



**9th Annual**

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**Diversity and Social  
Justice Education  
Awards**

.....

**Spring 2021  
Virtual Program**



# Land Acknowledgement

We would like to begin today by recognizing and acknowledging that we are on the lands of the Peoria, Kaskaskia, Piankashaw, Wea, Miami, Mascoutin, Odawa, Sauk, Mesquaki, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Chickasaw Nations. These lands were the traditional territory of these Native Nations prior to their forced removal; these lands continue to carry the stories of these Nations and their struggles for survival and identity.

As a land-grant institution, the University of Illinois has a particular responsibility to acknowledge the peoples of these lands, as well as the histories of dispossession that have allowed for the growth of this institution for the past 150 years. We are also obligated to reflect on and actively address these histories and the role that this university has played in shaping them. This acknowledgement and the centering of Native peoples is a start as we move forward for the next 150 years.



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Florence Adibu

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# Director of the Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Relations



## **Shawna Patterson-Stephens**

Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Director for the Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Relations

Shawna Patterson-Stephens, Ph.D. serves as the Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs/Director of the Office for Inclusion and Intercultural Relations at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Shawna

previously held various positions at the University of Pennsylvania, Williams College, Michigan State University, Pennsylvania State University, and Florida State University. Her research interests include Black and Latinx issues in higher education, media influences in the postsecondary sector, and critical theory in higher educational contexts. She also experiments with various modes of knowledge dissemination to ensure scholarship remains accessible, evidenced through projects like the “Scholar Tea” podcast. Dr. Patterson-Stephens has published several works citing the experiences of Black women in higher education, and has collaborated on various articles exploring the state of diversity and inclusion in higher education. She is currently a co-PI in a national project examining the experiences of Black doctoral women in higher education (Black Women Doctoral Students). Finally, she is co-editor of the forthcoming volume, “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Higher Education”.



# Outstanding Award Winners

**OUTSTANDING  
FACULTY/STAFF** Dr. Michelle Cox  
Ruby Mendenhall

**OUTSTANDING  
ALUMNI** Dr. Lori West  
Rachel Storm

**OUTSTANDING  
GRADUATES** Kitan Akinosho  
Andrea Kunze  
Charlotte Prieu

**OUTSTANDING  
UNDERGRADUATES** Keyana Diaz  
Surabhi Kiran  
Sophie Luijten  
Maram Safi

**OUTSTANDING  
REGISTERED  
STUDENT  
ORGANIZATIONS** National Organization of Minority Architects:  
President Musa Muhammad  
Student National Medical Association:  
President Kitan Akinosho



# Outstanding Faculty/Staff Award Winner



## **Michelle Cox**

Extension Educator, 4H Youth  
Development

Dr. Michelle Cox is a 4-H Youth Development-Extension Educator for the University of Illinois- Urbana Champaign. She holds a Bachelor of Arts from Barat College, Lake Forest, IL., and a Master of Arts as well as a Doctor of Philosophy from Capella University in Minneapolis MN. With over 20 years of experience, Dr. Cox's vision encompasses providing individuals with affirming opportunities, experiences, and relationships that inspire success. Dr. Cox is a certified Real Colors trainer and a certified cultural competency facilitator. She is also co-author of "Her Voice: A Legacy of Modeling, Mentoring, and Othermothering."

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*"The question isn't who is going to let me;  
it's who is going to stop me."*

*~ Ayn Rand*

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From Dr. Michelle Cox:

"I would like to thank everyone that has taken up the charge for social justice. It is through our efforts that true change will come."



# Outstanding Faculty/Staff Award Winner



## Ruby Mendenhall

Associate Professor, African American Studies and Sociology  
Assistant Dean for Diversity and Democratization of Health Innovation,  
Carle Illinois College of Medicine

Ruby Mendenhall is a Professor in Sociology and African American Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She is the Assistant Dean at the Carle Illinois College of Medicine. Her research examines how gun violence affects Black mothers' mental and physical health. She currently leads the STEM Illinois Nobel Project, a program that provides students of color and other marginalized groups with computer science experiences and mentors.

