

A photograph of three women smiling and looking upwards. The woman on the left has long brown hair, the woman in the middle has curly dark hair, and the woman on the right is wearing a pink hijab. They are all smiling broadly, conveying a sense of joy and optimism.

2022-23 EMERGING WOMEN LEADERS



UNIVERSITY OF
ILLINOIS
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN





Welcome to the 2022-23 academic year and to the Emerging Women Leaders.

We are glad that you chose to participate in Emerging Women Leaders this year. 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 that it will provide you with invaluable nuggets of knowledge.

Saludos cordiales,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gioconda J. Guerra P." in a cursive script.

Gioconda Guerra Pérez
Executive Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity
Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion



EMERGING WOMEN LEADERS 2022-23 CONTENTS

2 PURPOSE

**5 EMERGING WOMEN LEADERS
2022-23 MEETING SCHEDULE**

6 PARTICIPANTS

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.

A photograph of two women in business attire standing in front of a large window covered in rain droplets. The woman on the left is seen in profile, looking towards the right. The woman on the right is also in profile, looking towards the left. The background outside the window is blurred, showing a building and some greenery. The overall mood is contemplative and professional.

**“There’s nothing easy about
finding your way through a
world loaded with obstacles
that others can’t or don’t see.”**

— Michelle Obama, *The Light We Carry*

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES

**PROFESSIONAL
STAFF LEADERSHIP
ACADEMY**

**HUMAN RESOURCES/
SUPERVISORS
TRAINING**

**INDIVIDUAL
PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT**

**ILLINOIS SUPERVISOR
COMPETENCY MODEL**

**THE ACADEMIC
PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT FUND**

**THE INDIVIDUAL
PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT FUNDS
(IPDF)**

**FACULTY/STAFF
ASSISTANCE
SERVICES (FSAS)**

**UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
CHICAGO PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT/TRAINING**

EMERGING WOMEN LEADERS 2022–23 MEETING SCHEDULE

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 26, 2022

Gioconda Guerra Perez
Executive Associate Vice Chancellor for
Diversity, University of Illinois
Urbana-Champaign

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 9, 2022

Sarah Zehr Gantz
Senior Assistant Vice President for
Academic Initiatives and Policies,
University of Illinois System

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 7, 2022

Holiday Gathering

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 11 2023

Sarah Zehr Gantz
Senior Assistant Vice President for
Academic Initiatives and Policies,
University of Illinois System

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 15, 2023

Tracy Kleparski, Director of Students
Services, Parkland College

WEDNESDAY MARCH 22, 2023

Emerging Women Leaders Alumni Panel
Kimberly Otchere, Director of Inclusion and
Talent Development for University Housing
Deborah Shivers, Associate Director,
HR Shared Services, Illini Union
Maria Thompson, Procurement Manager,
Facilities and Services

WEDNESDAY APRIL 19, 2023

Kaamilyah Abdullah-Span
Director, Campus Culture & Climate
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

WEDNESDAY MAY 17, 2023

Robin Neal Kaler
Associate Chancellor for Public Affairs –
Keynote, Annual Emerging Women Leaders:
Leadership Lunch

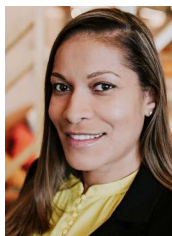
PARTICIPANTS



SOWMYA ANAND

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
OFFICE OF PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT**
sanand@illinois.edu

Sowmya Anand is Assistant Director, Office of Proposal Development, UIUC, which supports the development and submission of large-scale, multidisciplinary, strategic grant proposals to various federal sponsors such as NSF and NIH. Sowmya received her Master's degree from Mumbai University, India, and her Ph.D. in Social Psychology from The Ohio State University (OSU), Columbus OH. She has previously worked in the Survey Research Laboratory at UIC as Coordinator of Research Programs, in the Department of Psychology at OSU as lecturer and postdoctoral researcher, and at The Gallup Organization, India, as Associate Project Director. She lives in Champaign with her spouse and 12-year old twin daughters. She loves to read, cook, and watch movies.



