

Professional Staff Leadership Academy

Class of 2023

Urbana-Champaign



Ellen Wang Althaus, Ph.D. (she/her) is the Associate Director for Faculty and Staff Engagement at the Grainger College of Engineering's Institute for Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA). She is responsible for executing a college-wide strategy that establishes IDEA as ubiquitous in everything the college does. She serves as a subject matter expert who plans, develops, implements, and evaluates programs to meet the evolving needs of the college, its departments, and its people. She also helps with broader impact grant efforts and assists with refining and communicating the institute's vision, priorities, and activities. Additionally, Ellen serves on the Big Ten Academic Alliance (BTAA) Advancing Women in STEM initiative as a member of the

UIUC campus leadership team and as a member of the initiative's cross-institutional steering committee.

Prior to joining the IDEA Institute, Ellen served in several leadership roles at UIUC where she forged new initiatives fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines. In those roles she collaborated with campus administrative leaders, faculty, and stakeholders in 19 STEM departments, three colleges, and the Office of the Vice Chancellor for DEI to identify needs, challenges, and priorities for facilitating systemic change in STEM higher education. Ellen earned a BA in Chemistry from Carleton College, and an MS and PhD in Chemistry from Northwestern University.



Cristina Álvarez-Mingote, Ph.D., serves as the Senior Associate Director at the Center of Social and Behavioral Science (CSBS). She has been with CSBS since its inception in 2019 and plays a vital role in the development and execution of CSBS research activities. Her proven leadership, analytical, and organizational skills have been key in designing and implementing CSBS strategic research plans and services as well as public engagement programs. Cristina also has administrative and management experience in grant proposal writing, coordination of research partners and grant execution management.

Throughout her academic and professional employment, Cristina has worked, collaborated, and/or built relationships across a wide variety of stakeholders including researchers, funding agencies, corporations, international non-profits, and local community organizations. Cristina earned a Ph.D. in political science from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. As a researcher, she has experience in the areas of political economy, governance, food security, women's empowerment, migration, and violence prevention and in contexts as diverse as Ecuador, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Spain, and the US.



Elizabeth Chominski joined the Gies College of Business in August 2012 where she is currently the Director of Corporate Partnerships within the Student and Corporate Connections unit. Elizabeth’s role has evolved throughout her ten years with Gies. For many years she led and supported successful career and professional development outcomes for students in the residential MBA and Business Graduate Programs. In her current role overseeing external stakeholder relationships and campus recruiting activities, she is the primary liaison with key corporate partners including the Big 4 accounting firms and many Fortune 500 firms. She works closely with campus colleagues through the Career Services Council, Office of Corporate Relations, and Research Park in this highly collaborative role.

Prior to joining Gies, Elizabeth started her career in Boston in Financial Services. She discovered a passion for “career development” after finishing Business School. Rather than continuing to work in a corporate setting she moved to New York City to be part of a Workforce Development initiative with a Queens-based community non-profit. She holds a Bachelor’s degree from Lasell University and an MBA from Simmons University. Although she spent many years on the East Coast, she is a true Midwesterner who grew up on the shores of Lake Huron and the brilliantly blue waters of Lake St. Clair in Southeastern Michigan.



Meg Dickinson is Executive Director of Communications at the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. There, she sets strategy for and leads branding, marketing, crisis communications, internal and external communications, outreach, public relations, video production, and digital and online communication. As a member of Beckman’s leadership team, she contributes to climate improvement and diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. She serves as a member of the Speech Accessibility Project team, which is funded by five major tech companies to make voice recognition technology useful for people with a range of diverse speech patterns and disabilities.

Meg is campus co-chair of the Research Development Community, which brings together research development professionals from all over campus. She has participated in the IT Leadership Workshop, Emerging Women Leaders, and the Illinois Supervisory Skills Program. She serves on the advisory committee for the United Way’s Emerging Community Leaders at Illinois and previously served on the board of the Executive Club of Champaign County.

Meg has worked on campus for nine years and spent time in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering and the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences. Before that, she worked as a print journalist at The News-Gazette in Champaign, where she covered K-12 education, breaking news, regional municipalities, and features. She still writes a cooking column for The News-Gazette called Meg Makes. She is an alumna of Bradley University in Peoria and the School of Information Sciences at UIUC.



