

# Fred C. Cuny Center for Peace & Conflict Studies

Center Update for 2024

## About Us

### Mission Statement

The Frederick C. Cuny Center for Peace & Conflict Studies provides an academic and multidisciplinary platform for studying the causes, practices, and consequences of war and political violence, as well the methods of conflict management and conflict resolution. The research and programs undertaken by the Center helps academics, international and local government practitioners, and civil society to understand the nuances of conflict, assist in the formulation of policies that effectively manage conflicts and promote peace, and advise on international peacekeeping and state-building efforts.

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### Vision

The core of the Center's aspirations is derived from its namesake, Frederick C. Cuny, a humanitarian and disaster relief specialist who revolutionized aid and relief operations. Cuny was unrelenting in his quest to help others based on visions of a shared humanity and the larger dream of peace. In his memory, it is the Cuny Center's vision to pursue the same mission to bring understanding, reconciliation, and transformation to communities across the globe by investing in research on peacebuilding, building programs that promote cross-cultural cooperation and knowledge preservation, and empowering youth through peace education. For students involved in the Center, we aim to help them develop a passion for humanitarian work and the critical thinking necessary for transforming conflict. The Center seeks to educate students and the wider population by drawing extensively from experiences with conflict, peacekeeping, and state-building in the Western Balkans. In this sense, the Center's vision rests on developing tomorrow's humanitarian leaders and preparing them for a future similar to Cuny's: riddled with impossible missions waiting to be transformed into opportunities for lasting peace.