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*Just like moons and like suns,  
With the certainty of tides,  
Just like hopes springing high,  
Still I'll rise...*

*Out of the huts of history's shame  
I rise  
Up from a past that's rooted in pain  
I rise  
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,  
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.*

*Leaving behind nights of terror and fear  
I rise  
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear  
I rise  
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,  
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.  
I rise  
I rise  
I rise.*

-Maya Angelou, Still I Rise

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From Ruby Mendenhall:

"I would like to thank the selection committee for such a wonderful and beautiful surprise in the midst of so much racial trauma. I am deeply honored and grateful. This award means a lot to me.

I would like to thank Kitan Akinosho (medical student at Carle Illinois College of Medicine) for nominating me in the midst of her very busy schedule. I appreciate her support."

# Outstanding Faculty/Staff Award Winner



## **Rachel Lauren Storm, PhD**

Arts and Culture Coordinator  
City of Urbana

Dr. Rachel Lauren Storm has worked in education, advocacy, arts, and cultural work for over 15 years, focusing on broad issues of diversity, inclusion, and cultural development. Prior to her role as the City of Urbana's Arts and Culture Coordinator, she received her B.A. in International Studies and M.Ed. in Educational Policy, and Ph.D. in Educational Policy, Organization and Leadership from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. While there, she worked full-time as the Assistant Director of the Women's Resources Center in the Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Relations in Student Affairs, focused on issues related to gender-based violence, diversity and inclusion. Her work has included broad commitment to education and programs developed to address social inequity spanning race, ethnicity, class, gender identity, sexuality, ability, citizenship, religion, and culture. She worked collaboratively to launch the Feminist Activist Academy, the Women's Career Institute, the Campus Ecofeminism Summit, and the annual Feminist Film Festival. She taught intergroup dialogue within the Department of Educational Psychology and introductory courses in Gender and Women's Studies at the University of Illinois, while being actively involved in local nonprofit boards and community projects. In her role as the City of Urbana's Arts and Culture Coordinator, she facilitated the revision of its name, mission, and vision to better reflect an explicit commitment to diversity and inclusion, as well as launched the City's Poet Laureate and Youth Poet Laureate Programs, the Belongings Exhibition archiving the stories of local immigrants, the Young Artist's Studio arts education initiative for children 5 and up, and listening sessions on disability and the arts. She is an advocate for leadership as a practice that lives at the intersection of interpersonal and structural issues.

# Outstanding Faculty/Staff Award Winner



## **Lori M. West, Ph.D.**

Academic Advisor and Coordinator of International Student Programs, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Grainger College of Engineering

Dr. Lori M. West is an alumnus from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the College of Education! Throughout her career she has taught, mentored, and supported K-20 students historically marginalized from equitable educational opportunities. Since 1999, she has served in Academic and Student Affairs at Illinois including work with TRIO Ronald E. McNair Scholars, under-represented students pursuing STEM majors, and diversity education Intragroup and Intergroup dialogue courses. Throughout the community she supports women in transition, families impacted by substance abuse, and voter registration. As a researcher, Dr. West engages interdisciplinary histories of equity, excellence, and leadership. Her lifelong motto is "Stay encouraged!"

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*"But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."  
(1 Corinthians 15:57)*

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From Lori M. West, Ph.D.:

"I am truly thankful and graciously accept the 2021 Diversity and Social Justice Education Alumni Award from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Relations. To Teryl Brewster, a former colleague in the Office of Minority Student Affairs and current leader in social justice education, thank you, for this nomination! To those for whom and with whom I serve, thank you! Whether mentoring, teaching, supporting, or leading, I have sought to educate and encourage others. Today you encouraged me! THANK YOU!"

# Outstanding Graduate Award Winner



## **Kitan Akinosho**

Rising 4th Year Medical Student, Medical Degree (M.D.)

It has been my honor to help stand up the SNMA Collective, that house affinity and community service clubs aimed at helping to increase and foster racial and ethnic minorities in medicine, as well as local underserved communities. This work began before the renewed national discourse on race relations in our country, and proved to be incredibly timely; taking on flexible directions when needed. From creation of mentorship groups, to pursuing funding, to organizing

events, and partnering with other affinity groups, the work has been an uphill battle. However, I am eternally grateful to the support along the way.

