

Heller Alumni Association Board Biographies 2023-2024



Dr. Isaac Cudjoe
MA COEX'18, President

Dr. ISAAC CUDJOE, MA COEX'18, is a community organizer, social entrepreneur, and an equity strategist who has served on the alumni board since July 1, 2019. Dr. Cudjoe is a collaborative and strategic leader with demonstrated success as an active participant and in partnership with domestic and international organizations in developing countries and within the United States. He is currently the CEO of Peace First Inc., a global organization that elevates the voices and unleashes the power of young people worldwide to create meaningful change in their communities. He has used his training from the Young African Leaders Initiative and The African Middle Eastern Leadership fellowship to help communities inspire social change agents to do more and be more for the places they call home.

Dr. Cudjoe has a doctorate in public policy and administration. His dissertation, *Discrimination Threats for U.S.-Born Latinx During the Trump Administration*, explored whether and how U.S.-born Latinx young adults experienced discrimination during U.S. Customs and Border Protection and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement investigations, arrests, and deportation during the Trump administration. Now, Dr. Cudjoe uses system thinking to work on grassroots and local levels to help communities identify context-specific ways to transform problems in lasting ways.

Working alongside the Heller community, Dr. Cudjoe wants to help construct a more robust and equitable system for alumni relations that prioritizes belongingness. He believes that Heller's commitment to equity, inclusion, and diversity must also extend to its alumni, which begins with building bridges in all directions of our community. He wants our alumni to think of Heller's community as a warm embrace, wherein their expertise and contributions are enthusiastically welcome.



Parisa Kharazi
MS'13, Co-Vice President

Parisa Kharazi is a global public health professional specializing in health information technology. She has ten years of public health experience domestically and internationally. For over five years she worked as a Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor at Jhpiego, a leading NGO on global maternal and child health affiliated with Johns Hopkins University. In her role, she was a key player in the business plan development, communications, and deployment of the organization's centralized reporting health database. Parisa's interest in global health led her to serve as a United States Peace Corps Volunteer in Botswana, where she worked with vulnerable youth, faith-based groups, and local community leaders on HIV/AIDS prevention projects. Her experience living and working in a remote village in southern Africa shaped her career in public health. After graduating from Heller, she was selected as a USAID HIV/AIDS Care and Support Fellow with the Global Health Fellows Program II/The Public Health Institute. She also has a passion for working with students interested in health care. She was a teaching assistant for an online graduate course on the design of healthcare informatics systems at the Johns

Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. She is also a mentor with the National Peace Corps Association in which she helps Returned Peace Corps Volunteers with professional networking, future career planning, transitioning from serving abroad to serving at home, and sharing her Peace Corps experience with students of all ages. Parisa previously served on the Executive Board of American Muslim Health Professionals (AMHP), a national nonprofit organization focused on professional development, health education centered on the unique needs of American-Muslims, and advocacy for minorities and underserved communities. While at Heller, she served as class representative for the MS class and was a recipient of the Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Scholarship. In addition to her Heller degree, she also holds an MBA Certificate in the Business of Healthcare from Johns Hopkins University, and a BS in Public Health and Middle Eastern Studies from Rutgers University.



Bria Price
MPP'19, Co-Vice President

Bria Price is the Senior Manager of College Success for Achieve Atlanta, a nonprofit organization in Atlanta, Georgia. The mission of Achieve Atlanta is to ensure that Atlanta Public School System students have access to college and succeed once they get there.

As a college success manager, she works with incoming college students, on-campus student ambassadors, and college support partners on 11 college campuses in Georgia, and Scholars across the United States. Bria's work in the public-school systems has created a passion for further research of the impact of outreach and emotional support for students during their college years.

