2020 - 21 EMERGING WOMEN LEADERS
¡BIENVENIDAS!

Welcome to the 2020-2021 academic year and to the Emerging Women Leaders.

This nine month professional development program is designed to provide women who are mid-level managers with networking opportunities, learn about leadership strategies and how to think about their professional trajectory in higher education and beyond.

Each month you will be able to hear from women leaders across campus and in the community about their success and how you can strengthen and hone your professional prowess.

We hope that you will enjoy this program and will provide you with invaluable nuggets of knowledge.

Saludos cordiales,

Gioconda J. Guerra P.

Executive Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity
Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
PURPOSE
The Emerging Women Leaders Series provides leadership development for mid-level professional women at Illinois who aspire to become organizational leaders. The focus of this program is to equip women with fundamental leadership strategies that will have a positive impact within their work environments and the communities in which they live.

MISSION
Its mission is to empower and equip women who are looking to develop leadership skills for advancement with expert leadership knowledge and practical tools that result in strategic career planning and professional skill building and heightened self-awareness.

FOCUS
Meetings are designed to help women identify and reinforce their strengths while developing proactive strategies and behaviors to make a greater impact within their organizations, their personal networks, and the communities in which they live and serve. Topics will focus on core professional concepts and personal competencies.

OBJECTIVE
The objective is to enhance the participant’s credibility and strengthen their position within the organization; create and sustain effective developmental relationships and alliances that advance careers; maximize personal, professional, and organizational potential through better teamwork and team leadership; think, lead, and manage in ways that celebrate individual attributes and perspectives.

HOW
Meetings will be held once a month from September to May. Presenters are senior level women from the University campus, community leaders from Urbana and Champaign, and professional consultants from various backgrounds, who present on an array of distinctive topics that meet a wide range of leadership development needs.

AUDIENCE
This program is ideal for women who desire to learn more about effective leadership.
Real change, enduring change, happens one step at a time.

- Ruth Bader Ginsburg
PARTICIPANTS

MARISSA BARLAZ | goldrch2@illinois.edu
Marissa works as the Affirmative Action Data Analyst in the Office for Access and Equity, where she manages the university’s Affirmative Action Plan. Originally from Philadelphia, she went to college at the University of Pittsburgh and double majored in math and linguistics. She received her PhD in linguistics from the University of Illinois in 2018. When she is not at work, she loves to run, crochet, and cook. She also loves spending time with her husband, two sons, and very fluffy dog.

KALINA BORKIEWICZ | kalina@illinois.edu
Kalina is a senior research programmer for the Advanced Visualization Lab at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications. In college, Kalina studied computer graphics because she thought she wanted to work on Hollywood films. Instead, Kalina now applies those skills toward writing software that converts large, complex scientific datasets into images, to make them more understandable to the average person. She finds this much more rewarding! Kalina’s scientific visualizations have been included in a number of documentaries, IMAX films, and planetarium dome shows. Outside of work, Kalina is pursuing a master’s degree in computer science. Kalina enjoys listening to the Beatles, applying makeup, and reading at least a couple books a month.

WENDY BARTLO | wbartlo@illinois.edu
Wendy Bartlo is Assistant Director for Strategic Initiatives and Research Relations in the College of Applied Health Sciences. In this role she works closely with the senior leadership to provide strategic direction, design, and implementation of college initiatives. Prior to joining the University of Illinois, Dr. Bartlo earned a doctorate in anthropology at Wayne State University in Detroit, where she was a pre-doctoral fellow at the Institute of Gerontology. Dr. Bartlo recently won the 2020 Chancellors Team Award for Excellence in Public Engagement for her leadership on the initiative Age-Friendly Champaign-Urbana and serves on the Board of Directors for Clark-Lindsey Village in Urbana. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her husband and daughter, crafting, and reading.