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*"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."*

*-Maya Angelou*

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From Maram Safi:

"First, I want to thank our amazing executive board and faculty advisor for being invaluable members in this work and helping me stand up the SNMA Collective and being a resource through it all. Second, I want to thank local Physicians and others within the University of Illinois community for their assistance in this work. I also want to give a special thanks to Assoc. Dean of Student Affairs Danny Teraguchi, who has been there from the beginning, and has continued to support the myriad of ideas I bring to him on a frequent basis. Finally, I want to thank God and my family for giving me strength and sanity on a daily basis, and supporting me through it all."

# Outstanding Graduate Award Winner



## **Andrea J Kunze**

Doctoral Candidate, Educational Psychology  
(Third Year)

I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Psychology department, and I work actively with faculty and students across campus in the college of veterinary medicine, and departments of bioengineering, and educational psychology. I

have particular interests in how multimedia and hypermedia can help motivate prosocial attitudes and behaviors, such as anti-racism and environmental sustainability. My research is often framed in a social justice and interdisciplinary psychology lens (e.g., education, cognitive, and social) using a combination of qualitative and quantitative research and evaluation approaches. I'm particularly interested in evaluating and designing informal learning environments and activities, such as games, that can promote sustained engagement with emotionally evocative topics.

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*"In order to succeed, people need a sense of self-efficacy, to struggle together with resilience to meet the inevitable obstacles and inequities of life."*

*-Albert Bandura*

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From Andrea Kunze:

"I would like to thank the academic community at UIUC -- without your support, enthusiasm, and endless opportunities my success today would not have been possible."



# Outstanding Graduate Award Winner



## Charlotte Prieu

Ph.D. candidate in French  
Linguistics

Charlotte Prieu is a PhD candidate in the Department of French and Italian. Since joining the university six years ago, Charlotte has been

involved in social justice activities in the Champaign-Urbana area both on and off campus. She is committed to feminism, racial justice, inclusivity, and the fight against queerphobia. Her dissertational research and other academic interests focus on discourses around racial labeling and gender-inclusive writing in French on social media.

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*"I tried to be a joyful feminist, but I was angry."  
- Agnès Varda*

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# Outstanding Undergraduate Award Winner



## Keyana Diaz

Sophomore, Human  
Development and Family Studies

My name is Keyana Diaz, I am from Waukegan, Illinois, and I am a sophomore at UIUC. I am currently majoring in human development and family studies, with a concentration in child and adolescent development. I created the five-part webinar series Anti-Racism: Awareness and Allyship with two of my allies, because I wanted to amplify the voices of the Black community and educate others on to help them. I do believe that education is a powerful tool that we can use to spread valuable information that could make a difference in other people's lives and inspire others to create change.

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*"I have come to believe over and over again that what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood."*

— Audre Lorde

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From Keyana Diaz:

"I would like to thank my two allies, Aurora Flores-Gaytan and Xitlali Ramirez, for helping me guide this webinar series; and I would also like to thank Waukegan to College for giving me a platform to have my series on. I will never stop fighting for the Black community; and I will continue to be an advocate for social justice and anti-racism until I am no longer here. We will be seen and heard, and changes will be made for our generations to come. I am rooting for everybody Black."

# Outstanding Undergraduate Award Winner



## **Surabhi Kiran**

Year: Junior

Major: Developmental Psychology

Hello! My name is Surabhi. I am (surprisingly) a Junior about to graduate this May with a degree in Psychology. I am from West Windsor, NJ (about 10 minutes away from Princeton). I will be attending grad school at the U of I this upcoming Fall so get ready to see me around for another year and a

half. Some fun facts about me are that I speak 4 languages, I lived in India for 9 years, I have never lived in the same place for more than 5 years, and I love to crochet. I love the conversations we have surrounding social justice and I am excited to continue learning and having these conversations throughout my time here and in my career field.

