run group, based at Columbia Mailman School, pulls teams of contestants from across the university, ultimately involving 500 students each year. Fifteen teams are in the pitch competition, presenting their idea in front of investors and founders. Participants benefit from planning events, including a “startup lab” and a session on legal issues. Each team is matched with an experienced venture capitalist or founder as a mentor.

In the spring, CHV will host its second Innovation Fellowship program. “Student teams of three to five people work with venture capitalists on real projects, everything from fundraising

to venture capital strategy,” says CHV president Victoria Rentrop, MPH ’26. “We’ve created a curriculum and recruited partners from the startup and venture worlds.” About half of mentors have some connection to the University, but the other half do not. “Writing to entrepreneurs under the name Columbia Healthcare Ventures really opens a lot of doors,” Rentrop says.

CHV is a strong training ground and a networking opportunity for participants, drawing students from Columbia Business School, Columbia Engineering, and Columbia Law School in addition to Columbia Mailman School. The group and students who become involved in it mean business: At least one veteran of last year’s pitch competition, Mirelle Pereira, MPH ’26, is raising a first round of financing for her startup, Santé. And Rentrop? She launched a company in high school that is currently paying half her tuition.

FOR NEW FACULTY MEMBERS, A HOMECOMING

THE SCHOOL HAS WELCOMED SIX NEW FACULTY MEMBERS IN THE LAST YEAR. HALF KNOW THE CAMPUS WELL BECAUSE THEY EARNED DEGREES HERE.



Nicole Haberland, MPH ’93, joined the faculty as an associate professor of Population and Family Health and director of strategic initiatives for the School after more than 25 years advancing research, policy, and practice with a focus on gender equity, education, women’s and girls’ empowerment, sexual and reproductive health, civic participation, and youth. Haberland co-led development of the It’s All One Curriculum—a widely used resource translated into multiple languages—which has informed sexuality and HIV education programs globally.

She comes to Columbia from the Population Council, where she co-founded and directed the Gender, Education, Justice, and Equity initiative.

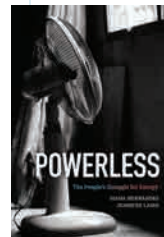


Kacie Dragan, MPH ’16, PhD, is back to the School as an assistant professor of Health Policy and Management. Her research draws on economics and epidemiology to study how health systems interact with the social safety net, often with a focus on policies affecting low-income New Yorkers. She earned her MPH in Sociomedical Sciences; while here, she wrote for Columbia Health’s Go Ask Alice website and worked at the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Most recently, she was a post-doctoral research fellow at the Dartmouth Institute for Health Policy and Clinical Practice.



Sarah McKetta, PhD ’21, is returning as an assistant professor of Epidemiology. A social epidemiologist, she focuses on use of novel measurements to expose hidden disparities and to inform policy and interventions that advance population health. Her areas of interest include alcohol use, sexual health, mental health, women’s health, and LGBT health. “I know Mailman attracts excellent master’s and doctoral-level students, and I’m eager to get to know them and start new collaborations and mentor-mentee relationships,” she says.

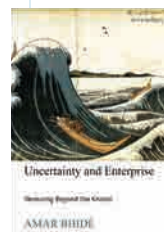
Books by Campus Authors / *Two new works receiving accolades*



POWERLESS: THE PEOPLE’S STRUGGLE FOR ENERGY (Sage Foundation)

In *Powerless*, Diana Hernández, PhD, associate professor of Sociomedical Sciences, and Jennifer Laird, an assistant professor of Sociology at Lehman College, uncover the often-overlooked crisis of energy insecurity—the struggle to afford or access the

basic household energy needed to live safely and with dignity. The book is based on in-depth interviews and detailed survey data, and brings to life the struggle of families who are quite literally choosing between paying for electricity and paying for food. It’s a five-star winner on Good Reads for its personal stories and for awakening readers to the fact that energy insecurity is about far more than just paying the bills.



UNCERTAINTY AND ENTERPRISE (Oxford University Press)

Named a 2025 Best Summer Read by the *Financial Times*, this book by Amar Bhidé, professor of Health Policy and Management, offers a new framework to help analyze everyday uncertainties that arise in entrepreneurship. Drawing on more than 30 years of teaching and research, Bhidé

offers a modern take on the the ideas of Frank Knight and other economists. He shows that using narrative reasoning—combining reason, contextual evidence, and creative interpretation—aligns leaders and helps companies take bold steps forward.