Brian Jacobson is the Associate Director of Strategic Operations for the pilot plant programs at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, jointly appointed to the Integrated Bioprocessing Research Laboratory (IBRL) and the Food Science & Human Nutrition Pilot Processing Plant (FSHN-PPP). He has been at the University since 2010 with responsibility to develop these facilities and associated programs.

The pilot plants serve industry and academic researchers seeking to commercialize their bio-based products through early-stage production in the food, beauty, chemical, and fuel industries. After completing construction in 2018, they quickly grew from three employees to over fifty-five and have served over eighty companies from around the world, including several with successful commercial launches.

IBRL and the FSHN-PPP are unique self-funded programs with a blend of industry and academic cultures. Brian led early efforts to build the operational structure and programming and now oversees the technical staff, strategic planning, safety, and HR functions. Both programs individually received the Paul A. Funk Team Award for Excellence in 2017 and 2020.

Brian holds a B.S. from Agricultural & Biological Engineering, an M.S. from Food Science & Human Nutrition, and completed a minor and MBA Essentials certificate in Business Administration through the Gies College of Business. Brian is involved in several small businesses in the community, participates as a start-up advisor in the bioprocessing industry, and serves as a committee member for the local Boy Scouts council. He enjoys spending time with his family, exploring the outdoors, and attending Illinois athletic events.



Linda K. Lee Drozt serves as the Director of Strategic Regulatory Programs and the Conflict of Interest Officer at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. In these roles, she collaborates with units across campus to address complex regulatory issues such as research security and oversees the disclosure and management of conflicts of commitment and interest for academic staff and researchers. She also serves on campus-wide committees, including the Campus Administrative Manual and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) Advisory Committee. She is a frequent presenter for the SPaRC'Ed certification program.

She has been at the university for 13 years, spending the last ten with the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation. She received her Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences in Urbana and her Juris Doctor from Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon.

In her spare time, she enjoys working with her husband and son on their farm in rural Champaign county.



Amie Loyd is the Director of Finance and Administration in the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning (CITL) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. CITL is a hub of innovation and hands-on support for those who want to discuss and work with higher education trends, models, projects, and resources. CITL uses leading pedagogical approaches, research-based methodologies, innovative instructional technologies, and comprehensive assessment practices to strengthen teaching efforts and improve student learning outcomes.

In her role, Amie serves as the Chief Financial Officer and oversees all administrative functions for the center including the business office and financial reporting, information technology, and facilities and operations. She also supervises the Instructional Support and Training team and the Project Management team as well as serves as the CITL liaison to the shared services HR office. Amie serves as a top advisor to the Director, providing expertise and guidance in areas related to budgeting, human resources, strategic planning, and resource allocation. Amie has over 16 years of financial experience at the University of Illinois having previously worked in the Urbana-Champaign Office of the Provost for Budget and Resource Planning, the OBFS Budget Office, the University System Office for Planning and Budgeting, and the department of Mechanical Science and Engineering on the Urbana-Champaign campus.

Amie has a BA in Economics and an MBA, both from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. In her free time, she enjoys traveling, spending time with her family, and supporting Fighting Illini athletics.



Subha Srinivasan, Ph.D., is the Associate Director for Research and Operations at the Carl R. Woese Institute for Genomic Biology (IGB) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She has been at the University for 8 years and currently oversees the administration and research operations of the institute. In this capacity she manages a dedicated and exceptional team of staff in communications and outreach, business office, external relations, facilities, IT services, and the microscopy core who support the IGB and campus research enterprise. She is committed to advancing research at the University and participates in campus level committees.

Subha has a B.Sc degree in Biotechnology and MS in Molecular Biology. She completed her Ph.D. in Physiological Sciences from the University of Arizona, Tucson, and postdoctoral research in University of California, San Francisco. Her research experience spans studying ion channel physiology in fruit flies to repurposing FDA-approved drugs to treat stress-induced alcohol addiction using preclinical animal models. She pivoted her research career to research administration and is passionate about identifying and connecting resources, opportunities, and talent.

Springfield



Rebekah Grosboll currently serves as the Director of Program Development, Outreach, and Quality Assurance for the College of Public Affairs and Education at the University of Illinois Springfield. She has over 18 years of experience working in higher education with a focus on online education, degree program growth, and student engagement and retention. Her experience includes marketing, recruitment, student onboarding, formulating retention strategies, professional training development, consultant and faculty collaboration, grant writing, and program evaluation.

