



# UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS SYSTEM

## Professional Staff Leadership Academy

Class of 2021

### *Urbana-Champaign*



**Margaret Browne Hunt, Ph.D.**, serves as the Assistant Director for Strategic Research Initiatives and Chief Diversity Officer at the Cancer Center at Illinois (CCIL). She has been with the CCIL since its inception and plays a vital role in the development and execution of CCIL activities. Her proven administrative and facilitative skills have enabled the integration of vision, decision making, and resource allocation. She provides support to the center's strategic research activities, partnerships, and special projects by building collaborative research networks. She has aided in the assessment and development of numerous research and strategic thematic areas. She works with institutional stakeholders – both internal and external – to determine infrastructure needs and implements processes to promote those collaborations. She leads the administration of the CCIL's strategic planning process, the development and execution of all new programs, and engagement opportunities with clinical partners.

Margaret has held many administrative and leadership positions. Additionally, she has served on several campus-level initiatives including the Provost Initiative – Big 10 Academic Alliance (BTAA) Health Equity Initiative and the Chancellor's Call to Action to Address Racism and Social Injustice – Diversity and Culture of Inclusion Committee. With over a decade of experience in diversity, equity, inclusion, and access research and training, Margaret is a co-principal investigator of the Racial Microaggression interdisciplinary research project. Her master's and doctoral degrees are from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Educational Organization and Leadership program.



**Kara Johnson** is the Associate Director for Administration at the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology. In this role Kara acts as a member of the executive leadership team, is the chief financial officer, and oversees all the administrative functions for the Institute which include human resources, business affairs and financial reporting, facilities and operations, information technology services, and the cafe. Kara has worked at the University of Illinois for 16 years and has been with the Beckman Institute in various roles since 2008.

Kara earned a Bachelor of Science in Accounting from Southern Illinois University and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Illinois. She serves on the board of directors for the United Way of Champaign County and Girls Go For It and is a University of Illinois Leadership Center coach. In addition, Kara serves on several campus and community committees. Kara was part of the Central Illinois Business Magazine's Forty under 40 class of 2020.



**Julia Nucci Kelly** is the Assistant Director for Marketing and Communications at Krannert Art Museum (KAM) at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She earned her BA from the University of New Hampshire and her MA from the University of Michigan. She has managed marketing and communications for the museum since 2014.

In her role at KAM and also as a board member of the Champaign County Museums Network, Nucci Kelly has partnered with museums and regional cultural institutions, the Champaign and Urbana Arts Councils, and state and local visitors' bureaus to position the museum and Champaign-Urbana area as a statewide and regional arts destination. She believes in the power of the arts to promote wellness and shape healthy communities, both for faculty and students on campus and for the public at large through KAM's public engagement initiatives.

In 2017, she guided a full redesign of KAM's branding, print marketing, and website (in a project that also made the museums art collections accessible online). Most recently, she has prepared KAM to navigate the pivot necessitated by COVID-19, building virtual exhibitions, events, and experiences for museum audiences who may not otherwise be able to attend the museum in person.



**Moises Orozco Villicaña, Ph.D.**, is the Director of Enrollment Management for the School of Information Sciences (iSchool) at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. In his leadership capacity at the iSchool, Dr. Orozco Villicana provides oversight for recruitment and admissions operations, managing numerous strategies and programs to attract the most talented and diverse students across all degree programs offered at the iSchool.

Over the past ten years, he has successfully held progressively responsible administrative roles in both student and academic affairs. He is an accomplished administrator who welcomes the opportunity to provide prospective students with the information and resources they need to successfully navigate the college application process. His work also demonstrates a deep passion and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Dr. Orozco Villicana has also served in numerous leadership roles at regional and national associations. For the past two years, he has been an active member of the National Association for Graduate Enrollment Management (NAGAP). He has been part of state and regional conference planning committees. He has recently been elected as the treasurer for the Midwest Association for Graduate Admissions Professionals (MAGPA) and previously served as the technology resources chair. In 2020, he received the NAGAP Future Leader Award given to an individual who has exhibited exceptional leadership qualities in the association. Currently, he is pursuing a certificate in leadership in enrollment management from the University of Southern California.

Outside of work and professional commitments, Moises treasures spending time with his two boys, daughter, and wife.