# Center Staff



Michael Hess  
**Center Director**



Xhavit Gashi  
**Summer Program Director**



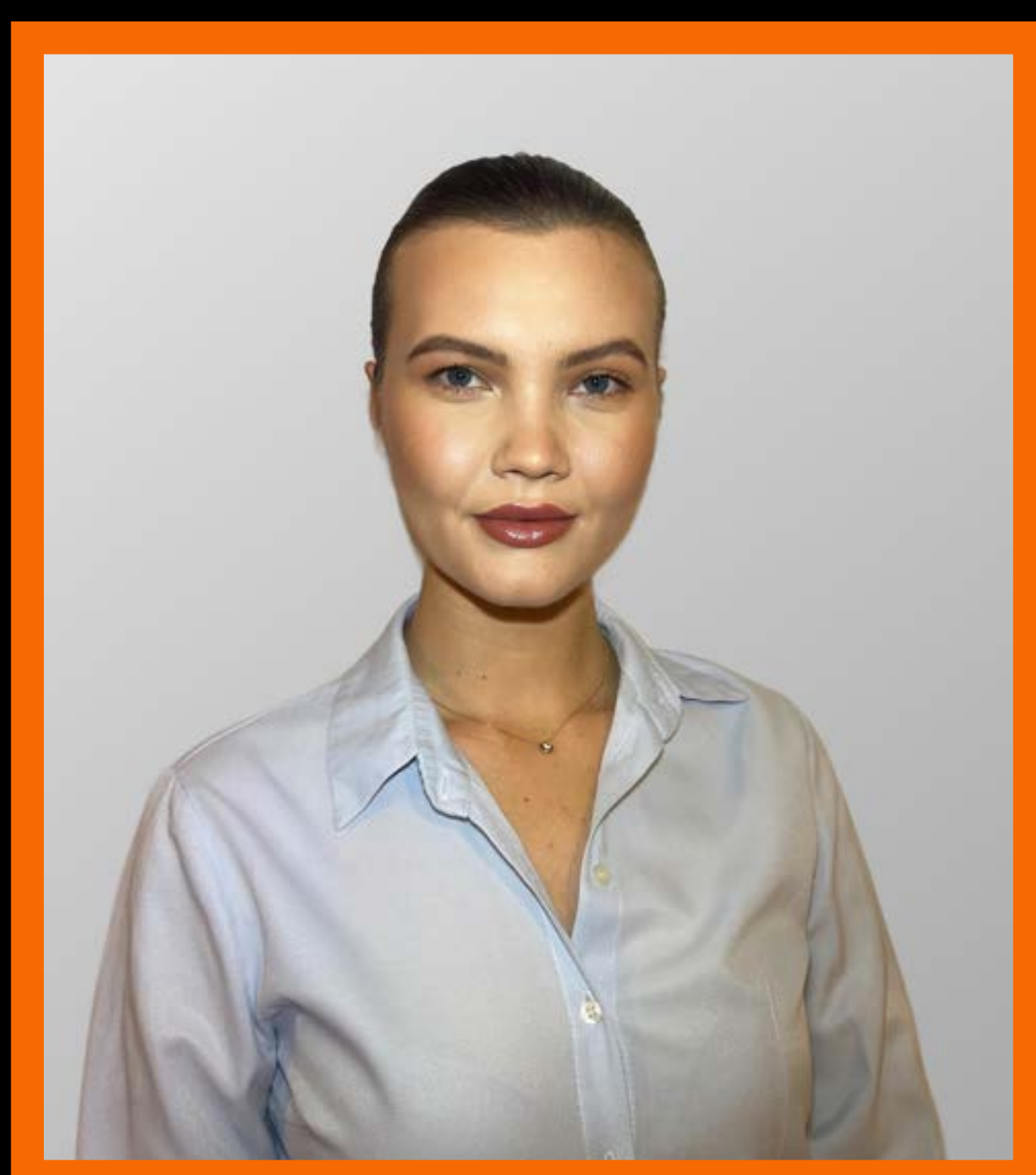
Holland Pratt  
**Center Coordinator**



Madison Poe  
**Center Coordinator**



Diellza Geci  
**Summer Program Coordinator**



Alisa Ramadani  