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*"Spread love everywhere you go. Let no one come to you  
without leaving happier."*

*- Mother Teresa*

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From Surabhi Kiran:

"I would like to acknowledge Teryl Brewster for nominating me and guiding me through my journey navigating through social justice and what that looks like on campus and in society. I truly appreciate all the help and guidance that I have received and having these opportunities to learn and grow these past couple of years has been nothing but amazing."

# Outstanding Undergraduate Award Winner



## **Sophie Isolde Luijten**

Junior, Global Studies and Spanish

Sophie Luijten is a junior in Global Studies and Spanish, with a concentration in Environmental Sustainability and Social Responsibility. She wishes to support disadvantaged populations and promote sustainable, equitable development. She has served as a Spanish Translator for the Immigration Project; Integration Plan Intern for the New American Welcome Center; research assistant for the Safe Global Water Institute; and on behalf of various community projects related to homelessness, food security, and housing. She has produced research on climate change, women's security, and women's empowerment in the Global South. Recently, she cofounded VermiCULTure, a vermicomposting program in Champaign-Urbana, which empowers students to compost by distributing free vermicomposting kits and educational content.

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*"You may never know what results come of your actions, but if you do nothing, there will be no results."*

— Mahatma Gandhi

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From Sophie Isolde Luijten:

"I am honored and grateful to be recognized by Diversity and Social Justice Education, which organizes such important campus programs to elevate inclusion throughout the community."



# Outstanding Undergraduate Award Winner



## **Maram M. Safi**

Junior, Electrical Engineering

Maram Safi is a student, peer, daughter, and sister. She is the current president of Women in Electrical and Computer Engineering at UIUC, where she is completing her undergraduate degree in Electrical Engineering. A Palestinian, first-generation immigrant, Maram had always been interested in the intersectionality of feminism and higher education. She strives to advocate for women in STEM and other marginalized groups in order to create equitable communities for all.

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*"I have learned that a woman can be a fighter, a freedom fighter, a political activist, and that she can fall in love, and be loved, she can be married, have children, be a mother... Revolution must mean life also; every aspect of life."*

—Leila Khaled

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From Maram Safi:

"I would like to thank Joan Brown for nominating me for this award and her seemingly endless support. I would also like to thank my friends and family, particularly my family, you are the light at the end of any tunnel."

# Outstanding Registered Student Organization Award Winner



## **National Organization of Minority Architects**

President Musa Muhammad, 2nd-Year Graduate, Master of Architecture, Master of Science in Civil Engineering (Construction Management focus)

Musa Muhammad is a 2nd-year graduate student pursuing joint Master's degrees in Architecture and Civil Engineering (Construction Management focus) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with an interest in the design, construction, repair, restoration, and rehabilitation of residential buildings in predominantly black and brown, low socioeconomic status communities throughout Chicago. Musa is a Black Muslim and is from Country Club Hills, IL. In his free time, he enjoys drawing, painting, reading, dancing, singing, and roller skating.

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*"Knowledge of one's identity, one's self, community, nation, religion, and God, is the true meaning of resurrection, while ignorance of it signifies hell."*

*- Elijah Muhammad*

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From Musa Muhammad:

"I would like to thank Allah (God), my family and loved ones, and all friends, colleagues, mentors, and professors who have supported me in any capacity and helped me grow into the person I am today. I would like to give a special thank you to La Tanya Cobb, Associate Director of Student Services for the Illinois School of Architecture, for nominating me for this award."



# Outstanding Registered Student Organization Award Winner



## **Student National Medical Association (SNMA) Collective**

President Kitan Akinosho, Rising 4th Year Medical Student, M.D. Program

The SNMA Collective was setup within the Carle Illinois College of Medicine to increase and foster underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities in medicine. The Collective houses the SNMA Chapter, an annual student-led Wellness Fair, and soon a chapter of the Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA). To that end, the Collective has pursued 4 main themes: (1) community building and mentorship, (2) investment in retention & professional development (PD), (3) recruitment and pathway programs, and (4) research and cultural competency. We have funded PD opportunities, started mentorship groups, and hosted numerous volunteer and cultural events - amongst many other activities. We are just getting started, and excited to continue this work.

