CLASS OF 2020 FELLOWS
THE CHICAGO URBAN LEAGUE IMPACT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO BOOTH SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

IMPACT
Leadership Development Program

Chicago Urban League
The mission of IMPACT is to create a pipeline of Informed, Motivated, Perceptive, Authentic, Connected Talent that will form the next generation of African-American leaders available to fill critical roles in the Chicago community and the business, public, and nonprofit sectors.

OUR PROGRAM ELEMENTS

One-on-One MENTORSHIP
Each IMPACT Fellow is paired with a senior leader who serves as a mentor. Mentors provide guidance in areas such as relationship mapping, work-life balance, and board engagement.

Individual LEADERSHIP ASSESSMENTS
Fellows take DISC and Hogan assessments. These assessments improve Fellows’ awareness of their leadership styles and interpersonal communications preferences.

CURRENT ISSUES Modules
Current issue modules equip Fellows with a toolbox of facts and ideas that they can utilize when making critical decisions that affect others in their city and community.

ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP Modules
Led by Chicago Booth faculty, Academic Leadership Modules equip Fellows with a framework for continued development. Topics include: ethics, negotiations, power and influence in organizations, decision making, and action and insight skills.

HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES Modules
An effective leader in Chicago should be aware of the moments that have shaped the city. Fellows learn about African-American history in Chicago and the roles and impact of African Americans in Chicago politics.

LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP Speaker Series
Lessons in Leadership features senior leaders who share their stories of triumphs, challenges, and lessons learned in their careers. Past speakers include: Kim Foxx, Andrea Zopp, Arne Duncan, John Rogers, Kurt Summers, Brett Hart, and Mellody Hobson.

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Message from Interim President and CEO Barbara A. Lumpkin

On behalf of the Chicago Urban League Board of Directors and our entire staff, I am delighted to welcome the Class of 2020 Fellows to our IMPACT Leadership Development Program.

IMPACT transforms lives. We know this not only because our Fellows tell us so, but also because we see it in announcements from organizations across Chicago that have tapped IMPACT alumni for leadership positions. As the program enters its sixth year, it is gratifying to know that it is accomplishing what it set out to do. IMPACT is developing a robust pipeline of African-American professionals who are well prepared to lead in Chicago's private, public and nonprofit sectors.

Increasingly, employers understand that diversity and inclusion matter. Yet, leadership diversity remains a challenge. According to Chicago United, African Americans represent only 3% of C-suite executives at Chicago's Top 50 publicly traded companies. As calls for inclusion grow, the League's 2019 State of Black Chicago report notes that increasing diversity among leadership ranks will be vital for organizations seeking to retain talent and even increase profitability.

The Chicago Urban League applauds those organizations that recognize this and are helping emerging leaders maximize their potential by sponsoring them for IMPACT. Since IMPACT began, 170 Fellows have gone through the program. We envision being able to serve hundreds more, and we are grateful for the many partners who support the Chicago Urban League in this effort.

We offer a special thank you to the University of Chicago Booth School of Business, whose commitment as our educational partner has been critical. We are also grateful for the generous financial support provided by Chicago Community Trust, the Field Foundation of Illinois, the MacArthur Foundation, and US Bank. A heartfelt thank you also goes to our advisory council and the influential leaders who have agreed to mentor this year's Fellows, and to Mesirow Financial for hosting our opening reception.

To our Class of 2020 Fellows, thank you for stepping up to invest in your future and in the future of Chicago. Prepare to be transformed.

In service to the movement,

Barbara A. Lumpkin
Interim President and CEO

Message from Vice President and Executive Director Mavis C. Laing

Since the IMPACT Leadership Development Program began in 2014, selecting Fellows has continued to be rigorous and rewarding each year. Rigorous because the process is highly competitive. Rewarding because each new cohort of individual achievers develops into a dynamic, connected group of African-American leaders.

This year, we welcome 37 new Fellows into IMPACT. Over the next nine months, they will take part in an intensive, multifaceted program that includes modules on academic leadership, current issues, and historical and political perspectives that have shaped Chicago. Through our Lessons in Leadership speaker series and one-on-one mentoring, they will gain insights from some of Chicago's most accomplished African-American business and civic leaders. They will also receive personal assessments of their own leadership styles.

We also welcome 26 organizations that are sponsoring Fellows for the first time this year. You will not regret this decision. You join more than 100 corporate, nonprofit, and government entities that have supported the professional development of emerging African-American leaders through IMPACT. We know that, over the course of the program, our Fellows become more confident leaders, who take innovative ideas and practices back to their workplaces.

I have had the honor of guiding IMPACT since its inception, and I have witnessed first-hand the individual growth of many of our Fellows. I have also heard countless inspiring stories of ways participating in the program has changed their lives. For instance, since completing the program, dozens of our alumni have received promotions, taken on roles of increasing responsibility, joined boards, or been recognized for their civic contributions. One thing I have heard time and time again is that our Fellows gain a new network of support and counsel as they build professional bonds that extend across sectors and across cohorts.

Those relationships are maintained through the IMPACT Alumni Association (IAA), which focuses on continued professional development and community engagement for our program graduates. The IAA is working to inspire social transformation that will have a lasting impact on the face of leadership in Chicago.