Bria received a Bachelor of Arts from The College of Wooster in Wooster, Ohio. It was during her time at Wooster that Bria felt the tug to work with students in underserved communities. She spent the first three years following Wooster serving in the AmeriCorps program, City Year-Washington, D.C., from AmeriCorps Member to Impact Manager. In 2016, Bria was named AmeriCorps Alum fellow for the Eli J. and Phyllis N. Segal Citizen Leadership Program. It was the example of citizen leadership demonstrated by fellow Segal Fellows that led Bria to pursue the master's in public policy program at the Heller School. During her time at Brandeis, Bria was active in several organizations: Heller Student Association, Founding Member of the Black Graduate Student Association, and worked in the Segal Citizen Leadership program as a liaison to Segal Fellows. In 2019, she received the inaugural Heller Award for Equity, Inclusion and Diversity. One of Bria's personal goals is to create a non-profit organization, Melanin Book Mobile. A mobile library of books to serve underserved communities of Melanin children with books written by Melanin authors.



Laura Alpert
BA'96, MM'98

Laura has 25 years of comprehensive fundraising and marketing experience and most recently served as Vice President of Philanthropy at Boston Arts Academy Foundation. The Quincy resident is a graduate of Brandeis University and The Heller School at Brandeis, where she earned bachelor's and master's degrees. Laura is fiercely committed to expanding opportunity and proud to serve on MAB's senior leadership team. He has also previously worked for United Way, Upper Hudson Planned Parenthood, Northeast Parent & Child Society, Pine Street Inn, and The

Dimock Center.



Oluwaseun Ayanniyi
MS'12

Oluwaseun Ayanniyi is a Contracts Specialist at UNICEF Supply Division and based in Copenhagen, Denmark. At UNICEF, her work involves ensuring uninterrupted supply of affordable vaccines of assured quality for children for the prevention of diseases. She is a seasoned health supply management professional with experience in contracts management, procurement, supply chain management, market research and data analysis, capacity development, process management and demand forecasting. She has extensive work experience with non-government organizations, UNICEF,

USAID, Global Fund, and Ministries of Health, in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia.

Previously, Oluwaseun was a Quantification Advisor at John Snow Research and Training Institute in Arlington, Virginia where she supported countries in their quantification for health commodities. She began her career as a Pharmacist in Nigeria. Working as a pharmacist and volunteering sparked her interest in public health which led her to apply for the International Health Policy and Management course at Heller. Oluwaseun holds a certificate in Leadership and Management from the University of Washington, a Masters in International Health Policy and Management, a Bachelors in Pharmacy and is a Certified Supply Chain Professional (CSCP).



Jacqueline Daniels Braunthal
MMHS'84

Jacqueline Daniels Braunthal has 30+ years of experience and training in healthcare management. Since 2014, Jackie launched and operates out of Connecticut, as the Principal and CEO of a consulting practice, Health and Human Services Management Solutions, LLC, serving seniors and people with disabilities. Jackie leverages her industry knowledge, management experience and clinical skills when evaluating the needs and services of a client. Early on, she promoted best practices in provider management by creating solutions for clinical and administrative staff that had quality

of care challenges with Medicare, Medicaid, State Licensure and JCAHO. Jackie served as the compliance expert for a large hospital corporation and as a hospital consultant for the State of Florida-Health Quality department. In 2019, Jackie was also selected to the Board of Directors of the Greenwich Symphony Orchestra, a volunteer elected position. More recently, Jackie branded a regional start up that specialized in private-pay pediatric and geriatric home staffing. She created a large referral network of clinical, financial and legal professionals involved in healthcare delivery. Jackie also created a database of senior choices for residential care in Great- er New York. Jackie holds a Master's degree in Non-Profit Management and Health Policy from Brandeis University and a B.A. in Psychology from Ithaca College.



Sara Chaganti
PhD'18

Sara Chaganti is the Deputy Director of Research in Regional and Community Outreach at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. She previously worked as a Senior Research Associate at the Institute on Assets and Social Policy (IASP) at the Heller School. Sara has expertise in jobs and job quality, poverty and inequality, and the racial wealth divide. She holds a PhD in Social Policy and Sociology from Brandeis University, an MS in Law, Policy and Society from Northeastern University and a BA in Anthropology from Yale.



