

# Professional Staff Leadership Academy

## Class of 2026

### Chicago



**Regina L. Davis, MPP, HACP**, is a healthcare administrator with over 20 years of experience in operational management, financial oversight, and human resource development. Currently, she serves as a Business Administrative Associate at UI Health, where she focuses on enhancing organizational efficiency and improving patient safety through strategic financial management and effective team leadership.

Regina's professional journey has involved managing financial operations, overseeing budgets, and implementing workflows that optimize patient experience and revenue capture. Her foundational experience as a Medical Office Specialist has given her invaluable skills in front desk operations and insurance claims processing, providing a comprehensive understanding of healthcare practice management.

Outside of Regina's professional endeavors, she is passionate about mentoring high school students. She believes in the importance of guiding the next generation toward successful futures and actively volunteers in her community to foster educational and personal growth.

Regina also loves to travel, as it allows her to explore diverse cultures and perspectives, enriching her understanding of global healthcare practices. In her downtime, Regina enjoys reading and painting, finding joy and inspiration in literature and the arts.

She holds a Master of Arts in Public Policy with a Healthcare Administration certification and is currently pursuing a Master of Science in Legal Studies. As a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE), Regina is committed to advancing health equity and improving healthcare delivery systems. Her blend of professional expertise, community involvement, and personal passion reflects her dedication to making a positive impact both in and out of the healthcare field.



**Sharrone Davis** has been working as a physical therapist at UI Health since 2002. She serves as a coordinator of clinical education for the Physical Therapy Program and is proud to help support the hospital's teaching mission through the robust therapy student internship program. In addition to her clinical responsibilities, Ms. Davis has made significant contributions to the academic Physical Therapy curriculum through guest lecturing and active participation in the Foundations of Interprofessional Collaborative Practice Program. Her multifaceted role allows her to deliver high-quality patient care while also supporting departmental operations through quality improvement initiatives and administrative leadership. Recent initiatives include collaborating on the development of a scheduling matrix to enhance quality patient care, leading efforts to modernize outpatient therapy documentation systems, and expanding electronic access for patient scheduling and registration.

She leads her department in patient experience and employee engagement initiatives and assisted in planning the hospital's Patient Experience Week. Additionally, Sharrone is an active member of the UI Health Committee for Anti-Racism and Equity, reflecting her commitment to inclusive, equitable healthcare delivery and organizational excellence.

Sharrone received a Bachelor's in Science and a Bachelor's in Language Arts at the University of Michigan and obtained her Doctor of Physical Therapy Degree from Northwestern University.



**Jessica Eisenbeis** is the Associate Director of Online Programs and Student Advising at the University of Illinois Chicago's UIC Online office. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Psychology and Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from Michigan State University. Jessica maintains an active professional license with the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) body.

Jessica has leveraged her counseling background and excelled in many student-facing roles in the decade she has worked for UIC. In 2014, she started at the UIC School of Continuing Studies, now UIC Online, as an entry level associate director, Jessica was promoted several times over her career, each time using her institutional knowledge, professional connections, and earned respect within UIC to grow each new role to more than it was intended to be. Jessica currently leads the student advising team bridging support and services across academic advising, admissions, and program operations. She works with her team to develop and implement strategic retention initiatives and targeted communications to improve student enrollment and retention outcomes. Jessica's compassion and emotional intelligence are routinely recognized by her "at a distance learning" students in their online course reviews. She is a 4-time winner of the Staff Award of Excellence awarded by the College of Nursing.

In addition to student advising, Jessica oversees the application, management, and enrollment of UIC Online's Continuing Education Program and its courses; solely managing over 700 enrollments in fiscal year 2025. Given her experience with many university systems, Jessica has taken the lead in implementing various technology upgrades for UIC Online including Slate improvements, Banner access and use, Web Intelligence reporting, and most recently Zoom phone integrations.



**Stu Robinson** is the Associate Director of Academic Services and Faculty Affairs for the Division of Community Health Sciences (CHS) in the UIC School of Public Health. The student-facing portion of his role includes oversight for student advising, directing the student admission process, and leading the divisional event schedule. He supports division leadership in organizing faculty activities, aiding in curricular planning and course schedule development, interpreting policy, and advancing strategic initiatives.

Stu has been at UIC for fifteen years, spending seven years in undergraduate advising for the Department of Psychology in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences prior to his transition to CHS. He has served UIC at the university level as a member of the Academic Professional Advisory Committee, a member of the UIC Senate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, and as a panelist for judicial hearings through Office of the Dean of Students. He has been active in several higher education professional organizations, including presenting at conferences and serving as a reviewer for conference presentations. Stu also served on the Executive Board for the Illinois Academic Advising Association for five years.

