Faculty Entrepreneurial Leadership Program

Fall 2024

Welcome!

We extend our enthusiastic welcome to the 2024 cohort of the University of Illinois Faculty Entrepreneurial Leadership Program (FELP). FELP seeks to foster a vibrant university entrepreneurial ecosystem by supporting faculty innovators in realizing the commercial and/or social impact of their research and scholarship. The main goals of the program are to:

- Support entrepreneurship-oriented faculty in their development as entrepreneurs
- Seed new venture creation from the "bench-up" and early-on in faculty research
- Create and nurture a dynamic community of entrepreneurial faculty colleagues
- Enhance diversity and inclusion among faculty entrepreneurs

FELP will assist faculty in developing foundational business knowledge, essential skills, and entrepreneurial self-efficacy. The program is designed to complement the vast array of entrepreneurship resources and programs available throughout our university ecosystem. Thus, while FELP is not meant to be comprehensive in supporting a faculty's entire entrepreneurial journey, it serves as a time-efficient entry portal into faculty entrepreneurship.

We do not expect an existing idea or startup; rather a keen interest in entrepreneurship and the desire to create socioeconomic impact. To maximize the effectiveness of FELP, a firm commitment to attend all four workshops is required so that we can deliver on the program's goals and cultivate a strong community of faculty entrepreneurs.

FELP was born out of a partnership between the Discovery Partners Institute and the Gies College of Business, supported by a generous gift from Don and Anne Edwards. Just as importantly, it represents a collaborative endeavor across the innovation ecosystem(s) of the University of Illinois and owes its existence to the support and sponsorship of many valuable stakeholders who were instrumental in bringing this initiative to fruition. Specifically, in what is surely an incomplete list, we would like to express our deep gratitude to:

Chicago: Provost's Office, Office of the Vice Chancellor for Innovation, Council of Deans
Springfield: Provost's Office
Urbana: Provost's Office, Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation, Council of Deans, Institute Directors, Grainger College of Engineering, Research Park and EnterpriseWorks, Office of Technology Management
System: Office of the Vice President for Economic Development and Innovation

Welcome to FELP!

Elias Kourpas
Deepak Somaya

Workshops

1 Being an Academic Entrepreneur

EnterpriseWorks
University of Illinois Research Park
60 Hazelwood Drive
Champaign, IL 61820

10:40 am–2:50 pm, September 6
Michael Roach
UI Ride Available

2 Designing the Business

Discovery Partners Institute
Room 2032, 20th Floor
200 S. Wacker Dr.
Chicago, IL 60606

10:10 am–2:50 pm, October 4
Deepak Somaya
UI Ride Available

3 Building and Managing the Team

EnterpriseWorks
University of Illinois Research Park
60 Hazelwood Drive
Champaign, IL 61820

10:40 am–2:50 pm, November 1
Melissa Emily Graebner
UI Ride Available

4 Sourcing Capital & Other Resources

Discovery Partners Institute
Room 2032, 20th Floor
200 S. Wacker Dr.
Chicago, IL 60606

10:10 am–2:50 pm, December 6
Thomas E. Parkinson
UI Ride Available

UI Ride

FELP Team

Elias Kourpas

Clinical Professor of Business Administration,
Academic Director of Strategy, Innovation &
Entrepreneurship (SIE), Gies College of Business

Deepak Somaya

Dianne and Steven Miller Professor of Business
Administration,
Don and Anne Edwards Scholar—Discovery
Partners Institute

Melissa Emily Graebner

Robert C. Evans Endowed Professor of Business
Administration,
Director of the Initiative for Qualitative Research
in Innovation and Entrepreneurship (INQUIRE)

Thomas E. Parkinson

Senior Director of Illinois Ventures,
Adjunct Instructor of Business Administration

Michael Roach

Associate Professor of Business Administration

Elias Kourpas
Clinical Professor of Business Administration,
Academic Director of Strategy, Innovation &
Entrepreneurship (SIE), Gies College of Business

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Dr. Kourpas' research interests include strategy and entrepreneurship, electronic commerce, healthcare innovation, business and medical analytics, and mathematical optimization. He serves as Associate Editor, Diabetes Clinical Epidemiology, Frontiers in Clinical Diabetes and Healthcare Journal.

A veteran entrepreneur, Dr. Kourpas is Founder & CEO at Rovier, a technology startup specializing in electronic procurement. Rovier combines the power of state-of-the-art mathematical optimization, advanced data analytics, and smart mobile technology to develop a more efficient and effective paradigm for business-to-business (B2B) electronic procurement. Additionally, Dr. Kourpas serves as senior advisor to many startups and is the faculty coordinator of the iVenture Accelerator program at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

Prior to joining academia, Dr. Kourpas was Strategy and Technology Executive at IBM Corporation where he was responsible for launching and managing new entrepreneurship initiatives (known as Emerging Business Opportunities – EBOs) growing them from incubator stage to multi-billion dollar businesses. Those initiatives included Grid computing (the predecessor to Cloud computing) and IBM's open-source business of the Linux operating system. Dr. Kourpas served on the Board of Directors of Open Grid Forum, the industry association for Grid computing, setting direction for technology standards and commercialization. Furthermore, he has held numerous management positions in the areas of strategy, marketing, business development, product development, industry solutions, and sales.

Dr. Kourpas received his Ph.D. in Business Administration from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, M.B.A. from Northeastern University, and B.E. and B.A. degrees from Stony Brook University.