**Program Specialist**

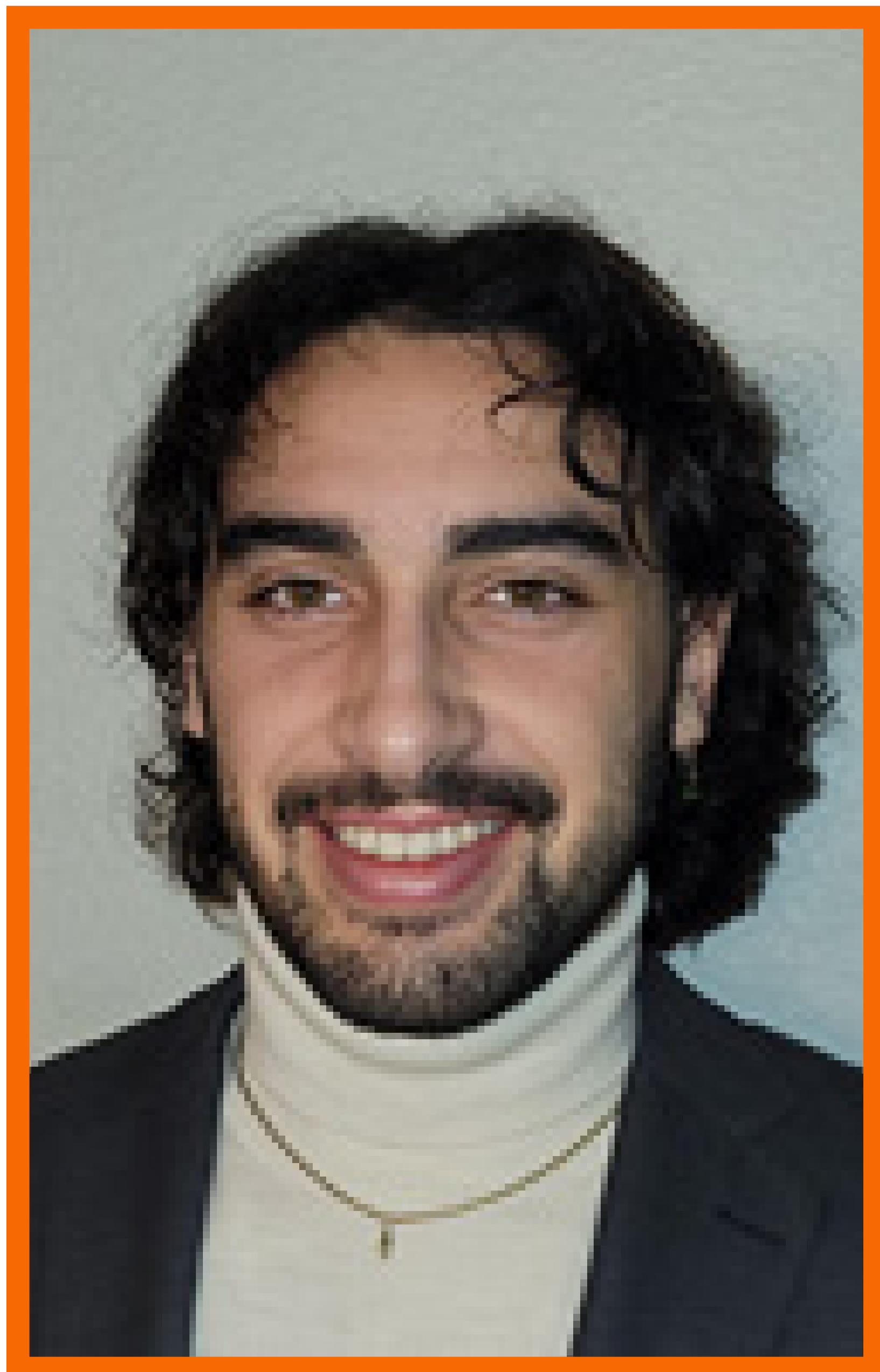


Peyton D'Anthony  
**Program Assistant**



# New Interns and Fellows

Since 2023, the Cuny Center has hosted 10 interns and fellows to work on research, Center projects, and professional development within their areas of interest. We are proud to present our 2025 cohort and their work:

