Steering Committee

To contact any member of the Women in Leadership Steering Committee, email womeninleadership@syr.edu.

Founder and Chair

Candace Campbell Jackson
Senior Vice President and Chief of Staff to the Chancellor

Steering Committee Members
(Bios below)

Mary Grace Alamandrez
Vice President, Inclusion and Equity

Candace Campbell Jackson
Senior Vice President and Chief of Staff to the Chancellor

Susan Cornelius Edson
Executive Senior Associate Athletics Director/Communications

Elisa Dekaney
Associate Dean for Research, Graduate Studies, and Internationalization; Professor of Music Education

Meghan Florkowski
Director, WISE Women’s Business Center

Marie Garland
Assistant Provost for Faculty Affairs

Pam Gavenda
Associate Director, Organizational Development and Training, Office of Human Resources

Catherine Gerard
Associate Director of Executive Education Programs in the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs

Marcelle Haddix
Associate Provost for Strategic Initiatives

Cydney Johnson
Vice President of Community Engagement and Government Relations

Beth Myers
Executive Director, Taishoff Center for Inclusive Higher Education & Professor of Inclusive Education

Tina Nabatchi
Director, Program for Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration & Professor of Public Administration and International Affairs, Maxwell

Mary Opperman
Senior Vice President and University Secretary

Dara J. Royer
Senior Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer

Stephanie Salanger
Director of Communications, Institute for Veterans and Military Families

Sarah E. Scalese
Senior Associate Vice President for Communications

Michele Wheatly
Special Advisor to the Chancellor, Professor of Biology

Jamie Winders
Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs

Leadership Bios
Mary Grace Alamandrez

Mary Grace A. Almandrez serves as the vice president for diversity and inclusion. She integrates her commitment to social justice, visionary leadership and interdisciplinary approach into her work to advance diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) across campus. Almandrez oversees the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, facilitates critical programs and initiatives, and partners with key constituencies to achieve the priorities outlined in the University’s DEIA Strategic Plan and Academic Strategic Plan.

Candace Campbell Jackson

Candace Campbell Jackson serves as Senior Vice President and Chief of Staff to Chancellor Syverud. An accomplished higher education executive, Jackson is recognized for being an exemplary strategic and operations leader with a strong record of achieving successful outcomes in all critical higher education management functions including academic affairs, athletics, auxiliary enterprises, board relations, communications and marketing, enrollment management, executive recruitment and team building, fundraising, governmental affairs, grants administration, international programs, planning, safety and strategic planning.

Susan Cornelius Edson

As the chief communications officer for Syracuse Athletics, Sue Edson is responsible for all public relations and media relations functions for the department. She serves as a member of the department's senior leadership and external relations teams, including communications, marketing, tickets, fundraising, corporate sales, digital media and athletics production. She supervises the Athletic Communications Department and works closely with University Marketing and Communications on athletics-related matters. In addition, she is the primary communications sport contact for volleyball, ice hockey and women's rowing.

Elisa Dekaney
Elisa Macedo Dekaney is the associate dean of research, graduate studies, and internationalization in the College of Visual Performing Arts (VPA) and professor of music education at Syracuse University. Dually appointed by the School of Education (teaching & leadership) and VPA (Setnor School of Music), she teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in the areas of choral music, music education, music research, and world music and cultures. From 2014 to 2020 Dekaney was a core faculty member for the Renée Crown University Honors Program, and in 2020 she was named a Laura J. and L. Douglas Meredith Professor for Teaching Excellence.

Meghan Florkowski

Meghan Florkowski is Director of the WISE: Women Igniting the Spirit of Entrepreneurship Women’s Business Center (WBC).

WISE is hosted by Whitman School of Management at Syracuse University and is one of 135 U.S. SBA designated Women’s Business Centers across the nation, reaching over 500 unique CNY women entrepreneurs annually with the tools and resources needed to reach their small business goals.

Marie Garland

Dr. Garland serves as the assistant provost for faculty affairs. In this role, she supports all operational functions and strategic initiatives within Academic Affairs as they relate to the faculty career progression, ongoing professional development, and leadership support with a specific emphasis on enhancing equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility. Specifically, she provides guidance on broadening faculty recruitment, structures orientation and mentoring for new faculty, and supports programs that encourage work/life and wellness.