HARUKA BROWN | hbrow@illinois.edu
Haruka Brown works at the Department of Mechanical Science and Engineering (MechSE) as a Research Administration Manager. She has been with MechSE for 8.5 years and has been in the research administration field for 7.5 years. She is involved with the entire sponsored project lifecycle from the proposal preparation to award close out. She grew up in Japan, and came to the U.S. to study accounting in 1997, and has been living in Illinois since.
RACHEL CHLEBANOWSKI | chleban1@illinois.edu
Rachel is from Bolingbrook, Illinois. She graduated from the University of Illinois with a Bachelors Degree in Speech & Hearing Sciences, and received a Masters Degree from Eastern Illinois University in Counseling & Student Development. Currently, Rachel is the Assistant Director of degrees in Gies College of Business, where she oversees Academic Advising as well as the onboarding of new students and communications. In her spare time, Rachel enjoys baking and cooking with her partner, Joe, while her cat tries to get in the way. She also enjoys weightlifting, reading fictional novels, listening to crime podcasts, and spending time with her niece and nephew.

KATHERINE DARR | kdarr@illinois.edu
Katherine (Kat) Darr joined the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering’s Office of Advancement in July 2019 as its Corporate Relations Coordinator. In this capacity, she is responsible for all corporate engagement, including the ECE partnership program, employer recruiting, and research funding opportunities. Kat earned her Bachelor of Science from Eastern Illinois University and her Master of Education from The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She has over 22 years of experience working on campus, with the majority of that time spent in The Grainger College of Engineering. In her free time, Kat enjoys spending time with family and friends, kayaking, mountain biking, and gardening.

ULAIS AENIS | udennis@illinois.edu
A proud, two-time UIUC alum, Ulyssia Dennis is an Associate Director of Engineering Career Services at The Grainger College of Engineering. She coaches students to discover and develop essential, professional skills using a combination of her diverse experience as a human resources practitioner and plain, old, street smarts.

MARGARET EDWARDS | mbedward@illinois.edu
Margaret (Meg) Edwards is the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs at the School of Information Sciences. In her role she oversees advising and career services for MS and BS programs, advises PhD faculty advisors in student policy and procedures, and coordinates student life and development for all iSchool students. Meg enjoys running, cooking, traveling, golf, and organizing and planning things. While originally from Urbana, she and her two sisters are the daughters of East Coast natives, and she lived in Ohio and Washington DC before returning to the C-U area. She currently resides right outside of town with her husband, Chuck, her 8-year old daughter Kate, and her 10-year old dog, Sadie.

She has been with Engineering IT as a lead specialist for six years, before that, she worked as data specialist at the University Human Resources. She enjoys working with data and produce data reporting, analysis and visualization based on the request. In her spare time, she like to watch movies, walking, hiking, and cooking.
PARTICIPANTS

LIN FAN  |  lfan@illinois.edu
Lin Fan has been with Engineering IT as a lead specialist for six years, before that, she worked as a data specialist at the University Human Resources. Fan enjoys working with data and produce data reporting, analysis and visualization based on the request. In her spare time, she likes to watch movies, walking, hiking, and cooking.

MADELINE FARRELL  |  mrf7@illinois.edu
Madeline started at the University of Illinois in December 2019. Madeline is from Milwaukee, where she worked for the past two years advocating and supporting survivors of domestic and sexual violence. A graduate from Illinois State University where she was a competitive swimmer, she loves anything related to Wisconsin sports, trying new hot sauces, and enjoys spending time with family and friends in her free time.

AKUA FORKUO-SEKYERE  |  akua@illinois.edu
Akua Forkuo-Sekyere is an Advocacy and Wellness Coordinator with the Women’s Resources Center. Akua comes to this work with a background in public health and is interested in the impact of sexual violence communities on communities and the ability of communities to heal. Akua is from Nashville, TN, and is new to the Chambana area. Akua is looking forward to exploring the area especially when it becomes safe to be out and about. Akua likes to relax with a cup of tea, watch television, chat with friends, read, and create art, among other things! She’s appreciative of the opportunity to be in the Emerging Leaders program and is looking forward to meeting and learning from everyone.

KELLY FOSTER  |  foster5@illinois.edu
Kelly is a 2018 MBA graduate who began working with the IQUIST Center in January 2020. She’s originally from the Champaign area and has a history of community volunteer involvement including hospice, helping the homeless, and previously served on the Board of Directors for the Orpheum Children’s Museum. Prior to working for IQUIST, Kelly was a communications coordinator at Penn State and volunteered with United Way. During the pandemic, she decided to venture out into the world of gardening and currently has a wild pumpkin patch in her backyard she’s extremely proud of.
PARTICIPANTS

**KATE GARDINER | kgardin2@illinois.edu**
Kate works for Illinois Extension Agriculture & Natural Resources as a Visiting Extension Outreach Associate. She is the communications manager for the Red Oak Rain Garden on campus and helps facilitate the Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy statewide. She’s also an MBA student at the Gies College of Business. In her free time, Kate loves to travel, bake, and has recently gotten into puzzles during quarantine. She’s from Park Ridge, Illinois and currently lives in Edwardsville, Illinois with her fiancé and their two cats.