Rebekah earned her B.A. in Political Studies and Legal Studies, an M.A. in Communication, an M.A. in Political Science, and her Doctorate of Public Administration. Her dissertation examined utilizing student orientation to promote online student retention and success by focusing on students' perception of social presence, their online learning self-efficacy, and their use of self-regulated learning strategies.



Dr. Tarah Sweeting-Trotter serves as the Director of the Center for Academic Success and Advising at UIS, and has been with UIS in various roles since 2008. She holds a bachelor's degree in English from MacMurray College, a master's degree in English from UIS, and a Ph.D. in English with an emphasis in Women and Gender Studies from Saint Louis University.

Dr. Sweeting-Trotter has served as an academic advisor, Director of Career Services, Interim Director of Office of Disability Support Services, coordinating summer bridge, instructing a variety of courses in multiple departments, working closely with living-learning communities, writing and managing grants, serving as and managing tutoring support services, and remaining highly involved in diversity, equity, and inclusion programming and training across campus units.

Dr. Sweeting-Trotter is most passionate about serving at-risk, first-generation and underrepresented students, and in developing fiscally responsible support services that promote engagement and success. Additionally, she works closely with student athletes to fine-tune support services and enjoys participating in the larger campus community.

She is a 15-year resident of Springfield and enjoys reading, recreational running, volunteering, and spending time with family.

Chicago



Jeanette Agustin is the Director of Administrative Operations of the Department of Dermatology at the University of Illinois Chicago. In this role, she leads and oversees the operational, financial, regulatory, and business activities of the department. As part of the leadership team, Jeanette works collaboratively with various offices, faculty, and administrative teams for process improvement in order to optimize the revenue for the Department. Since joining the Department, she has successfully recruited providers and developed department policies that have resulted in significant increases in clinical productivity. She is actively engaged in the Association of Dermatology Administrators and Managers (ADAM) and Dermatology Academic Administrators Group (DAAG).

Jeanette started her career at UIC in 2012 working in the Department of Surgery in different roles, each with increasing responsibilities, prior to joining the Department of Dermatology. She earned her Master's in Public Health with a concentration in Health Policy and Administration and Master's in Business Administration with a concentration in Finance from the University of Illinois at Chicago. She is also a Certified Professional Coder and Certified Professional Medical Auditor. She was born and raised in Chicago and resides in Northwest Chicago with her family.



Dr. Natalie Bennett is the Director of the Women's Leadership and Resource Center at the University of Illinois at Chicago where she is responsible for establishing the strategic, programmatic and operational direction of the center; developing and administering public programs and campus-wide initiatives around gender equity, violence prevention and responses; spearheading educational programs and supportive spaces for faculty, staff, graduate/professional and undergraduate students; providing confidential advocacy for students, faculty and staff across Chicago, Rockford and Peoria campuses who are survivors of gender-based violence; and overseeing the Campus Advocacy Network (CAN), the university's only violence prevention program which provides support, advocacy, resources and referrals for student, faculty and staff

who are victims of sexual misconduct (i.e. sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking or hate crimes). Previous to being director of WLRC, she served as the Assistant Director of Gender and Women's Studies Program at the University of Illinois at Chicago where she was responsible for supporting faculty searches, cluster hires, tenure and promotion processes, and faculty development; organizing visiting lectures; served director of undergraduate studies, and as lead instructor and organizer for Model World Conference for Women & Girls, a co-curricular project with high schools in Chicago Public Schools district.

Dr. Bennett's research, teaching and activism centers the lives of Black women and girls. Her interests are transnational in scope, located at the intersection of Black feminisms, social policy and migrations in the African diaspora. Her publications focus on women of color feminisms, transnational migration and Caribbean immigrant women's labor, racial and sexual identities among African American lesbians, and same-sexualities in Jamaica. Dr. Bennett has taught at Hunter College (CUNY), Long Island University, University of Nebraska, DePaul University and University of Illinois at Chicago.

Dr. Bennett received her Bachelor of Science (BS) in Biology and Sociology from Union College (Schenectady, New York) and her doctorate (PhD) in Sociology from University of Michigan.