Deepak Somaya
Dianne and Steven Miller Professor of
Business Administration,
Don and Anne Edwards Scholar—Discovery
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Dr. Somaya's research focuses on knowledge assets such as human capital, relational capital, and intellectual property, and on scalable business models enabled by digital innovation. His teaching and expertise straddle strategic management, technology strategy, intellectual property strategy, business models, and venture scaling.

Dr. Somaya has been engaged with the University of Illinois entrepreneurial ecosystem through several roles. These include Academic Director of the Origin Ventures Academy for Entrepreneurial Leadership, strategic planning for the Research Park and EnterpriseWorks, and as the Discovery Partners Institute's first Don and Anne Edwards Scholar (where he developed the Faculty Entrepreneurial Leadership Program). Dr. Somaya has been the recipient of several research awards, including the Best Interdisciplinary Paper Award from the Strategic Human Capital Interest Group of the Strategic Management Society, the California Management Review Best Article Award, the Arnold O. Beckman Award from the University of Illinois for research "of special distinction, special promise, or special resource value", and the Stephan Schrader Best Paper and Best Dissertation awards from the Academy of Management's Technology and Innovation Management Division. He serves on the editorial boards of several prominent journals and is the Division Chair of the Strategic Management Division of the Academy of Management.

Dr. Somaya's brings a unique blend of knowledge from engineering and business to academia and will draw on this background, experience with startups, and academic expertise during the second workshop on "Designing a Business".

Dr. Somaya received his PhD in business administration from the University of California at Berkeley, his M.B.A. from the Indian Institute of Management at Calcutta, and B. Tech. in Mechanical Engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology at Bombay. He is a former management consultant and continues to provide strategic management advice to clients.

Melissa Emily Graebner
Robert C. Evans Endowed Professor of Business Administration,
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Dr. Graebner's research interests include corporate governance, entrepreneurship, mergers and acquisitions, and strategic decision making.

Graebner is a world-renowned scholar in entrepreneurship and strategy. Her work has been recognized by the Academy of Management and has been featured in *The Economist*, *The New York Times*, and *Forbes*. She is also co-editor of the *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, a major outlet for entrepreneurship research. She believes in using fieldwork and case studies to help answer questions that have scholarly importance and also matter to professionals in the business world. Dr. Graebner has also been the recipient of several awards. She is a President's Distinguished Faculty Recruitment Program Awardee and a Robert C. Evans Endowed Professor in Business at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Dr. Graebner was also selected as a Fellow of the Strategic Management Society—a distinction recognizing and honoring members of the Strategic Management Society who have made significant contributions to the theory and practice of strategic management.

Dr. Graebner has a passion for entrepreneurship and empowering students to develop their own products and build their own organizations. "What's exciting for me is feeling like I'm opening up possibilities for students," she said. "I try to demystify the process and show them how they can succeed in entrepreneurship." Now, Dr. Graebner is looking to expand her reach and bring her experience to the Faculty Entrepreneurial Leadership Program to enable not just students, but also faculty to pursue entrepreneurship.

Dr. Graebner received her Ph.D, M.B.A., M.S., and B.S. from Stanford University.

Thomas E. Parkinson
Senior Director of Illinois Ventures,
Adjunct Instructor of Business Administration

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Tom Parkinson has been a lecturer in business administration for Gies College of Business since 2017. He is also a senior director with Illinois Ventures, which invests in early-stage technology-based ventures that are affiliated with the University of Illinois System, including faculty, student, and alumni-led businesses. He has been investing in, mentoring and advising technology-based startup companies for more than 30 years and possesses extensive knowledge of hardware, software, engineering, and SaaS technologies.

Prior to joining the Illinois Ventures team, Mr. Parkinson was a partner with a Chicago-based venture capital firm, where he helped raise and manage two venture capital funds that invested in under-served and fly-over parts of the country. He ran a successful seed capital fund affiliated with Northwestern University during the 1990s, and was CFO of an award-winning technology business incubator.

Alongside his work in technology investing, Mr. Parkinson is a passionate educator. He is currently teaching an iMBA course in Entrepreneurship at the Gies College of Business at UIUC. With enrollment averaging over 1,000 students over the past three years, this is the largest known MBA-level entrepreneurship course in the world. He has taught courses in entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial finance at several universities, and his students have gone on to raise more than $200 million in venture capital and other early-stage financing.

Mr. Parkinson is also a member of the National Advisory Committee for Pipeline, a prestigious entrepreneurial fellowship program based in Kansas City.

Mr. Parkinson received his M.B.A. and B.A. from Northwestern University.

Michael Roach
Associate Professor of Business Administration

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Dr. Roach's research investigates questions at the intersection of technology entrepreneurship and scientific labor markets, with implications for both academic scholarship and policy. The primary focus of his research examines the early careers of STEM doctorates, especially careers as employees in technology startups and the impact of U.S. immigration policies on foreign-born high-skilled workers. He also investigates the commercialization of university research discoveries through startups, with a focus on the composition of academic founding teams and the impact of university startups on regional economic development.

Dr. Roach has published his research in leading management and science journals including Management Science, Research Policy, the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, and Science. His research has also been featured in leading media outlets including The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, The Washington Post, and Forbes. He was awarded the Kauffman Foundation Junior Faculty Fellowship in Entrepreneurship Research and his research has been funded by grants from the National Science Foundation.

Dr. Roach received his Ph.D. in Strategy from Duke's Fuqua School of Business, and B.B.A., Summa Cum Laude, from Georgia State University. Prior to joining the University of Illinois, he was faculty at Cornell University and the University of North Carolina and held visiting positions at Duke University and the University of Pennsylvania. He pursued an early career as a co-founder of an educational software startup for eight years before beginning his undergraduate and doctoral studies. He also founded a medical diagnostic software startup as an undergraduate student to aid community healthcare workers in developing countries to diagnose communicable diseases.