Before long, the Class of 2020 IMPACT Fellows will join this group, and I am delighted to introduce them on the following pages. They represent diverse backgrounds, interests and sectors. As always, they are talented, accomplished, and eager to grow in their careers. I am confident that each of them will thrive and become stronger assets for their organizations and for our city.

Again, thank you to all of our partners and supporters who make IMPACT possible.

Sincerely,

Mavis C. Laing
Vice President and Executive Director, IMPACT
CLASS OF 2020 FELLOWS

Annie-Beryl Akuamoah
Customer Field Service Manager, Peoples Gas – WES Energy Group

Annie-Beryl Akuamoah serves as a Customer Field Service manager in Gas Operations for Peoples Gas. With more than 13 years of experience in engineering, gas operations, and management, she is responsible for the Chicago North District and oversees the daily customer service requests to activate natural gas delivery to customer homes. Annie is also responsible for regulatory compliance workload for gas pipelines. She serves as a committee member on the career and development group for the African American Business Group and the women’s development network at Peoples Gas. Annie loves to sing and is a music leader at her church.

J’ai Brown
HR Business Partner, BMO Wealth Management U.S.

J’ai Brown provides strategic insight and support to the senior leadership team at BMO Wealth Management across all aspects of Human Resources, including employee relations, diversity and inclusion, talent acquisition, compensation, organizational design and career development. Additionally, she is National Chair for BMO’s Black Professionals Network U.S. Previously, J’ai served as the Diversity Recruitment Advisor, North America. Before joining BMO, she worked in HR and Claims at Allstate Insurance Company.

Elsa Andrianifahanana
Associate, Jones Day

Elsa Andrianifahanana is an attorney in the Labor & Employment Group of Jones Day. She represents clients in various employment matters, including anti-discrimination and wage & hour litigation. She also provides counsel on the employment aspects of cross-border transactions.

Kelly V. Carter, Esq.
Associate Managing Director, CIBC US

Kelly is Associate Managing Director, State and Local Tax (SALT) for CIBC US, responsible for SALT-based strategic planning initiatives and ensuring compliance with all SALT-related regulations.

Jereme R. Braggs
Senior Program Quality Engineer, Gogo Inflight

Jereme Braggs supports Gogo LLC as a Senior Program Quality Engineer. Holding more than 10 years of experience in the aviation technical operations and quality organizations, Jereme has developed foundations in the commercial aviation sector, defense contract aviation sector and the expansive inflight entertainment sector. His key responsibilities include Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Boeing and Airbus hardware conformities, engineering prototype hardware validation and onsite hardware installation support.

J’ai Brown received an MBA and Bachelor of Science in HR Management and General Management from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and has her PHR and SHRM-CP designations. She is the Workshop Chair for Chicago SHRM and mentors youth with Posse Chicago and Chicago Scholars. She was awarded the 2019 Black Queens of Chicago, 2018 Wall Street in the Black Future Leader, and 2016 Chicago Scholars 35 under 35 awards. J’ai resides in Bronzeville with her husband, Frank, and daughter, Kylee.

Crystal T. Clark, MD, MSce
Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health Sciences and Obstetrics and Gynecology, Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine

Dr. Crystal Clark is a psychiatrist, researcher, and educator who specializes in women’s health. Her novel studies investigating psychiatric medications during pregnancy are informing medical practice. She is a director of the Perinatal and Women’s Mental Health Fellowship. She is also the rising president of Marcé of North America, a national perinatal mental health organization.

Kelly has a passion for people and a commitment to mentorship and education. An avid supporter of the arts, she serves on the Associate Board of Lawyers for the Creative Arts, a not-for-profit pro bono legal assistance organization. In an effort to increase diversity within the legal community, she serves as a bar exam tutor, providing supplemental exam process management for underrepresented law students.

Kelly loves exploring Chicago museums, galleries, and the restaurants in her West Loop neighborhood.

Dr. Clark’s mental health expertise has contributed to newsworthy reporting from media outlets including NPR, the New York Times, and Chicago Tonight. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Northwestern University and her Master of Science and Doctor of Medicine from the University of Louisville. She completed her psychiatry training at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, Maryland. She resides in the North Kenwood neighborhood in Chicago with her accomplished husband, Dramaine Irions.
Tiana Conley serves as Vice President of Global Brands for the Kellogg Company, where she is responsible for the $3 billion global brand portfolio including Pringles, Special K and Kellogg’s. Prior to joining Kellogg, she was marketing director of global tequila at Beam Suntory, where she led a portfolio of five brands and oversaw operations at the Casa Sauza Heritage Center in Tequila, Mexico.

Nicholas Cummings serves as a Chief Attorney for the Chicago Transit Authority’s Law Department, where he is responsible for complex litigation of personal injury cases. Prior to joining the CTA, Nicholas was a Cook County Assistant State’s Attorney. He currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Cook County Bar Association, where he chairs the Judicial Evaluation Committee.

Nathalie Essex serves as Vice President of State Funding for Teach America. She is a graduate of Spelman College and St. Louis University School of Law. Nathalie loves college football, traveling, and reading.