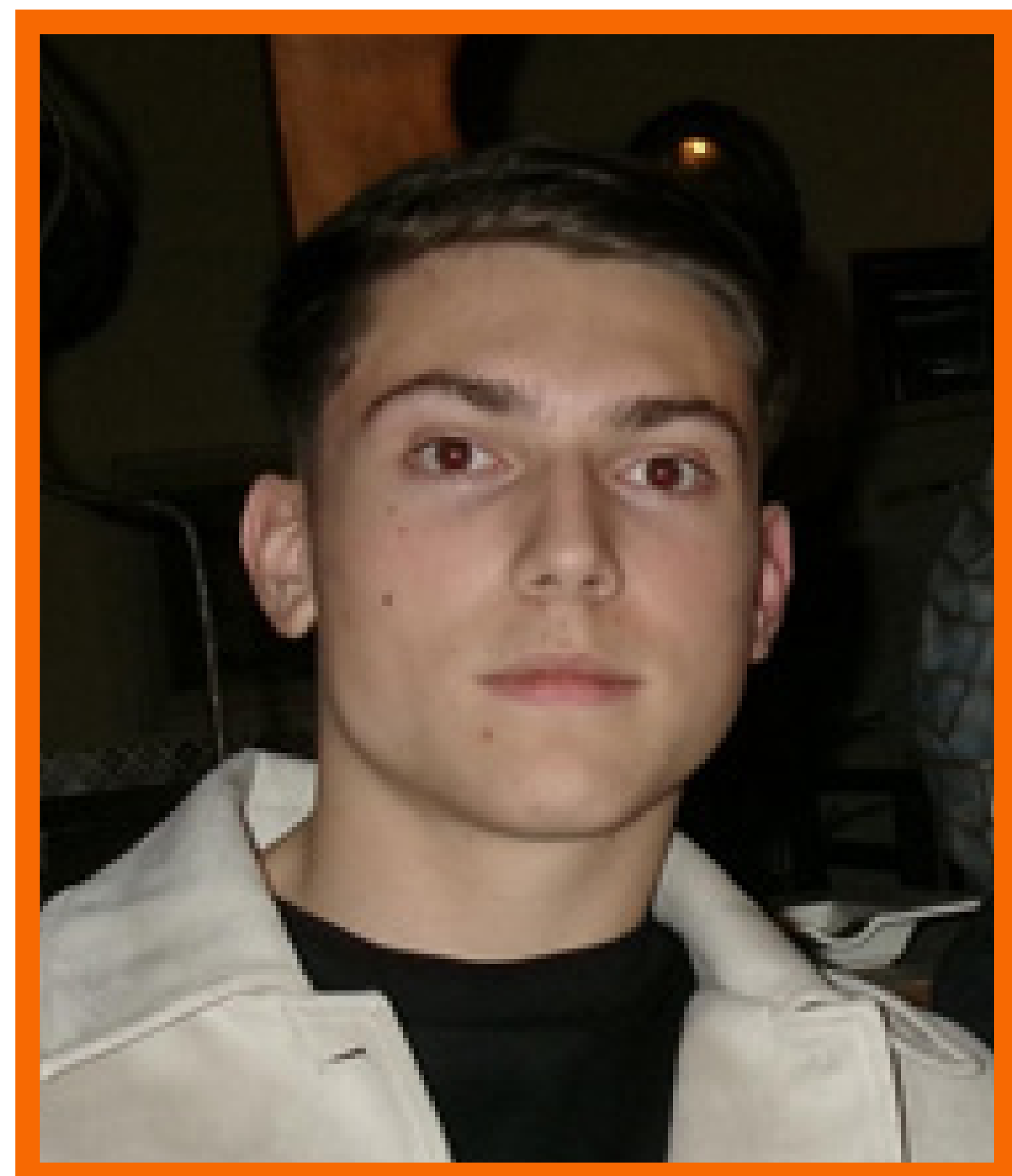


**Samuel Dziobkowski**  
2023-2025 Fellow

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Sam, an alum of the 2023 Frederick C. Cuny Peace and Conflict Summer Program, was originally an intern and is now a fellow with the Center working on two ongoing projects. The first of the two is an archival project wherein media files are tagged and archived for future student and professional use, and the second is research focused on how businesses in Kosovo are impacted by and contribute to the peacebuilding process. Sam graduated from the University of Maryland with a Bachelor of Arts in History.

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**Lennart van Leeuwen**  
2025 Intern

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Lennart, an international student at the American University of Kosovo, is an intern at the Center assisting with research and analysis on existing literature of civil-military relations and how businesses in Kosovo can get more involved in peacebuilding. He is a second-year political science student focusing on peace and conflict studies, with a particular interest in international relations, socio-political dynamics, and governance. Lennart is eager to contribute to the Center's initiatives while further developing his expertise in global conflict resolution and governance.

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**Zamir Eleusizov**  
2025 Intern

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Zamir, an alum of the 2023 Frederick C. Cuny Peace and Conflict Summer, is an intern with the Center working on using artificial intelligence to develop an archive of news media related to the Balkans and Russia. He graduated from the University of California Irvine in August of 2024 with a degree in International Studies, and is excited to soon serve as a Community Development volunteer in Kosovo with the Peace Corps.

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**Gresa Davidson**  
2025 Intern

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Gresa is a second-year international student from Texas at RIT Kosovo (RITK), studying peace and conflict. She is an intern with Center supporting communications and outreach. With a background in international affairs, she has focused on human rights, gender equality, and civil unrest. An active Model United Nations participant, she honed her analytical skills through debate. Passionate about diplomacy and global change, Gresa aims to pursue a career in international affairs, advocating for peace and justice.

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**Abbie Furman**  
2024-2025 Fellow

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Abbie, an alum of the 2023 Frederick C. Cuny Peace and Conflict Summer Program, is primarily working on the Oral History Project. In the past she has completed research on political rhetoric in the Balkans region. Abbie recently moved to Kosovo on a Fulbright scholarship to continue her work in Prishtina. She graduated from the University of Maryland with a Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Literature, and a minor in International Development and Conflict Management.

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# Kosovo Civil-Military Relations Conference 2024

Despite Kosovo's need for strong civilian-military relations, and its unique perspective on this relationship, the field of civil military relations remains an understudied and unexplored topic in Kosovo and the region. In October 2024, the Cuny Center partnered with the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) to co-host a Security Forum on Kosovo's "Civil-Military Relations Amid Current European Challenges" with an aim to open a conversation about this important relationship, and to educate future practitioners. The forum welcomed up to 140 attendees and the audience included senior KSF officers, KSF cadets, RIT Kosovo senior faculty and students, senior U.S. officers and officials, Kosovo government officials and civil society.



Throughout the event, attendees engaged with four panels, featuring 17 panelists with experience in the security forces, United States government, and civil society. You can see the [full summary of the event here](#), which discusses how the panelists:

- Engaged in a dialogue around civil-military relations between the security forces/military, government, civil society, and academia;
- Discussed best practices and identified challenges as well as opportunities for developing innovative approaches to complex problems; and
- Promoted cooperation and understanding between the military and the civilian population.

The forum aimed not only to educate, but also to engage, concluding with a large tabletop exercise that involved over eighty of the attendees, with RIT students and KSF cadets working together alongside the panelists and featured practitioners.



# New: Graduate Certificate in Peace and Conflict Studies

Beginning in 2024, RITK students are now able to earn a Graduate Certificate in Peace and Conflict Studies. In this two year program students undertake three class-based semesters, one summer fieldwork assignment, and one semester of dissertation writing focused on how conflict is engaged, resolved, and transformed for the aims of establishing and sustaining peace.