Fall 2024 Cohort

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS CHICAGO

Aritra Banerjee
Assistant Professor,
Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering

Tanvi Bhatt
Professor, Physical Therapy & Rehabilitation Sciences; Program Coordinator, MS in Healthspan Promotion and Rehabilitation

Carolyn Dickens
Interim Associate Dean for Faculty Practice and Partnership, College of Nursing

Sriram Ravindran
Associate Professor,
Oral Biology, College of Dentistry

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS SPRINGFIELD

Yona Stamatis
UIS Music Program Director;
Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Mehmet Eren Ahsen
Assistant Professor,
Business Administration, Gies College of Business

Claudius Conrad
Professor,
Carle Illinois College of Medicine and Cancer Center at Illinois

Florin Dolcos
Professor, Psychology and Neuroscience,
Department of Psychology, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Paolo Gardoni
Alfredo H. Ang Family Professor,
Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Grainger College of Engineering

Sebastiano Giardinella
Assistant Research Scientist; Project Engineer,
Prairie Research Institute

Asma Hatoum-Aslan
Associate Professor, Microbiology Department,
School of Molecular and Cellular Biology, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Samar Hegazy
Teaching Assistant Professor,
Biomedical and Translational Sciences, Carle Illinois College of Medicine

Anton Ivanov
Assistant Professor, Business Administration,
Gies College of Business

James Lowe
Associate Dean of Online Programs and Extension;
Associate Professor, Pathobiology & Veterinary Clinical Medicine, College of Veterinary Medicine

Moses Okumu
Associate Professor,
School of Social Work & Center for African Studies

Dren Qerimi
Research Assistant Professor; Associate Director,
Illinois Plasma Institute, Grainger College of Engineering

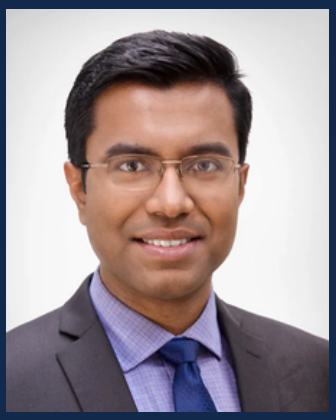
Mike Tissenbaum
Associate Professor, Curriculum and Instruction & Education Psychology, College of Education

Allison Witt
Director of International Programs;
Teaching Associate Professor, Education Policy Organization and Leadership, College of Education

Xun Yan
Director of BA in Linguistics; Associate Professor,
Department of Linguistics, Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology

Tony Zhang
Adjunct Clinical Assistant Professor,
Finance, Gies College of Business

Federico Zuckermann
Professor, Pathobiology & Veterinary Program in Agriculture, College of Veterinary Medicine



Aritra Banerjee
Assistant Professor,
Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering

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Dr. Banerjee's research interests include analog, RF, millimeter-wave (mmWave), sub-THz, and THz integrated circuits and systems including power amplifiers (PAs) and transceivers for wireless communication (5G, 6G, and beyond) and radar based sensing in CMOS, SiGe, and III-V technologies.

Dr. Banerjee's portfolio includes over 50 authored or coauthored papers in refereed international journals and conferences and 5 granted US patents. Dr. Banerjee is a senior member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) and a member of the technical program committee (TPC) of the IEEE Radio Frequency Integrated Circuits Symposium (RFIC). He was also a TPC member of the IEEE Custom Integrated Circuits Conference (CICC) from CICC 2018 to CICC 2024 and he served as the co-chair and chair of the wireless sub-committee in CICC 2023 and CICC 2024, respectively. Dr. Banerjee has 10 years' industry experience in RF, mmWave, sub-THz IC design. He was also a recipient of the IEEE Microwave Theory and Techniques Society Graduate Fellowship. He is a highly sought-after speaker, being invited to speak at many conferences and symposiums.

In addition to his academic and research achievements, Dr. Banerjee is the founder and CEO of Arionic, a startup at the forefront of technological innovation. He pursues entrepreneurship through FELP, believing that this experience will complement his practical expertise in electrical engineering and enrich his skills as a startup founder, providing a unique blend of theoretical knowledge and real-world applications.

Dr. Banerjee received his M.S. and Ph.D. in Electrical and Computer Engineering from Georgia Institute of Technology (Atlanta, GA) and his B.E. in Electronics and Telecommunication Engineering from Jadavpur University (Kolkata, India).

Tanvi Bhatt
Professor, Physical Therapy & Rehabilitation Sciences; Program Coordinator, MS in Healthspan Promotion and Rehabilitation

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Dr. Bhatt's research interests include adaptive perturbation training for fall prevention, neuromechanical basis of balance recovery, and effects of alternative cognitive and motor therapies to improve patient lives.

Dr. Bhatt is a distinguished figure in the field of physical therapy, having contributed significantly to research into fall prevention through adaptive perturbation training and balance recovery. She has developed intervention strategies to reduce fall risk and improve function and participation in individuals with neurological disorders, especially stroke survivors. She has nearly 50 peer-reviewed publications and has secured extramural funding from prestigious organizations, including the American Heart Association and the NIH. In addition to her research, Dr. Bhatt continues to practice physical therapy at Marianjoy Rehabilitation Hospital and serves on various professional boards, including the Advisory Commission on Disabilities for the City of Naperville and the Scientific Review Committee of the International Society for Posture and Gait Rehabilitation. She is also an Editorial Board Member for the Journal of Physical Therapy and Health Promotion.