Benjamin Dohner is the Manager of Ancillary Clinical Systems in the Department of Information Services at the University of Illinois Hospital and Clinics (UI Health). In this role, he leads a team of analysts who support clinicians and leaders throughout the health system. Together, they work strategically to improve patient care delivery through information technologies, primarily the Electronic Health Record (EHR) system.

Ben has worked in varying capacities at UI Health for more than nine years. In that time, he has developed and led improvements to numerous clinical and financial processes through close partnership with clinical service lines, such as Surgical, Inpatient, and Diagnostic Services. He recently led his team through an enterprise replacement of the EHR system.

Ben received his master's degree in healthcare administration from the UIC School of Public Health and a bachelor's degree in computer science from Wright State University. A native of Ohio, he currently lives on the north side of Chicago with his wife, Kate, and daughter, Melanie. In his free time, he enjoys exploring the great outdoors and cooking for family and friends.



Edward Drogos is the Director of Administrative Operations for the Department of Population Health Nursing Science in the UIC College of Nursing. In this role, Edward oversees financial, operational, human resources, and regulatory business activities for the largest academic unit within the College. Working collaboratively with stakeholders across the College and University, Edward contributes to strategic planning for the department, implements and tracks process improvements, and leads a professional administrative team to provide effective and efficient support to the department's faculty, staff, and students across five academic programs at UIC Nursing's six campus locations throughout the State of Illinois.

Edward has been with the University of Illinois Chicago for nine years. Prior to his current role in the College of Nursing, he served as the Executive Assistant to the Dean of the UIC College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS) from 2015-2019 and as a Publications Editor for the LAS Dean's Office in 2014. Before joining UIC as an employee, Edward spent seven years overseeing editorial operations for popular entertainment and news publications. He is a proud UIC alumnus.



Sharon Hayes has worked in various academic and student affairs roles at UIC for over 15 years. She is currently the Director of Undergraduate Programs and Academic Staff Support for the Department of Public Policy, Management and Analytics in the UIC College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs. In this role, she directs the Bachelor of Arts in Public Policy program and teaches the field experience course.

Sharon is also responsible for academic advising, recruitment, career and personal counseling of current and prospective students, course scheduling, planning events, and managing the day-to-day operations of the department including faculty support and supervising staff. Sharon is passionate about working in student affairs and enjoys making sure students have the resources they need to be successful.

Prior to joining UIC, Sharon earned her Bachelor of Arts and worked in fashion and costume design for a number of organizations including the Chicago Shakespeare Theatre and Columbia College. She enjoys spending time with family and sewing in her spare time.



Odell M. Richmond, Jr., MBA, SHRM-CP, is the Director of the HR Service Center for University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) Human Resources. In his role he leads a team of fifteen diverse HR professionals in providing distinct HR services to the UIC campus and UI Hospital and Clinics. Under his leadership, the HR Service Center was vital in the implementation of the UIC Law School merger. Additionally, the HR Service Center has a significant role in implementing retroactive payments for all UIC collective bargaining units, analyzing and resolving numerous SURS and IDES audit compliance issues, and providing key campus-wide training initiatives.

He is an integral part of the UIC HR Management Team advising senior leadership on various campus level HR initiatives and policy direction. During his 22-year career at UIC, Odell has served on several University of Illinois System wide committees where he has provided invaluable insight in the creation of new policies and procedures.

Prior to joining UIC, Odell worked as a Project Manager/Benefits Consultant for Hewitt Associates. He is a native of Milwaukee, Wisconsin and received dual bachelor's degrees in Business Administration and Marketing from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse as well as a Master of Business Administration from the Keller Graduate School of Management.

Odell has a passion for transformational leadership and change management and is highly effective in developing his team members and effecting change. He also enjoys volunteering, traveling, cooking, advocating for social justice change, and spending time with family and friends.



Justin Wier serves as the Assistant Dean, Recruitment & Engagement within UIC's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. He manages the College's recruitment strategy, develops public programs, creates targeted enrollment communication efforts, and enhances student success and engagement for the over 1,600 students enrolled in the College's first-year seminar, LAS 110: Experience UIC.

Justin has worked at UIC for over 15 years to build collaborations across the campus. He currently serves as an active member of UIC's Academic Professional Advisory Committee (APAC) as the Chair of the Professional Development Award Subcommittee and Co-Chair of the Awards Committee. He is also a member of the University Professional Personnel Advisory Committee (UPPAC), Chancellor's Committee on Sustainability and Energy (CCSE), and the Advisory Committee for Black Student Access.

