



**Devon Kraus**

**Hometown:** Scarsdale, New York

**Venture:** Antarctica

**Why did you decide to apply to be a VF:** One of the main reasons I came to business school was to work on my management and coaching skills. The Venture Fellow program was the perfect space to receive training and feedback on those skills as well as develop my facilitation and feedback abilities. I fell in love with the outdoors in my early 20s. I loved that VF program was a chance to combine my passion for the outdoors with an opportunity to give back to my peers through leadership development.

**Biggest fear when applying to be a VF:** Not earning the trust of my rope teams. I feared that I wouldn't be able to deliver the leadership component of the venture to a level my participants expected.

**The most rewarding part of VF experience so far:** Watching my rope teams become comfortable enough to share deep and thoughtful feedback with their teammates. Also August training - there is no better bonding experience than sleeping under a tarp together exposed to the elements (and bugs) and hauling water drums up a never ending hill.



**JC Rojas**

**Hometown:** Brooklyn, NYC baby!

**Venture:** Patagonia

**Why did you decide to apply to be a VF:** I was 25 the first time I heard silence while hiking down to the bottom of the Grand Canyon and have been in love with Nature ever since. For me there's no place like being outdoors, communing with Nature, and working hard to see places and things you can't just drive to; it's a very special and reflective space for me and it's where I recharge. I wanted to learn more about being outdoorsy, meet amazing hardcore guides that do this sort of thing for a living, and really lean into a unique leadership experience that isn't offered at any other b-school in the world #whartonnumberone Plus, this is easily the hardest and most badass thing you can do at Wharton and I love it because it can be so tough.

**Biggest fear when applying to be a VF:** It's TMI, but going to the bathroom in the wild. But the first time I did it, I had never gone to the bathroom in a more quiet, serene, peaceful and scenic place as that. Every New Yorker knows that the bathroom is the only place you're ever alone and in (relative) silence and going in Nature is like that but the presence you feel is quite extraordinary. Yes, I realize I just wrote an ode to pooping in the wilderness #shrug

**The most rewarding part of VF experience so far:** For me it was Summer training with my fellow VFs and tiggedyboos (inside joke, you had to be there). We hiked in the early morning, pitch dark, headlamps only, with mist/rain coming down and despite all that, we sang. And when I say we sang, I mean we SANG. We sang songs for 5 hours straight without stopping, at the top of our lungs, waking up an entire campsite one time that was just off the trail. The experience of being able to look at a collection of obstacles right in the face, say F YOU, and then sing to show that ain't nothing can stop you has been my most rewarding and inspiring experience yet.



**Kaila Squires**

**Hometown:** Queens, New York

**Venture:** Spring Andes

**Why did you decide to apply to be a VF:** I applied to be a VF because I wanted to lead diverse teams through challenging situations and help students develop leadership skills by facilitating thoughtful discussion and providing expert guidance. As a VF, I hoped to increase my own self-awareness and stretch past my comfort zone while also supporting fellow colleagues in achieving their peak level of success.

**Biggest fear when applying to be a VF:** As a New York City native, I didn't have much experience with over-night camping or hiking. Because of this, I worried that I wouldn't have the technical skills or know-how that other VFs or venture participants would have.

**The most rewarding part of VF experience so far:** Hands down, the best part of being a VF is all the amazing training we receive. After the two VF training sessions I felt empowered, capable and more knowledgeable. During the August week-long training, I learned how to navigate with a compass, reflected on the type of leader I want to be, and bonded with my rope team as we sang songs on our hike!



**Sheila Ho**

**Hometown:** Diamond Bar, CA

**Venture:** Utah Canyoneering

**Why did you decide to apply to be a VF:** I attended the Andes venture as a participant in my first year, and my VF was instrumental in both helping me learn about my blind spots as a leader and teammate, and in pushing our team to resolve conflicts. He inspired me to apply to be a VF with the hope that I can help other participants experience the same learnings. Also, I love backcountry camping and firmly believe the best way to poop is squatting over a dirt hole, cheeks caressed by the wind, gazing at the stars – and being a VF gives me ample opportunities to practice what I preach.

**Biggest fear when applying to be a VF:** Because of the huge positive impact my VF was able to make on my team when I participated in Andes last year, I felt nervous (and still feel nervous!) about my ability to facilitate the same caliber of learning experience for my peers as a VF.

**The most rewarding part of VF experience so far:** In addition to August training and the learnings / camaraderie generated by it (I learned to identify my co-VFs by body odor alone), I feel very grateful to be a part of this community. I know I would not have met and gotten to know many of the other VFs without this program, and I'm constantly impressed by the tenacity, empathy, and general fun-ness exhibited by this group of people.



**Andrew Boothe**

**Hometown:** Portland, OR

**Venture:** Atacama

**Why did you decide to apply to be a VF:** I thought the Antarctica venture was incredibly valuable and a lot of fun, and my VF played a big part in making that happen. I wanted to be able to provide that same type of experience for others while also getting a chance to further work on leadership and team building skills.

**Biggest fear when applying to be a VF:** I am the least outdoorsy person you have ever met. Before going to Antarctica, I had never camped before (by choice). While I love the snow and the cold, I wasn't sure how I'd do in more traditional outdoors scenarios during training.

**The most rewarding part of VF experience so far:** August training. Getting the chance to bond with the other VFs and push my outdoor limits was an amazing experience.



**Altug Simsek**

**Hometown:** Antalya, Turkey

**Venture:** Small Crew Sailing

**Why did you decide to apply to be a VF:** Becoming a VF was my dream even before coming to Wharton because travelling and outdoor activities are my biggest passion in life, and there is no better place to meet classmates with similar passions.

**Biggest fear when applying to be a VF:** After having many challenging situations and conversations in Antarctica, then observing how my VF had an impact in my self-discovery in those six days with her facilitation and communication skills, as an international student, I was thinking that I might have less impact in my participants' personal developments due to some cultural differences

**The most rewarding part of VF experience so far:** Being a part of this great community and learning from my fellow VFs' experiences and personalities are the most rewarding experience so far. In each training and bi-weekly breakfast, I'm taking great leadership and teamwork examples from this community.