Dr. Bhatt hopes to use her learning from FELP to launch her products and frameworks to the industry of physical therapy, creating a legacy that will continue to help patients even beyond her immediate reach. She invented the Fall-Risk Assessment and Training System (FRATS), a wearable sensor and video-based system for assessing fall risk. Her innovative approach systematically integrates the concepts of perception, prevention, and prognosis (the 3 P's) for fall prevention, and wants to be able to bring the product to market. She currently works with various companies including Surefooted Inc. and the providers of the SAF-T Vest.

Dr. Bhatt received her Ph.D. in Movement Sciences/Motor Control from University of Illinois at Chicago, her Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Sciences from the University of Manitoba, and her B.S. in Physical Therapy from University of Mumbai.

Carolyn Dickens
Interim Associate Dean for Faculty Practice and Partnership, College of Nursing

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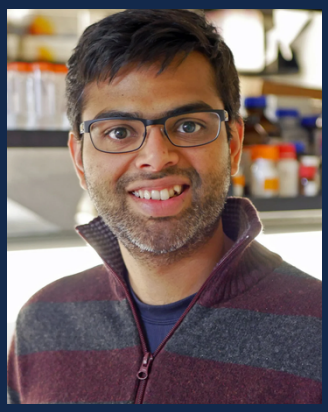
Dr. Dickens' research includes heart failure in low socioeconomic status and minorities, incivility toward nurses from both families and patients, nursing shortages across the United States, and COVID-19 among high risk and underserved patients.

Dr. Dickens has been presented with a Dean's Award for Research by the UIC College of Nursing, a Nurse Investigator Award for her work in cardiology socioeconomic research by the Heart Failure Society of America, and granted a Merit Award for the Qualities of Scholarship, Leadership, and Service through Sigma Theta Tau International. She has also been honored as a FHFSA fellow through the Heart Failure Society of America, a FAANP fellow through the American Association of Nurse Practitioners, and a fellow in Elevating Leaders in Academic Nursing through the American Association of Colleges of Nursing.

Along with awards and honors, Dr. Dickens was a part of the first cohort in the Acute Care Nurse Practitioner program at John Hopkins University. She also became the first nurse to be awarded the Community Health Advocacy grant from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Through the FELP program, she strives to improve incivility toward nurses, decrease the rate of nurses leaving areas serving minority populations, and fulfill the need for mental health services in marginalized communities.

Dr. Dickens has received her Ph.D. in Nursing Science from the University of Illinois at Chicago, her M.S.N in Acute Care Nurse Practitioner from Johns Hopkins University, and her B.N. from the University of Iowa.



Sriram Ravindran
Associate Professor,
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Dr. Ravindran's research focuses on the extracellular matrix (ECM) in stem cell behavior and matrix mineralization, with applications in regenerative medicine. In order to study such behavior, Dr. Ravindran works with nano scale vesicles known as extracellular vesicles (EVs). His research includes the replication of such EVs using both equipment and simple biofluids.

In order to achieve his goals in regenerative medicine, Dr. Ravindran believes that FELP is the key to building his research through the investment in new technologies. Primarily, the technology to control molecular pathways that EVs affect, the noninvasive tracking of EVs using iron nanoparticles, and the generation of artificial EVs capable of carrying different cargo. With the control of molecular pathways, there is an encapsulation element as these vesicles are injectable and can be polymerizable carriers for site-specific delivery and controlled release. With the noninvasive tracking, these EVs can be labeled and MRI-based tracking can be implemented to show the efficacy and site-specificity of such extracellular vesicles. When it comes to the generation of artificial EVs, this technology has a great potential in a multitude of medical fields, from vaccines to cancer therapy due to its customizable nature. Each of these technologies has the potential to create a societal and economic impact through the medical field, and entrepreneurship can build the foundation needed for all of them to grow.

Dr. Ravindran received his Ph.D. in Bioengineering from the University of Illinois at Chicago and his B.S. in Chemical Engineering from the University of Madras.

Yona Stamatis
UIS Music Program Director; Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology

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Dr. Stamatis' research interests include music and social justice, music and transformative education, Greek folk/popular music, modern Greek culture and language, and music and diaspora.

Yona Stamatis is Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology in the Department of Art, Music, and Theatre at the University of Illinois Springfield. Her research interests include Greek folk and popular song, with a focus on the intersections of music and social justice. Recent publications include "Rage Against the Machine's Evil Empire: Music and Political Socialization in Early Adolescence" in The Adolescentia Project: Essays on Music, Adolescence, and Identity (Oct 2022) and "'You only wanted me for the kitchen: That's why I revolted like Bouboulina': Gendered Commemorations of Bouboulina in Greek Music." In A. Householder Kalogeropoulou (ed.), Bouboulina and the Greek Revolution: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Heroine of 1821. Her research has been supported by the Fulbright Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, and by the Constantine Tsangadas Fellowship for Hellenic Studies. Stamatis is an active violinist and bouzouki player and plays in various professional orchestras including the Illinois Symphony Orchestra. As director of the UIS Music Program, she has established various music initiatives at the university, including the Partnership in Education and Civic Engagement (PEACE) with Illinois Symphony Orchestra, UIS Music Faculty Recital Series, UIS Music Lecture Series, UIS String Academy, and UIS Community Music School.

As director of the UIS Music Program and founder and director of the UIS Community Music School and the UIS String Academy, Dr. Stamatis would like to expand these programs to reach more students using the knowledge she will gain from FELP. This includes creating a new music business major and growing her programs to provide more music education in the Springfield community.

Dr. Stamatis received her Ph.D. in Musicology from the University of Michigan and B.A. in Music and Violin Performance from Barnard College, Columbia University and Manhattan School of Music.