Ashley Floyd is responsible for crafting strategic initiatives, communications and fund development to support the overall visibility, impact and programming for LINK Unlimited Scholars, Chicago’s oldest scholarship and mentoring program exclusively serving African-American students. Over 10 years, Ashley has worked in diverse segments of nonprofit management, including STEM education, arts and culture, and jazz music. She previously held positions with prominent organizations in her hometown of New Orleans and in Chicago, including the New Orleans Ballet Association and the Museum of Science and Industry. She serves as membership co-chair for the Big Shoulders Fund’s Chairman’s Advisory Council and is a member of the Auditorium Theater’s Auxiliary Board and Chicago Women in Philanthropy. Ashley received her B.F.A. in Dance Performance/Choreography from the University of Southern Mississippi, M.A. from the University of New Orleans, and M.B.A. (specializing in supply chain management) from Governors State University. She resides in Chicago with her husband, Derrick Manuel, and their dog, Miles Davis.

Kenneth Gilkes, Jr. serves as a Senior Analyst in the Business and Economic Incentives Group for Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL). Kenneth Gilkes, Jr., is responsible for real estate site selection, specific to multi-state comparisons of statutory and discretionary incentives, calculating estimated incentives based on project parameters, economic analysis, overall project execution, and strategy.

Christina Harris serves as Director of Land Use and Planning for the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC). Christina Harris works across MPC initiatives to focus on the intersection of planning, development, land use and open space and to consider how these issues impact stormwater management and water use, transportation and mobility, housing and community development.

Prior to joining MPC, Christina practiced landscape architecture and urban planning, with a particular focus on integrating resident engagement into planning and landscape frameworks. As a landscape architect, she worked on projects at a range of scales, from managing neighborhood plans to detail design for parks. Several of her projects have won awards from local chapters of the American Society of Landscape Architects. She is currently active in BlackSpace Chicago. Christina received her master’s degree in landscape architecture from Harvard University and her bachelor’s degree from Princeton University. Originally from the East Coast, Christina has lived in Chicago for more than 10 years.

Ashley Floyd is responsible for crafting strategic initiatives, communications and fund development to support the overall visibility, impact and programming for LINK Unlimited Scholars, Chicago’s oldest scholarship and mentoring program exclusively serving African-American students. Over 10 years, Ashley has worked in diverse segments of nonprofit management, including STEM education, arts and culture, and jazz music. She previously held positions with prominent organizations in her hometown of New Orleans and in Chicago, including the New Orleans Ballet Association and the Museum of Science and Industry. She serves as membership co-chair for the Big Shoulders Fund’s Chairman’s Advisory Council and is a member of the Auditorium Theater’s Auxiliary Board and Chicago Women in Philanthropy. Ashley received her B.F.A. in Dance Performance/Choreography from the University of Southern Mississippi, M.A. from the University of New Orleans, and M.B.A. (specializing in supply chain management) from Governors State University. She resides in Chicago with her husband, Derrick Manuel, and their dog, Miles Davis.

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Kelwin Harris
Director of Outreach and Engagement, Office of Cook County Assessor

Kelwin Harris is a city planner dedicated to creating equitable communities and empowering people who have historically been excluded from connectivity. Prior to his current role as Director of Outreach and Engagement for the Office of Cook County Assessor Fritz Kaegi, Kelwin was a senior outreach planner with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), where he translated policy and dense data into issues families care about and discuss around the kitchen table. Kelwin has served the Chicago community for years in numerous roles. He led social services, economic development, violence prevention, and nutrition and financial interventions in the Auburn Gresham neighborhood as director of a nonprofit. He also served in the administration of Mayor Richard M. Daley. Kelwin is a member of the Board of Acero Schools and is a graduate of Cornell University and the Harvard University Graduate School of Design. To unplug, Kelwin enjoys reading, traveling, and curating ‘90s Hip Hop music.

Corey Haynes
Sales Manager, CDW LLC

Corey Haynes is an Academy Sales Manager, covering the Corporate West and SMB Central segments for CDW Direct, LLC. He is responsible for enriching the CDW culture through new coworker engagement and for developing future sellers by enhancing their natural skillsets, uncovering new business opportunities, and generating strategic relationships with partners and clients in current and emerging markets. Additionally, he serves as Marketing Chair of CDW’s business resource group, Be:U: Black Excellence Unlimited. Corey is an avid learner and loves the outdoors. Corey also serves as a mentor and divides his free time between volunteering and playing with dogs. He currently resides on the West Side of Chicago in Logan Square.

Latoya Hughes
Supervisor, Community Justice Centers, Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office

Latoya Hughes has more than 17 years of legal experience. In her current role, she manages a team of attorneys and staff who focus on the development and implementation of crime prevention programming, increasing engagement and collaborations between the Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office and members of the community as well as the prosecution of crimes of particular significance to the community. Prior to joining the Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office, Latoya worked as an Assistant Public Guardian, advocating for the rights of children in the child welfare system. She volunteers as a mentor and is a member of the Chicago Chapter of the National Black Prosecutors Association. Latoya is a graduate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Sociology as well as a Juris Doctor from the University of Illinois College of Law. Latoya resides in South Suburban Cook County with her son, Isaiah.

Michael Jones
Human Resources Manager, Community and Diversity Programs, Rush University Medical Center

Michael Jones has more than eight years of strategic human capital management, process improvement and data centric business management experience. Michael is responsible for building and leading Rush’s Corporate Social Responsibility function as it relates to local hiring initiatives, which aim to hire and retain individuals from communities that have been disinvested in throughout Chicago. Michael also oversees Rush’s campus recruitment, veteran recruitment and individuals with disabilities recruitment strategies. Michael takes a proactive and purposeful approach to building strong talent networks that help to create long-term value and importance to Rush. One of the things he enjoys most about his role at Rush is being able to help community members rebuild and build out their future success through hiring. Michael holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of Illinois at Chicago and a master’s degree from Northwestern University in Evanston.