Pam Gavenda
Pam has over 20 years of Human Resource Management experience working primarily for professional service firms and educational institutions. Currently her focus is on learning and development within SU’s HR department. She is a Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) and also a SHRM - Senior Certified Professional (SHRM – SCP). In addition to being a certified trainer for Crucial Conversations, she is also an instructor for the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) Certification Preparation course.

Catherine Gerard

Catherine M. Gerard is Professor of Practice of Public Administration and International Affairs at the Maxwell School of Syracuse University. She served as Director of the Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration (PARCC) from 2005-2020 and as Associate Director of Executive Education. Her focus is research, education, and practice of managers and students in the skills of collaborative leadership and change.

Marcelle Haddix

Marcelle Haddix serves as Associate Provost for Strategic Initiatives. In this capacity, she partners with Vice Chancellor, Provost and Chief Academic Officer Gretchen Ritter and direct Academic Affairs with the campus and surrounding community. She is the liaison to the University Senate and oversees the First Year Seminar and University arts and humanities affiliates and programs. Haddix is a Dean’s Professor of Race and Justice. She was an inaugural co-director of the Lender Center for Social Justice and facilitates literacy programs for adolescent and adult communities in Syracuse.

Cydney M. Johnson
Cydney Johnson serves as the Vice President of Community Engagement and Government Relations, reporting to Vice Chancellor J. Michael Haynie. Johnson was hired by Syracuse University as executive director for state and local government relations in the Spring of 2018. Johnson leads the community engagement team as it continues to advance the University’s robust portfolio of community-connected programs and initiatives. In addition to overseeing all facets of the University’s community engagement efforts, Johnson will assume strategic responsibility for developing and implementing the University’s legislative and advocacy agenda, retaining her responsibility to serve as advisor to the University leadership on issues at the city, county and state level.

Beth Myers

Beth Myers is the Lawrence B. Taishoff Assistant Professor of Inclusive Education and Executive Director of the Taishoff Center for Inclusive Higher Education. She is a faculty member in the Teaching and Leadership Department in the School of Education at Syracuse University, teaching in the Inclusive Elementary program where she started in 2014. She oversees InclusiveU, a model program for college students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Tina Nabatchi

Tina Nabatchi is the Joseph A. Strasser Endowed Professor in Public Administration and a professor of public administration and international affairs at the Syracuse University Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, where she also serves as Director of the Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration (PARCC).

Mary Opperman
Mary G. Opperman serves as Senior Vice President and University Secretary. She supports the work of the Board of Trustees, manages the Office of the Board of Trustees and works closely with the Board Chair, the Chancellor, senior administration and committee chairs of the Board, to provide counsel and guidance on strategy, policy and process.

Dara Royer
Dara Royer is the Senior Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer. In this role she responsible directs all internal and external marketing efforts including strategic marketing campaigns, digital and content marketing, and brand stewardship. Her team of professionals are champions for promoting and protecting Syracuse University’s reputation as one of the pre-eminent and inclusive student-focused research universities.

Stephanie Salanger
Stephanie Salanger began as director of communications at Syracuse University’s Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) and Office of Veteran and Military Affairs (OVMA) in 2017, bringing with her more than 25 years of experience in advertising agency and corporate communications roles, covering integrated marketing, public relations, and media relations in a variety of business industries.

Sarah E. Scalese
Sarah Scalese currently serves as senior associate vice president for communications at Syracuse University. In this role, she supports the chief communications officer in managing internal communications, media relations and issues management. Scalese partners with campus constituents, including University leaders, faculty, staff and students on communications initiatives designed to support the University’s engagement with its internal and external audiences, including the media. A respected member of the campus community, Scalese first joined Syracuse University in January 2014 as director of communications in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Michele G. Wheatly

Michele G. Wheatly has served as Chief Academic Officer or Provost at two successive Research 1 universities, most recently at Syracuse University (2016-2020) and prior to that at West Virginia University (2009-2014). At both institutions she advanced academic rankings, led comprehensive academic strategic planning, spearheaded successful accreditation exercises and grew faculty ranks by establishing research clusters.

Jamie Winders

Jamie Winders serves as Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs. In this capacity, Winders partners with Vice Chancellor, Provost and Chief Academic Officer Gretchen Ritter and other Academic Affairs leaders to support key faculty initiatives and advance the University’s vision and mission as outlined in the Academic Strategic Plan. A professor in the Department of Geography and the Environment, Winders was also the Founding Director of the Autonomous Systems Policy Institute.