**James Quisenberry** is the Director of Student Affairs Technology on the Urbana campus of the University of Illinois. Student Affairs at Illinois includes a wide array of Student Service and Auxiliary units. Prior to taking this role, Mr. Quisenberry managed the IT organization at University Housing for over nine years. Mr. Quisenberry participates in campus IT governance committees representing Student Affairs and has recently been engaged in various aspects of the campus COVID response and the SHIELD CU initiative. He is active in several professional organizations including EDUCAUSE, NASPA, ACUHO-I, and the Big Ten Housing Officers IT Group. He will be the national chair of NASPA's Technology Knowledge Community for 2021-

2023.

Prior to returning to the University of Illinois, James worked at Pearson where he managed various IT teams for curriculum and student information systems in the secondary education market. He worked extensively with NovaNET, a U of I developed online education system derived from the PLATO project. His career began with the U of I as a system and network software developer for NovaNET.

Mr. Quisenberry has a BA and MS in Computer Science from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. He is a graduate of the Big Ten Academic Alliance IT Leaders Program and one of the founders of the IT Leadership Workshop at held on the Urbana campus.



**Brian Rogers** is the Senior Associate Director of Proposals in Sponsored Programs Administration (SPA). The SPA proposal team oversees submissions for external funding requests on the Urbana-Campaign campus. Brian assisted with the transition to a new transactional database, Quali Research, in 2016 and the rollout of the electronic proposal intake tool, myProposals, in 2018. He is a frequent presenter in the SPaRC'Ed certification program and serves as the operational lead for multiple, electronic initiatives, including the department's SharePoint site, intake forms built on FormBuilder, and the multi-campus tool, myResearch Portal. Brian is a Certified Research Administrator (CRA).

Brian began his Research Administration career as a Proposal Analyst at the University of Colorado Boulder. In addition to his primary duties of proposal development and submission, he was one of the leaders in the institution's transition to a new transactional database named InfoEd.

Brian received his Bachelor of Science in industrial engineering at Iowa State University (ISU). While at ISU, he was on the varsity swim team and earned the honors of All-American Honorable Mention, Academic All-American, and still holds three team records. After graduation, Brian attended the University of Iowa and received his Master of Business Administration and Juris Doctor degrees.



**Jen-chien Yu** is the Director of Library Assessment at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Jen joined the University Library in 2012 as the first Coordinator of Library Assessment and was promoted to the director level in 2018. She coordinates library assessment programs and works closely with faculty and staff across the Library, and around the Urbana-Champaign campus, to design and implement assessment activities that support data-informed decision making related to library services, collections, technology, and facilities. Before joining the Urbana-Champaign campus, she was the Electronic Information Services Librarian/Data Specialist and Assessment Librarian at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio (2001-2012).

In addition to her work at the University Library, Jen actively contributes to university-wide assessment and data science initiatives such as the Council for Learning Outcomes Assessment (C-LOA) and the University's Data Summit Planning Committee. Jen is a co-facilitator of the Big Ten Academic Alliance Library Assessment professional group. Jen's career goal is to lead transformative change informed by data and evidence that can strengthen the organization, the people within it, and the communities we serve. She also has a deep personal and professional commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, which has been a key principle guiding her career.

Jen received her B.A. in library and information science from Tamkang University (Taiwan), a MLIS from University of Pittsburgh, and a Master of Computer Science in Data Science (MCS-DS) from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

## *Springfield*



**Melisa Hatch** has worked in Human Resources since starting with the University of Illinois Springfield in 2014. In that relatively short period of time, she has served in numerous roles and quickly ascended to her current position as Classification and Compensation Manager for UIS. She oversees a team who administers all Civil Service testing and job audits for the University. Her team also determines classification and maintains job descriptions for all Staff positions. Melisa is responsible for establishing salary ranges and assuring compliance with Minimum Wage law and the Fair Labor Standards Act. She works closely with campus departments as well as having an active

role on many UI System-wide committees tasked with developing and implementing human resource policies, procedures, and services.

Melisa has led successful campaigns to educate and train UIS employees on emerging issues and policy changes related to human resources. She has been recognized across campus as bringing understanding and a spirit of collaboration to an area that must enforce compliance with federal, state, and University rules and regulations. She is dedicated to finding an innovative and creative approach to human resources and has worked to modernize and streamline services provided to the campus community.

Prior to coming to UIS, Melisa raised three children while working part-time in several business and finance roles. Melisa has a Bachelor of Science in Business degree awarded from Eastern Illinois University. In her spare time, she enjoys traveling and spending time with her husband and adult children.



**Rhyann Morris** is an Assistant to the Dean in the College of Education and Human Services for the University of Illinois at Springfield. In this role, she provides leadership with staff, faculty and administrators on contractual agreements with instructors, course scheduling, faculty and staff development, new program development, and personnel processes.