Raquelle “Rocki” Hunter
Senior Director of Brand Development, Zoro.com

With more than 15 years of leadership experience in brand, marketing, and general management, Rocki Hunter is a results-driven marketing executive with diverse experience across a breadth of B2B and B2C brands, businesses, industries and categories. She is currently responsible for developing and managing the marketing and brand growth strategy, as well as media, advertising, digital, and content marketing for the entire Zoro business.

Tyeise Huntley Jones
Director of Network Support, Chicago Public Schools

Tyeise Huntley Jones serves as the Director of Network Support at Chicago Public Schools (CPS), where she provides strategic leadership support for Chiefs of Schools (area superintendents) who lead more than 600 schools in the district. Tyeise made a career switch into education in 2015 as a Broad Resident at CPS. Previously she held leadership roles in Brand Management at SC Johnson and Ferrara Candy Company. Tyeise holds a Bachelor of Science in Marketing and International Business from Georgetown University and an MBA from Cornell University. She recently earned a master’s degree in Educational Leadership from the Broad Residency. Tyeise is also heavily involved in diversity initiatives and recruitment at Cornell. Prior to attending business school, she worked in public relations, as well as in the utility industry as a marketing analyst at the Southern Company. Tyeise lives in Chicago with her husband, Daryl, and their two young sons, Justice and Chancellor.

Michael also oversees Rush’s campus recruitment, veteran recruitment and individuals with disabilities recruitment strategies. Michael takes a proactive and purposeful approach to building strong talent networks that help to create long-term value and importance to Rush. One of the things he enjoys most about his role at Rush is being able to help community members rebuild and build out their future success through hiring. Michael holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of Illinois at Chicago and a master’s degree from Northwestern University in Evanston.
Jason T. Mercer
National Account Manager, U.S. Customer Retail, Fonterra (USA)

Jason Mercer has more than 10 years of experience in strategy, finance and mergers & acquisitions-related roles within multinational organizations such as Lehman Brothers, Warner Music Group, Deloitte Consulting, TreeHouse Foods and now Fonterra USA. As National Account Manager for the U.S., Retail business for New Zealand-based Fonterra, a global dairy co-op, Jason leads Fonterra’s retail growth ambitions and brand awareness by solidifying partnerships with distribution outlets (grocers, eCommerce, etc.) across the U.S. Jason is treasurer for both the Chicago Area Morehouse Alumni Association and Stanford Black Alumni of Chicago Club. He is also a member of the Young Leadership Board for America Needs You (Illinois) and 100 Black Men of Chicago. Jason earned his MBA from Stanford Graduate School of Business and Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration from Morehouse College, where he was a four-year letterman in basketball and pledged Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. (Alpha Rho Chapter). Jason resides in Bronzeville with his wife, Lydia.

Brittany Merritt
Chicago Executive Director, Peer Health Exchange

Brittany Merritt is a nonprofit executive with experience in the public and private sectors, focusing on business development, program development and implementation. At Peer Health Exchange (PHE), she is primarily responsible for cultivating funding sources to support the growth of programs, managing and growing the Chicago Board of Directors, and providing fiscal and organizational oversight for PHE Chicago.

Michelle Mills Clement
CEO, Chicago Association of REALTORS®

Michelle Mills Clement is CEO of the Chicago Association of REALTORS®. She previously served as President and CEO of the Commercial Brokers Association and association executive for the Washington State Commercial Association of REALTORS®. She is an active member of Association Forum of Chicagoland and ASAE: The Center for Association Excellence, where she was recently named to their prestigious Fellows program. A native Chicagoan, she enjoys political campaign fundraising and volunteer management. She was integral in the election of Congresswoman Robin Kelly (D-IL) from Illinois’ 2nd Congressional District. In 2019, she was elected trustee for Bradley University and is active in the university’s Black Alumni Alliance. She is an active member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Michelle holds a bachelor’s degree in communication from Bradley University and a master’s degree in nonprofit management from DePaul University. She has a certificate in commercial real estate from the University of Washington and earned the Certified Association Executive (CAE) certification from ASAE.

Ashanti Morgan
Global Manager of Inclusion & Diversity, Hyatt Hotels Corp.

Ashanti Morgan is charged with supporting business and human resource leaders in ensuring Hyatt increases, develops and leverages a diverse workforce; sustains an environment of inclusion via a multitude of strategic initiatives; and generates impactful business results. Before taking on her current role as Global Manager of Inclusion & Diversity, she served as the Global Manager of Learning Strategy & Design at Hyatt.

Nakhiia Morrissette
Regulatory Counsel & Midwest Director of State Affairs, Solar Energy Industries Association

Nakhiia Morrissette serves as Regulatory Counsel & Midwest Director of State Affairs for the Solar Energy Industries Association, a national trade association dedicated to solar advancement, advocacy, and education. In her role, Nakhiia oversees regulatory and legislative matters involving the growing solar market in all Midwestern states. With nearly a decade of legal experience, Nakhiia previously worked for the Illinois Commerce Commission, in private practice at Schumacher Electric Corporation and as a law firm owner serving entrepreneurs.

