

8th Annual Trustee Leadership Conference - Speakers' Bios



J.B. Pritzker
Governor of Illinois

Governor JB Pritzker was sworn in as the 43rd Governor of Illinois on Jan. 14, 2019. Since taking office, he has accomplished one of the most ambitious and consequential policy agendas in state history.

Before becoming governor, Pritzker founded 1871, the non-profit small business incubator in Chicago. Since its creation, Chicago has been named one of the top ten technology startup hubs in the world, and 1871 was named the best incubator in the world. As governor, he continues to expand support for new business creation throughout the state and cut taxes for hundreds of thousands of small businesses while incentivizing job creation.

Governor Pritzker and his wife, MK, have been married for more than 25 years, and they are the proud parents of daughter, Teddi, and son, Don.



José Garcia
Senior Associate Director of
Strategic Communications

José García is the communications lead at the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE). In his role, José is charged with developing and implementing the agency's strategic communications plan to advance the work of the state's strategic plan for higher education. As a former high school English teacher and college counselor, José understands the urgent need to remove barriers in college access and success.



Jennifer Foster
Deputy Executive Director,
Illinois Community College Board
(ICCB)

Jennifer K. Foster is the Deputy Executive Director and Chief Diversity Officer with the Illinois Community College Board. Jennifer Foster has been with the agency for more than 23 years and oversees the equity programs of the agency including the Workforce Equity Initiative. She also oversees academic and career programs including, federal postsecondary Career and Technical Education and Adult Education and Literacy as well as Workforce programs including Integrated Education and Training and Bridge.





Lisa Castillo Richmon
Executive Director, Partnership for
College Completion (PCC)

Lisa Castillo Richmond was appointed to the role of Executive Director of the Partnership for College Completion's (PCC) on August 1, 2021.

Lisa has years of experience in higher education access and success, systemic reform, and a deep commitment to racial and socioeconomic equity. With a wealth of experience managing nonprofit education organizations and initiatives, local and national program teams, and fundraising and development efforts, Lisa's work has focused on organizations in launch and growth phases, as well as work with PK-12 systems, colleges and universities, and government agencies.

Prior to joining PCC to help launch the organization in 2016, Lisa served for four years as the Executive Director of Graduate NYC (GNYC), a collaborative college readiness and completion initiative of the City University of New York, the NYC Department of Education, and the NYC Mayor's Office. She also previously served as the Vice President of Program for the national office of the "I Have A Dream" Foundation and as Senior Vice President of Program for Junior Achievement of New York.

Under Lisa's leadership as PCC's Managing Director, the organization developed its signature technical support effort, the Illinois Equity in Attainment Initiative (ILEA). Launched in 2018, ILEA today provides support to 26 colleges and universities across the state that are working to eliminate racial and socioeconomic disparities in degree completion on their campuses.

	<p>A native Illinoisan and the first in her family to attend college, Lisa holds an M.A. in Education & Social Policy from New York University and is currently a doctoral student at Loyola University Chicago.</p>
 <p>Dr. Claudia Mercado, Ph.D. Senior Director of College and University Partnerships, PCC</p>	<p>Dr. Claudia Mercado is the Senior Director of College and University Partnerships and most recently served as the Associate Provost of Student Affairs at Harper College, an ILEA-participating institution. Dr. Mercado has 20+ years of expertise in higher education and as a scholar-practitioner with over a decade of faculty experience as well as presenting and publishing nationally.</p> <p>Dr. Mercado earned a Doctorate of Educational Policy and Leadership and a Master of Science in Higher Education Administration from the University of Kansas and a Bachelor's degree in English Literature from Missouri State University.</p>
 <p>Dr. Lorenzo Baber, Ph.D.</p>	<p>Lorenzo DuBois Baber is an associate professor in the School of Education at Loyola University, Chicago. He also holds a research affiliation with the Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Dr. Baber's research interests include educational equity and justice, with a specific focus on community colleges, postsecondary education in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and advancement of critical frameworks in higher education research. His scholarship appears in various outlets including all the major journals dedicated to community college research and practice. Prior to his time at Loyola University, Dr. Baber held faculty appointments at Iowa State University and at Illinois.</p>