Mehmet Eren Ahsen
Assistant Professor,
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Dr. Ahsen's research interests include designing and using AI tools to ameliorate the field of healthcare, through areas such as machine learning, information systems, operations research, medical informatics, medical decision making, control theory, and compressed sensing.

For his work blending business, technology and healthcare to improve quality of mammogram screenings for patients, Dr. Ahsen was awarded the Young Researcher Award at the 14th Conference on Health IT and Analytics (CHITA). To further his goal of using AI to improve patient experience and diagnosis, Dr. Ahsen has also published works on asthma classification using machine learning analysis on patient RNA and sparse feature selection for prediction of metastasis in endometrial cancer. Dr. Ahsen was also at the forefront of research regarding the Covid-19 pandemic, setting up a competition to encourage research into effective treatments. With his background in mathematics, Dr. Ahsen is able to provide a theoretical angle to research, even connecting physics principles with binary classification in machine learning in one of his papers.

Dr. Ahsen believes that FELP will make his work more effective, by using the way entrepreneurship finds and creatively solves problems to make a tangible impact in providing better and higher quality access to healthcare to patients worldwide.

Dr. Ahsen received a Ph.D. in Biomedical Engineering from the University of Texas, Dallas, M.S. in Electrical and Electronics Engineering from Bilkent University in Turkey, and B.S. in Mathematics and B.S. in Electrical and Electronics Engineering from Middle East Technical University in Ankara, Turkey.

Claudius Conrad
Professor,
Carle Illinois College of Medicine and Cancer Center
at Illinois

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Dr. Conrad's research interests focus on the accurate prognostication in Liver, Pancreas and Biliary Tract Cancers, cancer outcomes research and artificial intelligence, new procedures and technologies pertaining to minimal access Surgery, and the impact of music on surgical performance, team dynamics in the operating room, and prolonged space travel.

Dr. Conrad serves at the Associate Dean of Research and Innovation at the Carle Illinois College of Medicine, Visiting Professor at the Grainger College of Engineering, Director of Translational Research at the Cancer Center at Illinois, Affiliate of the National Center for Supercomputer Applications and Medical Director of Surgical Strategy and Innovation for Carle Health, in addition to being a practicing board certified surgical oncologist. As a Steinway Artist, Dr. Conrad promotes the scientific investigation of music in clinical medicine.

Dr. Conrad believes that entrepreneurship holds the key to multidisciplinary connections that can transform research into meaningful results that affect the lives of patients. He hopes to use FELP to fill the gaps between research and clinical cancer care. Dr. Conrad's research has revealed the need for underserved communities to receive quality oncologic cancer surgery and care, and the potential tools that can be leveraged to meet this need. He believes that combining a background in gastrointestinal cancer surgical care and resources from FELP can provide the necessary foundation to create a meaningful change in healthcare disparities amongst minorities.

Dr. Conrad has received his Ph.D. in Surgery, Ph.D. in Musical Science, M.D., from the University of Munich. He completed his general surgery training and surgical oncology fellowship at Harvard and his minimally invasive hepato-pancreato-biliary surgery training at Institut Mutualist Montsouris, Paris and Tokyo University.

Florin Dolcos
Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience,
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Dr. Dolcos's research focuses on factors that influence the key relationship between emotion and cognition that leads to a happy and fulfilling life. Using brain imaging techniques, such as magnetic resonance imaging, Dr. Dolcos has identified the neural correlates of emotion-cognition interactions in both healthy and clinical groups. Additionally, he has investigated the effect of aging on the neural mechanisms of memory and emotion control.

Dr. Dolcos's work has received wide national and international recognition, along with financial support for research on emotion regulation and memory in anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as on cognitive development. He has also won several awards, including the Emanuel Donchin Professorial Scholarship in Psychology (2022, 2017), Arnold O. Beckman Research Award (2019, 2014), and Helen Corley Petit Endowed Scholarship (2016), from the University of Illinois. Prior to joining UIUC, Dr. Dolcos was awarded a Cermak Award for Early Contributions to Memory Research, from the Memory Disorders Research Society (2007), a Young Investigator Award from the National Alliance for Research on Schizophrenia and Depression (2007), and a Research Award from the Canadian Psychiatric Research Foundation (2008).

Dr. Dolcos believes that FELP can aid in further developing training programs to improve cognitive, emotional, and flexibility skills that are essential for psychological well-being and success. Additionally, there is potential to extend such training to underserved populations, such as minorities and first-generation students, who are often completing their education at a lower rate than other students. Dr. Dolcos is also exploring the possibility of creating a Center for Resilience at the University of Illinois.

Florin Dolcos has received doctoral and post-doctoral training in cognitive, affective, and clinical neuroscience (University of Alberta and Duke University), following B.S. degrees in Biology and Psychology, along with a M.S. degree in Neurobiology from the University of Bucharest.

Paolo Gardoni
Alfredo H. Ang Family Professor,
Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering,
Grainger College of Engineering

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Dr. Gardoni's research includes the assessment of risk analysis in civil engineering through the fields of reliability, risk (with ethical, social, and legal dimensions), life cycle analysis, probabilistic mechanics, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, decision making under uncertainty, and performance assessment of deteriorating systems. He has additionally researched modeling of natural hazards and societal impact, optimal strategies for natural hazard mitigation and disaster recovery, and impacts of climate change (through engineering ethics).

