

2024 Planning Committee

CHAIRS



[Chair] Bringing energy and innovation to higher education, **Karess N. Gillespie** (she/her) has over 13 years of experience in student affairs working with students and professionals. Karess Gillespie serves as an Assistant Director for Student Living at Syracuse University. Karess completed her Master's of Science in Cultural Foundations of Education from Syracuse University and Bachelors in Political Science and International Relations at the University of Iowa. She has a passion for creating training and development that centers intersectionality and current events. Outside of work, her hobbies include brunch, being a proud Disney adult and over-accessorizing. Karess is excited to serve this year's the chair of the TPE committee, as she has worn many tiaras with TPE over the years as a candidate, employer, super volunteer and candidate development subcommittee chair.



[Chair-Select] Born and raised in Chicago, **Nick Bates** (he/him) attended Southern Illinois University Carbondale, where he received a bachelor's degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice and a Master's in Higher Education. Nick comes to BU with both teaching experience in gender and sexuality studies, along with Residence Life experience. He has a vested interest in working with people to develop programs and strategies to reshape socialized perceptions of race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality while fostering an environment for healthy identity development. Nick provides oversight over the operations and content of the HTC. Nick has committed himself to thoroughly reading Thurman and finding ways to help members of the community develop a relationship with the work of Howard and Sue Bailey Thurman.

JOB SEEKERS & CANDIDATES



Steph Olson (she/her) serves as the Career Services Coordinator at the University of North Carolina, Eshleman School of Pharmacy. As a former candidate who participated in TPE, she is excited to bring over 10 years of experience in student affairs and career services to TPE! Steph is passionate about lifelong learning, finding your “fit,” and maintaining your mental health during the job search or the hiring process. In her spare time, she can be found hiking, teaching workout classes or finding a way out of an escape room.



Andre Jordan Jr. (he/him) currently serves as the Assistant Director in the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities at the University of North Carolina Greensboro. André is an advocate for transparency, equity, and accessibility in job search processes. As a member of this committee, he aims to leverage his commitment to inclusivity to empower job seekers of all backgrounds and experience levels to find their passions within the field of Higher Education and seek career opportunities that will be fulfilling to them and serve their best interests, professionally and personally.



Julie Batt holds a B.A in Psychology with minors in Social Welfare and Sociology and an M.Ed. in Higher Education Administration from the University of Toledo in Toledo, OH. Julie has four years' experience within the states of PA, VA, and IL. Her professional interests are Staff Development and Training; Recruitment and Selection; and mentoring Entry-Level and Graduate Students into the field of Higher Education, specifically Residence Life. Julie has extensive experience with Division One Student Athletes, International Students, and the Sophomore Year Experience. Welcome to TPE, we are so excited to have you!

AMBASSADORS



Griffen Farrar (he/him) currently serves as the Director of Residence Life at Iowa Western Community College. In this role, he is responsible for the overall management of a residence life portfolio of four distinct communities with a capacity of 1300 beds. Originally from the DFW metroplex, Griffen is excited to assist folks find their dream roles through TPE 2024.

changemakers!



With over 12 years of professional experience, **Katie Hill** (she/her) works as the Assistant Director of Residential Life for Training and Development at California State University, Monterey Bay. Within her current role, she guides a team of live-on professionals, oversees the comprehensive training of both professional and student staff, and crafts impactful large-scale programming for residential students. Her passions lie in instructional design and organizational development, as she continually strives to enhance the growth and skills of both student and professional staff. Through her role, she aims to create meaningful connections, promote continuous learning, and contribute to the holistic development of new professionals. She sees herself as silly, creative, and fun and tries to bring all of those elements into her work.



Frankie DiFranco (he/him) currently serves as a Community Director at American University in the nation's capital! Frankie works with first-year residents and can often be found creating new assessment tools to help enhance the student staff experience. Frankie attended Florida State University for his graduate degree (Go Noles!). When Frankie is not working with students, he can be found looking at a window into the distance, listening to a Taylor Swift tune. Frankie is excited to be working with the TPE planning committee this year!

EMPLOYERS



dr. janine m. weaver-douglas (she/her) currently serves as the Director of the Marcus Garvey Cultural Center, and the Interim Executive Director for the Division of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, at the University of Northern Colorado. In these roles, janine is primarily responsible for creating community for Black, African & African-American students, staff & faculty; as well as works to create inclusion through teaching, advising, mentoring & collaborating with the greater UNCO community to ensure Black culture is supported & celebrated in Northern Colorado. janine grew up a little bit of everywhere, but considers south Georgia (912!) home. janine is very excited to work with the TPE team to help employers to find & develop their future.



Raymond Gordon (he/him) is currently the Executive Director of Housing and Residence Life at The University of Texas at El Paso. He has been in his current position for three years and has been in the field for over 20 years. This is Ray's second year working with the TPE Planning Committee. Last year Ray worked with candidate development and this year he will be working with employer development. Ray is excited to continue working with TPE this year!



Katy Pelton (she/her) is an experienced higher education professional with over 20 years of experience in student affairs. While most of her experience is in student housing, she also has experience in facilities and operation management, risk management, and most recently oversight of a student union. Katy is currently working towards her Ed.D. in Educational Leadership with the goal to complete her degree by May 2024. Katy enjoys reading for both academic and non-academic purposes and spending time at the beach.

MARKETING + COMMUNICATIONS



Lisa Blasi (she/her) currently serves as the Assistant Director for Commonwealth Campuses at Penn State University. Lisa works with the hiring, training, and development of professional staff within the Residence Life department. Her passion lies within this realm as well as supervision. Lisa went to Pace University in New York City for her undergraduate and graduate degrees. She graduated with a MBA in Human Resource Management and Marketing Management. She is originally from New Jersey and has been in Central PA for 11 years now. She is married to Mathew and has a son, Austin along with a loveable dog, Fia.



Kyle N. Boone (he/him) currently serves as the Director of Housing and Residence Life at Grand Valley State University. As a scholar- practitioner, Kyle maintains a progressive research agenda that seeks to gain a better understanding of the social and cultural lived experiences of historically marginalized populations in the context of higher education—an often historically marginalizing space. To do this, Kyle recognizes the significance of asking important questions, but also the value of being a good steward of this information and reporting the answers to these questions in a way that has utility beyond academia. Kyle holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Louisville, a master's degree from the University of the Pacific and earned his Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration from Louisiana State University.