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*The Student National Medical Association (SNMA) is committed to supporting current and future underrepresented racial and ethnic minority medical students, addressing the needs of under-served communities, and increasing the number of clinically excellent, culturally competent and socially conscious physicians.*

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From Kitan Akinosho:

"The Student National Medical Association (SNMA) Collective at Carle Illinois is honored to receive this award for our efforts to increase the diversity of underrepresented minorities (URMs) in medicine, while also fostering current URM success. As President, I also want to thank our Vice-President Aaron Brown, Social/Events Chair Brittany Vill, Secretary/Historian Andrea Hall, Treasurer Jermaine Chambers, and Volunteers Chair Anders Gould. Also special thanks to our Assoc. Dean of Student Affairs Danny Teraguchi and our faculty Advisor Ruby Mendenhall."

# Honorable Mentions

**FACULTY/STAFF** Joan Brown  
Keith Garrett  
Sarah Isaacs  
Jessica Howard

**GRADUATE** Amie Baumeister

**UNDERGRADUATE** Judy Chiang  
Krys Madel  
Hadiya Jagroop  
Ciara Johnson

# Honorable Mentions



## Joan Brown

Academic Advisor, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering

Thank you to incredible colleagues and role models I have been lucky enough to know and learn from over the years: Marie-Christine Brunet, Jenny Amos, Chris Schmitz, Sakshi Srivastava, Lynford Goddard, and Brian Farber.

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## Keith Garrett

Unit Manager 4, Dining Services  
(no picture available)

"In the time that I have known and worked with Keith, he has always remained impartial as a unit manager. Despite the social issues, struggles, or politics that seem to mire the waters we all delve into, Keith approaches every situation and every staff member with a calm and collected demeanor.

Understanding is a word I often hear when people are referring to Mr. Garret. He simply is a very understanding individual who exhibits an air of professionalism both on and off the clock. He can always be counted on to address an issue with fairness, understanding, and discretion. I have worked with him in times of racial and political strife, but Keith's focus on our staff and ultimate goal as a department of making everyone feel included ceases to prevail when any sort of divisiveness rears its ugly head. Please strongly consider Mr. Keith Garret for this award."

--Dale Bargon

# Honorable Mentions

## Jessica Howard

Office Support Specialist  
The Career Center

I would like to thank my friends and colleagues who have bravely engaged in open, real, and safe conversations. I would also like to thank my colleagues at The Career Center for their support and encouragement, and allowing me the trust and freedom to explore the topic of inclusive attire in the workplace.



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## Sarah Isaacs

Project Coordinator and Librarian  
Illinois Early Intervention Clearinghouse  
Department of Special Education

Thank you, Dr. Meghan Burke for nominating me. Working with you has brought out the best in me. Your dedication to advocacy and family rights is an inspiration.



# Honorable Mentions



## Amie Baumeister

Graduate Assistant

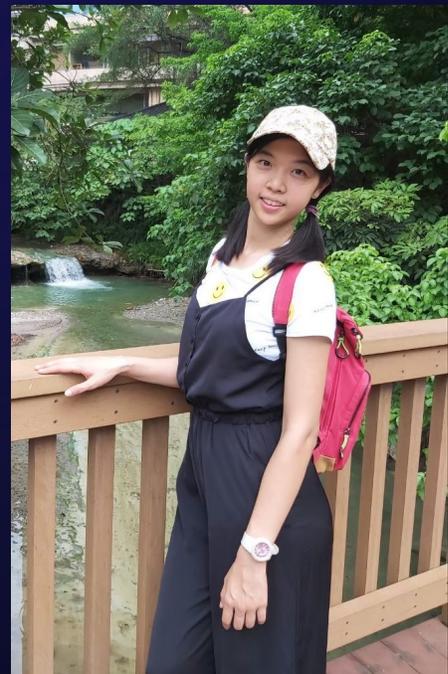
Amie Baumeister is a life long learner with a passion for social justice. She will be graduating with her Master's in Education with a major in Diversity & Equity in Education this May 2021. She graduated from UIUC in 2017 with a degree in English secondary education and took her passion for equity to the classroom where she was able to introduce diversity education into the school curriculum. In the last 8 years Amie has acted as an advocate and an ally on campus through a variety of programs with the OIIR including the First Year Campus Acquaintance Rape Education program, the I-Connect program, the Racial Justice Allies and Advocates program, the Coalition of Teachers for Social Justice, and more. Amie is committed to intersectional feminism and anti-racist work. As an educator, Amie believes that we all have much learning to do on our road to an equitable future.