Through his leadership in risk, reliability, and resilience analysis, Dr. Gardoni has been awarded the Alfredo Ang Award on Risk Analysis and Management of Civil Infrastructure by the American Society of Engineers. Additionally, through his 42 funded research projects, Dr. Gardoni has raised over $50 million in funding from agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security, the United States Army Corps of Engineers, the National Science Foundation, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, the Qatar National Research Funds, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

To utilize his knowledge in this field, Dr. Gardoni strives to use the FELP program experience to accompany his initiative with the U.S National Science Foundation's Innovation Corps programs in his efforts to predict and prevent wildfires and their damage to wildlife and low-income or indigenous populations.

Dr. Gardoni has received his Ph.D. in Civil Engineering and an M.A. in Statistics from the University of California Berkeley, a M.E. in Structural Engineering from the University of Tokyo, and his Laurea degree in Structural Engineering from the Politecnico di Milano.

Sebastiano Giardinella
Assistant Research Scientist;
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Mr. Giardinella's research interests include sustainable industrial and power generation technology, especially carbon capture, compressed gas energy storage, hybrid thermal/solar PV/battery systems, waste energy recovery, and industrial safety.

Mr. Giardinella holds a patent for a Non-Air Compressed Gas-Based Energy Storage and Recovery System and Method. He has worked on many Department of Energy funded projects, doing techno-economic and life-cycle analysis as well as engineering review for a carbon capture and storage project, and project management for natural gas based energy storage. In addition, Mr. Giardinella has studied various technologies in international plants throughout Latin America that work with liquified natural gas, thermal and solar energy. Along with his research, Mr. Giardinella's technical background includes being a process engineer and project manager at said power plants, working with renewable energy, thermal power generation, hydrocarbons and petrochemicals.

Mr. Giardinella has co-founded several small businesses after consulting for entrepreneurs in the chemicals manufacturing, grid solar PV, energy storage and hydrocarbons industries, among others. He hopes to use his learning with FELP to commercialize and expand the reach of his patented CGES technology.

Mr. Giardinella is currently pursuing Graduate Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and he received his M.S. in Renewable Energy Development from Heriot-Watt University in the UK, his M.S. in Project Management from Universidad Latina de Panamá, and his B.S. in Chemical Engineering from Universidad Simón Bolívar.

Asma Hatoum-Aslan
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Dr. Hatoum-Aslan's research investigates the molecular interactions between bacteria and their viruses (phages), and leverages basic insights to develop novel biotechnologies and therapeutics. Her research has made significant contributions towards understanding how CRISPR-Cas and other bacterial immune systems operate, as well as the strategies that phages have evolved to overcome them. Her research has also led to the development of new technologies for the engineering and delivery of therapeutic phages to eliminate antibiotic-resistant infections.

Dr. Hatoum-Aslan is a decorated research scientist in the field of microbiology, having received several honors and awards. She received an NIH K22 Career Transition Award from the National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, an NSF CAREER Award from the National Science Foundation, and a PATH Award from the Burroughs Wellcome Fund. In addition, she received a President's Faculty Research Award from the University of Alabama Office of the President in 2018 and was named 2023-2024 Helen Corley Petit Scholar at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Having worked in her family's business from a young age, Dr. Hatoum-Aslan developed a lifelong interest in entrepreneurship. She hopes this spark, along with the learning opportunities provided by FELP, will help her make a larger impact with her research and bring her patented technologies to marketable use to improve society. She holds two patents on CRISPR and phage-based technologies: "CRISPR-Cas Systems and Methods for Phage Genome Editing" and "Methods and Devices Related to Controlled Delivery of Phages as a Theranostic Tool".

Dr. Hatoum-Aslan received a Ph.D. in Biochemistry from Cornell University (and postdoctoral training at the Rockefeller University in the Laboratory of Bacteriology), M.Sc. in Biochemistry from the American University of Beirut in Lebanon, and her B.S. in Molecular Biology from Florida Institute of Technology.

Samar Hegazy
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Dr. Hegazy's research focuses on improving medical education in building the future generation of healthcare. This includes the development of innovative instructional approaches and open educational resources, the promotion of self-directed learning and mental health, and the integration of social determinants of health in medical education and clinical training.

Through her efforts in the medical field, Dr. Hegazy has been awarded the Zagazig University Award for Master of Sciences, the Queen Elizabeth II Graduate (Doctoral) Scholarship from the University of Alberta, Prostate Cancer Canada and Building Trades of Alberta Apprenticeship from the Prostate Cancer Center in Canada, and the Certificate of Recognition in Academic Excellence from the Carle Illinois College of Medicine at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

Dr. Hegazy believes she can use FELP to create opportunities for interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research to maximize the inclusivity of diverse expertise and enhance scholarly collaborations. This will serve to combine medicine and entrepreneurship to create new avenues of medical training and interprofessional education. Specifically, Dr. Hegazy strives to incorporate virtual reality and AI technology as well as more life-like prototypes in order to have a higher quality of procedural training.

Dr. Hegazy received her medical degree (MD) and M.S. in Pathology from Zagazig University, Egypt. She received her Ph.D. in Laboratory Medicine and Pathology from the University of Alberta and her Master of Education in Health Professions from John Hopkins University.

Anton Ivanov
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Dr. Ivanov's research interests include social media, user-generated content, online platforms, decision making, and healthcare analytics.

Dr. Ivanov is a dedicated information scientist, having published several papers on topics such as e-commerce and product popularity, imbalanced machine learning, the impact of user-generated content, COVID-19 detection and mitigation, the opioid epidemic, and corporate sustainability. For his research, he has been awarded almost $300,000 through various grants, including the SHIELD Illinois Grant, the Gies College Donor Grant, and the C3 Ai Grant, as well as the Deloitte Scholar Fellowship. In addition to being a reviewer for various publications including Journal of Association of Information Systems and Production and Operations Management, Dr. Ivanov has also been invited to speak at conferences around the world, such as Conference on Health IT and Analytics (CHITA) in Washington, DC, Americas Conference on Information Systems (AMCIS), and Startup Weekend, a country-wide event in Moscow.