Sheldon Gelman
PhD'73

Sheldon Gelman, Dean Emeritus, is a member of the Academy of Certified Social Workers and a Fellow of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) and the New York Academy of Medicine (NYAM). He has held office and served on national commissions of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), including the board of directors and Commission on Accreditation, the National Association of Social Work Deans (NADD), the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). The author of more than 100 professional articles and book chapters, he has served as a consultant to many social welfare organizations, presented testimony before legislative bodies and served as an expert witness in more than a dozen cases. He was named a "Social Work Pioneer" by NASW in 2009.



Shirley Girouard
PhD'88

Shirley Girouard is a health policy consultant to the Council of State Governments-East, a co-director of the Brooklyn Initiative to Develop Geriatrics Education, and a Professor (voluntary) in the College of Nursing at SUNY Downstate. During the preceding five years, she served as the Associate Dean of Research and Community Partnerships in the College of Nursing. Currently, Shirley serves on the State of Connecticut's Primary Care and Community Health Reforms Work. She is committed to improving quality, equitable, cost-effective health care and promoting health through her roles as analyst, researcher, nurse, educator, and advocate. Dr. Girouard's current research and policy interests include health and health care of older adults, food insecurity, social determinants of health, and strategies to enhance the organization, delivery, and financing of health and health care. She has held positions in philanthropy, public service (elected & appointed), management and administration in professional organizations, healthcare and education, and serving on national, state, and local committees. Her research has focused on the nursing workforce, evaluation, public policy and nursing education through publications, grantsmanship, service on several editorial boards and professional speaking. She holds a PhD in health & social policy from the Heller School, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA, a master of science in nursing from Yale University, New Haven, CT, a master of arts in medical sociology from the University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT, a bachelor of arts with a major in sociology from Eastern Connecticut State University, Willimantic, CT and a diploma in nursing from Hartford Hospital School of Nursing, Hartford, CT.



Alexandria Glaize
MA SID'17

Alexandria Glaize is currently serving as the Head of Partner Marketing at Mentor Collective – an organization committed to closing the equity gap in higher education. She has built her career on one principle: helping people actualize their full potential. Before joining Mentor Collective, Alex worked with True Blue Inclusion, where she crystallized novel approaches to the multi-faceted challenges faced by senior diversity and inclusion leaders.

Alex is inspired by the work happening at the nexus of technological innovations, the future of work, and equity. She finds joy in cultivating relationships and creating opportunities to connect solution-driven ideas, actions, and people in meaningful ways. Alex holds a MA in Sustainable International Development from the Heller School for Social Policy and Management and a BA in Business Administration and Management from Milligan College.



Carmen Hicks
MPP'14

Carmen Hicks is a Manager of Product at Checkr.org, Checkr's corporate social responsibility and philanthropic arm. Prior to this, Carmen worked as the Senior TurboVote Product Manager at Democracy Works, where she was instrumental in helping over 11 million voters across the country in 2020. She holds a Master in Public Policy from the Heller School for Social Policy and Management and a BA in Political Science and currently lives in Somerville, MA.



Bishar Jenkins, Jr.
MPP'20

Bishar is currently the Policy and Programs Manager at Society for Public Health Education in Washington, DC. Before that he worked as a Public Health Educator with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, GA. After Graduating from Heller he was a Health Policy Fellow for the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation as well as a Health Policy Fellow in the Office of Congresswoman Frederica Wilson, US House of Representatives in Washington, DC. Bishar was the 2020 Graduation

Speaker for the MPP Program and previously helped with the Heller Community Reading for Social Justice Initiative and New Student Orientation Facilitator in August 2020.