**ILALEE HARRISON JAMES | lalee@illinois.edu**
Ilalee Harrison James is the Associate Director of The Hoeft Technology & Management Program. She serves as course instructor in addition to leading the strategic plan for the program’s co-curricular outcomes. She is a first generation college graduate who is passionate about improving career outcomes for underrepresented students in business, technology and STEM related fields.

**OULAY HARVEY | opharvey@illinois.edu**
Oulay works in Illinois Business Consulting within the Gies College of Business as the Administrative Aide. Born in Laos but was raised in Champaign. She earned her Bachelor degree in Arts from EIU and received her Master’s Degree in Science Technology from Eastern Illinois University. She is also the President of the Lao Community of Champaign County. Oulay loves to read romance novels and enjoy socializing with her friends and family over good food and a nice glass of wine. She is married to Bryant Harvey, who is also from Champaign. They enjoying traveling around the US going to museums and beaches.

**EDEN HAYCRAFT | ehaycra@illinois.edu**
Eden is coming up on her 5-year anniversary of working at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Eden joined Illinois in 2015 when she accepted a position within The Career Center on Urbana-Champaign’s campus working with students on their career development. In 2019, Eden took the Associate Director position over online graduate programs within the School of Labor and Employment Relations where she serves as a student advisor and leads the program through student recruitment and curriculum growth. Prior to Illinois, Eden completed her Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and her Master of Education in Student Affairs and Higher Education at Texas State University.
PARTICIPANTS

LAUREN KARPLUS | lkarpl2@illinois.edu
Lauren is an academic advisor/experiential learning coordinator in Agricultural and Consumer Economics, where she advises undergraduate students on their academics, teaches a careers course, and arranges travel-based courses for the department. She has worked at the university for the past 6 years in roles related to study abroad, immigration, and guest protocol. She enjoys international travel, baking, boxing, and hiking. She has a toddler and lives in Urbana.

DEBRA LARSON | dlarson@illinois.edu
Debra is a one-person communications shop for the Department of Aerospace Engineering. She likes the variety, fast pace, and freedom to be creative (e.g. last fall, she got Alma to wear a space helmet then created a 30-day space helmet hunt on campus in January on Instagram). Prior, she was a news writer for the College of ACES for 19 years and freelanced for 15 years while her two sons were growing up” mostly writing/producing radio/TV commercials and educational videos. She earned a BA from Wheaton College and an MA from U of I. She and her husband Tim (a geophysicist) are active members of Copper Creek Church where they lead a 9-week marriage class. Debra enjoys her family, photography, architecture, and facilitating difficult conversations.

Jill Moore-Reynen | j-moore6@illinois.edu
Jill has worked in the Gies College of Business for over 25 years, starting in the IT unit providing software support and training, including teaching Excel classes for the MBA and other Master’s programs in the college. She has worked in the eLearning Office at Gies since 2008. She has an integral role in the development of over 100 Coursera MOOCs as well as for-credit courses in Gies online graduate programs. She lives in Champaign with her husband and new puppy and spends most of her spare time playing tennis.

JESSICA PEREZ | jgperez@illinois.edu
Jessica Perez is the Associate Director of Education and Inclusivity for an Engineering Research Center called POETS based out of the MechSE department. She received her Bachelor’s degree in Biological Engineering from MIT in 2011 and her PhD in Chemical Engineering from Northwestern in 2016. She is passionate about providing opportunities for underrepresented minority students to thrive in STEM. Jessica has been a remote worker since 2017 and is based in San Antonio, Texas where she lives with her husband and one year old son. In her free time Jessica enjoys crafting (primarily sewing, Cricut projects and nail art), board-games, self-improvement audio books and finding new ways to entertain her son from home.
PARTICIPANTS

DANIELLE RUNYON | drunyon@illinois.edu
Danielle is completing her fourth year in Advancement at the University of Illinois and is currently the Associate Director of External Engagement in the College of Applied Health Sciences. Her main responsibilities include stewardship of donors and planning engagement activities for donors and alumni. She’s been in this role since October 2018 and before that did corporate fundraising at Krannert Center. Danielle became a mom in March, just days before everything was shut down due to COVID. She resides in Rantoul with her husband, son, and two juggles to be close to her in-laws. Other professional activities include being on the steering committee for the Stewardship and Donor Relations Roundtables and being the president of Executive Club of Champaign County.