An experienced, creative, higher educational professional, Justin has delivered presentations at the National Student Success Conference; NACADA: National Academic Advising Association National Conference; Midwest First-Year Conference; NASPA: Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, Region IV-East Conference; and the Illinois Association for College Admission Counseling's Middle Management Institute and Annual Conference. He has received grants from the UIC Student Success Innovation Fund Award, UIC Sustainability Fee, and PepsiCo Zero Impact Grant to enhance the UIC student experience.

Previously, Justin served as an academic advisor to UIC College of Liberal Arts and Sciences undergraduates and professional students in UIC's College of Medicine. He earned a B.A in journalism from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and an M.Ed. in higher education from Iowa State University.

System Offices



Marissa Brooke Brewer is the Director of Advocacy in the University of Illinois System office of External Relations and Communications. In this role, she leads the legislative advocacy efforts which includes managing Illinois Connection, the University of Illinois System's grassroots advocacy program. She has over 16 years of lobbying and legislative advocacy experience at the local, state, and federal levels. Originally from Texas, she began her career as a legislative aide in Washington DC for a U.S. Congressman, advising on a variety of issues, including education policy. Marissa relocated to Illinois from Washington, D.C. in 2009 to work for Illinois State University as the Associate Director of Development and Governmental Relations where she served as the University's liaison to Illinois members of Congress and their staff, federal agencies, and other organizations. She transitioned to the University of Illinois System to help lead the legislative advocacy efforts in 2013.

In addition to her role with the U of I System, Marissa also consults for the Congressional Management Foundation training clients in best practices regarding legislative advocacy. She also serves on several committees and boards including the Steering Committee of Public Higher Education Legislative Advocacy

Professionals, a national organization of higher education advocacy professionals who are dedicated to determining the best practices for advocacy in the higher education setting.

Marissa earned her M.A. in Political Science from the University of Illinois Springfield, her B.S. in Public Administration from Texas State University, and a certificate in PAC and Grassroots Management from the Public Affairs Council.



Dale J. Morrison, Esq. currently serves as Associate Director in the Office of Procurement Diversity at the University of Illinois and has a wealth of knowledge and experience with supplier diversity programs. As part of University of Illinois System Administration, which governs three major campuses in Urbana-Champaign, Chicago, and Springfield with over \$1 billion in annual procurable spend, Dale oversees all aspects of the University's Supplier Diversity Program to ensure that businesses owned by minorities, women, persons with disabilities and veterans receive procurement opportunities.

Dale is a graduate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with a Bachelor of Science degree in Finance and has earned the degree of Juris Doctor from the Chicago-Kent College of Law. Prior to his current position, Dale served as Administrative Counsel for the State of Illinois, where he provided legal advice for various State agencies, including the State's Business Enterprise Program. He has also served as Diversity and Procurement Manager at Chicago's iconic McCormick Place/ Navy Pier.

Outside of work, Dale enjoys singing karaoke and is an avid athlete, having completed over 30 marathons worldwide, including several Ironman Triathlons. He also enjoys spending time with his family.



Alice Seaton is the Assistant Director of Customer Service & Cashier Operations within University Bursar and is based at UIS. 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, Alice provides a leadership role at UIS where she provides timely and accurate financial information and service to support our customers in fulfilling their financial responsibilities. In addition, Alice works closely with the UIS Enrollment Management Team to address and resolve student-impact issues, ensuring all stakeholder's objectives are shared and considered through open communication.

Alice was part of the team in 2011 who was awarded the University of Illinois Distinguished Employee and Leadership Award (DELTA), which recognizes exceptional accomplishment, service and dedication to the University. In addition, Alice was the University Bursar 2021 Peer Recognition Award recipient. The nomination criteria for this award includes elevating the reputation of the office, celebrates and recognizes others, provides an innovative spirit, collaborates with external clients, integrates themselves and others into the University Bursar environment, and practices an attitude of gratitude.



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS SYSTEM

A proud alumnus, she holds a bachelor's degree of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration from the University of Illinois Springfield. Alice started her career at University Bursar in 2008.

Alice is also a Certified Business Administrator and a Certified Customer Service Professional. In her free time, Alice enjoys traveling, reading, gardening, and spending time with her family.