Farhat Jilalbhoj
MA SID'14

Farhat is a dynamic social impact leader with 15 years of progressive experience in managing and scaling innovative programs. She leverages experience in strategy, analysis, implementation, and business planning to make data-driven decisions. Her technical expertise includes children, youth, families, education, health, hunger and livelihoods, and protection. Before Save the Children, she worked as a Independent Strategy and Management Consultant with BroderickHaight Consulting and before

that as a Project Manager with TDC. She also worked for Catholic Relief Services and Peace First. While at Heller, she was a Peace Corps Paul D. Coverdell Fellow and Brandeis India Initiative Fellow. She also participated in cultural events and other student activities. She graduated Cum Laude with a BA in International Affairs from the University of Mary Washington. Farhat has worked across the United States and over 15 different countries.



Shayna Jones Perry
MPP'18

Shayna Jones, (she/they), is an embodied healer committed to the practice of living out wild imaginative Black futures right now. Shayna is an experienced facilitator, trainer, and organizational consultant. She has supported individuals and communities with the work of integrating a Black feminist ethic of care into their lives and work, through transformative justice, political education, policy and practice. She is a proud auntie and has learned from her nibblings the value of felt joy, resilience and dance. Shayna is a co-founder of blackyard Learning Community, a practice in alternative systems building that emerged in 2019 following years of base-building, direct action, policy advocacy and

organizing in Cambridge, MA. This project offers a full day co-operative school for Black children and families and a political home for Black youth. Shayna is currently based in Durham, NC and is dedicated to exploring the ways Black communities heal from generational trauma and the impacts of white-supremacy, by regaining our connections to our bodies, each other, and the land.



Ty Leisey
MA COEX/MA SID'17

Ty Leisey is a systems thinker with a focus on the intersection of power dynamics and social justice, a perspective he relied on throughout his graduate career. While at the Heller School, Ty was a member of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Steering Committee, Co-Chair of the Anti-Oppression Working Group, and recipient of the Barbara Wakefield Leadership Award. He has experience planning and leading anti-oppression workshops in small and large settings and spearheaded the first completely student-created and -run Heller Anti-Oppression Community Day for incoming students in the fall of 2015. While at Heller, Ty interned at MaeBright Group, where he partnered with community stakeholders in Boston, MA to design and implement a legal name change clinic for transgender and gender nonconforming residents. In addition to his graduate degrees, Ty received a Bachelor's in Liberal Studies in Peace and Intercultural Relations with a concentration in Sub-Saharan Africa from Salem State University. Ty now lives in Austin, Texas and works for CASA of Travis County as a Sr. Teen Advocacy Specialist, where he manages a team of volunteers to advocate in court for children in the Texas foster care system. Ty works on a team that advocates specifically for youth likely to face additional barriers to finding permanency; through this work with CASA, he has continued to engage in equity and social justice work, including co-chairing CASA's Equity and Inclusion Committee, representing CASA on variously community stakeholder committees, and becoming a certified facilitator of CASA's internal anti-racism workshop for staff and volunteers.



Sara Miller
BA'11, MBA/MA Hornstein'16

Sara Miller, CFAR's Coaching Practice Manager, is a coach, consultant, and facilitator based in the greater Boston area. In addition to her client-facing roles, she has served as Richard Levin & Associates' Managing Director—overseeing several marketing and operational initiatives and striving to understand the needs of potential clients in order to connect them with the best coaches, consultants, and facilitators. As Coaching Practice Manager, Sara connects the administrative piece of the work with coaches and clients and strategizes for communication externally and internally.

As a coach, Sara prioritizes developing trusting relationships with her clients, such that shared goals and challenges alike can be approached with understanding and strategic savvy. She enjoys helping leaders find creative solutions that position them for success and believes that learning across organizations and fields can yield strong results.

Sara has previously worked in Providence, Rhode Island at a campus-based organization devoted to student engagement and education, as well as with organizations such as a museum, an arts institute, and a women's shelter abroad. She has a B.A. from Brandeis University. A graduate of the MBA program at the Heller School for Public Policy and the Hornstein Jewish Professional Leadership Program (Brandeis University), Sara devoted her graduate fieldwork to a diversity of competencies: education, data analysis, and human resources policy research.

