

## Professional Staff Leadership Academy Class of 2022

### *Urbana-Champaign*



**Aaron Darnall** is the Assistant Head for Administration in the Department of Computer Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He has been at the University for 13 years and has spent the last 10 years in Computer Science where his primary role is to serve as the Chief Financial Officer managing an \$80 million portfolio of state, gift, and research dollars. He also serves as Chief of Staff to the Head overseeing an exceptional team of human resources, business operations, sponsored programs, and facility operations staff who support the daily operations of the Thomas M. Siebel Center for Computer Science.

Aaron holds a Master of Business Administration and is a Certified Financial Research Administrator. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with his family, hiking, and traveling.



**Rian K. Jones** is the Assistant Director of Facilities Operations for the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics. In his role, Rian manages and coordinates the usage and maintenance of athletic facilities for practices, outside community events, and NCAA sporting events with Memorial Stadium being the largest venue. He also helps oversee the facility budget, equipment purchases and yearly training. Since his start in 2008 he has been a part of multiple facility renovations and additions with Smith Football Center and Demirjian Park being the most recent to date. Rian has also worked closely with outside community events that are held yearly such as, Illinois Marathon, Freedom Celebration, and IHSA football championships. In addition to his role, he also serves on DIA's Mission Statement Committee, Illini Executive Academy and did a 6-month voluntary internship with the I FUND.

One of Rian's most notable and memorable contributions was overseeing athletic facilities at Huff Hall for Illinois Volleyball as they hosted the NCAA Regional Sweet 16 in 2018 and advanced to the Final Four.

Rian has a bachelor's degree from Eastern Illinois University in Mass Communications. He also earned two master's degrees from Southern New Hampshire University in 2013 and 2019 with concentrations in Sport Management and Operations/Project Management. Rian also has ties with the community, as he is a Champaign native and has coached youth recreational sports through the years with basketball being his favorite sport to coach.



**Chris Lehmann** serves as the Research Integrity Officer within the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research & Innovation at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. In this role, he supports research integrity and addresses allegations of research misconduct for the Urbana-Champaign campus. He coordinates campus-level Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) education, which supports federally mandated research ethics training. He is a frequent presenter for the SPaRC'Ed certification program.

Chris is also a Clinical Professor of Civil & Environmental Engineering and a Research Affiliate with the Illinois State Water Survey in the Prairie Research Institute where he worked from 2002 – 2020, most recently as laboratory director.

His expertise is in air pollution, drinking water testing, and laboratory quality management. He serves on several international scientific working groups for the World Meteorological Organization's Global Atmospheric Watch (WMO-GAW) and the NSF-supported National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON).

Chris currently serves as the coordinator for the Big Ten Academic Alliance - Responsible Conduct of Research (BTAA-RCR) Collaborative. This group includes RCR educators from Big Ten peer institutions and seeks to foster ethical research environments through information sharing on best practices for robust research. Chris received his BS in Civil Engineering from Valparaiso University, and his MS and PhD in Civil & Environmental Engineering from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.



**Don Marrow** has been at the university since 2007 and has served in various roles in research and business administration. From 2007 to 2020, he was at Civil and Environmental Engineering and was the Newmark Structural Engineering Laboratory Manager. While at Civil Engineering, he was responsible for the management of one of the largest structural engineering research laboratories in the country.

Presently, Don is the Assistant Director of Business and Operations at University of Illinois Laboratory School. He is responsible for all finance, operations, and facilities management activities. He manages the business office and facilities operations for three separate buildings. During his time, he has been instrumental in the development of new student programs and multiple renovation projects. He enjoys working with his staff and helping to develop them into leaders within the school.

Don has a passion for organizational leadership and serves on many non-profit boards in his community. He is the President of the Vermilion Heritage Foundation, which oversees operations of the historic Fisher Theatre in Downtown Danville. He is also the Treasurer and former President of the Danville Symphony Orchestra Board of Directors. He enjoys giving back by sharing his knowledge and abilities through serving and volunteering in local non-profits.

Don earned his Bachelor of Business Administration from the University of Illinois Springfield and an MBA from Southern Illinois University. Don enjoys spending time with his family, traveling, playing golf, and spending time outdoors.



**Suzana Palaska** is an Associate Director in the Office for International Programs, College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences (ACES) where she has served in progressive professional roles over the last ten years. In this capacity, Suzana leads the management of strategic global partnerships and specialized, capacity strengthening training programs. To her current position, she brings a wide-range of expertise, which includes international student advising, international education program design and administration, international faculty engagement facilitation and nurturing of key bi-lateral and multi-lateral institutional partnerships. As a natural extension of these functions, she is also a liaison to government-led and private sector funding agencies, NGOs, and research-based organizations.

