FALL 2025 EDUCATION EXPERTS' SEMINAR SERIES

ALUMNI CAREER PANEL

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23 1-2:30 PM (ET)

ZOOM LINK

PANELISTS:

DR. ANAIYA RELIFORD (NCAS-M)

Senior Research Scientist,
Research Institute for Tactical Autonomy (RITA),
Howard University

MIA TREVINO (NCAS-M)

Climate Program Manager,
Climate and Sustainability,
City Manager's Office,
City of El Paso.

NICHOLAS COLEMAN (LMRCSC)

Fisheries Certification Director,
MRAG Americas

DR. QUINN MCCOLLY (CCME)

Managing Director of Water Resources,
Conservation Equity Management

DR. ALANA MENENDEZ (CESSRST)

Postdoctoral Research Associate,
University of Virginia

DR. DUGWON SEO (CESSRST)

Associate Professor,
Engineering Technology
Department, Queensborough
Community College, CUNY

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PANELIST:

DR. ANAIYA RELIFORD (NCAS-M)

Dr. Anaiya Reliford is a Senior Research Scientist at the Research Institute for Tactical Autonomy (RITA), specializing in AI/ML, sensor integration, and autonomous decision-making for air and space platforms. She is an FAA-certified Remote Pilot with expertise in atmospheric phenomena, remote sensing, and sensor suite design for small Uncrewed Aerial Systems (sUAS). Dr. Reliford holds a Ph.D. in Atmospheric Sciences and two Chemical Engineering degrees from Howard University, supported as a NOAA Cooperative Science Center for Atmospheric Sciences and Meteorology (NCAS-M) Fellow while in graduate school. Her research spans air quality monitoring, remote sensing, and national security applications, with experience at NASA, NOAA, Lockheed Martin, and the FBI. Dr. Reliford is dedicated to empowering underrepresented women in science and engineering while advancing interdisciplinary research in cutting edge fields.
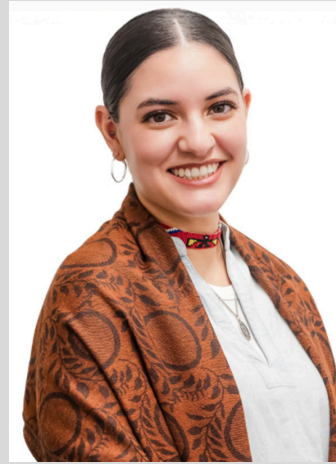
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PANELIST:

MIA TREVINO (NCAS-M)

Mia is an environmental scientist with a passion for resource conservation, community science, and environmental justice. She currently serves as the City of El Paso's Climate Program Manager for the Office of Climate and Sustainability. Her work focuses on developing the region's first Climate Action Plan with her team, preparing El Paso's certification for LEED for Cities, and planning a future heat awareness program in the El Paso community. Outside of work, Mia enjoys spending time with loved ones, gardening, and birding.

During her time as an NCAS-M/NCAS-M II fellow, Mia was able to develop her professional skills, network with other students in her cohort, and attend conferences such as AMS, the EPP/MSI Biennial Education and Science Forum, and the NCAS-M II Annual Center-Wide Cohort Experience. She worked closely with her NOAA mentors on her NERTO titled "Enhancing NWS Heat Services through Urban Heat Island (UHI) Mapping Information". She earned her B.S. and M.S. in Environmental Science at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and El Paso respectively.

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PANELIST:

NICHOLAS COLEMAN (LMRCSC)

Nicholas Coleman joined MRAG Americas in June of 2025 as a Fisheries Certification Specialist. He is a member of our Certification Division and is involved in assessments reviewing fishery compliance with the Marine Stewardship Council and Certified Seafood International sustainability standards. Prior to coming to MRAG, Nicholas was a Biologist at the NOAA Southeast Fisheries Science Center in Miami, Florida. He has also served as an Environmental and Fisheries Policy Analyst for the NOAA Office of Sustainable Fisheries in Silver Spring, Maryland. His research background focuses predominately on population dynamics, acoustic telemetry/imagery, climate informed species distribution modeling, and offshore energy planning. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Marine Science with a minor in Biology from Coastal Carolina University and a Master of Science from the University of Maryland. Outside of his professional life, Nicholas enjoys football (soccer), kayaking/paddleboarding, and fishing.