Sara is the Vice Chair of Branding and Communications on the board of the Jewish Alliance of Greater RI and is a co-founder of Mentoring for Equity.



Rodrigo Moran **MA SID'16**

Rodrigo is an international development professional and tech expert. He is passionate about human-centered technology innovations that tackle some of the most pressing development issues. He navigates between diverse networks of development professionals, technologists, creatives, and government officials to foster unusual partnerships that accelerate shared understanding on how to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He was president of the Heller Student Association and one of the founders of the Heller Forward movement. He is an adjunct lecturer for the Digital Media for Community Development Proseminar (2020 and 2021) at Heller and has been a guest speaker for SID courses as an alum. He also previously worked for CREA El Salvador and Creative Associates International.



Ahmad Naveed Noormal **MA COEX'16**

Naveed Noormal is a Journalist at Volant Media and a former Afghan Diplomat to the United Kingdom. He advocates for Human Rights and enjoys commentary, reading and writing on issues related to foreign policy, peace, security and development.

Mr. Noormal possess more than 10 years of work experience with both government and non-government international organisations. He has served in different key positions for several organizations including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, US Embassy in Kabul, Asia Foundation, and the UNDP.

Mr. Noormal is a Fulbright Scholar holding a Masters degree in Conflict Management from the US, an MBA from the UK and a degree in Law from India. He is a fellow at Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, Asia Foundation Development Program and UK Aspen Institute. He sits at the Board of Directors for Ubuntu Scotland.



Jessica Pacheco-Estévez **MM'98**

Jessica Pacheco-Estévez has passionately invested her service and expertise in empowering and developing inclusive leadership and management for thousands of nonprofits, K-12, higher education and corporate audiences. For over 20 years she has created, developed and implemented educational and organizational capacity building initiatives that foster equitable spaces and facilitate thriving communities, locally and internationally. As the current vice-president of Estrategia Group, she uses her collaborative management skills to help the consulting firm provide ideas, strategies and solutions to non-profits, educational institutions and businesses. Previous employers include the Institute for Community and Justice at Greenville College; the W.K. Kellogg Foundation as a national fellow for its Community Leadership Network; and the Community Tampa Bay programs director. The United Nations Intergovernmental Working Group, invited her to present on the nonprofit's trademarked "ANYTOWN" program in Geneva, Switzerland. Jessica's efforts earned her the USA Network Characters Unite Award in 2010. She's also a certified trainer for the Points of Light Youth Leadership Institute and a certified strength coach for the Gallup School of Management. Born in New York and raised in the Dominican Republic, she has earned her Heller degree and a Bachelors of Arts from Mount Holyoke College, where she graduated at the age of 19. Her husband Edwin Estévez and daughters Taina and Natalia share residence in IL and FL.



Prince Mujumbe Salama
MA SID'20

Prince Mujumbe Salama has 10 plus years' experience working in private and non-profit organizations leading projects in entrepreneurship, sexual and gender-based violence, healthcare, nutrition and community development. He holds a Master of Arts degree in Sustainable International Development from the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University, and a Bachelor of Science degree in Information Management Systems from Université Lumière de Bujumbura.

Prince served as Associate Researcher with the William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan (WDI), and is currently working as an independent consultant based in Africa, working on various projects with interest in sustainable development in low-to Middle income countries. For six years, he worked with the International Center for Advanced Research and Training (ICART), first as Financial Administrator, and then Director of Operations. ICART is a research center co-founded by the Panzi Foundation in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the University of Michigan.

Dynamic, self-motivated, multicultural, independent, Prince is fluent in French, English, Swahili, and Lingala. He is the recipient of the Barbara Wakefield Award and the Maurice J. and Fay B. Karpf & Ari Hahn Peace Endowment Award.