Dr. Ivanov hopes to use FELP to bolster his work in the AI space, especially regarding the healthcare industry. Along with his entrepreneurial spirit in creating an automatic reputation evaluation system, he is using AI to help healthcare providers mitigate the opioid epidemic by reducing opioid prescriptions and promoting alternative strategies for patients with opioid use disorder.

Dr. Ivanov received his Ph.D. in Management Science and Systems from the University of Buffalo, NY, Candidate of Science in Economics from International Banking Institute in St. Petersburg, Russia, and Bachelor of Science in Public Relations from State University of Telecommunications in St. Petersburg, Russia.

James Lowe
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Dr. Lowe's research has included understanding swine influenza, clean methodology's effect on Diseases (PEDV), evaluation of swine production systems, creating a Virtual Care Hub in the College of Veterinary Medicine, and most recently centers around the development of the Center of Veterinary Innovation (CVI) at the University of Illinois.

Dr. Lowe has received the Allen D. Leman Science in Practice Award from the University of Minnesota and Pfizer Animal Health, as well as the Kuhlenschmidt Innovative Teaching Award from the University of Illinois. Additionally, Dr. Lowe has been given the honor of Keynote Lecturer at the European Symposium on Porcine Health Management, speaker at the Duke University Provost Forum on Conservation and Health, and Howard Dunne Memorial Lecturer at the American Association of Swine Veterinarians.

Through FELP, Dr. Lowe aims to improve the creation of the CVI, a facility with a mission to promote the creation and use of technology-based tools to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of veterinary care delivery while supporting such tools in the veterinary community. He is also planning on understanding, identifying, improving, and implementing a technology stack for veterinary care by partnering across the UI system and with startups and established companies. Dr. Lowe believes that he can harness the UI entrepreneurship ecosystem, relationship building, and experience that the FELP program brings in order to develop a successful foundation for the Center of Veterinary Innovation.

DDr. Lowe has received his D.V.M., E.V.P. M.S. in Infectious Disease and Management, and B.S. in Agriculture from the University of Illinois.

Moses Okumu
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Dr. Okumu's scholarship revolves around developing and testing community-inspired innovations to advance the sexual and mental health of migrant and mobile populations. He is particularly interested in how to optimize digital and technology-based interventions to increase access and utilization of life-saving information and services by the most vulnerable populations.

Dr. Okumu believes that FELP can be the spark on a cycle of improvement, serving to aid health outcomes, boost economies, and advocate for an equitable world. He is aiming to harness the power of entrepreneurship to scale digital support interventions, which can challenge societal stigma related to sexual health and mental well-being, by normalizing conversations, reducing discrimination, and fostering mutual understanding. These solutions have the potential to translate into practical solutions in the future.

Dr. Okumu received his Ph.D. at the University of Toronto, his Master of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis, and B.A. in Child Development at Uganda Christian University.

Dren Qerimi
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Dr. Qerimi's current research includes EUV Photo-Resist Development, Extreme Ultra Violet (EUV) Sources, 3-D Graphene Production, Semiconductor Processing, Deposition, and Etching, and Plasma Sources (such as DBD, PVD, PECVD, ICP, CCP, and Microwave Sources).

Through his excellent work in Nuclear, Plasma, and Radiological Engineering, Dr. Qerimi has received the Nguyen Thi Coung Fellowship and Engineering Vision Award on behalf of the University of Illinois.

Through his work at the Illinois Plasma Institute, Dr. Qerimi has learned the importance of bridging the gap between academic research and industrial applications, and believes that FELP could aid in driving innovation and providing a positive societal change. Specifically, in the field of lithium-sulfur batteries, Dr. Qerimi believes that entrepreneurship could help in commercializing such batteries, which would offer a higher energy density and lower cost while being more sustainable. Investing in such technology could prove to drive economic growth while reducing environmental impact.

Dr. Qerimi received his Ph.D., M.S., and B.S. in Nuclear, Plasma, and Radiological Engineering from the University of Illinois.

Mike Tissenbaum
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Dr. Tissenbaum's research interests include computing education, technology enhanced learning spaces, collaborative learning, and learning analytics and AI for classrooms.

Dr. Tissenbaum is a prominent researcher in the field of educational technology and computing education. His work focuses on innovative learning spaces, including the development of learning spaces in which immersive simulations and the physical space work together to augment (such as through AR applications) student learning and support real-time classroom orchestration. As the Principal Investigator (PI) on multiple National Science Foundation (NSF) funded projects, such as "SimSnap" and "Connected Spaces," he has been instrumental in exploring how technology can bridge communities of makers and enhance STEM education. Dr. Tissenbaum's contributions also extend to initiatives like the "Institute for Student-AI Teaming," where he collaborates to integrate artificial intelligence into educational contexts. His research has been published in prestigious journals, highlighting his expertise in supporting collaborative classroom networks and understanding non-designers' practices in human-centered design courses. Recognized for his early career achievements, he received an honorable mention for the Jan Hawkins Early Career Award from the American Educational Research Association and was named a Distinguished College Scholar at UIUC. Dr. Tissenbaum continues to push the boundaries of educational innovation, merging technology with pedagogy to create impactful learning experiences.

Dr. Tissenbaum hopes to learn with FELP how entrepreneurship can help him refine the games and technologies his labs produce for scale. He has always had an interest in finance, and FELP would help him with being able to successfully market his research in order to be self-sufficient in terms of funding.