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## Judy (Hsin-Hui) Chiang

Mathematics Major and Chemistry Minor |  
Class of 2023

First of all, I would like to thank OIIR for encouraging my effort in social justice promotion with the award. I am grateful for how every student and staff in the Office of Minority Student Association and University Housing is creating a more inclusive community for each individual. Lastly, I would like to thank my dearest mother, Pin-Yu Cheng, for being not only the best mother in the world but also the strongest and kindest woman that I could have ever known.



# Honorable Mentions

## Hadiya Jagroop

Community Health  
Class of 2023

"Thank you to my lifelong best friend, Ashley Winters, for nominating me for this award. Forever appreciate of your unwavering love and support for me.

Also, thank you for the selection committee for the acknowledgement!



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## Ciara Lauren Johnson

4th year Undergraduate (Senior) -  
Bachelor's of Science in Integrative Biology  
with minor in Journalism and Certificate in  
Technology Commercialization



"I would like to thank the University of Illinois for giving me an opportunity to take a stand for Diversity & Social Justice Education. I would especially like to thank the Technology and

Entrepreneur Center for giving me a platform to share the power of diversity of thought and the beauty of inclusion through the multiple diversity initiatives that the TEC community has focused on this semester."

# Educational Psychology (EPSY) 203

**SOCIAL ISSUES** Scott Bidner  
**GROUP DIALOGUES** April Carter  
Joe Cross  
Teresa Davenport  
Robyn Deterding  
Hattie Holtapp  
Molly McLay  
Dr. Eugene Moore  
Artinese Myrick  
Chaya Sandler  
Charles Young



# Social Justice Educator Paraprofessional Program

Social Justice Educator Paraprofessionals are students who develop and facilitate workshops and training to provide their peers opportunities to dialogue about social justice issues.

I-Journey workshops are peer-developed, peer led workshops covering a variety of topics. Facilitated by pool of trained student-facilitators, I-Journey workshops explore issues of social identity, exclusion/inclusion, and being an ally.

Student-facilitators work with requestors to adapt, modify, or create a workshop to meet the needs of the specific groups.



# Social Justice Educator Paraprofessionals

Yulyssa Agustin  
Jackson Esela  
Jaquelin Hernandez  
Brooke Ingram  
Surabhi Kiran  
Allison Nichols  
Jernesha Walls  
Chenhao Zhao