Nubia Murray
Global Family Marketing Manager, McDonald’s Corporation

Nubia joined McDonald’s with over a decade of experience in sponsorship and partnership marketing, spearheading global sports properties in the US, Frankfurt, Singapore, South Africa and Sydney, Australia. At McDonald’s, Nubia contributes to the strategic oversight of the Family Experience in 120+ countries and 36,000 restaurants worldwide. She also tackles brand alignment and relationship management of McDonald’s nearly 30 different licensing partners, including Universal, DreamWorks, and Disney.

Nubia was previously a Vice President in JPMorgan Chase’s Sports & Entertainment Marketing division, and served the Chase Foundation on the Strategic Initiatives team. Nubia is an active member of Junior League Chicago and Delta Sigma Theta’s Chicago Alumnae Chapter. Crediting sports for developing her strong work ethic and competitive drive, Nubia competed in track and field at Howard University and is a proud finisher of five Olympicdistance triathlons and two New York City Marathons. Nubia is married to her elementary school sweetheart, Brian Davis.
Britney Robbins
Founder and CEO, The Gray Matter Experience

Britney Robbins founded The Gray Matter Experience in 2016 to help black high school students start socially conscious businesses. She has several years of experience working within Chicago’s business/tech community, including with some of Chicago’s top venture capital firms and incubators: Sandbox Industries, Lightbank and 1871.

She has been recognized as one of Ariel Investments’ 40 Under 40 Gamechangers and in Essence Magazine’s Woke 100. She was a finalist for 40 Under 40 Gamechangers and in Essence Magazine’s Power 100 People’s Choice Award and was featured on Fox32 and in Chicago Inno, BlackEntrepreneur.com, DNAInfo Chicago and Chicago Tribune. She has also spoken at several conferences and panels about the value of community development.

Britney is passionate about entrepreneurship, education, youth and community and believes in empowering others to use their passions and strengths to create opportunities. She is also a published children’s book author. Britney received her Bachelor of Arts in Rhetoric with an English minor from the University of Illinois in 2009.

Johnni Rodgers
Director of Marketing, The Laughing Cow, Bel Brands USA

With more than 10 years of experience in the consumer products industry, Johnni Rodgers has taken on the challenge of reinventing the historic flagship brand, The Laughing Cow, which is core to Bel Brands’ $4 billion global portfolio. Her responsibilities range from full-brand P&L responsibility to developing and executing the roadmap to accelerating growth in the U.S.

Prior to joining Bel, Johnni came from the Breakthrough Innovation group at Kraft Heinz.

Mironda Ross
Director, PricewaterhouseCoopers

Mironda Ross is a Deals Director in PricewaterhouseCoopers’ (PwC) Advisory practice. She has more than 10 years of consulting experience, helping her clients strategically and tactically execute on mergers and integrations, divestitures and carve-outs, and overall business transformation across a range of industries. Her expertise includes large-scale project management, human resources, change management and communications, Day 1 readiness, employee transitions and workforce planning.

When Mironda is not helping her clients realize the value of a deal, she proudly serves as a volunteer with Ladies of Virtue and a mentor with Chicago Scholars, organizations committed to empowering the next generation of leaders in underresourced or underrepresented communities. Mironda graduated with honors from the University of Alabama with a Bachelor of Science in Management Information Systems and Computer Science and an MBA from the University of Michigan’s Ross School of Business. Mironda currently resides in Bronzeville on the South Side of Chicago.

Melanie Sillas
Vice President of Development, World Business Chicago

Melanie Sillas has more than 10 years of experience in the public sector, and her more recent work has been in nonprofit fundraising. At World Business Chicago, she has primary responsibility for developing key external alliances through the cultivation and solicitation of corporate and foundation support, special events, as well as individual giving.

Prior to joining World Business Chicago, Melanie held fundraising roles at the University of Chicago, the Chicago Urban League, and Chicago Youth Centers. Melanie received a Bachelor of Arts in English from the University of Illinois in 2005, a Master of Science in Public Service Management from DePaul University in 2008, and a Certificate in Fundraising Management from North Park University in 2014. In her spare time, Melanie enjoys running half marathons and destination races, baking and volunteering with her sorority, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Alexandra “Alex” Sims
Founder and CEO, APS & Associates

Alex Sims believes that one’s birthplace and economic status should not disproportionately determine one’s life journey. A native of Metro Detroit, Alex majored in social policy at Northwestern University. Inspired by President Barack Obama’s social policies, she accepted an appointment to head his 2012 presidential campaign for Missouri. Following President Obama’s historic victory, she became a state coordinator with Organizing for Action before relocating to the Chicago headquarters. Alex later served as campaign manager for Kurt Summers’ race for City Treasurer and directed his impactful 77 in 77 platform. After Summers’ election, Alex was named Senior Advisor for the Treasurer’s Office and helped advance an agenda of financial equity.

The establishment of APS & Associates distills the remarkable skills and talents Alex has honed. Two years into business, her vast client base has ranged from the Obama Foundation to the Black Aldermanic Caucus to JB Pritzker for Governor.

Rendel L. Solomon
Managing Director, Muller & Monroe Asset Management LLC

Rendel Solomon is a Managing Director with Muller & Monroe Asset Management (MM), a Chicago-based private equity firm that manages $1.2 billion on behalf of public pension plans. He serves on the investment team and leads sales & marketing and client services. Prior to joining MM in 2008, Rendel worked as an engineer at P&G in Cincinnati.