Dr. Tissenbaum received his Ph.D. in Education and Master's in Information Sciences from the University of Toronto, and his Bachelor of Administrative and Commercial Studies from The Western University.

Allison Witt
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Dr. Witt's research interests include global citizenship education, virtual global engagement, transnational education policy, cross-cultural collaboration in teacher education, and study abroad programs for pre-service teachers.

Dr. Witt has authored and co-authored several influential works, including "Shifting Tides in Global Higher Education: Agency, Autonomy, and Governance in the Global Network" and various chapters in books like "The Neoliberal Agenda and the Student Debt Crisis in US Higher Education." She has presented at numerous international conferences, such as the World Federation of Associations of Teacher Educators and the Comparative and International Education Society. Her work includes research on virtual global fieldwork and its impact on teacher education, as well as the ethical frameworks applied in higher education through virtual engagement. Dr. Witt has been invited to lecture at institutions such as Illinois State University, Waseda University, and Hitotsubashi University, demonstrating her global influence. Additionally, she has received grants from organizations like the European Center and the U.S. Department of Education Title VI National Resource Center, supporting her work on global education and teacher preparation.

Dr. Witt would like to use her entrepreneurial learning experience from FELP to expand her IGlobal initiative, a virtual laboratory for training undergraduate students to teach about the UN Sustainable Development Goals in the College of Education using new technology developed at UIUC.

Dr. Witt received her Ph.D in Educational Policy Studies from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and her M.A. and B.A. in English Literature from Eastern Illinois University.

Xun Yan
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Dr. Yan's research interests include language assessment, corpus linguistics, data science, assessment literacy and teacher education.

Dr. Yan has been a longstanding researcher and practitioner in second-language teaching, learning, and assessment. To further these efforts, he has developed several tests of college-readiness in the English and Chinese language, as well as a multilingual test for interpreters. Dr. Yan has published several journal articles and two books on local language testing, as well as speech fluency, rater behavior, cognitive strategies and linguistic accuracy, the impact of language proficiency, use of assistive technologies, and cultural and contextual factors. He has received many accolades, including the LAS Alumni Distinguished Professorial Scholar Award, Conrad Humanities Scholar Award, the LEAP Scholar Award, and the TOEFL Essentials New Scholar Award. Over $5 million has been awarded in grants to Dr. Yan for Aptis Research, IELTS Research and training qualified interpreters for Individualized Education Program meetings.

Dr. Yan hopes to fill a market gap with his program using technology to individualize pedagogy and assessment for language learners, incorporating AI, instructional and measurement sciences. Using FELP, Dr. Yan will be able to bring this technology beyond the confines of the Illinois campus and improve language learning practices and assessment nationally, and even globally.

Dr. Yan received his Ph.D. from Purdue University, M.A. in TESOL from the Ohio State University, and his B.A. in English from Wuhan University in China.

Tony Zhang
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Dr. Zhang's research centers on quantitative finance, portfolio management, and financial technology, where he explores advanced computational methods and machine learning to enhance investment strategies and risk management.

Dr. Qingquan (Tony) Zhang is a pioneering researcher and educator at the intersection of finance, technology, and entrepreneurship. He serves as an Instructor of Finance at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, where he also holds the titles of R.C. Evans Fellow in Data Analytics and Disruptive and Innovation Fellow. His work in these domains has been recognized with numerous awards, including Best Paper Awards at international conferences such as IEEE WCNC and MSN. Additionally, he has been instrumental in bridging the gap between finance and technology through his contributions to alternative data utilization and AI techniques, as documented in his publications and his recent co-authored book, Alternative Data and Artificial Intelligence Techniques. In his role at the University of Illinois, Dr. Zhang has secured multiple university grants totaling over $60,000 for projects on Blockchain and FinTech innovations.

Dr. Zhang is developing an AI-based teaching assistant called AristAI to personalize the learning experience for students and help faculty seamlessly integrate various learning methods into their courses. He hopes to develop this into a startup or license the technology using his learning from FELP.

Dr. Zhang received his Ph.D. in Electrical and Computer Engineering from the University of Minnesota at Twin Cities, and his MBA in Analytic Finance and Entrepreneurship from Booth School of Business at the University of Chicago. He is also an alumnus of Harvard Business School.

Federico Zuckermann
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Dr. Zuckermann's research focuses on the natural and changing immune responses in swine to battle viruses, including the mechanisms used by such viruses to evade the immune system. This includes the development of vaccines in order to combat diseases such as porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome virus, and influenza A virus of swine.

As a former president of the American Association of Veterinary Immunologist, Dr. Zuckermann is an esteemed researcher in the field of Veterinary Immunology and Immunopathology. He
has also received the Pfizer Award for Research Excellence, the Research Excellence Award and Norman D. Levine Award through the College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Illinois. Additionally, Dr. Zuckermann was given the Arnold O Beckman Research Award through the University of Illinois Research Board, and the National Cancer Institute Research Award.

Through his career, Dr. Zuckermann has developed several patents derived from developed technologies. He believes entrepreneurship is a key aspect in bringing such innovations from the lab to market-ready products. Dr. Zuckermann believes that FELP will be pivotal in growing Vastimune Biologics, which aims to commercialize a vaccine protecting against Influenza A virus (IAV). The prevention of such a disease could improve operations of commercial swine farms worldwide, leading to significant social and economical implications.

Dr. Zuckermann received his Ph.D. in Immunology from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, his M.V.Z. from the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico, and his B.S. in Biology from Mixcoac College.
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Faculty Entrepreneurial Leadership Program

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