

University Senate
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences: Social Sciences Division
Election to the University Senate 2026
Candidates' Statements
(Candidates Listed in Alphabetical Order)

There are 4 candidates in this election to one open seat in the University Senate:

1. **Rachel Carethers** | M.A. Student, Latin-American and Caribbean Regional Studies
2. **Vivek Singh Chauhan** | M.A. Student, Economics
3. **Siyang Liu** | M.A. Student, Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences
4. **Ava Wu** | M.A. Student, Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences



Rachel Carethers

M.A. Student

Latin-American and Caribbean Regional Studies

The growth that occurs within classrooms has impacted how I navigate the world, but the changes that occur from pursuits outside the classroom has changed my life to a greater degree. As GSAS Senator, I plan to co-create with our student body to focus on establishing subsidized MTA transportation and strengthening alumni relations for students at Columbia University.

During my time as a Wellesley College undergraduate, I was able to cross-register at MIT, similar to Columbia's consortium with NYU. My transportation was fully subsidized, which allowed students to expand their academic and professional horizons. This was pivotal to the work I do now and it is important that students feel welcome to take advantage of these valuable opportunities.

Another crucial role to personal and professional wellbeing is connection. As an undergraduate, using our alumni network was consistently encouraged – as students could visualize themselves and their unique interests outside of student life. In developing more specialized programming and methods of alumni connection within NYC and internationally, alumni have the opportunity to exchange and impart knowledge with current students.

I look forward to working with you,

Rachel Carethers



Vivek Singh Chauhan

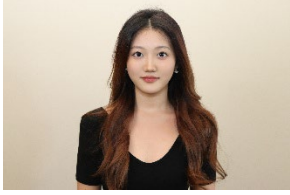
M.A. Student

Department of Economics

I am running for University Senate because I believe student representation begins with listening. As a student representative throughout my undergraduate degree, I regularly collected student concerns, spoke with faculty and administration, raised issues, conducted surveys, and communicated decisions back to students. For example, I advocated for better career fairs on behalf of the students I represented. I would bring that same experience to Columbia: not simply speaking in meetings, but creating a genuine channel between students and university leadership.

Since arriving at Columbia, I have also seen how operational challenges can affect the value students receive from an institution to which they devote significant time and resources. I am particularly concerned that some students may hesitate to raise concerns or may feel that they are alone in them. I want to make it easier for students to speak up, especially those who may not be comfortable doing so themselves.

I will not promise to have every answer or to solve every problem. I will promise to listen carefully, represent students honestly, communicate what I learn, and do my best to turn their concerns into constructive conversations and meaningful action.



Siying Liu

M.A. Student

Department of Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences

I am a graduate student in Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences (QMSS), and I am running for the University Senate because I want to contribute to a stronger connection between graduate students and University decision-making.

Through my experience as both a student at Columbia, including my work as a Research Assistant, I have seen how academic, financial, administrative, and professional concerns can shape students' experiences. I hope to bring these perspectives to the Senate and help ensure that the concerns of Social Sciences students are clearly communicated and thoughtfully represented.

If elected, I would focus on issues that directly affect graduate students, including affordability and tuition-related concerns, resources for international students, academic and career support, and clearer communication between students and the University. I would also seek regular input from students across Social Sciences programs so that the issues raised in the Senate reflect a broad range of experiences rather than only my own.

Thank you for your consideration.



Ava Wu

M.A. Student

Department of Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences

Hi! I am Ava Wu. I would love to run for one student seat in the University Senate. As an international student in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Social Sciences division, I am deeply impressed by the University Senate's commitment to shared governance and its work to turn university-wide concerns into meaningful institutional action. Especially your efforts which have advanced institutional accountability, faculty advancement, student access to wellness resources, and faculty titles and benefits. I hope to contribute as a participant who listens carefully, connects perspectives, and represents the diverse interests of our campus community.

As a graduate student, I am prepared to consistently invest the time required to attend monthly committee and plenary meetings, carefully review policy documents and reports in advance, and follow issues through the policy-making process. I will also seek dialogue with students, faculty, staff, and other university stakeholders, recognizing that effective university-wide policy requires consideration of its broader impact across constituencies. In Senate discussions and votes, I will approach differing perspectives with respect, follow established procedures, and ground my contributions in evidence, careful deliberation, and the interests of the University community as a whole.