SHAUNA CLAYBORN

SUPPLIER DIVERSITY COORDINATOR
srclayb1@uillinois.edu

Born and raised in Champaign, Shauna has worked at the University of Illinois System for over 12 years in various communication roles and in the Office of Procurement Diversity as a Supplier Diversity Coordinator for four of those years. In this role, she advocates for contracting opportunities for small, diverse businesses. During her free time, Shauna loves working out, living a healthy lifestyle, and helping others do the same. She enjoys traveling and trying new adventures with her twelve-year-old daughter and friends. Shauna also enjoys volunteering in non-profit organizations such as the YWCA University of Illinois, where she serves as the Board Vice President. In this role, she brings her communications and relationship-building skills to the

table to help increase awareness of the economic and social injustice issues in our nation and communities.



CHARISSE COLEMAN

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES
cjones1@illinois.edu

Charisse Coleman is currently the Associate Director of Human Resources with Carle Illinois College of Medicine. In this role, she supports faculty related initiatives and functions within human resources, manages all levels of recruitment and staffing, provides leadership for the development of organizational structures and systems, and serves a core role in operational management. Born and raised in Champaign, Charisse is a two-time University of Illinois alum. Outside of work, she enjoys reading, working out, and spending time with her family.



BETH CONERTY

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
bconerty@illinois.edu

Beth Conerty is the Associate Director for Business Development for the Integrated Bioprocessing Research Laboratory and the Food Science Human Nutrition Pilot Processing Plant. Beth also runs educational opportunities for industry representatives and advises a Professional Science Master's in Bioprocessing and Bioenergy. Beth received her Bachelor's in Chemistry and Master's in Bioenergy from the University of Illinois, and she received her PhD in Energy Science and Engineering from University of Tennessee and Oak Ridge National Lab. In her free time, Beth enjoys spending time with her husband and two dogs gardening, hiking, and running.

PARTICIPANTS



LAURA CZYS

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF HR
czys@illinois.edu

Laura Czys has extensive experience in HR in higher education and in private sector work. She has over 15 years experience in the field, a master's from the U of I and a SHRM-SCP certification. Her areas of interest include culture development, employee engagement, recognition and appreciation and developing emotional intelligence in troubled work teams. She currently works in the School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics, the largest school in LAS.



ANN FREDRICKSEN

DISABILITY SPECIALIST/COORDINATOR OF ACCESSIBLE MEDIA SERVICES
ajfredr1@illinois.edu

Ann Fredricksen has worked at DRES since 2008. She leads a team that make sure course content is accessible for student with disabilities. She is also serving as an accessibility consultant for a grant that is creating OER textbooks. Ann currently lives in Paxton with her husband and 3 children. She is always looking for a way to keep her hands busy and knows how to braid rugs, knit, crochet, embroidery, and make bobbin lace but her passion is for sewing. She has been making clothing, costumes, bags and has pieced and quilted many quilts. She has recently begun restoring vintage sewing machines and has over 30 in various states of restoration in her collection.



Daniele Frerichs

Assistant Director of Administration
dlfreric@illinois.edu

As a member of the IHSI leadership team, Daniele's primary role is to oversee all administrative functions of the institute, including but not limited to human resources, procurement, fiscal management and processes, research administration, and facilities management. Daniele has her B.S. in Business Economics and M.B.A. from the Gies College of Business at the University of Illinois. Daniele has four daughters and lives just out of Ogden. Running marathons is her favorite hobby and stress relief. Also, she spends most of her time following all her daughters around to the many varying activities they are each involved in! Daniele also volunteers at her local church, girl scouts, cheer leading coach and parent-teacher organization at school.



HOLLY FUSON

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
hjayne@illinois.edu

Holly Fuson started at the University of Illinois in 2005 and has served the College of Veterinary Medicine since 2007. In her current role of Associate Director of the i-Learning Center, she administers and builds online degree and certificate programs. Holly is a two-time Illinois Alum earning her master's in Education on the Urbana-Champaign campus and her master's in business administration on the Springfield campus. Outside of work, Holly spends her time at sporting events for her two teenage boys and cheering on the Illini.

PARTICIPANTS



HEIDI GHARST

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, ENTERPRISE MANAGED SYSTEMS & SERVICES
hgharst@illinois.edu

Heidi has worked at the University of Illinois for over 20 years in various IT roles. She is currently the Assistant Director for Technology Services Enterprise Managed Systems and Services. In this role she is responsible for strategic planning, budgeting, overseeing daily operations, delegating tasks to staff, and managing personnel for multiple campus services. Heidi's service areas include End Point Management, Linux and Windows System Administration, and IT support for both physical labs/classrooms and remote learning. When not working, Heidi spends her time with friends and family, playing with her dog, and enjoys cooking.



