

## 2018 DELTA Recipient

Individual Academic Professional Award



### Jan Dennis

Jan Dennis is an Assistant Director in the Office for University Relations.

Jan serves as the primary writer for University Relations, creating speeches, presentations, news releases, mass mailings, letters, comments, and background briefings for President Killeen and other system

administrators. Jan is, quite simply, a powerhouse of prose.

He has captured the voice and style of our president, meticulously creating remarks and turning complicated concepts into clear messages. He is trusted to capture powerful thoughts and feelings, often during times of high stress and immediate deadlines. He provides calm, effective feedback during the decision-making process, and he is methodical and accurate, while being nimble and adaptable. He asks the right questions to get at the true meaning of a concept.

In a typical month, Jan will create more than 20 sets of speeches and remarks for multiple events, write multiple news releases, create a dozen letters, and make sure President Killeen has accurate briefing backgrounds for all events. The president is the face and voice of the U of I System and Jan is the wordsmith and message maker working with the ideas, vision, and words of the president to communicate widely to varied audiences.

Going above and beyond is the natural state for Jan. A set of remarks that takes minutes to deliver can require hours of research and writing. Jan is a true collaborator and team player, producing excellent work that advances the Strategic Framework and the goals and values of the University of Illinois System.

He is also admired within the office for his goodwill, humor, and excellent judgment that he has inspired a unique hashtag used to track his works and ideas: #belikejan. We do indeed wish we could all be like Jan.

## 2018 DELTA Recipient

Individual Civil Service Award



### Graciela Peña

Graciela “Gracie” Peña is a Senior Human Resources Coordinator in the System Human Resource Services (System HR) office.

Gracie currently serves as the lead for System HR for the Chicago system offices. She is responsible for talent management, HR processing, new employee orientation, and

employee relations, as well as oversight of a staff member that is responsible for appointment processing for all three universities.

Gracie has an extremely high volume of work that falls on her shoulders. Because of the level of service Gracie provides, clients have commented that they feel like they are the only unit Gracie assists. In reality, Gracie handles multiple HR functions and departments and her search load can vary anywhere between 15 – 21 searches in which she is handling independently. With the amount of involvement she has with searches, it is extremely difficult to give each client individual attention, but Gracie manages this with ease.

Clients consistently praise Gracie for the speed at which their searches are conducted and the quality of candidates that are produced. One of her Chicago clients commented, “Her regular communication and flexibility was instrumental in helping our search committee go through what otherwise might be a complicated/timely process, and due to her efforts, we were ultimately successful in finding and hiring the ideal candidate for this position.”

Gracie is professional and responsive and does whatever it takes to get the job done; she is very conscientious in researching options and verifying accuracy and compliance for her clients. Gracie is a very hard worker and truly embodies the spirit of the individual DELTA award.

## 2018 DELTA Recipient

### Project Team Award



### University Payroll & Benefits Call Center Project

The University Payroll and Benefits (UPB) Call Center Project Team set out to research, design and implement a phone solution for UPB. The project goal was to implement a single unified customer service solution that could support phone agents in Urbana, Chicago and Springfield locations.

The Team consisted of eight members, representing three different units and all three Universities. The project kicked off in 2014 and focused on two key areas:

- To research and implement a robust phone solution to improve the quality of the customer experience.
- Prepare the organization for the next steps of identifying their service levels to meet customer expectations.

Focus groups and survey results identified twenty-nine desired features and functions for the contact center solution. Based on the results, project team members researched several options including premise-based systems and cloud-based systems. These options were attractive; however, the cost for the University to incur was beyond budget and timeline. After reaching out to the various Information Technology Units, we learned of a new system Technology Services was offering called TouchPoint.

The project saved the University several thousands of dollars by collaborating with another department and implementing a system that the University had already paid for. The solution provides a unified, efficient process for the internal UPB agents, as well as tools for reporting.

Customer responses are quicker which results in fewer abandoned calls and employees are able to get the right subject matter expert for their questions. With an organization that oversees processing of payroll and benefits at all three universities, having a phone system that can meet the needs of employees, customers and staff alike is a big advantage in today's world.