He holds a Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration and a Graduate Certificate in Community College Leadership from Eastern Michigan University, and a Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics from the University of Michigan. He taught mathematics at the secondary and post-secondary levels for six years prior to moving into higher education administration.

Outside of UIC, Stu enjoys spending time with his wonderful wife and two amazing daughters, cooking, listening to podcasts, and pretending he has time to keep up with sports and popular media.



**Sierra Ryan, Ph.D.**, is the Director of the Council on Teacher Education at the University of Illinois Chicago. In this role, she provides campus-wide leadership for over 30 programs that lead to the professional licensure of educators. She serves as a liaison between UIC and the Illinois State Board of Education and works collaboratively with the deans of the College of Education, Liberal Arts and Sciences, the College of Art, Architecture and Design, the College of Nursing, and the Jane Addams College of Social Work to ensure state and federal program compliance.

Dr. Ryan has served in multiple roles within the Council on Teacher Education. She began as a Graduate Assistant and later served as Student Teaching Placement Coordinator and Assistant Director before being appointed Director in 2023. She is deeply committed to supporting high-quality educator preparation at UIC.

Dr. Ryan holds a B.S. in Psychology from the University of Evansville, an M.Ed. in Measurement, Evaluation, Statistics, and Assessment from UIC, and a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from UIC.

In her free time, Dr. Ryan enjoys hiking, traveling, baking cookies, and spending time with her family.



**Janaya L. Shaw, Ed.D.** is the Director of TRIO and the Interim Director of the African American Academic Network at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Dr. Shaw joined the UIC community in December 2018, after teaching for seven years at Chicago Public Schools and eight years at other Illinois institutions of higher education.

Dr. Shaw's approach to education is rooted in equity, access, and student-centered support. In her current capacity at UIC, she oversees two units committed to expanding educational opportunities and fostering student success. Dr. Shaw has worked at UIC for seven years across a variety of units, including TRIO, the Math and Science Learning Center, the Engaged Humanities Initiative, and the African American Academic Network. During her tenure at UIC, Dr. Shaw has received funding from the SAC Professional Development Program and has presented at the Annual National Humanities Alliance Meeting.

Dr. Shaw was born and raised in Chicago, IL. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in English Education and a Master of Science in Reading Specialist from Western Illinois University, a Master of Arts in Educational Administration from St. Xavier University, and a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership from Chicago State University.

Dr. Shaw is also an active member of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., an organization dedicated to uplifting communities through sisterhood, scholarship, and service. Over her 25 years of membership, she has served in multiple leadership positions and on numerous committees at the local, regional, and international levels. In recognition of her service, Dr. Shaw earned Life Member status after 10 years of service and Ruby Member status after 22 years of service.



**Tim Sullivan** was recently appointed as the Executive Director of Specialty Graduate Programs at the University of Illinois College of Medicine, where he oversees the administrative operations of two distinct graduate programs. He has been with UIC for more than 15 years and has held a range of leadership roles across both the College of Medicine and the College of Dentistry.

Throughout his tenure, Tim has led numerous high-impact initiatives, including serving as editor of the College of Dentistry's accreditation self-study and spearheading the implementation of the College's ExamSoft testing platform. He has also held several college- and campus-level leadership roles, including serving as current Treasurer of APAC, a member of the ITGC Education Committee, and

former Chair of the UIC ExamSoft Committee.

Tim holds an M.Ed. in Education Leadership and Instructional Design from UIC and looks forward to this amazing opportunity as part of PSLA to strengthen and expand his skillset in strategic leadership and operational excellence.

## *Springfield*



**Patty Meyer** currently serves as the Facility Director of Operations at the University of Illinois Springfield, (UIS) within Facilities and Services. She began her career in February of 2021 as the Superintendent of Building Services and was promoted July 10, 2022. Throughout Patty's tenure, she's had the privilege of supporting the university in various capacities, including managing parking, transportation, custodial services, and now the union trade employees.

During Patty's employment at UIS, she has collaborated closely with colleagues across departments to improve services, enhance operational efficiency, and achieve positive outcomes for the campus community. She consistently seeks opportunities to contribute to the university's mission and to make a meaningful impact on students, staff, and faculty. She views her role at UIS as both a privilege and an opportunity to serve alongside a dedicated Facilities team, fostering continued growth, ensuring regulatory compliance, and delivering effective, high-quality services across campus.