Additionally, she serves as a Managing Director of the International Food Security at Illinois (IFSI) and is deeply involved with several other global initiatives spearheaded by the college. Throughout her tenure at ACES, she chaired and was a member of many committees, including the College Strategic Planning, Government Relations, and several professional award selection and hiring committees. Currently she leads the strategic partnerships section on the campus-level, advisory group to the Vice Provost for International Affairs and Global Strategies, and is an active representative of District 5 on the Council of Academic Professionals (CAP).

Suzana holds an undergraduate degree in Government-International Relations and an MA in African Studies, and Women and Gender in Global Perspectives from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.



**Gillian Snyder, Ph.D.**, is the Senior Director for Research and Core Development at the Interdisciplinary Health Sciences Institute (IHSI). As a member of the leadership team, Gillian's primary role is to apply her research expertise to implement the vision and strategic direction of the IHSI. Gillian develops and directs the IHSI research cores, including REDCap, Research Development, and Health Equity. In addition to selected special projects, she also engages with various research groups across campus to provide programming to educate researchers about best practices in health sciences research; offers consultative support in using resources, services, and applications germane to research; and address challenges in conducting research. Gillian participates in several campus committees and has been closely involved in various aspects of the campus COVID-19 response. She is an active member of NORDP (National

Organization of Research Development Professionals) and recently completed the 2021 NORDP Leadership Forum.

Gillian has a BA in psychology as well as a MS in Neuroscience. Prior to her move to Illinois in 2009, Gillian completed her Ph.D. in cognitive neuroscience at Trinity College Dublin, Ireland. She has worked at the University of Illinois since 2011 and has been with the IHSI in various roles since 2015.

Gillian is a dedicated leader, with responsibility and impact both within the IHSI and beyond. As one of the founding members of the Research Development Community, Gillian has applied her notable leadership skills to help coalesce and strengthen the research staff network at Illinois.



**Kamil Tamimie** is the Assistant Director for Training, Outreach, and Data Management for the Sponsored Programs Administration (SPA) office at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. SPA plays a critical role within the University of Illinois, supporting the research enterprise throughout the entire lifecycle of an externally sponsored project, from proposal submission to award closeout, as well as providing guidance and capacity development to faculty and staff engaged in research across all colleges, departments, and units. SPA sits within the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation within the University of Illinois.

Kamil has been involved with SPA for the last thirteen years and is responsible for leadership and direction of the Sponsored Programs and Research Compliance (SPaRC) program. SPaRC provides the university research community with a platform to exchange and disseminate information related to the sponsored research portfolio and process. This includes SPaRC'Ed, a certification series that provides research administrators with the knowledge and skills necessary to administer sponsored programs and research activities; the SPaRC Quarterly Meetings, which regularly engage faculty, staff, and other stakeholders to discuss critical new innovations and processes; and the annual SPaRC Retreat, a full-day event for research administrators to learn about exciting new research underway across the campus community, new initiatives, and other topics related to research administration.

Kamil holds a Master of Education degree in Human Resource Development and a Bachelor of Science degree in Community Health from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

## *Springfield*



**Bryan Rives** is the Director of UIS Performing Arts Services, a unit which manages the UIS Performing Arts Center, UIS Ticket Office, UIS Performing Arts Education Connections Program, and the FRIENDS of UIS Performing Arts Center membership program.

Bryan's expertise is in elevating performing arts venues to their next level of success with experience in both university-owned venues and private not-for-profit facilities. His work has resulted in increases in ticket sales and fiscal growth/stability for numerous venues in the Midwest. At UIS, Bryan rebranded his unit from being known simply as "Sangamon Auditorium" to the more encompassing "UIS Performing Arts Services." He simultaneously rebranded the 2,000-seat Sangamon Auditorium into the "UIS Performing Arts Center" which now includes the 124-seat UIS Studio Theatre, which he

had renovated in 2019, the 187-seat Brookens Auditorium, and a variety of former UIS Conference Services conference rooms.

He joined UIS in 2017 and has held similar leadership positions at Indiana University, Southern Illinois University, and at The Whiting in Flint, Michigan. Bryan was also previously the Chief Operating Officer for the Detroit Opera House & Michigan Opera Theatre. He has traveled extensively as the Company Manager for several national touring productions and was even an onboard Production Manager for Celebrity Cruises.



# UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS SYSTEM

Bryan holds a Master of Arts in Business/Arts Administration from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theatre Production from the University of Texas at Austin. Fun fact: Bryan has never desired to be a performer or in a show.



**Justin J. Rose** holds a Master's degree in Public Administration from the University of Illinois Springfield. Working in Student Affairs, at the University of Illinois Springfield (UIS), Rose serves as the Director of Diversity and Inclusion for the campus. He is known as a researcher, educator and consultant in areas of Higher Education that most often deal with: Multicultural and Diversity Affairs, Men of Color/African American Male Matriculation, Student-Success for First-Generation College Students, Living-Learning Communities, Student-Development, Organizational Leadership, Persistence and Retention, and Greek Life, just to name a few. He has currently authored a textbook for African American males offering a road map to academic success and holistic development. Justin J. Rose is the Co-Founder/Creator of the Black Male Collegiate Society (BMCS) at the University of

Illinois Springfield. This organization falls under the Men of Color Initiative (MOCI), formerly known as the Black Male Initiative (BMI). In addition, central to his duties/responsibilities is adjunct instruction for a first-generation mentoring program (Necessary Steps Mentoring Program), housed on the UIS campus. Currently, Rose is in progress of obtaining a doctoral degree (Ed.D), in Higher Education, at the University of Illinois Champaign Urbana (UIUC).

As an active community member/activist back at home in Chicago, and currently in Springfield, Rose has been recognized by many organizations for his commitment to service. Rose is a proud member of Alpha Phi Alpha, Fraternity, Inc. and holds numerous affiliations/membership in organizations of distinction that feed his interest and hobbies.

## *Chicago*



**Jennifer Bordy** is the Director of Library Human Resources for the UIC University Library. She joined UIC in 2013. In her current role, Jen leads a human resources program that supports the strategic goals of the library. She provides expertise and oversight for all Library HR functions, including recruitment, HR operations, employee and labor relations, professional development and leave of absence management. Jen was instrumental in developing and implementing the UIC Library's intense yearlong DEI program. She leads subsequent task forces to create an inclusive culture and diversify the profession of librarianship, including a recruitment task force to review and improve the recruiting process to attract a more diverse applicant pool.

Prior to joining UIC, Jen worked in human resources and benefits positions at the University of Chicago and the Merrill Lynch Retirement Group. She received a B.S. Finance from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and an MBA from the University of Illinois Chicago.



**Ebony Brooks** is the Assistant Director of Operations, Accounting and Finance for the University of Illinois Chicago, Division of Specialized Care for Children (DSCC). As manager of the division's \$35 million annual budget, Ebony's responsibilities include spearheading the business operations, accounting, and financial analytics associated with over 300 division employees. She also conducts ongoing compliance monitoring activities in coordination with DSCC's business and accounting policies and other compliance and operational assessment functions. In addition, Ebony leads a team dedicated to a statewide Medicaid Managed Care (MCO) unit on behalf of the Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS).

Ebony brings to this position a well-established background in financial reporting, data analysis, budgeting configuration and management, and cost analysis, amongst other finance-related services. She has accumulated over 15 years of work experience in progressive finance roles. In addition to 10 years of service with the University of Illinois Chicago, she has worked at Loyola University and the University of Chicago.

Ebony holds a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics and Accounting from Illinois State University, and a Master of Science in Accounting and Master of Business Administration from Governors State University. Her favorite pastime activities include experimental cooking, beach travel excursions, and listening to live music.



**Elizabeth Hawes** is the Director of Administrative Operations for the University of Illinois at Chicago's Center for Clinical and Translational Science (CCTS), serving as the chief administrative and financial officer and a senior leader for one of UIC's largest research grants and complex multidisciplinary centers. During her 13 years in CCTS, she has focused on ensuring researchers have access to the resources needed to conduct responsible, ethical and reproducible research, including expert consultants and collaborators available to foster team science and usher discoveries beyond the bench and into communities.

Within this role, she fosters collaborations across colleges and disciplines to develop and implement programs to advance translational research, development of a diverse, engaged research community and enhance the research environment at UIC. Through the CTSA's national network, Liz builds connections that have resulted in innovative initiatives and opportunities for national partnerships. She is a strong advocate for diversity and inclusivity within the research community, with a strong commitment to promoting an environment that provides professional and personal advancement opportunities across the UIC community and beyond.

Liz started her career at UIC in 2003, serving in several roles in the Department of Otolaryngology, Department of Family Medicine and Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at UIC's College of Medicine, prior to joining the CCTS. A proud alumnus, she holds a Bachelor's degree of Science and Master's of Business Administration from UIC. Born and raised in Chicago, Liz now resides in the southern suburbs with her husband and three children.



