

## **MARC ALONGI**

*High School Director (malongi@sequoyahschool.org)*

Marc Alongi is the high school director at Sequoyah. A native of New Mexico, Marc completed his BA in religious studies and his MA in Teaching at Brown University. He has taught high school world and U.S. history, and was most recently the Director of Curriculum and Student Support at Sequoyah. Marc has also enjoyed his time during the last five years coaching the debate team. Marc holds a doctorate in Educational Psychology from USC. His research focused on how teachers help students to apply history concepts to their experience beyond the classroom. In addition to his work at Sequoyah, Marc is a co-founder and advisor to Ashram Paryavaran Vidyalaya (APV), a model school and teacher training center in Uttarakhand, India dedicated to project-based learning, mindfulness and music.

## **CAROLINA ARANGO**

*K-12 Student Support Coordinator (carango@sequoyahschool.org)*

Carolina obtained a BS degree in Psychology, however she soon discovered her passion for teaching and pursued education studies in integrated curriculum, differentiation, language teaching, bilingualism and 21st-century skills among others. Carolina has completed a RelaxKids Coach certification which focuses on helping children and young adults manage their emotions and gain self-awareness and self-control skills. She recently moved to Pasadena from Bogotá, Colombia, where she first taught in an elementary classroom in a K-12 school, and was then appointed Head of Elementary. She is committed to maximizing individual student performance through differentiated teaching, and believes in instilling compassion, empathy, and self confidence among all students

## **RONNIE BRYAN**

*Faculty – Math (rbryan@sequoyahschool.org)*

Since his early years in Knoxville, Tennessee, Ronnie Bryan has pursued studying and teaching math and science. His interest in understanding the mind led him to earn a bachelors degree in Brain and Cognitive Science from MIT and a PhD in Computation and Neural Systems from Caltech. Ronnie believes that math is a natural language that anyone is capable of developing into a powerful tool for pursuing their passions. He is excited about encouraging others to see how math interrelates with all aspects of thought and action, from science and engineering to art and philosophy. He has taught throughout his research career, and in recent years, has been dedicated to teaching full-time, from the middle school level through college.

## **IAN CHANG**

*Faculty – Humanities (ichang@sequoyahschool.org)*

Ian Chang began his career at Sequoyah as a language arts specialist before shifting to the high school where he developed the Humanities curriculum. He has worked as a private tutor and college counselor, a journalist at ABC News, a venture capitalist at Millennium Technology Ventures, and a professional cook at Lucques. He has an MFA in Fiction Writing from the Iowa Writer's Workshop and a BA in English Literature from Swarthmore College. He is working on a novel and has written art criticism for *frieze*, *Modern Painters*, and *X-TRA*.

## **CHELSEA CONFALONE**

*Faculty – Science (cconfalone@sequoyahschool.org)*

Chelsea received her Ph.D. in Biological Chemistry from the University of California, Los Angeles. Her interdisciplinary training began at the College of the Atlantic, a small liberal arts college on an island off the coast of Maine. The college offers one degree, in Human Ecology, which teaches students to understand not just the subject at hand, but how that subject relates to the larger world. The island is also home to the Jackson Laboratory, a world renowned genetics research center, where she studied how genes impact brain development. She wrote up her final research results in a scientific paper and as a children's book, demonstrating that complex scientific concepts do not have to be relegated to academic language. She brought her holistic approach to education to her graduate studies and undergraduate teaching at UCLA. While researching the genetic underpinnings of breast cancer, she mentored students in the laboratory and taught biology to undergraduates from a wide range of academic backgrounds. Her ability to teach a variety of scientific concepts to academically diverse students led to her being awarded a Graduate Student Instructor Award for "extraordinary contributions to interdisciplinary undergraduate teaching."

## **DEBBIE DEEMS**

*Administrative Assistant (ddeems@sequoyahschool.org)*

Debbie Deems is thrilled to be part of the high school team at Sequoyah. She spent 14 years at Sequoyah with her children – Kathleen, Rory and Maeve. As a parent, she volunteered countless hours doing everything from co-chairing the auction to sitting in for Betty Chavez in the K-8 main office; and she brings the organizational skills she demonstrated as co-chair of the Parent Resources Committee for eight years. Debbie is also very involved in National Charity League and has volunteered with her daughter Maeve over 100 hours annually at local philanthropies for the last six years. In her previous life, she was Executive Director of the California Commission for Economic Development, and was Finance Director of Leo McCarthy's U.S. Senate Campaign.

## **BRIAN EAGEN**

*K-12 Director of Field Studies (beagen@sequoyahschool.org)*

Brian has been working in outdoor education for the past decade with numerous independent schools in Los Angeles and through the YMCA BOLD/GOLD program in Seattle. Brian is certified as a Single Pitch Instructor through the American Mountain Guides Association. He is also a Wilderness First Responder, and has a Bachelor of Architecture and a Bachelor of the Arts from Iowa State University. Brian's primary focus is on making the outdoors approachable for everyone, regardless of their background, by creating an environment that provides opportunities for personal growth and discovery. He built OutdoorBlueprint.com to be a starting point for folks who want to explore the outdoors with simple gear tutorials, travel guides, and interactive lessons. Brian has visited all 50 states and 33 of the 59 National Parks and counting.

## **BEN EDE**

*Faculty – Music (bede@sequoyahschool.org)*

Ben Ede is originally from Little Rock, Arkansas, and received his bachelor's degrees in philosophy and music from Cal State Los Angeles, and his Master of Arts in teaching from the Longy School of Music.

Ben teaches classes on improvisation, music technology, and composition with the LA Philharmonic's Youth Orchestra Program and is a member of the Jazz faculty at Heart of Los Angeles Music Studios. He is also a founder and former music coordinator of Kid City Hope Place, a nonprofit after-school program dedicated to fostering youth leadership and college aspirations in low-income communities.

Ben and his guitar, "Jessie," have performed with and opened for hundreds of artists, including Grammy winners: John Legend, Poncho Sanchez, Lady Gaga, and Oscar Hernandez. He regularly plays with The Wiseguys, an 18-piece big band led by the mayor of Montebello, as well as with the Pay It Forward Band, an organization dedicated to using music to affect changes in the nursing home system. Ben's students have performed at many prestigious venues including LA's Latin Jazz Festival, the Hollywood Bowl, the House of Blues, Walt Disney Concert Hall, and alongside artists like Damian Marley, Journey, jazz legend Bob Mintzer, and hip-hop artist Big Sean.

## **LINDSEY GRAHAM**

*Faculty – Humanities (lgraham@sequoyahschool.org)*

Lindsey comes to Sequoyah from New York City, where she taught history at Dalton and Fieldston. Lindsey holds a BA in Political Science from Williams College and a Masters from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Outside the classroom, Lindsey grew up singing in a professional children's chorus in NYC, where she performed with a range of artists, including the New York Philharmonic, Elton John, Philip Glass, and Lou Reed. When she's not singing in a chorus or cracking open a new library book, Lindsey can be found hiking, cycling and visiting historical sites and museums. She is excited to join the Sequoyah community and share with students meaningful experiences that connect contemporary global issues to the past.

## **AMBER GRAVELY**

*K-12 Athletic Director (agravely@sequoyahschool.org)*

Amber is returning to her hometown of Pasadena where she attended PUSD Noyes Elementary, middle school at Westridge, and high school at Poly. She then went to Loyola Marymount University where she played womens' basketball and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology. Amber received her MA from USC Annenberg School for Journalism and Communication. A lifelong learner, she is currently working on her doctoral dissertation for the educational leadership program at USC Rossier School of Education, with a concentration in educational psychology. Throughout her career in education, Amber has maintained student-support roles such as guidance counselor at Jefferson Elementary School in Pasadena, and as Director of After School Programs at Bentley School in Oakland. She remained connected to sports with positions as a girls' basketball coach at both Bentley and Poly, as athletic coordinator at Poly, and as an assistant learning specialist with USC Student Athlete Academic Services. Amber is founder of the educational services organization S.O.S. Student Opportunities for Success, which has produced events such as the Los Angeles Student Athlete Symposium and the Pasadena Student Leadership Conference.

## **SEAN HAMIDI**

*Faculty – Humanities (shamidi@sequoyahschool.org)*

Sean Hamidi believes that a solid foundation in the humanities prepares us to more compassionately understand ourselves and our environment, more clearly communicate our emotional needs, and more powerfully express our vision for a better world. When he's not geeking out over a beautiful piece of art, Sean can be found practicing yoga, playing improv comedy, or consuming questionable amounts of Korean barbecue. A former Ford Foundation Public Interest Fellow, McKinsey consultant, and national Mock Trial Champion, he has been teaching high school students for several years in the LA area. Sean holds a BA from the University of Virginia in poetry writing and a JD from Harvard Law School.

## **PATRICIA HAN**

*High School Admissions Associate (phan@sequoyahschool.org)*

Patricia has worked in several independent schools in the NYC area as a teacher and school counselor. Her last position was as Counseling Psychologist in Brooklyn where she provided counseling and crisis management to middle school students diagnosed with language-based learning disabilities. Patricia received her BA from Smith College in Education and Child Study, and Italian Language and Literature and earned her MEd in Counseling Psychology at Teacher's College, Columbia University. When not working, Patricia enjoys camping and traveling with her family.

## **LAURA HANEY**

*Faculty – Physics (lhane@sequoyahschool.org)*

Laura received her bachelor's degree in Astrophysics and Math from Barnard College of Columbia University, and her PhD in Astronomy and Astrophysics from UCLA. In the course of her training, she has always had a strong passion for outreach and civic engagement in science and math. Laura is a co-founder of SciComm Hub, an online community for grad students and post-docs to create content that engages the general public with science topics. In addition to her work in public outreach and undergraduate teaching, she is also interested in improving science communication skills in students and scientists alike. She believes strongly that any science classroom should promote self-confidence, creative problem-solving, and a spirit of collaboration among students. When she's not teaching, Laura can usually be found blogging, hiking, or cooking Greek food!

## **JUSTIN KENDERES**

*Faculty – Mathematics (jkenderes@sequoyahschool.org)*

Justin received his BS in Mathematics, with a minor in Computer Science, from Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and his Masters in mathematics from CSULB. Justin has taught high school math for many years, and most recently was an adolescent guide and mathematics teacher at Oak Knoll Montessori School in Pasadena. Justin is passionate about teaching mathematics with a focus on problem-solving, argument, application, and history; and he enjoys making connections between mathematics and other disciplines, including computer science. As a young child, Justin lived in Papua New Guinea, which inspired his appreciation for travel. He's lived in or traveled to 44 of the 50 states, as well as dozens of other countries in Asia, Africa, and Europe. He is an avid rock climber and enjoys hiking and backpacking and other outdoor activities.

## **LEE MICHAEL KRIEGER**

*K-12 Field Studies Specialist (lmkrieger@sequoyahschool.org)*

Lee Michael started out pursuing environmental engineering and quickly discovered his interest in outdoor education, earning a BA in Park and Recreation Management from Northern Arizona University. Since then he has combined his love for the environment with the inspiration he gets from leading youth on trips. Lee has led trips and outdoor programs with diverse groups and in a variety of settings. With Outward Bound, Lee worked with students from Boston's inner city, focusing on developing students' integrity and self-reliance. With SoulSustainable Adventure group, Lee has led adventure and service learning trips to Ecuador.

## **KRISTINE NAKADA**

*Faculty – Mathematics (knakada@sequoyahschool.org)*

Kristine is excited to become a part of Sequoyah's community. As an avid proponent of international and outdoor education, she wants to make these opportunities more accessible to all. Kristine comes to Sequoyah after teaching at Polytechnic and Northfield Mount Hermon. She earned her BA in Mathematics from Williams College and her MS in Education from the University of Pennsylvania. Kristine is fascinated by the brain, and is deeply invested in diversity and equity work. She is always searching for ways to make her classroom more equitable and her community more celebratory of its differences. When Kristine is not teaching or coaching, you can find her on the rugby pitch or soccer field, or in a kick boxing gym or yoga studio. Otherwise, she might be traveling overseas or on an adventure in the back country.