# I-Connect Facilitators

Anuraag Agarwal

Ariella Alibudbud

Tamika Bobo

Liv Borawski

Karina Cordova

Julia Dempsey

Ivy Flores

Lilian Galvez

Anthony Gavrilchenko

Athena Gerousis

Alison Green

Katie Han

Eleanor Humphreys

Hadiya Jagroop

Surabhi Kiran

Samantha Lai

Alice Lam

Diem Le

Praise Lee

Mallory Mahen

Julie Matuszewski

Chantel Noggle

Kathryn Osepek

Jordan Payne

Morgan Payne

Lauren Purchase

Marissa Ruiz

Soleil Sanchez

Aditya Sayal

Anna Sellas

Sid Veeravalli

Valerie Villaflor

Faithe Wenger

Kelsey Woodbury

Solah Yoo

# Special Recognition

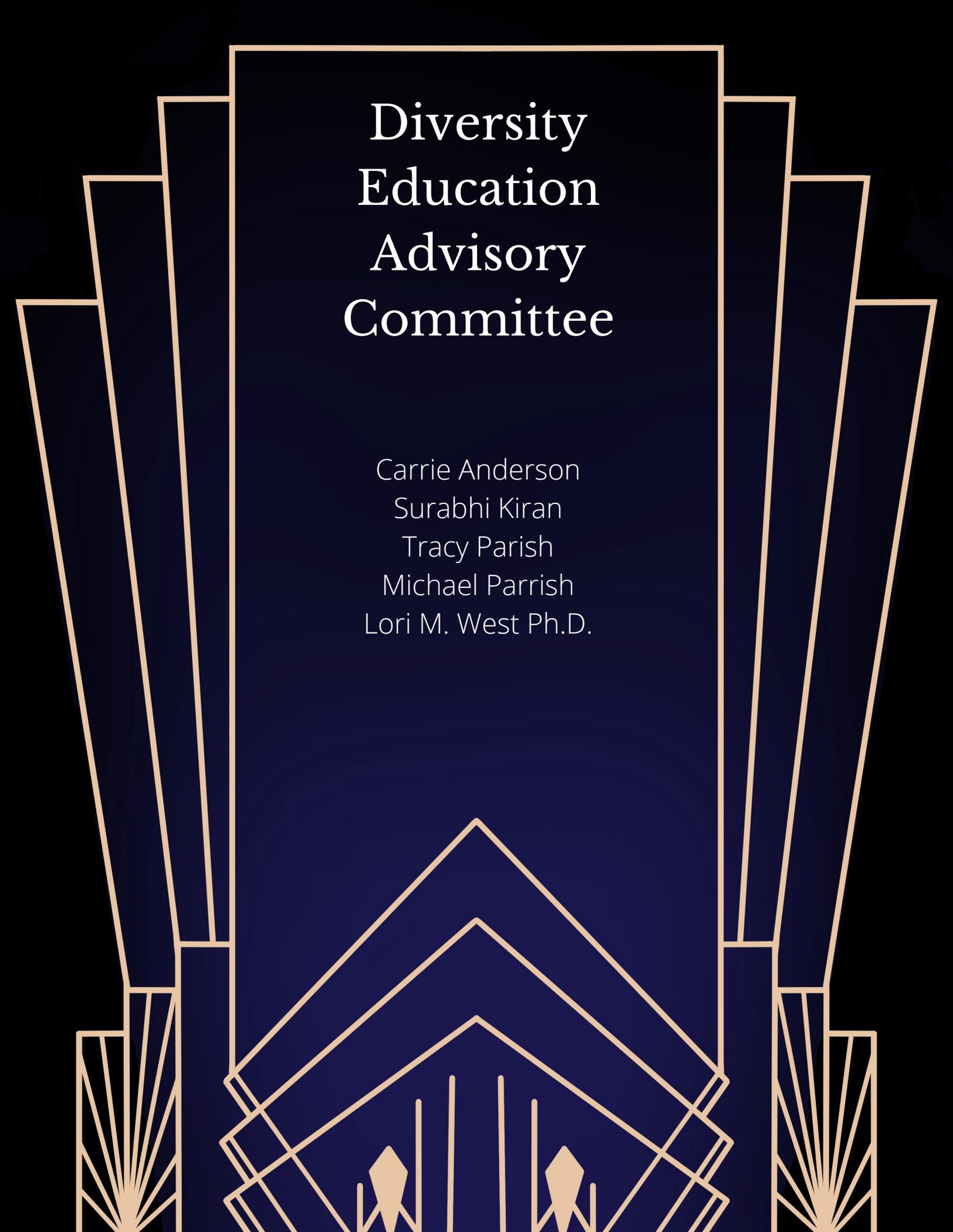
**OIIR DIRECTOR** Shawna Patterson-  
Stephens

**DSJE DIRECTOR OF  
ASSESSMENT** Joycelyn Landrum-  
Brown

**DSJE DIRECTOR OF  
PEDAGOGY** Joe Minarik

**DSJE GRADUATE  
ASSISTANT** Amie Baumeister





# Diversity Education Advisory Committee

Carrie Anderson  
Surabhi Kiran  
Tracy Parish  
Michael Parrish  
Lori M. West Ph.D.



**A special thank you for joining us for  
the 2021 Diversity and Social Justice  
Education Awards!**

<https://oii.illinois.edu/diversityed>