Looking ahead, Patty envisions UIS as a thriving hub for innovation, inclusion, and academic excellence. The university's expansion of research initiatives, new programs of study, and strengthened partnerships with local industries are creating enhanced career pathways for students. As a UIS alumna with a master's degree and a current doctoral student, UIS has played a pivotal role in her educational and professional growth. She hopes to extend that impact by supporting others as they pursue their own achievements and long-term success.

Outside of work, Patty enjoys spending time with her family, outdoor adventures and attending her grandchildren's sporting events.



**Marie Watson** serves as the Director of Student Life at the University of Illinois Springfield, where she leads initiatives that foster engagement, experiential leadership growth, and holistic student development that empower students to thrive throughout their college journey. Marie is passionate about creating meaningful connections with students and supporting their success both inside and outside the classroom.

Marie earned her B.A. in Political Science and M.A. in Higher Education Administration from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. She values collaboration, authenticity, and continuous growth—principles that guide her leadership approach. Marie believes perfection is not an expectation; rather, learning from the decisions we make each day, both big and small, is essential.

She looks forward to continuing her own professional development through the PSLA program, gaining new insights and strategies to advance impact within student affairs and create transformative experiences for students.



**Jamie Weber** has dedicated more than eleven years to serving the University of Illinois, building a career rooted in service, continuous improvement, and a genuine commitment to making work easier—and more enjoyable—for those around her. She currently serves as Senior Business Manager for Library Administration at the University of Illinois Springfield, supporting the dean, financial operations, HR processes, strategic planning, and library operations.

Jamie approaches challenges with optimism and a knack for simplifying complex processes. When a major staffing transition left the library's administrative team short-staffed, she stepped into a leadership role with minimal instruction, maximum determination, and a questionable amount of caffeine. Her efforts produced streamlined workflows, clearer documentation, stronger systems, cost savings, and two promotions that reflect her commitment to service and continual growth. She has earned Employee of the Year and the Chancellor's Award Recognizing Excellence (CARE), demonstrating her impact and dedication.

Her dedication extends beyond her job description. Jamie is deeply engaged in systemwide service—representing UIS and the System on advisory groups, chairing committees, supporting fundraising, and mentoring colleagues. She values strong relationships, transparent processes, shared learning, and fostering an environment where people feel supported to do their best work.

She is committed to deepening her systemwide knowledge, strengthening her ability to serve others, and growing as a leader grounded in integrity, professionalism, and humor. She strives to help build environments where people feel empowered, informed, and genuinely supported (and maybe crack a smile at a business meeting during budget season).

## System Offices



**Stacey Ballmes** is Associate Director of the Business and Finance Policy Office, a University of Illinois System unit. She leads system-wide business and finance policy governance and has initiated a project to procure a consolidated policy database that will ultimately be used for all System Office units. Stacey coordinates pre-publication briefings for business managers, manages signature authorization delegations for senior leadership, co-presents the Business & Finance Orientation for new employees, and co-organizes the annual Business & Finance Symposium across all three universities.

Previously, Stacey served as Senior Assistant Director in the University Contract Records Office (UCRO), where she led a major contract upload initiative to manually upload 4,901 contracts into the electronic contract management system in just over three months. As Assistant Director in the Contract Services Office, she managed a team of three, executing an average of 1,500 contracts annually for UIUC, UIS, and System office units. While in this role, Stacey developed style guides and job aids, delivered contracts training, and tested contract system upgrades. At the College of Law, Stacey served as the Managing Editor of the *Comparative Labor Law & Policy Journal*; coordinated and provided on-site management for international conferences in Canada, France, Germany, and Greece; and supported faculty recruitment.

Stacey holds a Master's Degree in Library and Information Science and a Bachelor of Arts in English & American Literature with a minor in Linguistics, both from the University of Illinois. In her spare time, Stacey enjoys spending time with family and friends, reading, and crafting.



**Kathryn (Kat) Mathews** serves as Coordinator of Asset Management and Administrative Support within Administrative IT Services (AITS) for the University of Illinois System. She has over 15 years' experience in project management, process improvement, and administrative operations, with a strong focus on asset and facilities management across the Chicago, Urbana, and Springfield campuses. Her systemwide perspective is further strengthened by seven years of prior experience at the University of Illinois Chicago, where she played a key role in supporting IT leadership, operational initiatives, and cross-functional projects.

In her current role, Kat leads efforts to enhance asset tracking and inventory processes, coordinates facilities and space renovation projects, and identifies opportunities for increased efficiency and cost savings through improved organization and documentation. She is known for her collaborative approach, ability to manage complex timelines, and commitment to guiding projects from planning through successful implementation.