DIONNA HARPER

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF ACADEMIC & STUDENT SERVICES, BSA/MAS
dwilliam@illinois.edu

Dionna Harper began working at Gies College of Business in 2008 and has served in a variety of roles. Currently, she works in the Accountancy department as the Assistant Director of Academic & Student Services at Gies College of Business. In this role she oversees a range of initiatives including the ACCY Opportunities program and other diversity-focused partnerships designed to improve program admissions and student engagement for the underserved populations. She also serves as staff lead and co-instructor for the Academy of Accounting Excellence and Innovation. Dionna earned her BA from Eastern Illinois University and her MBA from Gies College of Business. She enjoys traveling, cooking and quality time with her husband and children.



REBECCA HODSON

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, CAREER SERVICES
rhodson1@illinois.edu

Rebecca is a townie, UIUC alum (BA '09, MS '13) and staff for nearly 8 years. She's always been fascinated by people and culture and wants to help others. Originally a community college librarian, Rebecca now helps students in the iSchool explore careers, gain experience and find a job. She loves teaching, advising students and coordinating programs. Rebecca is a mother of 3 year old fraternal twin boys, and her and her husband enjoy cooking, spending time outdoors, watching and playing soccer, music and movies.



KELLY JO HOFFMANN

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF ENGINEERING SERVICES
kjhffmnn@illinois.edu

Kelly Jo has been in her role at F&S as the Associate Director of Engineering Services since May of 2022. Prior to her current position, she was at Capital Programs where she planned and completed roughly 300 projects ranging from \$3k to \$41M. Her experience, collaborative spirit, and communication style engage campus partners, F&S team members, consultants, and contractors to work together and succeed in the missions of the university. Kelly Jo values spending time with her family, including husband and daughters at Illini games or enjoying the great outdoors.

PARTICIPANTS



DIMITRIA JOHNSON

OFFICE SUPPORT SPECIALIST
dimij@illinois.edu

Dimitria is currently an Office Support Specialist for the School of Information Sciences. (iSchool) in the Admissions department. She specializes in processing applications and assisting with admitted students receiving their I-20 to obtain their Visa. Dimitria graduated from Parkland College with her Associates Degree and now she is attending Eastern Illinois University with a major in Psychology and a minor in Public Health. Dimitria is the proud mother of two wonderful children Aaron and Mikayla, and my rescue fur baby Hercules. On her free time, she says that lightly, she enjoys strength training, binge watching television shows, especially Hallmark Christmas movies, and reading.



JANET JONES

ACTING DIRECTOR, ENTERPRISE APPLICATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT
jdjones@illinois.edu

Janet Jones is currently the Acting Director of Enterprise Applications and Development at Technology Services. In this role, she leads a team of IT professionals that support a wide array of campus services: Canvas, cPanel, Exchange, and Zoom to name a few. Her team also includes software development, quality assurance, and accessibility experts. Janet has worked in the telecommunications and IT industry for over thirty years - the last fifteen of which have been at Illinois. When not working, Janet enjoys exploring new places and new food with her husband and son, a high school senior. She also enjoys spending cuddle time with Roscoe, the family dog.



LEXIE KESLER

OUTREACH SPECIALIST
lkesler@illinois.edu

As Beckman's outreach specialist, Lexie Kesler plans and implements community outreach programs and events for Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology. She serves as a liaison among researchers, faculty, students, and the surrounding community. She received her degree in elementary education from Webster University in St. Louis. Prior to this role, Lexie taught fourth grade at Next Generation School in Champaign. She has experience at both rural and urban, public and private elementary school settings. Originally from Champaign, she enjoys the unique atmosphere of the area. Her hobbies include running and spending time with her family. Lexie lives with her husband, their two young daughters, and Labrador Retriever, Milo.

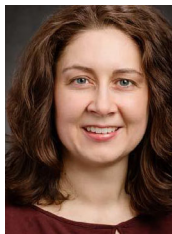


MARIA MCMULLEN

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF PARKING
mmcmull2@illinois.edu

Maria began working at the University of Illinois in 2016 as a Customer Service Representative for the Parking Department. She is now the Assistant Director and leads the external operations of the unit. In 2020, Maria earned her master's degree from Eastern Illinois University and in 2021 she became a Certified Administrator of Public Parking. Maria was born and raised in Champaign-Urbana. She enjoys spending time with her family, especially her two kids.