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PANELIST:

DR. QUINN MCCOLLY (CCME)

Dr. Quinn McColly joined Conservation Equity Management, LP in January of 2023 to help manage the burgeoning water program. Before joining CEM, he was a director at a Texas based non-profit and helped craft multiple first of their kind transactions involving surface water and groundwater. He brings a wealth of experience with over 15 years spent in the capital markets as a floor trader on the Chicago Stock Exchange and in wealth management. McColly earned an MS in Environmental Science and PhD in Coastal and Marine System Science at the Harte Research Institute at Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi. He earned his PhD by defending his work Market Mechanisms and Efficient Allocation of Water: Modelling Water Prices, Pricing Options on Water, and Enhancing Frameworks. McColly has been published in the Texas Water Journal and has spoken at Yale, the University of Texas, Rice University, and many national and international conferences. Dr. McColly is also an Adjunct Faculty Member at Texas State University, where he contributes to environmental science and water management programs.

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DR. ALANA MENENDEZ (CESSRST)

Alana Menendez is a marine biogeochemist studying the production and transformations of dissolved organic matter (DOM) and its role in carbon cycling, climate, and marine ecosystems. She is currently a Postdoctoral Research Associate in the Department of Environmental Sciences at The University of Virginia, where she analyzes DOM dynamics in the warming West Antarctic Peninsula. Much of her work focuses on developing new methods to remotely measure components of DOM using sensors and satellites, allowing for spatiotemporal scalability that supports more accurate assessments of DOM inventories, fluxes, and composition. Alana completed her Ph.D. in Earth and Environmental Sciences at The CUNY Graduate Center, where she was a NOAA CESSRST Fellow. She holds an M.Sc. in Earth and Atmospheric Sciences from The City College of New York and a B.A. in Earth and Oceanographic Science from Bowdoin College.
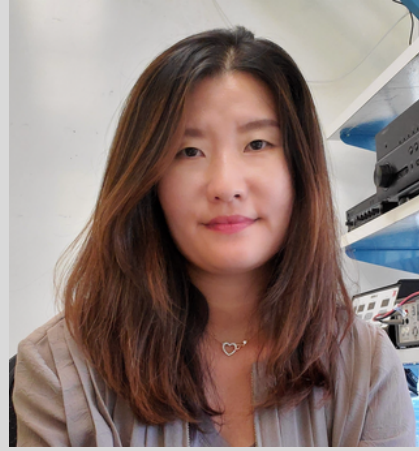
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PANELIST:

DR. DUGWON SEO (CESSRST)

Dr. Dugwon Seo is an Associate Professor in the Engineering Technology Department at Queensborough Community College (QCC). She received her Ph.D. in Civil Engineering from the City College of New York and has a background in Electrical Engineering, holding a Bachelor's degree in Telecommunication Engineering.

Dr. Seo's research interests focus on leveraging remote sensing technology applications to address challenges in modeling land surface processes, numerical weather prediction, and global climate models. Her work also explores renewable energy applications, zero-emission strategies, and the development of a green economy, aiming to advance sustainable solutions for climate resilience and environmental sustainability. Her recent grant awards from the private industry will enable her to launch a groundbreaking initiative focused on training technicians for emerging green economy jobs. This project aims to equip professionals with the necessary skills and expertise to support the transition to sustainable energy solutions, such as renewable energy systems, energy efficiency technologies, and zero-emission infrastructure. By rising a workforce skilled in green technologies, her initiative will play a crucial role in addressing industry demands, promoting environmental sustainability, and advancing the clean energy sector.