Beyond her professional role, Kat is committed to community engagement and service. She volunteers with the CU One-to-One Mentoring Program, St. Jude Runs, is an active member of the Executive Club of Champaign County and has served on boards for local nonprofit organizations. Her involvement reflects her belief that leadership extends beyond the workplace and is rooted in building meaningful connections and positively contributing to her community.

Outside of work, Kat enjoys running Ragnar relays and half marathons, crafting, volunteering, traveling, and spending time with her corgi, Leela, who is always ready for their next adventure.



**Athanazia Varner** serves as the Assistant Director of Cashier Operations for University Bursar at the University of Illinois. In this role, she manages 235 Cash Handling Units across the system, overseeing cash handling operations that process over \$200 million annually.

Since joining University Bursar in 2018, Athanazia has advanced through progressive leadership roles within University Bursar, leading efforts to modernize processes and improve service delivery.

Athanazia holds a Bachelor of Science in Liberal Arts & Sciences in Psychology from the University of Illinois and is completing her Master of Education in

Education Policy, Organization, and Leadership in Higher Education in Spring 2026. She was inducted into Phi Kappa Phi and completed the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) Emerging Leaders Program. She is also a Certified Business Administrator and a Certified Customer Service Professional.

## *Urbana-Champaign*



**Jamar Brown** is a facilities leader and longtime University of Illinois professional with nearly twenty years of service dedicated to supporting learning, research, and institutional excellence. He currently serves as Facilities Operation Coordinator for the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, where he oversees facilities operations, capital and renovation projects, and departmental safety initiatives. Working closely with faculty, staff, and Facilities and Services, Jamar helps ensure that academic spaces remain safe, functional, and responsive to the evolving needs of teaching and research,

particularly during critical periods of the academic year.

Jamar began his career with the University in 2006 as a Building Service Worker and has advanced through multiple roles, gaining a deep, ground-level understanding of how physical spaces and operational systems impact people's ability to do their best work. He approaches leadership as a responsibility rooted in service, collaboration, and trust, with a strong focus on creating environments where students and faculty can thrive without barriers.

Beyond campus, Jamar has served in public service and community leadership roles, including as a Champaign City Council Member and as Vice President of the Champaign Unit 4 School Board. Across all of his work, he is guided by a commitment to equity, collaboration, and building spaces and systems that serve people well.

In his free time, Jamar is a competitive powerlifter, an avid aquarium keeper who maintains a dedicated fish room, and a proud husband.



**Rosalind Garcia-Tosi** is the Chief of Staff at Carle Illinois College of Medicine. She serves as an advisor to the dean and leadership and leads a variety of strategic, executive, administrative, and operational activities across the college. She provides organizational assessments and recommendations and manages the development and implementation of initiatives to advance strategic priorities and to optimize integrated operations and communications in the college. She is on a team overseeing the college's organizational culture, leads the college's staff awards program, and co-leads the college's Well-Being Committee.

Dr. Garcia-Tosi earned a doctorate degree from Tulane University's School of Public Health in Health Systems Management. She also holds Master of Social Work and Master of Public Health degrees in Administration, Management, and Policy from the University of Michigan. She has expertise in operations, fiscal management, strategic planning, program evaluation, staff management, maternal and child health, community outreach and education, and translational research.



**Kara Haley** is the Associate Director for Research at The Grainger College of Engineering at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). In this role, she contributes to the Illinois research enterprise across all departments and institutes in The Grainger College of Engineering. She supports faculty teams in developing compelling large-scale multidisciplinary proposals, strategizes funding opportunities, assists with research-related events in the College, helps manage activities for newly funded centers and institutes, and oversees the Office of the Associate Dean for Research Project Management Team.

With over 20 years of professional experience in academia, she has been serving the research administration and research development communities at UIUC since 2015.

Her current role, as well as her previous work at the Beckman Institute of Advanced Science and Technology [2018-2022], and the School of Chemical Sciences [2015-2018] has provided her with a deep knowledge base that touches all aspects of research in a university setting. Additionally, prior to her time at UIUC, Kara spent the previous decade teaching mathematics. Throughout the course of her career, Kara has held strongly to Albert Einstein's quote, "In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity," and she has continually earned the trust of colleagues and peers in all she does.

Kara earned her Bachelor of Science in Education from Millikin University, and as one that is passionate about learning, she is always pursuing ways to expand her knowledge and understanding of those around her. This passion extends outside of work, where she enjoys spending time with her husband and four children, cooking, gardening, and supporting her community.



