

Ava Kikut

Provost's Graduate Academic Engagement Fellowship at the Netter Center

Biography and Project Description

My name is Ava Kikut and I am very excited to meet and work with you all! I was an English major (and ABCS student) at Penn and am now completing my second-year in the PhD program at the Annenberg School for Communication. I am interested in the role community-based health communication campaigns can play in addressing racial and socioeconomic health disparities, particularly among adolescents.

Before coming to Annenberg, I worked with Penn Ophthalmology and *WURD Radio* on an initiative to address racial disparities in glaucoma research and care in Philadelphia. I have most recently conducted research on the effects of media coverage and peer influence on youth e-cigarette use. For this fellowship and for my dissertation work, I will explore the potential for youth-driven health campaigns to inoculate the effects of harmful media messages targeting adolescents in low income communities. Specifically, how can youth involvement in countermarketing message design generate a sense of ownership and belonging around healthy decision-making?

I plan to collaborate with middle school, high school, and Penn students to design and evaluate a health campaign. For the research project, I will assess the effects of both participation in campaign development and exposure to messages designed by peers on youth health and empowerment. My proposed project will also include an ABCS class that will incorporate youth-driven campaign design and evaluation into the curriculum.