Rendel obtained his Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from Tulane University and his MBA from Columbia Business School. In June 2016, he founded the nonprofit One Stock One Future NFP (OSOF) to turn one million youth into public company shareholders. OSOF uses workshops to expose young people to stocks and ownership; then the organization purchases gift certificates for public company stocks so that each student can open their first investment account. Rendel is a member of 100 Black Men of Chicago and has been recognized by Ariel Investments, Chicago Defender, Chicago Community Trust, Chicago Urban League, Ebony, and WGN for his accomplishments.
Thomas K. R. Stovall
President, Intention Mastery

An alum of the Tennessee State University Electrical Engineering department, ironically, Thomas K.R. Stovall has never actually worked a day as an engineer. He started his entrepreneurial career selling luxury custom car accessories online from New York to California out of his dorm room at 19 years old, and he never looked back. Thomas’ online courses and group training programs (IntentionMastery.com), along with his problem/solution think tanks (ThinkLikeAThinkTank.global), teach entrepreneurs and business leaders practical ways to quickly close gaps between intentions, deliberate actions, and measurable outcomes, to make bottom line revenue predictable, and amplify growth in their companies. Thomas is an author, a sought after speaker and facilitator, a Google Entrepreneur in Residence, the founder of an enterprise microfeedback company, and the creator of an organization that catalyzes growth for Black and Latinx entrepreneurs (ImBlackinTech.com), with almost 6000 people in the membership network across 16 countries.

Marcus Thomas
Senior Manager of Customer Marketing, Reynolds Consumer Products

Marcus Thomas has more than 10 years of leadership experience in marketing, sales and operations planning, and supply chain management. In his current role at Reynolds Consumer Products, he is responsible for developing and managing pricing and promotional plans for Hefty products across all sales channels. Prior to joining Reynolds, Marcus held positions at Kraft Foods, ConAgra Foods, and OfficeMax, Inc. He received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Economics from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. Marcus currently resides in the near western suburbs of Chicago with his wife, Dawn, and their two daughters, Leah and Avery.

Anthony D. Tindall
Policy & Special Projects Manager, Forest Preserve District of Cook County

Anthony Tindall manages the policy, sustainability, and climate resiliency agenda for the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, a 70,000-acre public land management agency. Prior to joining the Forest Preserve, Anthony served as an associate director at the Francis W. Parker School. He also previously held positions at the University of Chicago and the Daniel Stowe Botanical Gardens.

Anthony received a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, N.C., and a Master of Public Administration from DePaul University in Chicago. Anthony currently serves on the National Advisory Board for the Union of Concerned Scientists in Cambridge, Mass. He is also a coach for One Million Degrees in Chicago and was one of the inaugural fellows for Chicago United for Equity in 2018. Anthony resides in the Rogers Park community in Chicago.

Jeremy Watson
Art Director of Global Digital Content Marketing, Groupon

As Art Director of Global Digital Content Marketing for Groupon, Jeremy Watson sets the strategy for visual storytelling and marketing campaigns for digital channels across 16 countries. He also manages the international design team. Since joining the company in 2012, Jeremy has held a number of leadership roles that have elevated the Groupon brand through the new channels he has defined globally.

James Williams
Director of Finance, Chicago Neighborhood Initiatives

James Williams has more than 15 years of experience in accounting and finance. As Director of Finance at Chicago Neighborhood Initiatives (CNI), he is responsible for financial management across all subsidiaries and affiliates. He is also responsible for facilitating strategic planning for new business opportunities. Prior to joining CNI, he was an investment officer at the California Public Employees Retirement System.

Nykia Wright
Interim Chief Executive Officer, Chicago Sun-Times

Nykia Wright is Interim Chief Executive Officer of the Chicago Sun-Times. In May of 2019, she was named one of the top 10 most powerful women in Chicago journalism. Before joining the Sun-Times, Nykia was a strategy consultant with experience in financial management, business restructuring, performance improvement, supply chain, and human resources. Her work history included roles with JPMorgan Chase, Huron Consulting, and North Highland Worldwide Consulting. Nykia has a Bachelor of Science in Finance from Carnegie Mellon University, International Business Certification from the University of Cambridge (England), and an MBA from the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth. She has also studied business at the Indian School of Business in Hyderabad, India. She is a member of the 2018 Crane’s Chicago Business 40 under 40 class, and also a member of the 40 game-changers under 40 class, a recognition bestowed from a partnership between WVO and Ariel Investments.
Bryce Yancy  
Director of Government Affairs, Chicago State University

As Director of Government Affairs at Chicago State University, Bryce Yancy is responsible for advocating for the university’s interests with federal, state, and local governments. Prior to joining Chicago State, Bryce served in senior staff roles on political campaigns for Illinois state representatives, Chicago aldermen, U.S. Senate candidate Andrea Zopp, and Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel. He also consulted for Fortune 500 companies and other large organizations, including the University of Chicago, Ford Motor Company, and American Airlines. In addition, he was a co-convener of the Coalition for Police Contracts Accountability, an organization that advocates for changes to the Chicago Police Department contracts.

Bryce is a proud Chicagoan, and is civically involved. He serves on the boards of Joel Hall Dancers and Center, and PEAK Chicago. He is a graduate of Michigan State University.

Our Education Partner

The University of Chicago Booth School of Business

Chicago Booth hosts each of our monthly sessions at its state-of-the-art Gleacher Center in Chicago’s Streeterville neighborhood. Members of Booth’s world-class faculty provide instruction on various academic topics that are relevant to our Fellows’ leadership development.