Prior to this, Rhyann worked in the Office of Records and Registration as the campus resource for all catalog-related matters and upon successfully coordinating and leading campus-wide training sessions leading up to the Banner 9 upgrade, she began managing all training-related activities for the various student systems (Banner Document Management (BDM), Degree Audit System, and Banner systems).

Rhyann is a 2003 UIS alum and enjoys mentoring students, spending time with her family, gardening, and listening to local live music.

## *Chicago*



**Loretta Foote Casey, M.P.P.**, is Associate Dean for Administration in the College of Education and oversees fiscal affairs, personnel and space/facilities management and a staff of five; she has served the college for more than fifteen years. Casey received her undergraduate degree in Political Science at UIC and her Master of Public Policy degree at the University of Chicago.

Casey has worked at UIC for twenty-six years, has worked on several campus committees and spent several years in the Office of Budgeting and Program Analysis in the Provost's Office and also in the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs. She is an active volunteer at her children's school, located on the South Side of Chicago.



**Dr. Lunaire Ford, Ph.D.**, currently serves as the Assistant Dean for Diversity and Recruitment in the Graduate College at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He oversees a wide range of programs and services designed to recruit, retain, and graduate underrepresented minority graduate students. In this role Lunaire works closely with administrators, faculty, and staff to ensure success. In addition to his work with graduate students, Lunaire spent many years directing undergraduate research and graduate school preparation programs for college students. During that time, he held several positions including: Program Coordinator, Assistant Director, Associate Director, and Director.

Lunaire led the Graduate College's Diversity Strategic Planning Committee. He continues to engage graduate alumni to return to campus to support current graduate students through the Fellows Mentoring Initiative. In addition, Lunaire helped to secure funding for the PASSAGE Scholars Program—a doctoral transitions experience designed to increase the success of minority Ph.D. students in the STEM disciplines. For the past

five years, he secured the most IBHE-sponsored Diversifying Higher Education Faculty in Illinois Fellowships in the state.

Lunaire has served on several committees including: The Preparing Future Faculty in Illinois Conference, African American Staff Recruitment and Retention Committee, Chancellor's Committee on the Status of Blacks, Diversity Chairpersons Committee, and the Urban Health Program Management Team.

Lunaire holds a B. A. in Economics from the University of Illinois at Chicago, a M.S. Ed. in Adult and Continuing Education from Northern Illinois University, and a Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration from Loyola University Chicago.



**Viviana Kabbabe-Thompson** is the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs within the College of Applied Health Sciences (AHS) at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). She began working at UIC over a decade ago as an academic advisor where she developed a summer bridge experience for incoming freshmen. With a track record of graduation rates higher than the UIC average, the program remains in existence today.

In 2012, Viviana transitioned to become the director for the AHS learning resource center called the Academic Support and Achievement Program (ASAP). Viviana partnered with faculty and expanded ASAP's services of tutoring and academic-related workshops. She identified a need for career development among health science students and extended ASAP's mission to include career related activities. In 2018, Viviana developed a curriculum on career readiness and teaches each spring. She has partnered across campus to broaden pre-health students' perspectives on health fields.

Viviana still oversees ASAP, but in her recent promotion as Assistant Dean, she focuses on advising coordination efforts to support retention and graduation. One of these efforts is an intrusive campaign where students at risk of 'stopout' are called after peak enrollment. The yield of the students from this outreach in summer of 2019 was 40% and this last summer of 2020 was 65%.

In 2020, her book chapter, "Creating Motivational Learning Climates," was released in the High Impact Teaching for Sport and Exercise Psychology Educators, which highlights many of the philosophies she incorporates in her trainings to student staff and AHS departments.



**Joseph Kearney** currently serves as Assistant Dean for Strategic Initiatives at UIC John Marshall Law School. In this role, he carries out discrete and mission-critical projects at the request of the Dean and helps to coordinate the law school's responses to accreditors, regulatory agencies, and reputational publications. He also serves as Interim Director of Safety & Security, helping to protect UIC John Marshall students, faculty, staff, and facilities 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

Before these roles, Joe served as Director of Special Projects for The John Marshall Law School (JMLS). In that capacity, he worked for two years across all departments at the Law School, and many departments at UIC, to help facilitate the acquisition of the Law School by the University Illinois System in August 2019.