Classes include research methods engagement, language building, and interest-focused electives like peacekeeping, international human rights law, and genocide studies. Taught by practitioners, this program aims to develop tomorrow's humanitarian leaders and prepare them for a future riddled with impossible missions waiting to be transformed into opportunities for lasting peace.

As a part of students' fieldwork, the Cuny Center is working to set up opportunities for students to be placed in organizations working on peacebuilding activities in Kosovo, such as the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Please let us know if you work at an organization that would like to work with one of our students!





# Fred C. Cuny Peace and Conflict Center 2024 Summer Program

Since our last update, the Cuny Center's 2024 Summer Program was a resounding success, advancing our mission to develop the next generation of humanitarian leaders. Our two program options, the Frederick C. Cuny Peace & Conflict Summer Program and the Len Hawley Human Rights Summer Program, provided participants with transformative experiences rooted in the history and contemporary challenges of the Balkans. The programs attracted a diverse cohort of students passionate about international peace, justice, and leadership. Through meaningful engagement with peers and practitioners, participants left inspired and better equipped to tackle the challenges of humanitarian leadership in their future careers.

## Key Highlights:

- **Regional Travel:** Students embarked on a joint, one-week study tour to Albania, Montenegro, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. This immersive experience allowed them to engage with local activists, explore historical sites, and gain firsthand insights into the region's complex history of conflict and reconciliation.
- **Kosovo as a Living Laboratory:** Students examined Kosovo's rich history of state-building and conflict resolution. The unique environment fostered deep learning about post-conflict justice, international peacekeeping, and reconciliation.
- **Practitioner-Focused Learning:** Courses were led by senior officials, NGO activists, and academics with hands-on experience in conflict zones. These instructors served not only as educators but also as mentors, shaping participants' professional growth as leaders in international affairs.
- **Engaging Curriculum:** Students selected from dynamic course offerings such as Human Rights in a Global Perspective, Transitional Justice and Reconciliation, and War and Peace in the Balkans. Workshops, simulations, and seminars on peacekeeping and reconciliation further enriched their experience.

We are deeply grateful for your support, which makes these impactful programs possible. We are looking forward to hosting our summer 2025 cohort to Prishtina June 23 - July 25, 2025!

## Research/Publications

The Cuny Center is undertaking various research projects on peace and conflict related topics and working to preserve existing knowledge in these fields for future research use. This work aims to continue to develop the knowledge around peace-building best practices while aiding both existing and future practitioners in the evidence available to them as they evaluate existing policies and proposed new or improved approaches.

## New Journal of Peace, Conflict, and Security Studies

The Cuny Center is proud to announce that RITK's new journal on peace, conflict, and security studies will have its inaugural issue published in June of 2025! The journal aims to publish original research, book reviews, and other works from academia within the broad scholarly discipline of peace, conflict, and security studies. Keep an eye out for the upcoming open call for proposals. You can find the journal website at the following link: <https://repository.rit.edu/jpcss/>



## New Research on Kosovo Businesses Role in Peacebuilding

Over the past year, the Cuny Center has undertaken research on local businesses' role in peacebuilding, opportunities for additional engagement, and how corporate social responsibility presents an opportunity for businesses to promote peace and drive growth. We are proud to be publishing a paper on this important work in 2025!

## New Oral History Project

Through our new Oral History Project, the Cuny Center is working on preserving the knowledge and history of international practitioners, important figures in Kosovo's history, and scholars. The project began as a partnership between West Point Center for Oral History, and has continued on RIT's campus in Kosovo. With an array of themes, from the conflict in Darfur to the demobilization of the Kosovo Liberation Army, the Oral History Project aims to highlight the invaluable stories and lessons learned of those who experienced these historical moments firsthand. These videos can be viewed on the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies, RIT Kosovo Youtube page, at the following link: [Center for Peace and Conflict Studies, RIT Kosovo](#).



