

SCHOOL OF GENERAL STUDIES  
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

ALL YEARS REUNION LUNCH  
PROGRAM

**Welcome Remarks** Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90  
*Dean*

**Student Experience Panel** Jill Galas Hickey  
*Senior Associate Dean for Development  
and Alumni Relations*

**Panelists** Pearl Sikepe, Pj Sonnen, and  
Raquel Ramirez



Saturday, May 31, 2025, 12 p.m.  
Faculty House, Skyline  
Columbia University in the City of New York

## SPEAKER BIOS

### LISA ROSEN-METSCH '90

Lisa Rosen-Metsch '90GS is the 9th Dean of the Columbia School of General Studies. She is the first alumna to serve as Dean of GS. Previously, she was the Chair and Stephen Smith Professor, Sociomedical Sciences at the Mailman School of Public Health. Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch is a medical sociologist and an internationally recognized scholar whose work has focused on the social determinants of health with special focus on access to care for persons living with HIV and substance use disorders.

For the past two decades, her research has been continuously funded by the National Institutes of Health and has resulted in over 260 publications in high impact journals including the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), Addiction, and the American Journal of Public Health. Mentoring and teaching has always been a high priority for Dean Rosen-Metsch and she has won numerous teaching awards and co-directs a NIH-funded training program with the Columbia School of Social Work. For the past two years, Dr. Rosen-Metsch has taught a new seminar course in the Department of Sociology for undergraduates entitled "AIDS and US Society" that explored how the HIV/AIDS epidemic transformed American society.

In her time as Dean, Columbia GS has significantly increased fundraising for student financial aid scholarships, created and launched new international dual-degree programs, new partnerships with community colleges and created new initiatives focused on social justice and women student veterans.

## JILL GALAS HICKEY

Jill Galas Hickey is the Senior Associate Dean for Development and Alumni Relations at Columbia GS. Jill manages all development and alumni-related activities for GS and works closely with the Columbia Office of Alumni and Development to prioritize activities of the fundraising team related to GS initiatives. In her role at GS, Jill works to develop new and creative ways to sustain and expand the significant success GS has achieved by building strong relationships with alumni and helping them engage with the School, its students, and the wider University alumni community. She is a member of the executive team of the Columbia GS Board of Visitors.

## PEARL SIKEPE

Pearl Sikepe is a first-generation student at Columbia University School of General Studies, majoring in computer science. Originally from South Africa, Pearl moved to California before settling in New York City to pursue her academic and professional aspirations. With a keen interest in data science and artificial intelligence, she is driven by a desire to harness technology for innovative solutions. As someone who values community and connection, Pearl takes pride in contributing to the diverse environments she's a part of. Columbia GS has become a true home away from home, supporting her growth as both a student and a person.

## PJ SONNEN

From San Antonio, TX, Pj Sonnen is a rising senior studying political science at Columbia's School of General Studies. He enlisted right out of high school for five years into the United States Army active duty service and later on to the Army Reserves to allow time to pursue his interest in political science and higher education. Prior to his journey to GS, Pj studied political science and history at the Northwest Vista College in San Antonio, TX.

Since the beginning of his journey here at Columbia GS, Pj has been heavily involved around campus in many academic and student leadership roles dedicated to his education and community, actively participating in numerous student organizations simultaneously; he has been a part of organizations such as the Youth for Debate, the General Studies Student Council Election Task Force. Most recently he was elected and will be serving as the upcoming President of the Military Veterans of Columbia University (MilVets) for the 2025-2026 academic year.

Currently, Pj dedicates his time and efforts to the student-veteran community, and works to help bridge the gap and transition of veterans from military service to academic life, and eventually the professional world by working tirelessly to provide more tailored academic and professional opportunities for student veterans.

In addition to professional and academic programs, Pj alongside his team of motivated student veterans, is working on initiatives aimed to explore and encourage creativity amongst student veterans through connection to creative arts and philanthropic service to the local community programs.

## RAQUEL RAMIREZ

As a first-generation college student and a passionate advocate for educational equity, Raquel offers a distinctive and valuable viewpoint in her role as a student leader at the university. Working closely with the alumni office, she has demonstrated exceptional interpersonal skills by fostering meaningful connections between current students and alumni, thereby enhancing networking opportunities and support. Raquel's approachable demeanor and genuine enthusiasm for helping others have established her as a respected figure on campus. She actively participates in alumni events and student events, offering guidance and inspiration to fellow first-generation students as they navigate their academic journeys. Through her initiatives, Raquel aspires to cultivate a stronger and more inclusive academic community that recognizes and celebrates diverse backgrounds and experiences.