PARTICIPANTS



JENNIFER MCNEILLY

DIRECTOR, MATH MERIT PROGRAM
jrmcneil@illinois.edu

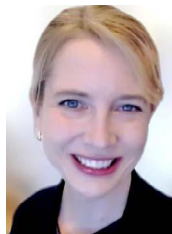
Since 2002, Dr. Jennifer McNeilly has been the Director of the Merit Program in the Department of Mathematics which serves approximately 500 students each year. In this role she oversees all aspects of program management, including recruitment of students, recruitment and training of teaching assistants, and program evaluation. She is also a faculty advisor in the department, primarily advising math majors seeking the Secondary Education Minor. She is a three-time alumna of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, a native of Champaign, and began working for UIUC full time in 2001. She has two sons – one is a college sophomore, and one is a high school senior – and she enjoys spending time with friends/family, reading and yoga.



ALISA (KRISTY) MECUM

TELECOMMUNICATOR SUPERVISOR
mecumak@illinois.edu

Kristy is a Telecommunicator Supervisor with the University Police Department. She worked there for 16 years as a Telecommunicator prior to promotion. Kristy grew up in Champaign and attended Parkland College where she earned a degree in Science and a degree in Veterinary Technology. She is close to her family, which contains 2 older brothers, a twin sister, and her parents. Kristy has 2 dogs and a cat, all 3 special needs. Her favorite activities is hiking, enjoying the outdoors and spending time with friends and family.



EMELIE MIES

TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT SPECIALIST
emies@illinois.edu

Emelie Mies works directly with faculty at the intersection of instructional technology and pedagogy, helping them find innovative ways to improve student success. At Illinois, she co-chairs CITL's curriculum committee and has taught in the Departments of Communication and Agricultural and Biological Engineering, where she received the J. Kent Mitchell Teaching Excellence Award and was recognized by the Office of Minority Student Affairs as "faculty that was instrumental in academic success." A systems thinker, Emelie specializes in exploring connections between seemingly disparate entities.

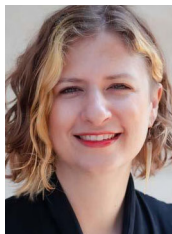


ALLISON (AL) PAYNE

MANAGER OF TECH SUPPORT & TRAINING
acpayne@illinois.edu

Allison (Al) Payne is a Central Illinois native who started working at the U of I in 2005. She has been an IT professional in the community since 2008 and currently manages the Help Desk team and technology training efforts for the Gies College of Business. Outside of work, she and her husband play board games with friends, take day trips to local public parks and nature preserves, and watch a lot of sci-fi TV and movies; she also participates in the NaNoWriMo writing challenge every November. Though currently in between pets, Al loves all creatures with fur, scales, and feathers, and enjoys any time pets 'help' during Zoom calls.

PARTICIPANTS



AMY L. POWELL

CURATOR OF MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART
alpowell@illinois.edu

Amy L. Powell has been curator of modern and contemporary art at Krannert Art Museum at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign since 2014. She centers collaborative research with artists and scholars by leveraging campus resources to contextualize and envision the next stages of artists' work. Her research has been supported by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Institute for Research in the Humanities at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she earned a Ph.D. in art history in 2012. Formerly a curator at the University of Houston, Amy misses life in a city but thrives in the abundance of intellectual community at Illinois.



CAROLYN RANDOLPH-KATO

VISITING ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF ARTS IMPACT ASSESSMENT
crandol2@illinois.edu

Carolyn Randolph-Kato is Visiting Associate Director of Arts Impact Initiative in the College of Fine and Applied Arts at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. In this role, she oversees administrative-level operations and strategic directions in support of applied research efforts that foster understanding of the role of art and artists in social well-being and community development to guide arts practice and policy. Prior to taking on this role, Carolyn led the Training in Digital Methods for Humanists faculty development program in the Humanities Research Institute. Randolph-Kato earned a Ph.D. in Communications and Media Studies from the Institute of Communications Research at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.



SUSANN SEARS

DIRECTOR, BECKWITH RESIDENTIAL SUPPORT SERVICES
sheft@illinois.edu

Susann Sears is the Director of Beckwith Residential Support Services (BRSS) and the Assistant Director of Academic Services with the Division of Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES), the service unit of the College of Applied Health Sciences (AHS). She has served as a higher education disability services administrator in a variety of capacities, and has presented at the local, regional, state, and national levels. She recently completed her PhD in Community Health with a Rehabilitation Studies emphasis, while managing family life and working full time in the pandemic. She enjoys sewing, family time with her husband and son, and traveling.