## Building Connections

In line with the Cuny Center's focus on development, recent efforts seek to expand academic and practitioner focus on regional integration within the Balkans, particularly when it comes to collaboration on security, resilient institutions, and ethnic relations. For this reason, the Center has established relationships with the following institutions and programs:

[Youth Initiative for Human Rights \(YIHR\)](#)

United States Military Academy of [West Point Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies](#)

[Post Conflict Research Center](#)

[Kosovo Center for Security Studies](#)

[War Crimes Documentation Center \(DCK\)- Humanitarian Law Center](#)

## Learn How You Can Support: Global Giving Page

RIT Kosovo has launched its Global Giving Page entitled "Establishing the Fred C Cuny Center at RIT Kosovo." Donations to this site will be used to facilitate the Cuny Center's academic research, summer programs, historical archive, graduate certificate, future conferences, and further peacebuilding and conflict resolution dialogues. Any donations and support will be highly appreciated, and will be used directly to empower youth through peace education and professional development.

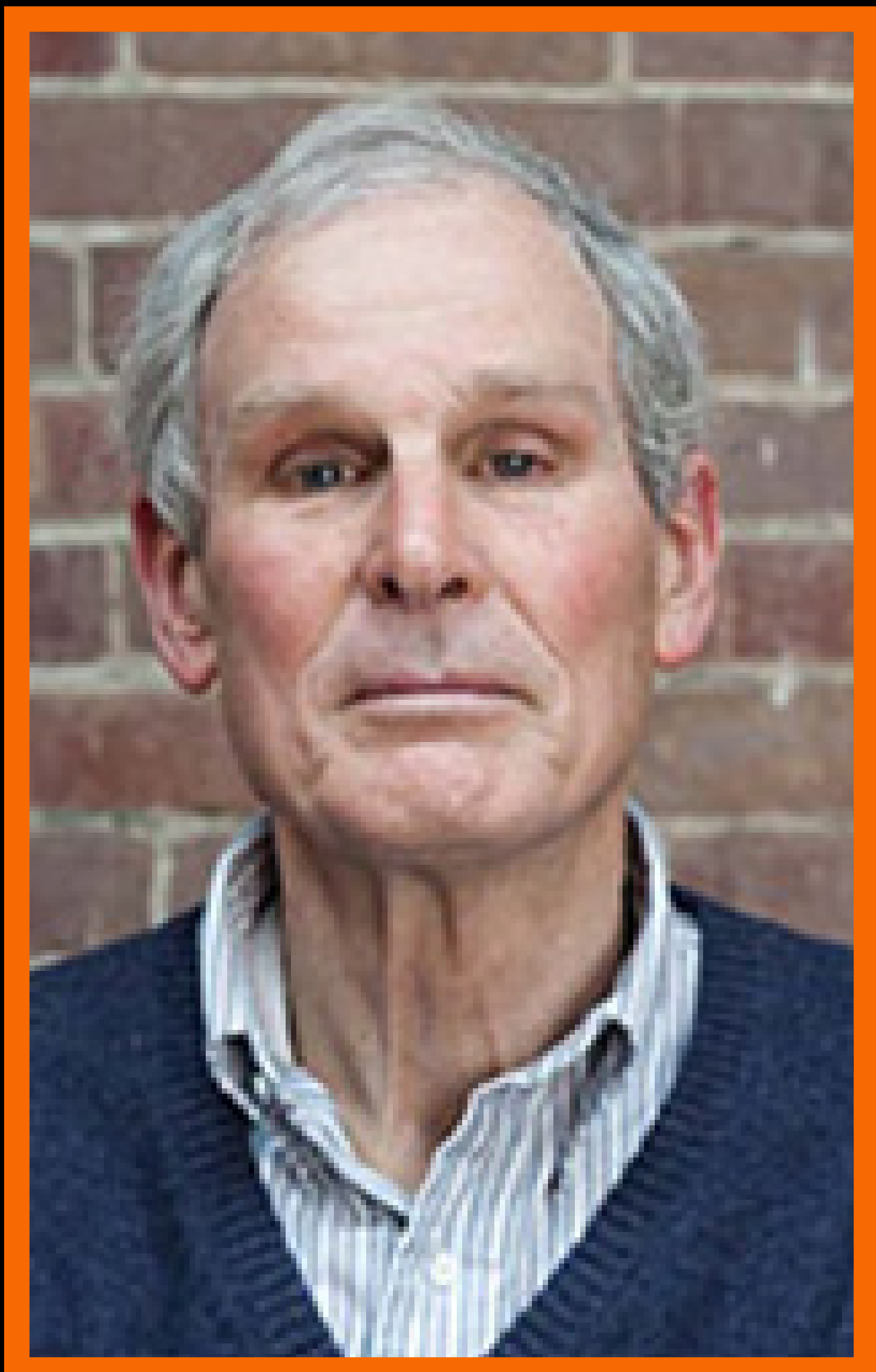
**Please visit this link to donate to the center:**