## **VIVIANA PALACIO**

*Faculty – Visual Arts (vpalacio@sequoyahschool.org)*

Viviana is a multidisciplinary artist. Influenced by being born in Chile to Colombian parents and having grown up across the Americas, her works address ideas about borders, boundaries, and shifting identities. Viviana earned her BFA in Studio Practice and Art Education and her MA in Human Studies with a focus in Narrative. As a graduate student, she studied the relationships between discourse and drawings, prints, and ethnographic photographs, and she wrote a book on the history of photographic representation of the indigenous peoples of the Sierra Nevada in Colombia which was awarded the National Award in Cultural Studies (2014). She recently moved to Pasadena from Medellin, Colombia, where she taught at art and design colleges – courses on experimental design, fieldwork for design, art history, and installation art. Viviana is passionate about learning about the ways we see and shares her enthusiasm for the world around us with her students. When she's not teaching, making art and books, or doing research for documentary films, Viviana loves reading, walking, and dancing.

## **MARISOL PÉREZ**

*Faculty – Spanish (mperez@sequoyahschool.org)*

Marisol holds a master's degree from UCLA. Her doctoral studies focused on the intersection of Latin American Literature, Chicano Studies, and Women's Studies. She brings over 20 years of experience teaching high school students, creating curriculum and successful programs, including teaching UC students in Mexico City and underserved students in Inglewood. Marisol has led trips to Barcelona, Costa Rica, Chiapas, and Oaxaca. In the last 6 years she has found great joy in crafting experiential learning courses for students to explore the histories and cuisines of Los Angeles' ethnic neighborhoods. Marisol feels strongly that an interdisciplinary approach to language learning opens a portal to other worlds as much as it provides us opportunities to cultivate empathy, gather new perspectives, and deepen understanding. When she is not teaching, Marisol enjoys taking long rides on a beach cruiser, hiking, and exploring the culinary arts.

## **JULIAN PETRI**

*Faculty – Humanities (jpetri@sequoyahschool.org)*

A native of Germany, Julian Petri first came to California as a student at Deep Springs College in the high desert of the Eastern Sierra. Since then, he's followed his interests in philosophy, history, and literature. He obtained a BA in Social Studies at Harvard and is presently completing his PhD in Philosophy at Princeton where he has been a Language Instructor and Teaching Assistant (Philosophy.) In his spare time, he's also a runner and a musician, and he's worked in theater as a dramaturge.

## **ANAIS PLASKETES**

*Social and Emotional Learning Specialist (aplasketes@sequoyahschool.org)*

Anais received a BA in Theatre Arts from Birmingham-Southern College and a Masters in Clinical Psychology from Antioch University Los Angeles. She received one of a kind, extensive training in LGBTQ affirmative psychotherapy during her training at Antioch. Currently, Anais is a Marriage and Family Therapist Intern in private practice. In addition to her private practice work, Anais facilitates a support group for adolescents in recovery at Destinations to Recovery. Anais has an affinity towards working with youth through a holistic lens around big questions and issues that may arise around identity and identity intersection. Anais believes deeply in contributing to a community in which our youth are empowered and can thrive. With a background in arts and entertainment she is also passionate about utilizing creativity and artistic expression as a vessel to exploration both in the classroom and outside of it. Anais is excited to get to know all of the students and is honored to be a part of the Sequoyah School community.

## **RJ SAKAI**

*High School Director of Social Innovation (rjsakai@sequoyahschool.org)*

RJ Sakai, a Sequoyah alum, is a design researcher who crafts tools and activities to facilitate insightful conversations for governments, nonprofits, startups, and classrooms. RJ's work has led to immersions in Uganda, Cuba, small town Massachusetts, East Harlem, and Los Angeles. After graduating from Hampshire College studying cultural anthropology and graphic design, RJ pursued a variety of interests: helping independent book stores survive in the face of online book buying; mapping the politics of souvenir supply chains; interviewing international students about their relationship to credit cards; fostering collaboration, creativity, and innovation amongst professors and students. Earning his MFA in Media Design Practices at ArtCenter College of Design, RJ used workshop facilitation, systems thinking, and pinball to create new forms of communication between city governments and residents. He has a goal to visit all the U.S. state capitals (35 down).