**Dan Harmon** serves as the Director of Data and Systems for Sponsored Programs Administration (SPA) at the University of Illinois, where he leads strategic initiatives that enhance research administration through data-driven decision-making and innovative technology solutions. With two decades of service to the University of Illinois, Dan has built a distinguished career advancing operational excellence, modernizing enterprise systems, and strengthening the university's research infrastructure.

A recognized national thought leader in the application of artificial intelligence within research administration, Dan contributes regularly to national working groups, panels, and communities of practice focused on responsible AI adoption. Their efforts center on developing practical frameworks and tools that elevate efficiency, compliance, and service across the research lifecycle.

Dan holds an MBA from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, which supports his integrative approach to leadership, change management, and organizational strategy. Dedicated to fostering collaborative, future-focused teams, Dan is committed to advancing the university's mission by empowering others and championing continuous innovation.



**Stephanie Tumidajski Hess, Ph.D.** is the Director of the Division of Research Safety (DRS), a unit within the OVCRI, and is responsible for the implementation and oversight of comprehensive safety programs in the areas of chemical, biological, and radiation safety, as well as regulated waste management and DEA controlled substance compliance for the university. Hess joined DRS in 2013 as a chemical safety professional after completing her Ph.D. in organic chemistry at MIT. In 2016, she was promoted to Assistant Director and Chemical Hygiene Officer, where she led the comprehensive laboratory audit program, chemical safety programs, and efforts to develop online safety training for campus. Since joining DRS, Hess has been an advocate for partnership and collaboration with faculty students, and staff to support research and innovation across the university. In 2025 she helped launch the [campus safety campaign](#) to showcase how everyone plays a role in safety in Illinois.

Hess received bachelor's degrees in both chemistry and chemical education from Purdue University in 2008. Working in higher education has allowed her to fulfill her passion for education, solving complex problems, and supporting the university mission she values. She leads her team of professionals to consistently recognize the impact of their work and how their contributions are critical to the success of the university. In her free time, she cherishes being the mother of her two daughters, enjoys making maple syrup, and is always on the lookout for great seafood in the Midwest.



**Jason Mock** is the Assistant Dean of Teaching & Learning and Chief Learning Innovation Officer at the Gies College of Business at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. In these roles, he leads Gies' Teaching & Learning unit, a multidisciplinary organization embedded within the College and dedicated to supporting faculty, academic leaders, and learners across online, hybrid, and residential programs.

Jason is a two-time Illinois alumnus with degrees in physics and education and has spent 25 years working in learning and development across corporate, government, and higher education contexts, including the past 17 years at the University of Illinois. His career at Illinois previously included roles within Global Campus, the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, and the Center for Innovation in Teaching & Learning (CITL), giving him a strong foundation of relationships and a deep understanding of teaching and learning work across units, colleges, and all three University of Illinois campuses.

In addition to his college-level leadership, Jason has served on numerous campus committees focused on online education, learning infrastructure, and institutional policy, where he represents the Gies College of Business and helps shape university-wide practices. His work increasingly includes advising and mentoring emerging leaders within Gies, across campus, and at peer institutions, reflecting a sustained interest in developing people and building effective, scalable systems.

Through participation in the Provost's Strategic Leadership Academy, Jason looks forward to broadening his system-level perspective, strengthening cross-campus partnerships, and continuing to grow as a leader in service of the University of Illinois.



**Kostas Yfantis** is Director of Operations at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's Center for Innovation in Teaching & Learning (CITL). In this role, he provides strategic and operational leadership across CITL's core administrative, technological, and instructional support functions. He leads a diverse portfolio of teams with a people-centered leadership philosophy that emphasizes clarity, accountability, and collaboration. Central to his work is creating environments in which staff are supported, empowered, and able to grow as professionals while advancing the center's mission.

Prior to joining CITL, Kostas worked for more than a decade with CITES (now Technology Services) and ten years with the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences' ATLAS unit. Across these roles, he supported teaching, learning, and enterprise services while developing deep expertise in organizational change, service delivery, and cross-unit collaboration within complex institutional environments.

Kostas has a longstanding commitment to service and shared governance at both the campus and system levels. He has contributed through leadership and membership roles in the Academic Senate, the Council of Academic Professionals (CAP), and the University Professional Personnel Advisory Committee (UPPAC), as well as participation in senior leadership searches.

Central to his leadership approach is an ongoing emphasis on professional development, fostering environments where continuous learning and staff growth are integral to organizational success.

He holds a Bachelor's degree in Communication and an MBA from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.