DEBORAH SEILER | dlseiler@illinois.edu
Deborah is leading the design and launch of the new campus Extension & Public Engagement Connection Center (EPECC). She serves on the Illinois Extension Leadership Team and the Faculty Senate Committee on Public Engagement, and has previously worked for University of Wisconsin Extension and California Sea Grant. Originally from Auburn, California, Deborah lives in Champaign with her husband and two dogs. She is a proud AmeriCorps alum, former Division-I swimmer, current CU 1-to-1 volunteer, and deaf advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion. Her most recent challenge is to become a certified Master Urban Farmer through Illinois Extension.

ALLISON SIVERS | agaddis@uillinois.edu
Allison manages and executes business and financial operations for multiple System Offices, including the Executive Vice President and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President of Economic Development and Innovation, Discovery Partners Institute, and Illinois Ventures. A native to central Illinois, Allison resides in Urbana with her husband Scott and her 2 dogs Jack and Diane. Her favorite activities include gardening, taking bicycle rides, and spending time with friends and family.

RASHMI TENNETI | rtenneti@Illinois.edu
Rashmi serves as Assistant Director, Marketing and Communications and is responsible for the various communications initiatives supporting the OCR and units across campus. Rashmi is a certified digital marketing expert with training in content creation, branding strategies, analytics and advertisement strategies. Prior to joining the OCR, she worked with the Gies college of Business, Infosys and Accenture Consulting. Rashmi holds an undergraduate degree in Computer Science and Engineering from Osmania University, India and an MBA from DePaul University. Rashmi is originally from Hyderabad, India and has loved in the USA for 6 years now. She spends her time reading and enjoying the company of her Bernedoodle puppy, Puri.
PARTICIPANTS

TALISA THOMPSON | tethomp@illinois.edu
Talis is Assistant Director of HR at Gies, College of Business, in the office of the Dean. She has worked at the University for 23 years and at Gies for just a little over 2 years. She loves her job and the welcoming environment. Prior to her employ at Gies College of Business she worked at the College of Law. Talisa interacts with every unit within college because my unit provides HR shared services for the college and everyone was so welcoming. She appreciates the fact that the leadership at Gies, is very in touch with the employees and feels that is very important. Talisa is a native to Champaign, and is married to her husband Otis. They both enjoy traveling and spending time with family. Especially with their 1 year old grandson, Maverick. Her youngest child is a senior at Eastern Illinois.

LISSETTE VENABLE | lchaid2@illinois.edu
Lissette has worked in the College of Media for 5 years and is currently the Student Records Coordinator. She is also part of the Diversity Committee for the college. She loves doing both roles as they help her assist students, faculty, and staff, which she really enjoys. She is originally from Chicago, IL but has lived in Champaign for 10 years. She has 3 children, two girls and one boy. She is an alumna of U of I, receiving her MBA in 2019. In her free time she enjoys spending time with family, watching sports, and, enjoying the outdoors.

KELLI WENDT | kwendt@illinois.edu
Kelli grew up in Champaign but ventured to Florida for college where she obtained a degree in mathematics education. After teaching junior high math and English for three years in Florida, she moved back to Champaign to be closer to family. Kelli worked with the university’s Sponsored Programs office and Mechanical Science department before settling into the Beckman Institute in 2012. Assembling financial data and collaborating with colleagues are two of Kellie’s favorite assignments in her current role as director of budget and resource planning. She is thankful to those who have provided opportunities and mentored her at the Institute. In her spare time, Kelli enjoys sports, music, yard work, and spoiling her nephews.