Ginger Ostro
Executive Director of
Illinois Board of Higher Education



Ginger Ostro brings extensive policy and finance leadership to the Illinois Board of Higher Education. She previously served as interim Chief Financial Officer and Vice-President of Financial Operations at Chicago State University. Earlier in her career, she served as Deputy Executive Director at the Illinois Student Assistance Commission and as Director of the Office of Budget Planning at Governors State University. Ginger served as Executive Director of Advance Illinois as it helped architect the successful effort to fix the nation's least-equitable K12 funding formula. She played a lead role as budget director and CFO at Chicago Public Schools in developing and implementing a more equitable system of allocating funding across schools as well as managing the district's \$6 billion operating budget and the capital budget. Ginger also served in several roles in state government, including over six years at the Governor's Office of Management and Budget, where she rose to director. Since joining IBHE in February 2020, she has led the agency's response to the COVID-19 pandemic; worked with other agencies and stakeholders to develop a strategic plan for Illinois higher education, A Thriving Illinois; and is currently working on multiple new initiatives, including the Equitable Public University Funding and the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity. Ginger holds a BA in Politics, Economics, Rhetoric, and Law from the University of Chicago and a Master's in Public Policy, Health, and Human Services from Harvard's Kennedy School. She lives in Chicago.




Scott Rice
Deputy University Counsel
University of Illinois System

As Deputy University Counsel, Scott assists the University Counsel with the management of all legal services for the Board of Trustees, the President, University officers, all three campuses of the University and various university related organizations. Scott joined the Office of University Counsel in 2005 and was named Campus Legal Counsel for the Urbana-Champaign university in 2011, serving in that role through 2020 and again on an interim basis in 2022. He was named Deputy University Counsel in 2019. In addition to his administrative duties, Scott maintains an active legal practice on a broad range of topics, including governance, infrastructure, athletics, employment, investigations, claims, complex transactions, First Amendment and other areas. Scott is a leader or member of numerous organizations, including the National Association of College and University Attorneys, Big Ten general counsels' roundtable, Sports Lawyers Association and Illinois State Bar Association.

Prior to joining the University, Scott had significant experience at a national architecture and engineering corporation. He also worked in all three branches of Illinois state government,

	<p>including as an aide to former Illinois Governor Jim Edgar and as a clerk to former Illinois Supreme Court Justice Rita B. Garman. Scott is a graduate of the University of Illinois College of Liberal Arts & Sciences and earned his law degree at Southern Illinois University.</p>
 <p>Rhonda Perry <i>Campus Legal Counsel</i> University of Illinois Springfield</p>	<p>Rhonda Perry is the Campus Legal Counsel for the University of Illinois Springfield. In addition to providing advice to University System offices, she is responsible for providing all legal advice for all UIS activities. She earned her juris doctorate from the University of Illinois Law School at Urbana-Champaign.</p> <p>Rhonda started her legal career in the Champaign County States Attorney's Office. After a brief period in private practice, she joined the legal staff at the City of Champaign. During her six years with the City, she was responsible for developing and negotiating city contracts, advising city administrators and prosecuting ordinance violations.</p> <p>Rhonda joined the University of Illinois Office of University Counsel in 2006. She started at the Urbana-Champaign campus as a general practitioner. Rhonda joined the Office of University Counsel leadership team when she was appointed to serve as the Springfield Campus Legal Counsel in 2014.</p> <p>[Rhonda resides in Champaign, Illinois with her husband, Mike, and two daughters.]</p>
 <p>Pranav Kothari Founder & CEO, Revolution Impact, LLC, Chair, Illinois Board of Higher Education</p>	<p>Overview</p> <p>Pranav Kothari is the Founder & CEO of Revolution Impact, LLC. Founded in 2016 and headquartered in Chicago, the firm focuses on helping social sector organizations improve their results through better business practices and organizational strategies. The firm's projects include growth and scale strategy, evaluation and measurement, and capacity-building for social sector leaders nationally.</p> <p>Pranav also serves as Adjunct Lecturer in the Public Action and Social Compact Program at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, teaching both MBA and executive education courses on the education sector, social sector performance measurement, and board governance. He speaks</p>