In addition to Booth faculty, Chicago Booth Executive Education has been an amazing partner of IMPACT since the program’s inception. Executive Education staff have provided invaluable support at each of the program’s monthly sessions and many supplemental events and activities. We are incredibly grateful for their remarkable partnership.
Our Mentors

Carol Adams  
Jacinda Adams  
Terrell Anderson  
Linda Crane Boyd  
Carole Brown  
Karen Caldwell  
Dorothy Capers  
Dorval Carter  
Adela Cepeda  
Gregory Chappell  
Elvin Charity  
Virginia Clarke  
Karen Collins  
Michelle Collins  
Les Conley  
Cheryl Cooke  
Tarrah Cooper  
Toni Cornelius  
Risa Davis  
Ronald DeNard  
Donna Grant Dorsey  
Sidney Dillard  
Derek R.B. Douglas  
William Farrow  
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Rahni Flowers  
Rebecca Ford Terry  
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Anne Fredd  
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Darrious Hilmon  
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Kym Hubbard  
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Derrick Johnson  
Tiffany Hamel Johnson  
Emil Jones  
Eugene Jones  
Sharon Jones  
Karen Kerr  
Lerry Knox  
Connie Lindsay  
Phyllis Lockett  
Lyle Logan  
William Lucas  
Gregg Lunceford  
Sonya Malunda  
Lester McKeever  
Eric McKissack  
Dorri McWhorter  
Marquis Miller  
Dara Munson  
Ina Murray  
Cheré Nabor  
Stephanie Neely  
Gerald Nixon  
Cheryl Pearson-McNeil  
Audrey Peeples  
Terry Peterson  
J.Todd Phillips  
Adrienne Banks Pitts  
Diane Primo  
Juliette Pryor  
Reginald Reed  
Gary Rozier  
Jelani Rucker  
Shari Runner  
Kelly Saulsberry  
Zaldwyna Scott  
Brian Sleet (deceased)  
Eric S. Smith  
Melody Spann Cooper  
Lovetta Spencer  
Stephanie Springs  
Kurt Summers  
Jonathan Swain  
Desiree Tate (deceased)  
Stuart Taylor  
Stephen Thomas  
Donna Thompson  
Dominque Jordan Turner  
Paula Thornton-Greear  
Sherron Thornton-Pierce  
William Towns  
Chad Walker  
Alex Washington  
Pamela Wedgworth  
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Office of the Honorable Rodenicker T. Sawyer  
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Olive-Harvey College  
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RLM Media  
Robert R. McCormick Foundation  
Rush University Medical Center  
SGA Youth & Family Services  
Solar Energy Industries Association  
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Year Up  
Zekelman Industries  
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What Our Alumni Say About IMPACT

LeDeidre Turner
IMPACT Class of 2018

“I walked away from each Lessons in Leadership session more confident in my abilities than before the session began. I was encouraged to step out of my comfort zone and take steps to advance my career rather than waiting for the traditional path in the position I had at the time. “The support system is unmatched. I am connected to a group of people who celebrate each other’s successes and encourage each other through their trials. After I applied for my previous job, which was my first supervisory role, one of my fellow cohort members spent five hours prepping me for the interview.”

Jennifer Hodges
IMPACT Class of 2018

“I became a more self-aware and confident people leader. I was promoted twice within my organization over the course of two years and was offered more opportunities to lead initiatives across the United Way system. Much of the work I was leading was important, but I was not comfortable vocalizing the impact of my contribution of projects and how it affected team, and organization prioritizes. After completing IMPACT, I became more vocal in raising challenges that were being overlooked, tactfully promoting my contributions, trusting my intuition and judgement and sharing my perspective with the leaders of the organization. I trusted that as a creative, African-American woman and a business professional, my perspective is important and matters in any seat I hold.”

Torrey L. Barrett
IMPACT Class of 2015

“When I first joined IMPACT, I had an idea of building a $23.5 million housing development to help hardworking families on the South Side of Chicago have quality housing with retail options similar to those that downtown affluent families enjoy. IMPACT helped me take my project from concept to completion. I was able to leverage the skills and tools I gained through the program to put together a development team to complete this difficult project. “My mentor, Gary Gardner, invested in me. He helped identify funding sources, as well as much needed counsel to protect my interest and the project. As a result of the program and my mentor, whom I still speak with today, we recently celebrated the grand opening of the KLEO Art Residences, a 58-unit mixed-use project with retail on the first floor that will also house an upscale, affordable boutique restaurant and banquet hall.”

Jeremy Howell
IMPACT Class of 2017

“Not only did IMPACT meet my expectations, the program exceeded them. The connections to the market through the mentorship program provided me with exposure to names and networks that I would have never been able to access so fast without the program. The access to top professors at Booth gave me the institutionalized structure I needed to be focused and allowed me to continue to pursue my passion for education.”
IMPACT Alumni Association

The extent to which IMPACT is successful in its mission depends on the collective success of our alumni. We are proud of the professional and community-oriented strides that each of our 170 alumni have made since joining IMPACT and are excited about what they will accomplish in the future as Chicago's leaders.

One vehicle through which our alumni remain connected to IMPACT and to each other is the IMPACT Alumni Association (IAA). Launched in 2016, the IAA provides graduates of the IMPACT program with opportunities for continuing education, networking, and community trusteeship.