JEANICE WIARD | jwiard@illinois.edu
Jeanice graduated from the State University of New York at Canton, becoming a certified veterinary nurse in 2007; three years later, while working within private practice, she obtained her bachelor’s in veterinary management. She relocated to Illinois in 2010 and worked within general practice until 2014, then moving into academia. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Veterinary Teaching Hospital has employed her since, beginning her service in the Intensive Care Department, then Diagnostic Imaging Department, and currently within the Equine Medicine and Surgery Department. She recently graduated from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with a Master of Education. She lives with her husband, two young sons, two older dogs, and one frisky cat. She enjoys running, reading, and landscaping.
PARTICIPANTS

SAMANTHA WILLITS-ROSTEN | swill9@illinois.edu
Samantha is the Compensation Analyst for Illinois Human Resources. She has six years of professional HR experience, with two of those at the University. Originally from Clinton, Illinois she now lives in Urbana with her spouse, Brian; one-year old twins, Isaac and Rae; and rambunctious lab, Hermione. In her free time, she loves to read, garden, cook, and spend time with family.

ALLISON WINTER | Awinter@gmail.com
Allison Winter was raised in nearby Mahomet and is a second generation Illini, with two degrees from Illinois. She fundraises for the College of ACES where she leads efforts to secure private support for the Departments of Animal Sciences, Human Development and Family Studies, and Agricultural and Biological Engineering. Prior to ACES, Allison served The Grainger College of Engineering fundraising for ECE and Materials Science during her tenure. Prior to joining campus, Allison worked in the private sector for 10 years in external sales.

In her free time, Allison enjoys spending time with her husband Matt and her extended family, which often includes their herding dogs rescues, Happy, HoneyPot, Baloo. She has a passion for good food, which she tries to balance with enthusiasm for an active lifestyle, including actively recruiting her niece and nephews to the University of Illinois for fall semesters 2030, 2034, and 2036.

CHRISTINA WORTHINGTON | cmagurr2@uillinois.edu
Christina works in AITS as a member of our Strategic Human Capital team. Her role focuses on employee engagement and determining how to best support our people as they contribute to department and university goals. She grew up just north of Champaign and now resides here with her husband, Ryne, and their cat, Andy Dwyer and dog, Ben. Hobbies include: international travelling, thrifting vintage goods at antique shops, playing volleyball, and tending to her ever-growing houseplant collection. Christina is a true people-person down her core which means she is already looking forward to meeting each and every one of you during this empowering program!

MARYALICE WU | malice@illinois.edu
Maryalice has been the Director of Data Analytics at the Center for Innovation in Teaching & Learning (CITL) since 2015 and is an adjunct assistant professor in Sociology. She has a PhD in Sociology from Illinois and has been working in a variety of management positions at Illinois since 2004. Her current research focuses on the economic and health empowerment of women in developing nations. She has taught several courses at Illinois, including Introduction to Social Statistics and Social Research Methods. She currently serves on the Urbana city council as representative for ward one, is on the Cunningham Township board, and chairs the farmer’s market advisory board.
2020 - 21 SPEAKER LIST

September 23, 2020
GIOCONDA GUERRA PEREZ
Executive Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity
Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

October 21, 2020
REBECCA NASH
Administrative Assistant
Fine & Applied Arts Administration
rnash@illinois.edu

November 18, 2020
SARAH ZEHR
Assistant Vice President, Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs

December 16, 2020
KIMBERLEE KIDWELL
Dean, College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences

January 20, 2021
SHARON ALLEN
Founder and CEO, Sterling Wealth Management, Champaign, Illinois

February 24, 2021
KAAMILYAH ABDALLAH-SPAN
Director of Campus Culture and Climate Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

March 24, 2021
KIMBERLY OTCHERE
Director of Inclusion and Talent Development for University Housing

April 21, 2021
MARIANA SEDA
Communications & Outreach Specialist, Office of the Chief Information Officer

May 19, 2021
ANNUAL EMERGING WOMEN LEADERS END-OF-YEAR EVENT

MEETING SCHEDULE

All meetings for fall and spring 2020 - 21 will be held via Zoom

Wednesday, September 23, 2020
Wednesday, October 21, 2020
Wednesday, November 18, 2020
Wednesday, December 16, 2020
Thursday, January 20, 2021
Wednesday, February 24, 2021
Wednesday, March 24, 2021
Wednesday, April 21, 2021
For more information contact

**Medra Roberts-Southerland**
Assistant Director for Diversity Initiatives

Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

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