<https://globalgiving.org/projects/establishing-the-frederick-c-cuny-center-at-ritk>

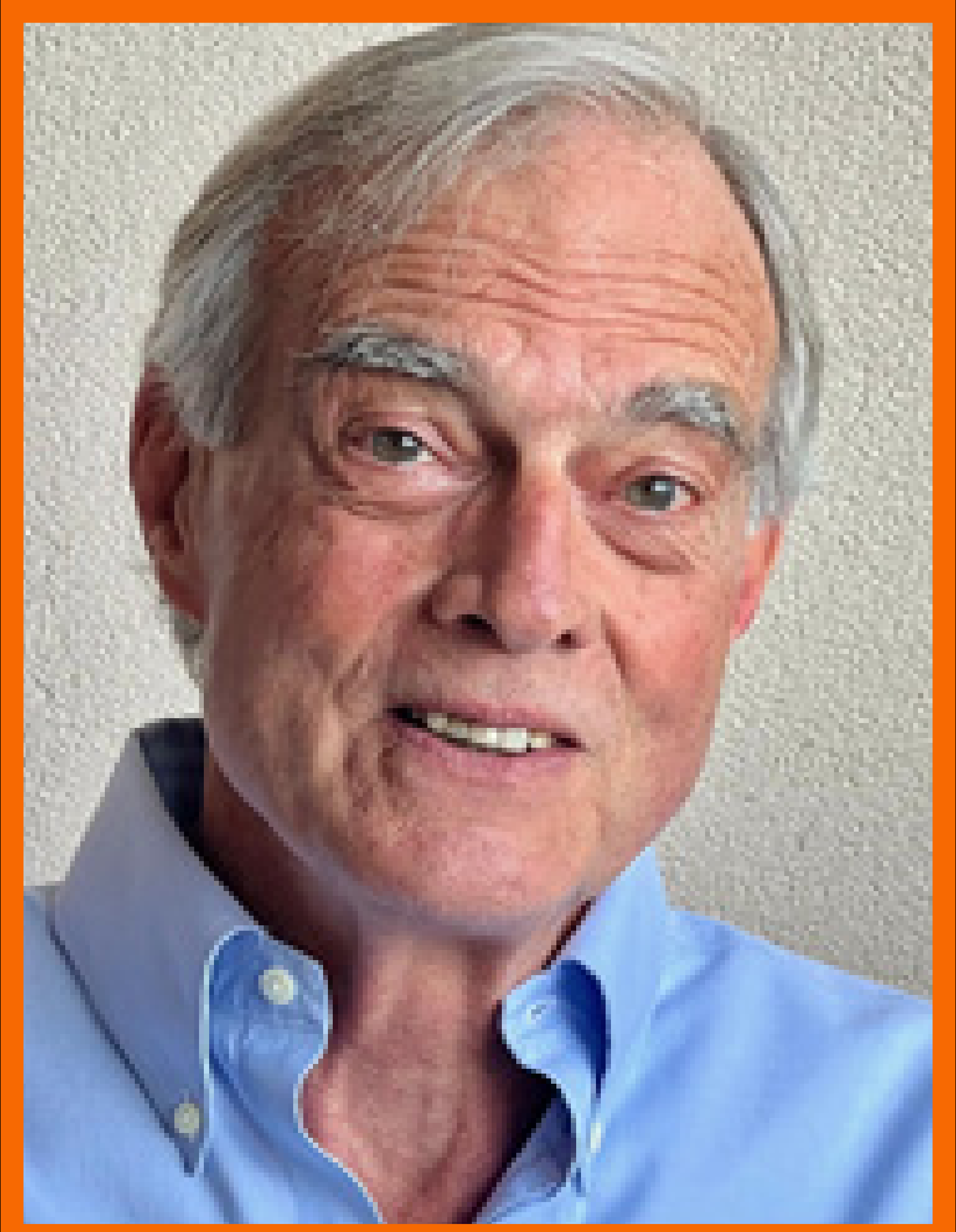


# Honorary Members

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Professor Louis Sell  
**Member**



Professor Jock Covey  
**Member**



Professor Christopher Coleman  
**Member**



In Memoriam  
Professor Leonard Hawley  
**Honorary Member**