Left to right: IAA Vice President Jonathan Buckner, Cook County State’s Attorney Kim Foxx, Illinois Lieutenant Governor Julianna Stratton, and IAA President Charise Williams at IMPACT Day at the University of Chicago Bleacher Center on July 12, 2019.

IMPACT alumni gathered for a group photo at the IAA Annual BBQ at Pier 31 on June 29, 2019.

Alumni – Class of 2019

Jasmine Bankhead, Ed.D.
Danielle Banks
Kristin Beal
Alex Breland
Micae Brown
Frank Brown II
Steve Cade
William Collins
Cory Croft
Jeff Dase
Francine Dower
Averil Edwards
Julie Félix
Tamara Fletcher, Ph.D.
Jessica R. Harris
Kenya Jenkins-Wright
Franchella Jennett
Carnell R. Jones
Christina Jordan
LeeAndra Khan
Channing Lenert
Stephen McClain, Ed.D.
Jereil Parker
Ariel DeNey Rainey
Felicia Rauls
Dawn Frances Reese
Akobe Sandy
Blake Sercye
Jason Smith
Kemi Solade
Tiffany Taylor
Danielle Tillman
Shaan Trotter
Bradley Washington
Destiny Woods
Tanesja M. Young
Alumni – Class of 2017

Michelle Brown
Jonathan Buckner
Inger Burnett-Zeigler
Clarence Carson
Michael Clark
Ameshia Cross
Rukiya Curvey-Johnson
Alexandrea Davis
Chris-Tia Donaldson
Bobby Earles
Kendra Freeman
Corliss Garner

Jonathan Glover
Eddie Gordon
Toinette Gunn
Courtney Hollins
Tony Howard
Jeremy Howell
Adrienne Irmer
Candace Jackson-Akiwumi
Janelle James
Farissa Knox
Patrice Louis
Joshua Miller

Halleemah Nash
Alex Ofei
Eugenia Orr
Renai Rodney
Marielle Sainvilus
Ayom Siengo
Russell Singleton, Jr.
Jamila Trimuel
Blessing Uchendu
Charise Williams
Jeremy Wright

Alumni – Class of 2018

Adekunle Akingboju
Erin Alexander
Jeffery Beckham
Carolyn Branton
Eva Brown
Jayson Canady
Courtney Curtis
La Toya Dixon
Jerry Doss
Sheehan Fisher
Kelley Foxx
William Hall
Simuel Hampton

Amiel Harper
Kebreab Henry
Jennifer Hodges
Katrina Jackson
Kimberly R. Jackson
Wynter Jackson
Jason Johnson
Emanuel Johnson II
James Joshua
Reyahd Kazmi Kenya
Key
Erica Kirkwood
Camile Lindsay Kumi

Raven Mackey
Ronald Milisap
Curtis Monday
Kafi Moragne-Patterson
Martita Mullen
Qiana Nelson
Rondell Newcombe
Brian Packer
Lamont Robinson
Drahcir Smith
LeDeidre Turner
Garth Walker

IMPACT
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IMPACT
Three new versions
that should work well.

IMPACT
NEW HYBRID
Made top font bolder,
adjusted P, A, & C to be more like
second font

Three new versions
that should work well.

IMPACT
NEW HYBRID
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Alumni – Class of 2015

Brent Baccus
Ella E. Baccus
Rai Barrett
Rosi Blasingame-Buford
Dwayne Bryant
John Casmon
TaRhah C. Cooper
Kenesa Debela
Doresah A. Ford-Bey
Torrey L. Barrett
Michael Smith
Emin Stanford
Dania Terrell
Roslind Blasingame-Buford
Dwanye Bryant
John Casmon
Tarrah C. Cooper
Kenesa Debela
Doresah A. Ford-Bey
Ryan C. Green
Nicole Hayes
Brandi Head
Tasha Henderson
Jud Henry
Lisa Hinton
Nathalina A. Hudson
Constance Jones
Timothy L. Jones, Jr.
Karyn Brianne Lee
DeJuan M. Lever
Gerald E. Lewis, Jr.
Miguel S. Millett
Jimi Orange
Dartesia A. Pitts
Xavier Ramey
Christopher Rooney
Michael Simmons
Brian E. Sleet*
Lovetta J. Spencer
Joshua Strickland
Dominique Jordan Turner
Daphanie Wallace
Kenneth R. Williams
*Deceased

Alumni – Class of 2016

Helen Ashford
Stacey Austin
Meredith Brooks
Garrett Buchanan
Kam Buckner
Erryn Cobb
Marquita Cunningham
Katie Ellis
Andrea Flynn
Marlo Gaal
Na'Ree Hankins
Alpachino Hogue
Erica Hubbard
Kevin Lamarr James
Sizwe Kamara
Imani Lewis
Claoe Louis
Tiffanye McQueen Lewis
Gerard Nixon
Danielle Parker
Darryl Rodgers
Jelani Rucker
Mark Sanders II
Jolene Saul
Kelly Saulsberry
Alvin Schexnider
Aaron Sims
Charles Smith
Michael Smith
Erin Stanford
Dania Terrell
Damien Trinuel
Vanessa Wasserman

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The Chicago Urban League gratefully acknowledges the support of our IMPACT Leadership Development Program partners.
Lead Chicago.