Sheilanee Shona Sen
MBA/MPP'15

Shona is a community development professional with over ten years of experience managing programs, raising and deploying capital, and providing technical assistance to community-based organizations through the public, nonprofit, and philanthropic sectors. She is currently a Senior Program Officer with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) - an organization committed to forging resilient and inclusive communities across America. Shona provides fundraising, project management, communication, and evaluation and reporting support to

LISC's National Programs team, which consists of Health, Economic Development, Child Care and Early Learning, Safety and Justice, and Sports and Recreation. Prior to her current role with LISC National, Shona managed the workforce development portfolio for LISC Los Angeles. Shona is passionate about dismantling racist systems and structures and human-centered approaches to community building and design that contribute to positive, long-term health and economic outcomes. She holds a Master of Business Administration and a Master of Public Policy from the Heller School for Social Policy and Management and a BA in Government from the University of Texas at Austin.



Anupama Sharma
MS'08

Anupama is a MS program alumna and also completed her MBA in health care management at the Indian Institute of Health Management and Research. With more than 18 years experience in Indian and international industries, she has been providing consultative technical support to NGO's in Afghanistan. She has led team projects with numerous research studies and is a Women Entrepreneurship and Empowerment (WEE) IIT Delhi fellow. She is a national level gold medallist in Powerlifting. She is currently the an external auditor of national health facilities for

the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in India. She has set up three different oragnisations, one for-profit and not-for-profit in India and Estonia with forte in development sector.



Jarnail Singh
MA SID'13

Jarnail Singh currently serves as the Deputy Director of the India Office for the MacArthur Foundation. Jarnail works with the India Country Director to deliver the Foundation's Climate Solutions strategy and grant making in India. Most recently, he led the India team of The Climate Group, a UK-headquartered international nonprofit and was the youngest member of their senior leadership team. Jarnail spent the early part of his career with The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) where he co-managed clean energy initiatives across several Indian states. He specializes in business-led climate action, international climate policy and using strategic communications as a lever for change. With a strong interest in visual art, he also runs a photo-journal. Jarnail was selected as a Feldman Fellow to pursue an MA from the Heller School, Brandeis University and holds an Environmental Studies from TERI University. He lives in New Delhi with his family.



Jeanette C. Takamura
PhD'85

Jeanette C. Takamura has held principal leadership positions at the national and state level and has been a higher education administrator and member of the faculty at several U.S. universities. She is currently serving as chair of the Heller Board of Advisors. She is currently dean emerita and professor of gerontology, social policy, and social enterprise administration at Columbia University, where she was the 17th dean and the first female leader of its School of Social Work. During her 15-year tenure as dean, she instituted multidisciplinary global, national, and statewide education, research, and service programs and collaborations that engaged academic institutions and scholars worldwide and prioritized diversity as a cross-cutting academic initiative. She was assistant secretary for aging at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services from 1997 to 2001. There, she led the development and enactment of a modernized Older Americans Act and established the National Family Caregiver Support Program, the federal government's first formal recognition of the significant contributions and needs of family caregivers. She also spearheaded an initiative to lay the foundation for aging policy and program coordination and collaboration across executive branch departments and agencies for the first decade of the new millennium.