**Gerardo Jimenez** is the Director of Operations (Business Admin/Associate) for the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Affairs and Academic Programs where he is the lead HR and fiscal officer and an integral part of the Vice Provost's Management Team. In this role, he works collaboratively with all directors from the 15 student success units and academic program offices to help increase student success on campus. During his 16-year career at UIC, Gerardo worked as a Program Coordinator in the Liautaud Graduate School of Business, Assistant to the Department Head of English, and Director of Resources Management and Planning in the Honors College.

A native Chicagoan, Gerardo is a double alum from the College of Business at UIC. During his MBA studies, he participated in the Doing Business in Brazil program in São Paulo at Fundação Getulio Vargas, a program that offered first-hand, international business experience that covered the current state of Brazilian and South American business environments. Gerardo has been an active member of the alumni community having served on the Business Alumni Association Board from 2012-2015, where he helped plan events as part of the "How Chicago Works" series and the "Alumni Advisory Forum." As a member of the Chancellor's Committee on the Status of Latinos, Gerardo has organized professional development workshops for UIC employees and currently sits on the Staff Advisory Council and the Alumni Employee Task Force.



**Antoniah Lewis-Reese** is a project manager, change agent, and strategic advisor currently applying her talents as the Senior Director for Strategic Initiatives at the UIC School of Public Health. She holds a Master's in Business Administration from Roosevelt University and has nearly 20 years of professional experience in strategic management, process improvement, and enhancing organizational effectiveness.

Over the course of her career, she has both facilitated and led programs and projects aimed at improving enterprise efficiency, transparency, engagement, and communication across the disciplines of medicine, nursing, and, for the last 13 years, public health. Her formal training and development in project management, process improvement, design thinking, facilitation, and change management underpin her experiences and unique professional trajectory.

In her current role, she works across cross-functional teams to optimize institutional engagement in and execution of planning and change initiatives. In collaboration with internal and external stakeholders, she has successfully led strategic planning, institutional research, evaluation, and compliance efforts.

In her spare time, she enjoys reading, traveling, advocating for social, emotional, and environmental justice, and advising small business owners in change management and marketing strategy.



**Santhi Nannapaneni** is the Director of Student Affairs for the Computer Science department at the University of Illinois Chicago. She has worked for the Computer Science department for over 20 years with progressively increasing responsibility as Program Coordinator to the Director of Student Affairs. During this period, the student population has increased from a little under 400 to nearly 2,000 and she went from being a lone staff member to overseeing its current team of eight.

Santhi is in charge of providing day-to-day leadership including management and direction with respect to policies, practices and operations. She provides input into the development of the department strategic and operational plans and ensures that her team achieves the department's student engagement, enrollment, retention, recruitment and graduation goals set by the Department Head and the Directors of Graduate and Undergraduate Studies.

Santhi was directly involved in the advocacy and creation of the academic advising team for Computer Science, a first in the College of Engineering. She is in charge of oversight, assessment and implementation of academic advising initiatives and programs. The team of two has grown to five within a span of 24 months with great success and satisfaction among the students.

Santhi earned a Bachelor of Science in Engineering and MBA from University of Illinois at Chicago. She serves on department and campus committees and volunteers as a tutor. She is a passionate and fierce advocate for the students and her staff.



**Aaron Rosenthal** is the Senior Associate Director of Contract Management for UIC Purchasing and Contract Management. In this role, he leads a high-functioning, compliant contracts team in drafting, negotiating, and executing a high volume of expenditure, revenue generating, no fund, and "hybrid" contracts while delivering excellent customer service to UIC stakeholders. As a member of UIC Purchasing and Contract Management's senior leadership team, he also assists the Executive Director on a wide range of complex procurement and contract issues. Recently, he managed the successful merger of the Contract Services Office-UIC with UIC Purchasing to form the new combined Contracts unit under UIC Purchasing and Contract Management. He previously received the Delta Employee Leadership and Team Award (DELTA) for leading a cross-functional team to move UIC towards greater utilization of the iBuy requisition

system.

In his 10+ years at UIC, Aaron has driven many process improvements to the procure-to-pay cycle, including development of contract templates, the Risk Management Insurance Matrix, the TEM Allowable Payment List, and a contract monitoring policy. Aaron has also led UIC deployment activities for various contract management systems, including the Illinois Contract System (iCS), and he is currently managing UIC's rollout of Contracts+.



