

CARLA GARCIA (she/her)

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SUMMARY

Driven PhD Candidate with a research background in higher education politics and student activism. Dynamic graduate student leader passionate about supporting and empowering diverse communities of students. Eager to leverage project management skills and inclusive leadership experience to transition to a career in higher education.

EDUCATION

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Cambridge, MA

Ph.D. Candidate in Political Science (ABD)

2020 – Expected Spring 2026

National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellow

Dissertation: *Who Said That All Is Lost?* Essays on Student Protest Movements in Latin America

Committee: F. Daniel Hidalgo (Chair), Evan Lieberman, Ben Ross Schnieder

University of Central Florida

Orlando, FL

B.A. in Political Science, B.S. in Economics

2016 – 2020

Magna Cum Laude and University Honors

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Cambridge, MA

PhD Candidate

September 2020 – Present

- Leverage quantitative and qualitative research methods to study the impact of student activism in Latin America
- Design, implement, and analyze online research surveys and survey experiments in international contexts
- Conducted semi-structured interviews with student activists at public universities during five months of international field research in Mexico City, Mexico, Guatemala City, Guatemala, and Buenos Aires, Argentina
- Presented at conferences and departmental workshops to communicate findings to academic community
- Completed two years of coursework in Comparative Politics, Political Economy, and Quantitative Methods

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

MIT Priscilla King Gray (PKG) Center for Social Impact

Cambridge, MA

Graduate Community Fellow

September 2025 – Present

- Collaborate with the Assistant Dean of Community Based Programs to support the development of community-engaged learning projects and civic engagement initiatives on campus
- Aggregate and analyze an Airtable database of MIT courses that feature community-engaged learning projects
- Liaise with relevant offices and organizations on campus to promote civic engagement in the MIT community
- Design graphics and materials to promote student civic and voter engagement using tools such as Canva

MIT Summer Research Program

Cambridge, MA

Pod Leader Liaison

June – August 2024

- Assisted the MIT Office of Graduate Education staff in providing support and programming for a cohort of nearly 100 high-achieving undergraduate research interns from diverse backgrounds and institutions
- Supported a group of 20 *pod leaders* (graduate student mentors) by providing guidance on mentorship, managing issues within their intern group, and offering feedback on program deliverables
- Designed and facilitated workshop presentations for interns, intended to enhance learning outcomes such as research poster design, the graduate school application process, and applying to graduate fellowships
- Held weekly office hours to advise interns on topics such as research, career goals, and graduate school

Pod Leader

June – August 2023

- Mentored a group of ten undergraduate research interns who visited MIT as part of a program designed to introduce students from underrepresented backgrounds to academic research and graduate education
- Collaborated with a partner (co-pod leader) to plan weekly discussion meetings and social events for the group

LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE

Latinx Graduate Student Association

Cambridge, MA

President

September 2025 - Present

- Lead a student organization whose mission is to connect and empower MIT's Latinx graduate student community
- Direct the organization's executive board by collaboratively developing events and initiatives consistent with the organization's vision, and delegating responsibilities to carry out these plans
- Administer the organization's \$15,000+ budget and oversee grant funding applications
- Maintain relationships with various student affairs offices, as well as other student affinity groups on campus

Social & Cultural Co-Chair

September 2024 – August 2025

- Collaborated with a team to plan social events intended to foster community and belonging
- Co-chaired the planning committee for MIT's 2025 Latino Graduation Celebration, a large-scale event hosted in collaboration with the Latino Cultural Center, MIT Alumni Association, and MIT Intercultural Engagement
- Organization awarded the 2025 MIT RISE Award for Student Organization of the Year

MIT Office of Graduate Education

Cambridge, MA

Graduate Ambassador

September 2024 – Present

- Promote the recruitment of a diverse graduate student body by participating in outreach efforts, such as graduate school fairs, campus visits, and Q&A panels for underrepresented prospective students

MIT Political Science Graduate Student Council

Cambridge, MA

Diversity Co-Chair

September 2024 – May 2025

- Organized the Political Science Application Mentorship Program (PS-AMP), a student-run initiative that paired prospective PhD applicants from diverse backgrounds with a current graduate student mentor
- Advocated for student concerns within the department, especially as they related to belonging and inclusion
- Participated in a network of graduate student DEI Conduits representing departments across MIT

Latin American Working Group

Cambridge, MA

Organizer/Co-Organizer

September 2022 – May 2024

- Convened an interdisciplinary workshop series which invites local scholars to give talks at MIT about ongoing research projects related to Latin American politics and society

WORKING PAPERS

“‘A Little Guatemala’: The University of San Carlos as a Window into Guatemala’s Democratic Backsliding”. Revise & Resubmit at *Perspectives on Politics*.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

“Framing Social Movement Grievances: Evidence from Argentina’s University Protests” *American Political Science Association Annual Meeting*. Vancouver, BC, Canada. Sept 2025.

“The Effects of Social Protest on Public Opinion: Evidence from Colombia” *American Political Science Association Annual Meeting*. Los Angeles, CA. Sept 2023.

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, 2020 – 2025

American Political Science Association Diversity Fellowship, 2020

Ronald E. McNair Scholar (UCF), 2018 – 2020

SKILLS

Software/Programming: R, LaTeX, Qualtrics, Airtable, Adobe Creative Cloud

Research: Surveys, causal inference, qualitative interviews

Languages: English (native), Spanish (heritage)