In addition to being a graduate of JMLS and a licensed attorney in Illinois, Joe holds an M.S. in Public Services Management from DePaul University, and a B.S. in Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences from the

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He has served as Associate Director of Career Services at JMLS; Staff Attorney for the Illinois Appellate Court; Program Manager at DePaul University's Chaddick Institute, along with other roles. He has taught graduate and undergraduate courses at DePaul and Loyola universities. Joe has chaired the UIC Senate External Relations and Public Service Committee since 2019 and has served on several not-for-profit and public boards. He lives in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood with his wife, Annie.



**Dale Rush** is the Associate Dean for Administrative Affairs for the UIC College of Pharmacy. As the chief financial officer, he provides leadership and oversight for all administrative functions including financial management, human resources, and space planning and serves as the HIPAA Privacy Officer for the College. As a member of the College's senior leadership team, he has worked collaboratively with his colleagues on numerous initiatives which include monitoring and assessing the College's strategic plan, partnering with the UI Hospital and other clinical partners to improve its clinical financial infrastructure, establishing an employee orientation for new faculty and staff, and developing strategic metrics to measure resource productivity and entrepreneurial growth opportunities. He has served as chair of the

UIC Information Technology Leadership Council's Administrative Applications Committee and chaired the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy's Administrative and Financial Officers Special Interest Group.

Prior to working in the College of Pharmacy, Dale has served in several roles at UIC including Assistant Director of the UIC's Budget and Financial Analysis office and as a program analyst for the College of Medicine. Prior to working at UIC, Dale was the Community Service Coordinator for a small private college and worked for the federal government. His professional interests include institutional data management and team-based leadership while his personal hobbies include scuba diving.

Dale Rush earned his M.S. in Higher Education Administration from Iowa State University and a Master's in Public Administration (MPA) from the University of Illinois at Chicago.



**Charese A. Smith** is a Chicago Native, alumna of UIC, and dedicated employee of UIC for the past 18 years. She has served the College of Nursing for the last 10 years, currently as the Assistant Director for the Urban Health Program. During her tenure, Charese has kept cultural diversity education as a focal point for the entire College. She has extended herself and expanded her role as she has helped many students grow in their leadership and professional development within the College and greater UIC Chicago community.

Charese also serves as the Staff Advisor to Urban Health Program College of Nursing Student Association (UCONSA); providing direction and opportunities for students to help fulfill the College's and University's mission. She has received several community awards and certificates of appreciation, including from the Chicago Hispanic Coalition, UIC Health Oriented Latino Association, the National Black Nurses Association, and several Chicago Public Schools.

Charese considers her work great achievements in diversity, and has led and organized lectures, panels, and workshops that have earned her the inaugural Julie and Mark Zerwic Diversity Award, which recognizes staff and faculty for their work around equity and inclusion. She has a heart for the world and has served in several

countries including Haiti, Ghana, Chad, Kenya, and several cities in India. She seeks to be a bridge builder and advocate for those who ordinarily have no voice.

Outside of work, Charese enjoys serving God, her family, and friends. She loves learning new languages and trying different cuisines.



**Uma Sriram** began her University career in 2001 when she joined Campus Auxiliary Services as the Assistant Director of Finance. There under the tutelage of amazing supervisors, she received her first understanding of the student experience at a University and the broader mission of not just educating the students but also providing housing, dining and recreation for them. Seven years later, Uma joined University Accounting and Financial Reporting (UAFR) under the umbrella of the Office of Business and Financial Services (OBFS). Being part of the Accounting Consulting group, her work with the various departments across all campuses helped cement her knowledge of the various University colleges/departments and system offices that foster instruction, research, student services, auxiliaries, public service, governing, and legal functions.

After another seven years at UAFR, Uma joined the College of Medicine, Rockford to get more exposure to healthcare management. She has been working as the Director of Business and Finance for the last five years. In her current position, she oversees all of the accounting, purchasing, finance and business operations for the campus with a staff of five people. She also functions as the revenue cycle manager for the clinical operations with a staff of three.

Over the past five years, Uma has been involved with the finances of the both the academic as well as clinical side of College of Medicine. It has been rewarding for her to get a much deeper understanding of the academic side of the college while trying to balance the finances of the campus with tuition/fee dollars and clinical revenues.

Uma and her husband have a son and daughter who are both married and settled. Recently they became grandparents to their beautiful granddaughter Leela.



**Nancy Tartt** began her tenure at the University of Illinois at Chicago in 2000. She currently holds the position of Associate Director of Operations in the department of the Office of Community Engagement and Neighborhood Health Partnerships (OCEAN-HP), which is under the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Health Affairs. Through community engagement efforts, she collaboratively works toward fostering partnerships which brings together the expertise, resources and wisdom of the community, with that of the university.