Aaron is a licensed attorney in Illinois and a Certified Professional Public Buyer (CPPB). He holds a B.S. in Finance from University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and a J.D. from Chicago-Kent College of Law. Outside of work, Aaron enjoys live music and spending time with his three daughters and wife.

## *System Offices*



**Margaret Chambers** is Director of Membership and Communications at the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI). A unit of the Executive Vice President/Vice President for Academic Affairs, CARLI works with all Illinois public universities and community colleges, and 65+ Illinois private colleges to acquire, develop, and support academic library resources at scale.

Margaret received her Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Iowa. Her professional career is rooted in team-based support for education through textbook production, academic publishing, and support for Illinois academic and research libraries. She is a member of the grant-funded Illinois SCOERs team (Support for Creation of Open Educational Resources) that will develop open textbooks and personalized learning tools for entry-level courses in high-demand health care and human development career paths.

She currently leads CARLI's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force in the development of the Building Diversity Assistantship. This new program, slated to begin in fall 2022, will provide two graduate assistantships to students from underrepresented groups who are enrolled at the University of Illinois School of Information Sciences providing hands-on experience, mentoring, and networking at participating CARLI libraries.

Outside of work, Margaret enjoys attending local art and music festivals, reading mystery novels, and any activity she can do in or next to a pool, lake, or ocean.



**Melissa Haas** is a native of Illinois and a proud alumna of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Melissa joined the University of Illinois System's Office of Governmental Relations in May 2013 after working on Capitol Hill for three years. As congressional staff within the House of Representatives, Melissa managed a large constituent mail operation for an Illinois delegation member and ultimately advised them on a variety of legislative issues important to the U of I, including higher education, agriculture, and immigration.

Melissa first joined the University of Illinois System's federal team as a Federal Relations Specialist, and has since served in several roles, including Assistant Director of Federal Relations, Acting Director of Federal Relations for two years, and now in her current post as Associate Director of Federal Relations. Melissa spent her first three years working out of OGR's D.C. office and was active as a member of the Illinois in Washington Advisory Board and the

Illinois State Society Board. She has been based out of OGR's office in Chicago since spring 2016. The federal team works closely with Congress, federal agencies, the White House, and higher education associations and advocacy groups to represent, and advocate for the interests of, the U of I System.

Melissa is also a part-time student at the University of Illinois Springfield working on a Master of Public Administration.



**Erin E. Herrick** is the Director of AR Operations, Billing Services, Student Loans and Collections within University Bursar. University Bursar is a system-wide service center that supports the billing and payment needs of all locations within the University of Illinois System. In this role, she provides leadership and oversight for a variety of core business operations such as Application of Payments, Student Refunds, Student Holds, State Offset, Account Write-offs, 1098-T, Collection's activities and Student, General and Sponsor Billing. Erin serves as a member of the department's leadership team, working collaboratively with her colleagues on various initiatives to improve the student billing and payment experience and developing strategic metrics to measure productivity and growth opportunities.

Erin earned her BS in Statistics from University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and a Master's in Management Information Systems from University of Illinois Chicago.

Erin is also a Certified Business Administrator, Certified Customer Service Professional, Certified Professional Collection Manager and Certified Collection Industry Professional. In her free time, Erin enjoys reading, cooking and spending time with her family.



**Svetlana Sowers, PhD, MBA**, is the Assistant Director for Strategic Initiatives and Senior Technology Manager at the Office of Technology Management (OTM), where she is responsible for broadening the impact of research and facilitating transfer of innovations from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign for societal benefits. In her current role, she is responsible for marketing, protecting and licensing portfolios of software, data, and copyright technologies. Throughout her tenure at OTM, Svetlana has sought to help grow the University's reach and entrepreneurial ecosystem in a range of ways. She has co-organized the University's Share the Vision event and the statewide Illinois Ignite program in partnership with large research universities in Illinois, showcasing entrepreneurial faculty and startups to investors and companies. Svetlana has mentored and judged various University innovation competition events and serves on several University working groups.

Prior to joining the University 10 years ago, Svetlana spent 15 years in private industry at Yahoo!, Motorola, and a startup company, where she managed teams of engineers and was responsible for development and completion of various software and hardware related products.



# UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS SYSTEM

She is an active member of Association of University Technology Managers (AUTM) professional organization where she presented on various licensing topics and has served as a member of the AUTM Annual Planning committee. As a member of the AUTM Software Course committee, she co-created various software and data related courses.

Svetlana earned MS and PhD degrees in Electrical Engineering from the University of Maryland at College Park, and MBA from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign where she received a Provost Scholarship.