## **ARDEN THOMAS**

*Faculty – Humanities and Theatre (athomas@sequoyahschool.org)*

Arden has been an educator for over 20 years: she taught English for 10 years at Episcopal Academy in Philadelphia, and she taught English, humanities and theater at colleges and universities for another 10 years. Arden has a PhD in Theatre and Performance Studies from Stanford, where she also directed plays and taught dance history, theater history, and acting. Arden has also been a theater director for 15 years, and was a member of a women's theater company and Director of Education of the Lantern Theatre Company in Philadelphia. Arden is currently the Associate Artistic Director of The Festival of New Science-Driven Plays at Caltech, where she works with playwrights and scientists to develop new plays about science. Arden is passionate about theater, literature, history, and progressive education, and she's thrilled to have joined the Sequoyah community. When she's not teaching or making theater, Arden loves hiking, camping, traveling, and, most of all, spending time with her two little boys Orion and Leo.

## **JUSTIN THOMPSON**

*Faculty – Chemistry (jthompson@sequoyahschool.org)*

Justin Thompson is excited to become a part of the Sequoyah community as a chemistry instructor. He believes Sequoyah's emphasis on authentic, process-driven learning is the key to creating lifelong learners. Previously, he taught chemistry at a boarding school in Asheville, NC where he took a position soon after earning his bachelor's degree in chemistry from University of North Carolina- Asheville. During his time at UNC, Justin was a member of the Mossbauer Spectroscopy Research Group investigating copper/arsenic-based superconductors responding to nickel-doping in the superconductive phase. His curriculum largely focuses on inquiry and critical thinking, two components that have largely been inspired through his graduate studies at Montana State University. Aside from teaching chemistry, Justin has experience in outdoor education as a backpacking trip leader, a kayak instructor, and a mountain bike instructor. He is excited to bring all facets of his experience to Sequoyah.

## **ILAN VAISMAN**

*Faculty – Spanish (ivaisman@sequoyahschool.org)*

Ilan Vaisman has been traveling the world since a young age. He was born and raised in Colombia, lived in Israel for nine years, had a four-year layover in New York City where he completed his BA in romance languages and economics at NYU. He also lived for four years in Madrid, Spain, where he earned his MA in teaching Spanish as a second language from Universidad de Alcalá and taught ESL. He refined his cooking skills during his time there. Ilan eventually moved back stateside to Cape Cod, where he taught IB Spanish for three years. He is passionate about languages, literature and world cultures, and loves sharing his excitement with the students and faculty at Sequoyah. He is also thrilled about living in Pasadena as the winters here are mild.

## **ELSA VON HEYDENREICH**

*Director of College Counseling (evonheydenreich@sequoyahschool.org)*

Elsa has over 30 years of experience as a college counselor in independent schools and has served as the president of the Western Association for College Admission Counseling, board member and coordinator for Multicultural Concerns for the National Association for College Admission Counseling and member of the College Board National College Scholarship Service Committee. Elsa is a graduate of the University of Southern California and holds an MS in School Counseling degree from California State University, Los Angeles. When not working with colleges and students, Elsa looks forward to spending time with her grandson. She is also a competitive powerlifter.

## **PETER WALLIS**

*Faculty – Visual Arts (pwallis@sequoyahschool.org)*

Peter Wallis is an interdisciplinary artist and native son of the Green Mountains of Vermont. He has worked with students throughout the country teaching visual art at independent schools and non-profit arts organizations. Integrating his interests in illustration and printmaking, his approach to teaching trends in new media is grounded in an appreciation of traditional art techniques and practices. His BFA study was in illustration with a double minor in art history and drawing from the Maine College of Art in Portland, Maine. Working at the Center for Cartoon Studies in Vermont, he cultivated a strong connection to graphic novels and the strengths they have as teaching tools. Peter earned his MFA from Goddard College with a focus in printmaking, graphic novels, and peace studies. While an artist in residence in the Montserrat Mountains of Catalonia, Spain, he developed a graphic novel. Peter enjoys being in the mountains snowboarding and hiking. He spends a lot of his time playing music and developing creative work of his own. Peter sees visual art and art education as a catalyst for meaningful change in the world.

