ISABEL RIVERA

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EDUCATION

Clark University, Worcester, MA Expected Dec 2027
Master of Arts in International Development

The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA Graduated May 2026
Bachelor of Arts in Geography; Bachelor of Science in Community, Environment, and Development
Minor: Politics and Public Policy | Certificates: Environment and Society Geography (May 2025); Justice, Ethics, and Diversity in Space (December 2025) | GPA: 3.77

HONORS & AWARDS

Spring '23 - Spring '26	**Dean's List** for 9 semesters - The Pennsylvania State University
July 2024	**Eva B. and G. Weidman Groff Memorial Scholarship Fund** - $1,750
August 2024	**John and Elizabeth Holmes Teas Scholarship Fund** - $3,000
August 2024	**ARCUS Early Career and Travel Funding Award** - Travel expenses, conference fees, per diem (Total ≈ $5,000)
October 2024	**G.D. Richardson and Kathy LaSauce Scholarship** - $2,400
July 2025	**Ryan Earth and Mineral Sciences Scholarship** - $3,300
August 2025	**Paul R. and Ethel S. Guldin Agricultural Scholarship** - $1,746
2025-2026 Academic Year	**Ready to Succeed Scholarship (RTSS)** from the Pennsylvania State General Assembly - $2,500
September 2025	**Rock Ethics Institute Undergraduate Ethics Fellow** - $1,000
October 2025	**EMSAGE Laureate**
February 2026	**Gladys Snyder Faculty Enrichment Grant Beneficiary** - Travel expenses and $750 stipend
March 2026	**Fiat Lux Scholarship** from Clark University - 75% tuition remission (≈ $11,500 per semester)

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Graduate Research Assistant May 2026-Present
Environmental Demography Network - Indiana University
Assistant to Dr. Guangqing Chi

- Supported administrative and research operations across multiple NSF-funded projects (ACE, POLARIS, RETRACE).
- Managed project communications, web content, and social media outreach for the EDeN research group.
- Coordinated data management and reporting processes for multi-institutional collaborations.
- Developed the EDeN "Impacts Map" and online project summaries showcasing research outcomes.
- Assisted in preparing annual NSF progress reports, including documenting outputs and student participation.

Undergraduate Research Assistant Sept 2025-May 2026
Independent Study & Rock Ethics Institute Fellow - Pennsylvania State University
Assistant to Dr. Ida Djenontin

- Conducted qualitative thematic analyses of key informant interview and focus group discussion transcripts related to ecosystem restoration and community engagement.
- Identified and coded emergent themes across stakeholder perspectives to examine ethical dimensions of environmental governance.
- Developed a manuscript and literature synthesis on ethics, power, and justice in restoration practices.

- Organized and interpreted data for cross-case comparison and inclusion in collaborative research outputs.
- Participated in weekly meetings to discuss analytical progress, refine coding frameworks, and ensure consistency in qualitative methods.

Undergraduate Research Assistant Sept 2023-May 2026
Environmental Demography Network - Pennsylvania State University & Indiana University
Assistant to Dr. Guangqing Chi

- Supported administrative and research operations across multiple NSF-funded projects (ACE, POLARIS, RETRACE).
- Managed project communications, web content, and social media outreach for the EDeN research group.
- Coordinated data management and reporting processes for multi-institutional collaborations.
- Developed the EDeN "Impacts Map" and online project summaries showcasing research outcomes.
- Assisted in preparing annual NSF progress reports, including documenting outputs and student participation.

Undergraduate Research Assistant Jan 2023-Aug 2023
Pennsylvania State University
Assistant to Dr. Ida Djenontin

- Conducted discourse and sentiment analysis using Twitter data related to ecological restoration and environmental justice.
- Examined how narratives of power, place, and sustainability are constructed in online spaces.
- Organized and coded qualitative datasets to identify recurring social and political themes in digital environmental discourse.
- Shared preliminary findings in research meetings.

INTERNATIONAL FIELD EXPERIENCE

International Research Intern, ECO-DRYFOREST March 2026
South Africa

- Participated in an international research internship focused on local aspirations for ecosystem restoration futures in South Africa.
- Supported qualitative fieldwork processes connected to key informant interviews and focus group discussions in restoration landscapes through training field researchers and refining research questions and instruments.
- Documented field-based observations related to land use, restoration priorities, livelihoods, governance, and community wellbeing.

PUBLICATIONS & MANUSCRIPTS

Djenontin, I., **Rivera, I.**, Abdulai, A. S., Elias, F., Qui, T., Twine, W., Chen, H., Kamoto, J., Smithwick, E., & Fleischman, F. Understanding Local Aspirations for Restoration Futures in Tropical Forest-Woodland Mosaics: Lessons from Malawi, Southern Africa. *Journal of Global Environmental Change* [Under Review]

ORAL PRESENTATIONS

- **Rivera, I.**, & Chi, G. (2025). Climate change impacts on Indigenous Alaskan food sovereignty and what we can do at Penn State. *Penn State Student Farm Food Justice Summit*. State College, PA, February 13, 2025.
- **Rivera, I.**, & Pavlacka, A. (2025). Asset mapping and resource utilization suggestions for nature education on South Fayette School District grounds: A geospatial land use assessment. *South Fayette School District Faculty Townhall*. McDonald, PA, December 4, 2025.

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

- **Rivera, I.**, & DeSa, K. (2025). Resource Assessment for Clinton County Homeless Coalition. *Penn State Sustainability Summit*. State College, PA, December 11, 2025.
- **Rivera, I.**, & Pavlacka, A. (2025). Asset mapping and resource utilization suggestions for nature education on South Fayette School District grounds: A geospatial land use assessment. *Penn State Sustainability Summit*. State College, PA, December 11, 2025.

TEACHING & ADVISING

Graduate Assistant for Leadership & Engagement Aug 2026-Present
Student Leadership, Identity, & Community Engagement, Clark University

- Serve as a liaison between SLICE and student organizations, providing event planning and policy advising.

- Provide on-site event support, troubleshooting logistics, safety concerns, and attendance management.
- Support administrative operations, communications, purchasing, marketing, and event preparation.

Undergraduate Advising Assistant Sept 2023-May 2026
Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology, and Education, Penn State University
- Advised undergraduate students across majors on course selection, degree planning, and departmental opportunities.
- Represented the department at recruitment events, information sessions, and student involvement fairs.
- Facilitated one-on-one advising meetings with prospective and current students to clarify academic pathways.

Teaching Assistant Aug 2023-Dec 2023
CED 152, Penn State University
- Assisted the course instructor in grading written assignments and presentations for 20+ students.
- Monitored student progress through Canvas and provided feedback on coursework and participation.
- Led in-class discussions and activities in the professor's absence to reinforce key course concepts.

Peer Learning Assistant Aug 2023-Dec 2023
CED 102N, Penn State University
- Provided peer support and guidance to students during work sessions and project development.
- Helped facilitate group discussions and collaborative exercises to enhance comprehension of systems thinking.
- Evaluated low-stakes assignments and maintained records of student participation.
- Assisted the instructor in lesson coordination, classroom management, and online learning resources.

CERTIFICATIONS

CITI Program Nov 2026-Nov 2029
Social and Behavioral Human Subjects Research (IRB)

CITI Program Nov 2026-Nov 2029
Students in Research

CAMPUS LEADERSHIP & SERVICE

President May 2025-May 2026
Gamma Theta Upsilon - Geography Honor Society, Alpha Tau Chapter
- Led executive meetings and served as liaison between the chapter, faculty, and departments.

Recruitment Analyst Jan 2024-March 2026
Alpha Delta Pi Sorority, Delta Kappa Chapter
- Managed recruitment analytics for 200+ chapter members and 1,000+ potential members, led analyst team of 14, coordinated data reporting between chapter, international organization, and the university, and led chapter Member Selection Session.

President Apr 2023-May 2026
Community, Environment, and Development Club
- Oversaw executive board operations and professional development events, maintained relationships between the club, the university, and the department, and communicated with relevant faculty members.

Executive Vice President Dec 2023-Jul 2024
Omega Phi Alpha Service Sorority
- Chaired Chapter Standards and Alumni Boards and oversaw constitutional revisions and governance.

THON Finance Chair Jun 2023-Feb 2024
Omega Phi Alpha Service Sorority
- Tracked donations, reported financial progress, and coordinated fundraising logistics.

Event Planner Oct 2022-Apr 2023
Community, Environment, and Development Club
- Organized service and social events and created activities to strengthen member engagement.

SKILLS

Technical: NVivo, ArcGIS Products, R (Programming Language), Microsoft Office, Google Workspace, research writing and reporting, grant writing and reporting (NSF and USDA), website and social media management, qualitative and quantitative data analysis, statistical analysis

Interpersonal: Public speaking, teamwork and project management, critical thinking and analysis, time management, independent and collaborative research/project development

Research Methods: Qualitative coding, mixed methods data collection, key informant interviews, focus group facilitation, discourse and sentiment analysis, survey development, literature synthesis, policy analysis

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

- American Association of Geographers (AAG)
- Gamma Theta Upsilon - International Geography Honors Society