Early in her career, Jeanette was a practicing social worker serving youth and families. She held senior executive positions in the Hawaii state government and faculty and administrative appointments in higher education in Hawaii and California. She has served on numerous national and international boards, commissions, and working groups, is an elected fellow of the National Academy of Social Insurance, the National Academy for Public Administration, the New York Academy of Medicine, and the Royal Society of Medicine, and has received numerous awards, among them the Lucy Stone Award from the White House for her advocacy on behalf of older women and the enactment of the National Family Caregiver Support Program. Professor Takamura was invited to serve on the Obama Transition Team, specifically for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In 2009, she was honored by the Japanese Government with The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon, for contributions to the promotion of social welfare policies and programs and the status of Japanese Americans. In 2019, Advancing States, a national association for state aging departments, established the Jeanette Takamura Long Term Care Leadership Award which is given to a national leader in long term care policy and services. She is also featured in the American Society on Aging Legacy Series of interviews of 12 gerontology leaders. She was named a Social Work Pioneer by the National Association of Social Workers. In addition to her Heller PhD degree, her bachelor's degree in political science and sociology and her master's degree in social work are from the University of Hawaii-Manoa. She received special training in gerontology at Harvard Medical School-Massachusetts General Hospital and the University of Southern California Ethel Percy Andrus Gerontology Center. She is an invited featured speaker at national and international conferences on health, long term care, aging, women's issues, and higher education.



Mary Ward
MBA'19

Mary is an innovative and results-driven leader in the field of alumni relations. She has expertise in guiding staff and volunteers in program strategy development and implementation. She is a catalyst for transformational change around diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging efforts guided by community feedback and organizational mission. She is adept at establishing rapport with a diverse range of internal and external stakeholders and communicating institutional and departmental needs. Mary is confident in managing change during challenging and evolving times.

Prior to working at Brown University, she held many positions helping MIT as director of class and affinity programs, reunions and class programs, regional clubs and alumni education.



Roberta Ward Walsh
PhD'89

Roberta Ward Walsh joined Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) as a founding faculty member during the institution's inaugural year in 1997. She served as departmental chairperson for public administration and political science until 2006. She is credited with laying the foundation for the Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree program to receive the first professional accreditation by the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration for an exclusively internet-based degree. Dr. Walsh earned Emeritus status at FGCU in 2009 for "...exemplary support of public affairs education...[and] a distinguished record of

accomplishment both as an academic and public servant." She continued on-line graduate teaching and consulting in public administration for Norwich University, Northfield, Vermont and served as an adjunct online professor for the University of Virginia.

Prior to her FGCU appointment, she was a tenured associate professor at the University of Vermont and also held visiting professorships at Simmons College, The University of Texas at Austin and Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh, Scotland. Her undergraduate degree is from Framingham State University where she received the institution's Alumni Achievement Award in 1981 and Distinguished Alumni Award in 2019. She holds a master's degree in consumer economics with a minor in American Government from Cornell University. For her doctoral dissertation at the Heller School she conducted an inter-regional, inter-industry input-output analysis to estimate economic effects of energy savings in the federal Low-income Weatherization Assistance Program.

Dr. Walsh's career in public service began with anti-poverty programs in New York State. Later, she served with the Federal Trade Commission, U.S. Department of Energy, and Northeast Solar Energy Center, all in Boston, Massachusetts. She has authored over 50 publications and presentations in energy program evaluation, receiving the Aaron Wildavsky Book Award from the Policy Studies Organization in 1998.



Nicole Rodriguez
MPP'14, Immediate Past President

Nicole Rodriguez, President of New Jersey Policy Perspective, is an experienced public policy leader who advocates for equitable solutions that center communities' needs with racial, social, and economic justice.

Before joining New Jersey Policy Perspective as Research Director, Nicole was senior researcher at Community Labor United (CLU) — an organization that brings

community and labor partners together to speak in one voice on issues affecting working families throughout Greater Boston. Nicole drove strategic campaigns with rigorous research and leadership that stabilized and strengthened low-paid families and communities of color.

Before that, Nicole worked as senior policy analyst for the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center, an independent research organization that produces nonpartisan policy research, analysis, and data-driven recommendations to improve the lives of low- and middle-income residents and strengthen the state's economy. Nicole wrote numerous reports focusing on family economic security and the state budget.

She has also worked for foundations, nonprofits, and state and local governments. She holds a Master of Public Policy from the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Villanova University. After graduating the Heller School, she returned in 2016 to serve as a board member on the Heller Alumni Association Board and served a term as President from July 2019-June 2022.