	<p>nationally on measuring social impact, education data, education philanthropy, and nonprofit effectiveness. And was recently named chair to the Illinois Board of Higher Education.</p> <p>He holds an A.B. in Economics from Washington University in St. Louis and an MBA in Corporate Strategy and Organizational Behavior from the Stephen M. Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan. Pranav is immediate past board president of the National College Access Network and is a member of the UChicago Consortium on School Research Steering Committee.</p> <p>Pranav lives in Chicago, IL with his wife, Harpreet Khera, and is a native of Pittsburgh, PA.</p>
<div data-bbox="219 728 609 1098" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="227 1106 592 1283" data-label="Caption"> <p>Andrea Zopp Managing Partner, Cleveland Avenue Chair of the Board of Trustees, Chicago State University</p> </div>	<p>In her current role at Cleveland Avenue Ms. Zopp leads the organization's work investing in and supporting minority and women entrepreneurs and their companies. Previously she served as President and CEO of World Business Chicago, where she led the organization's mission of inclusive economic growth, supporting businesses, and promoting Chicago as a leading global city. Prior to joining WBC, she served as Deputy Mayor, Chief Neighborhood Development Officer for the City of Chicago.</p> <p>Ms. Zopp has held executive leadership positions at several Fortune 500 companies. She was General Counsel and Chief Human Resources Officer at Exelon Corporation and served as Senior Vice President General Counsel and Corporate Secretary at Sears Holdings Corporation. Ms Zopp also served as Vice President and Deputy General Counsel at Sara Lee Corporation. As the former President and CEO of the Chicago Urban League, she led the nationally-recognized organization's focus on expanding economic opportunity in underserved communities. Andrea also served as a federal and state prosecutor, serving as an Assistant United States Attorney and as the first woman and African American First Assistant in the Cook County State's Attorney's Office.</p> <p>Ms. Zopp currently serves on the board of Relativity a global e-discovery and document management software company and has served on the boards of Urban Partnership Bank, Andrew Corporation and the Chicago Police Board. She is the Chair of the Board of Trustees at Chicago State University and also serves on the boards of the Henry Ford Health System, the Economic Club of Chicago, the Northwestern Memorial Hospital Foundation, Federal Home Loan Bank Chicago and the Black Ensemble Theater. She received her BA in History and Science from Harvard</p>

	University and her JD from Harvard Law School
 <p>Paige Ponder Founder & CEO, Idea Jar, LLC Trustee (Former), Illinois Community College Board Board Member (Former), Chicago Board of Education</p>	<p>Paige Ponder is the Founder & CEO of Idea Jar, LLC and former Chief Executive Officer at One Million Degrees. She joined One Million Degrees after leading Project Exploration, a dynamic youth STEM organization. Prior to Project Exploration, Paige was Officer of Student Support and Engagement at Chicago Public Schools.</p> <p>Paige's private sector experience in education includes work at the Grow Network and McGraw-Hill in product development, professional development, and client services capacities. She began her career as a Princeton Project 55 Fellow at Holy Cross School in the South Bronx, NY. Paige holds a bachelor's degree from Princeton University and an MBA from Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. Paige was appointed to the Illinois Community College Board in 2018. She currently serves on the Steering Committee for the Consortium for Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago and is a 2019 Leadership Greater Chicago Fellow.</p>