Nancy serves on various internal committees such as the Anti-Racism Urgent Action Committee and the Strikeforce which is committed to providing organized support, resources and dynamic relationships to community partners to dismantle health inequities and racial injustices. Nancy experience includes directorship of multiple programs over twenty-five years. She hails from New York City and has lived in various US cities and internationally as well. Her goals as a member of the 2021 Professional Staff Leadership Academy (PSLA) is to further strengthen her leadership acumen by becoming more knowledgeable of all aspects and functions of the University system, to foster collaboration with other



internal leaders and to increase opportunities for OCEAN-HP to further align and contribute to the University strategic priorities which are to embrace community engagement, create opportunities to inform policy and provide quality care no matter of socio-economic or racial status.

## *System Offices*



**John M. Laroe** is the Assistant Controller of the University Accounting Services division within University Accounting and Financial Reporting (UAFR). UAFR is a system-wide service center that supports the accounting and financial reporting needs of all locations within the University of Illinois System. John leads 24 professional accounting staff in providing a variety of back-office operations and customer service to the University community, such as guiding units on complex accounting issues, developing system-wide policies, procedures, and training materials on a variety of accounting topics, and monitoring compliance with numerous regulatory requirements and externally imposed restrictions.

John has developed and improved numerous accounting processes which have enhanced the accuracy and efficiency of the System's accounting and financial reporting. John has also researched and documented extensive amounts of theoretical, procedural, and historical accounting guidelines to ensure accurate and uniform application of accounting standards to complex accounting scenarios.

John graduated with honors from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1999 with a BS in Accountancy and worked as a student employee in a variety of University positions. After working in public accounting upon graduation, John rejoined the University community in 2001 as an Enterprise-Wide Auditor for the Office of University Audits and subsequently joined UAFR in 2004.

John is a Certified Public Accountant, Certified Internal Auditor, Certified Business Administrator, and two-time finalist for the Distinguished Employee and Leadership Team Award.

In his free time, John enjoys adventures with his wife Megan and their two dogs, traveling, reading, and playing his guitars.



**Renee Nagy** is an Associate Director within Planning and Budgeting. Her responsibilities include conducting analytical studies such as the Discipline Unit Cost Study to analyze the costs for instruction, organized research, and public service activities. She also prepares and analyzes historical expenditure information for the Resource Allocation Management Program (RAMP) that is published within the "IBHE Report on Public University Revenues and Expenditures."

Prior to joining Planning and Budgeting, Renee served the Division of Management Information (DMI), where her primary role was to plan and implement a software system conversion project for the Office of International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS). Renee also previously served as head of the Facilities Information Department at Facilities and Services, where she led a team to transform the engineering "drafting room" into a facilities-related information center, hired key staff, and implemented new technology including the adoption of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) within the organization.

Renee has also conducted research and published geologic maps at the Illinois State Geological Survey and served as an engineer at several environmental consulting firms prior to joining the University.

She earned a B.S. in Geological Engineering from Missouri University of Science and Technology and a M.S. in Environmental Engineering in Civil Engineering from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.



**Ben Taylor** currently serves the University of Illinois System as Assistant Director for Economic Development and Innovation, where he develops and executes strategic initiatives for the Vice President for Economic Development and Innovation (VPEDI) office. He manages a comprehensive, strategic communications plan that tells the story of the System's innovation pipeline and economic development efforts. Ben also serves as the office's liaison between Illinois-based corporate, government, community, and university stakeholders to enhance connections, drive economic development and foster entrepreneurship.

Ben also is the marketing and communications lead for SHIELD Illinois, a unit dedicated to deploying the U of I's innovative saliva-based COVID-19 test throughout the state. In this role, he handles all media requests about SHIELD Illinois, develops marketing and communications materials, and provides regular updates to System and campus leaders.

Previously, Ben worked in the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's College of Applied Health Sciences, where he executed digital and social media strategies that advanced the college's reputation and recruitment efforts. Before that, he developed and executed marketing strategies for the graduate and online programs in Urbana's College of Engineering.

Prior to that role, Ben coordinated publicity for a number of Fighting Illini teams. He worked with the 2008 Rose Bowl football team, the 2013 NCAA runner-up men's golf team and the 2011 baseball squad that reached the NCAA Tournament, among others. Ben is an alumnus of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, with a bachelor's degree in journalism and a master's degree in recreation, sports and tourism.