LESLIE SHERMAN

SENIOR DATA SYSTEMS DEVELOPER
leslies@illinois.edu

Leslie Sherman is a Senior Data Systems Developer with IT Partners at Education and the Council on Teacher Education. For over 20 years she has enjoyed creating usable web applications that empower users to better access their data and improve their work processes. Currently, she creates web applications and data reporting tools to support students and staff across all licensure programs. She pursues her passion for inclusivity through her activities as the chair of the Technology Accessibility Review Committee, an IT Accessibility Liaison, and a member of the IT Accessibility Liaison Advisory Committee. Leslie likes to travel, explore the outdoors, and volunteer with the League of Women Voters and the Urbana School District.

PARTICIPANTS



MARISSA SIERO

DIRECTOR OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING
siero@illinois.edu

Marissa Siero is a dedicated and passionate advocate for small businesses, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Proudly serving the Gies College of Business Magelli Office of Experiential Learning as the Director of Experiential Learning she facilitates the nation's largest experiential learning programming. An experienced entrepreneur, Marissa is an instructor of entrepreneurship for the Technology Entrepreneur Center at the Grainger College of Engineering and teaches entrepreneurship for Veterans at the Chez Veteran Center. In 2013 she was recognized as the Central Illinois Business Magazine Woman of the Year. Marissa is a mom of two little boys Hudson & Peter and proud firewife to her husband Adam.



MELISSA WHITT

INTERIM MANAGER FOR INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES
whitt@illinois.edu

Melissa Whitt has spent the last 8 years working for Engineering IT. Currently, she is the Interim Manager for Instructional Services where she provides guidance and leadership to the instructional labs and eLearning teams. Prior to taking on this position, she was as an eLearning Specialist delivering help to instructors for lecture capture recordings, Learning Management Systems, as well as a variety of other applications and technologies related to instructional and classroom support. Melissa lives in Champaign with her family of four plus one dog. Outside of work, Melissa enjoys going to CU Women's Boxing and watching her kids participate in a variety of activities.



HEATHER WRIGHT

INTERIM ASSOCIATE DEAN OF STUDENT AFFAIRS
heatherw@illinois.edu

Heather Wright (she/her) currently serves at the Interim Associate Dean of Student Affairs at the Carle Illinois College of Medicine. Heather was raised in a rural community two hours west of Champaign (Farmington, IL). Her research centers on the experiences of Native American students who go into medicine, including those from her own tribe (Turtle Mountain Chippewa). In her free time she enjoys spending time with her family, gardening, listening to music, and spending time outdoors. She is particularly proud of her 17 month-old daughter, Piper.



HELEN ZHOU

ELECTRONIC ACCESS SPECIALIST
xhzhou@illinois.edu

Helen Zhou has been with the University Library for over fifteen years. Currently she works at the Library IT as an Electronic Access Specialist. In this position, she develops the web presence of the Library, provides IT consultation and support, and serves as an IT Accessibility Liason. She has a Master's degree in Library and Information Science from the University of Missouri-Columbia. Previously she worked at the University of Toronto Library as the East Asian Information Services Librarian and Gift & Exchange Coordinator. Outside of work, Helen enjoys outdoor and indoor swimming with her son, experimenting with vegan cooking, and listening to BBC and NPR podcasts.

PARTICIPANTS



JENNA ZIEMAN

BUDGET AND FINANCE MANAGER

zieman@illinois.edu

Jenna Zieman has been working in research administration and budget and business management positions in higher education for over a decade. She started her professional journey at Northwestern University in 2008 and then moved to UIUC in 2013 to work for the Sea Grant program housed in Extension. She joined the staff at the Humanities Research Institute (HRI) in April, 2017, where she happily remains. Jenna grew up in the Chicago-area and has a BS in Psychology from UIUC and an MSW and MSI from the University of Michigan. She enjoys spending her free time with her husband, Ben, 3-year old son, Teddy, and their small pack of high-maintenance dogs and one bossy cat.

For more information contact

Medra Roberts-Southerland
Associate Director for Diversity Initiatives

Office of the Vice Chancellor for
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

mrs@illinois.edu | 217-300-1484

Photography/Images

Storyblock.com, UIUC image base

Design

Lorraine Graham



UNIVERSITY OF
ILLINOIS
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN