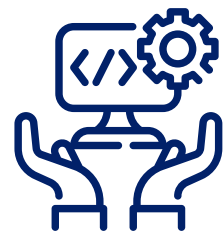
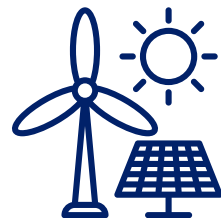




4TH ANNUAL



APPRENTICESHIP ILLINOIS BOOTCAMP



OCTOBER 13-14, 2026
BONE STUDENT CENTER, ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity





Day One

Time	Session	Presenter(s)
9:00am - 9:30am	Registration/Networking	
9:30am - 9:40am	Day One Welcome	Julio Rodriguez, DCEO
9:40am - 10:30am	Opening Keynote: <i>The Future of Work Depends on Who Gets a Chance: Apprenticeship in an AI Economy</i>	Daniel Serota, Aon/IWIB WBLA
10:30am - 10:45am	Compression Planning Introduction	Curt Rendall, Nate Carlson
10:45am - 11:35am	Main Stage Training: <i>From Employer Interest to Lasting Impact: A Framework for Sustainable Apprenticeship</i>	Rebecca Daurio, RADD Training
11:35am - 11:50am	Micro-Feedback Session	Curt Rendall, Nate Carlson
11:50am - 12:00pm	Transition to Lunch	
12:00pm - 1:00pm	<i>Plenary Lunch Session:</i> <i>The Voice of the Apprentice: A Panel on Illinois' Apprentice Ambassadors and Their Employers</i>	Sheryl Morris, Apprentice Ambassadors
1:00pm - 1:15pm	Transition to Breakout Session #1	
1:15pm - 2:15pm	Breakout Session #1	Various
2:15pm - 2:30pm	PM Break	
2:30pm - 3:30pm	Breakout Session #2	Various
3:30pm - 3:35pm	Transition from Breakout #2	
3:40pm - 4:30pm	Main Stage Training: <i>Built by Business: How One Region's Sector Partnership Is Solving Its Own Talent Crisis</i>	Kim Kuchenbrod & Mike Baker
4:30pm	Day One Closing Remarks	John Barr, DCEO



Day Two

Time	Session	Presenter(s)
8:00am - 8:50am	Pre-Conference Session: Apprenticeship 101	Nate Carlson
8:00am - 9:00am	Networking/Coffee	
9:00am - 9:50am	Main Stage Training: <i>Where Learning Meets Production: Building a Sustainable Apprenticeship Cohort</i>	Dr. Gina de Rosier Cook, Elgin CC
9:50am - 10:00am	<i>Transition to Breakout #3</i>	
10:00am - 11:00am	Breakout #3	Various
11:00am - 11:10am	<i>AM Break</i>	
11:10am - 12:10pm	Breakout #4	Various
12:10 - 12:15pm	<i>Transition to Lunch</i>	
12:15pm - 1:05pm	<i>Plenary Lunch Session:</i> <i>From Pilot to Talent Strategy: What Employers and Apprentices Need from Illinois</i>	Curt Rendall, Heartland CC
1:05pm - 1:20pm	Micro-Compression Planning - Conclusion	Curt Rendall, Nate Carlson
1:20pm - 2:00pm	Bootcamp Closing Remarks	Kelly Lapetino, DCEO

The event organizers would like to express a special thank you to the members of this year's Bootcamp Planning Committee and staff:

Sara Espeland, Tara May, Jonathan Fitzpatrick, Larry Fitzpatrick, Chuck Jones, Biswa Phuyal, Collin Ruthe, Justin Arnold, Emily Perks, Abby Russell, Gina De Rosier Cook, Anne Brogden, Kelly Lapetino, Ivy Hood, Antonio Gomez, Jalissa Jones, Terri Shandrow, Aimee Julian, Kimberly Heinisch, Chase Martin, Jennifer Foil, and John Barr.

"No work is insignificant. All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence."
- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

QUICK LINKS FOR APPRENTICESHIP ILLINOIS RESOURCES

The Apprenticeship Illinois team is here to assist you and your partners in expanding work-based learning expansion opportunities! From this page, access links for employers looking to identify their area's Apprenticeship Specialist, directly connect with the State Apprenticeship Mentor's biweekly drop-in Office Hours, and explore resources developed to strengthen your partnerships and understanding of life-changing, business-revitalizing registered apprenticeship programs.



WORKFORCE PARTNERS
WEBPAGE



APIL EMPLOYERS
WEBPAGE



STATE APPRENTICESHIP
MENTOR
OFFICE HOURS ZOOM LINK



APPRENTICESHIP ILLINOIS
TV SPOT
VIDEO LINK



APPRENTICE AMBASSADORS
WEBPAGE



NURSING
APPRENTICESHIP
CASE STUDY

Do you have an idea for a case study, outreach tool, or other resource that the Apprenticeship Illinois team could develop for your team's use in the field? Send your ideas to Nate Carlson at ncarlson@niu.edu

Session Descriptions

Main Stage Trainings

From Employer Interest to Lasting Impact: A Framework for Sustainable Apprenticeship

Rebecca Daurio, RADD Training

This interactive session will present a practical framework for transforming disconnected workforce resources into sustainable apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship pipelines. Drawing from RADD Training's experience designing and managing employer-responsive programs, participants will explore how to engage employers through a clear ROI proposition, align education and training partners around industry needs, leverage workforce funding and incentives, and establish accountability across multiple organizations.

The Voice of the Apprentice: A Panel on Illinois' Apprentice Ambassadors and Their Employers

Sheryl Morris, Facilitator

Hear this year's cohort of ambassadors speak about their paths to apprenticeship and its impact, and hear their employer sponsors speak to the return on investment generated for their enterprise through strategic investments in cultivating talent via work-based learning.

Built by Business: How One Region's Sector Partnership Is Solving Its Own Talent Crisis

Michael Baker and Kim Kuchenbrod

What happens when competing businesses stop going it alone on workforce challenges — and start building solutions together? Find out directly from the people doing it. Join business champions, workforce board leadership, and the team behind one of Illinois' most active sector partnerships as they share an unfiltered look at how their collaboration came together and what it's producing.

Where Learning Meets Production: Building a Sustainable Apprenticeship Cohort

Dr. Gina de Rosier Cook and Elissa Kojzarek, Elgin Community College

Developing Elgin Community College's Industrial Maintenance Technician cohort required finding the right balance among student needs, academic excellence, the fiscal responsibility of the training provider, and employers' production demands. The presentation will trace internal and external collaborations across academic leadership, faculty, workforce development, advising, registration, financial services, and employers. It highlights how ECC uses pre-apprenticeships, career exploration, tours, paid work experiences, and programs like "Taking Back the Trades" and "7-Day to Career Success."

From Pilot to Talent Strategy: What Employers and Apprentices Need from Illinois

Facilitator: Curt Rendall, Heartland Community College

This panel brings together three Central Illinois employers and three apprenticeship graduates representing manufacturing and healthcare to share their experiences building, participating in, and completing programs. Panelists will identify where value and ROI were highest, what mattered most to apprentices, and what barriers were encountered.

Day Two Pre-Conference (Circus Room)

Apprenticeship 101

Nate Carlson, Apprenticeship Illinois/Workforce Policy Lab

This Day 2 pre-conference session will outline the fundamentals of registered apprenticeship programs, the information needed to register an apprenticeship program with USDOL, and the roles played by various stakeholders in the Illinois work-based learning ecosystem.

Breakout Session #1 (Day One)

Session	Location
Building Talent Pipelines Through Strategic Incumbent Worker Investments and WBL Alignment <i>Sara Espeland and Omar Ramirez, Lake County Workforce Development</i> This presentation will showcase how workforce development boards can leverage Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) investments to address critical talent shortages while strengthening employer engagement and industry partnerships. Attendees will learn how Lake County Workforce Development has strategically aligned workforce funding, apprenticeship programs, and sector partnerships to support both the manufacturing and education industries.	Spotlight Room
No Wrong Door: Breaking Silos Between Adult Education and Workforce Partnerships <i>Angelique Maguire, Illinois Eastern Community Colleges</i> In this session, we will explore how Illinois Eastern Community Colleges (IECC), Lake Land College, and their vital WIOA partners have moved beyond traditional networking to create a deeply integrated ecosystem. We will pull back the curtain on our dual enrollment strategies, our unified referral and intake process, and our shared testing model, showing how these efforts provide a "no-wrong-door" experience for students.	Circus Room
The ROI of Kindness: How Equitable Apprenticeships Return Dividends <i>Tara May, Aspiritech</i> In this session we will discuss about how investments in apprenticeships for disabled and underserved communities can make businesses stronger and more innovative — despite being easier than you might think. We'll share real-world examples, tips, and strategies for success from Aspiritech's first-of-its-kind registered apprenticeship program serving neurodivergent career seekers in the Information Technology sector.	Main Ballroom

Breakout Session #2 (Day One)

Session	Location
Bridges to Opportunity: A Comprehensive Workforce Development Model for Economic Growth <i>Sara Espeland and Omar Ramirez, Lake County Workforce Development</i> Sustainable economic vitality starts with an aligned, responsive workforce ecosystem. In this session, Lake County Workforce Development showcases a proven, holistic framework designed to bridge the gap between regional business demands and community talent. Attendees will explore actionable strategies for co-designing high-impact work-based learning pathways, implementing family-centered workforce initiatives that foster long-term community resilience, and cultivating strategic cross-sector partnerships.	Circus Room
The District-Led Intermediary Hub: Scaling High-Growth Youth Apprenticeships via the Illinois Quality Framework <i>Barb Kain and Kathy Gannon, High School District #214</i> This session provides an operational blueprint of how a public high school district can serve as a centralized intermediary hub, leveraging the Illinois Quality Framework for Youth Apprenticeships to connect youth to apprenticeships across diverse sectors within a condensed, 12-month timeline. Participants will explore how High School District 214 successfully manages multi-organizational ecosystems involving dozens of employers and several Related Technical Instruction (RTI) providers. The presentation will explicitly map how the District aligns its programs with ISBE-recognized College and Career Pathway Endorsements (CCPE), integrates dual credit, and utilizes credential stacking to maximize student portability and career adaptability.	Spotlight Room
Building Awareness and Utilization: A Showcase of SHRM Foundation, IL SHRM, and Apprenti Progress <i>Robert Lemke, Illinois State Council for the Society of Human Resource Managers (IL SHRM)</i> This session showcases the collaborative work of the SHRM Foundation, Illinois SHRM, and Apprenti to expand registered apprenticeship awareness and utilization across Illinois. Presenters will summarize the statewide initiative funded by the SHRM Foundation grant in partnership with DCEO, highlighting measurable outcomes from employer outreach, pilots, and registrations. The session engages participants to crowdsource future paths and provides a basic playbook to engage employer associations and intermediaries to scale apprenticeship pipelines in IT and HR.	Main Ballroom

Breakout Session #3 (Day Two)

Session	Location
Customized Apprenticeships and Pillars of Support: Best Practices for Program Success from Zurich North America <i>Susan Meehan, David Jaeger, and Sirena Arnaout, Zurich North America</i> Launching an apprenticeship program is only the first step. Sustaining apprentice success requires intentional program design, customized learning pathways, and a strong support ecosystem. In this session, representatives from Zurich North America will share how the company's nationally recognized apprenticeship program combines customized apprenticeship models with a strategic Pillars of Support framework to drive strong completion rates, talent outcomes, and business impact. Participants will learn how Zurich leverages academic coaches, job coaches, cohort-based learning, mentorship, and apprentice alumni engagement to support apprentice success from hire through graduation, leaving with practical strategies that can be adapted for any organization.	Main Ballroom
Expanding Early Childhood Education Opportunities through Apprenticeship <i>John Hall and Patrick Hall, Will County; Julie Brancalion and Dain Meza-Gotto, Joliet Junior College</i> Joliet Junior College (JJC) and the Workforce Investment Board of Will County partnered to address early childhood education teacher shortages and improve the success of childcare centers through pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs. This session will provide an overview of the strategies and funding models used to expand early childhood education dual credit programs to new high schools, launch apprenticeship programs, and engage employers. Participants will learn about the successes and challenges encountered along the way.	Spotlight Room
Making Multi-Partner Pathways Work: Connecting High School, College, and Employers <i>Dr. Michael Kuhn and Ericka Kouba, Des Plaines Valley Region EFE; Dr. Paul Jensen, Triton College</i> How can EFE, high school, college, and employer partners turn separate educational and work-based experiences into coherent student pathways? Des Plaines Valley Region EFE, Triton College, Leyden High School, and district employers will share a regional model connecting CCPE, dual credit, 60-hour WBL experiences, industry credentials, and employment opportunities. Using Criminal Justice Administration, HVAC, and CNA-to-Nursing as models, presenters show how partners divide responsibilities, manage transitions, engage employers, and address operational barriers.	Circus Room

Breakout Session #4 (Day Two)

Session	Location
A Recipe for Opportunity: How High School CTE, Industry, and Apprenticeship Create Culinary Careers <i>Berenice Jaquez and Collin Ruthe, The Workforce Connection; Jay Rosati, Rosati's Pizza</i> This session will discuss how an Illinois restaurant organization is developing future leaders by engaging students early, providing structured career advancement opportunities, and leveraging workforce programs, including work experiences, OJT, and Registered Apprenticeship to strengthen the talent pipeline. This session also illustrates the value of an integrated workforce approach, highlighting how Business Services, apprenticeship specialists, and program staff collaborate to strategically leverage programs to build a comprehensive talent pipeline.	Main Ballroom
Who Does What? Building Flexible Agreements for High-Performing Apprenticeships <i>Curt Rendall, Heartland Community College</i> Who recruits apprentices, provides training, supports participants, tracks progress, manages compliance, pays costs, and measures outcomes? The answers vary by employer, industry, region, and partner capacity. Using essential functions found within an apprenticeship agreement as a starting point, participants will explore how responsibilities can be distributed across employers, sponsors, LWIAs, intermediaries, training providers, and other partners. The session examines how two-party and multi-party agreements can provide accountability while remaining flexible.	Spotlight Room
Creating a Teacher Pipeline with Apprenticeship Programs <i>Elizabeth Ketchum, McKendree University</i> This presentation will show how McKendree University created an apprenticeship pathway for paraprofessionals to continue working while earning their teaching degree and licensure. It will showcase the importance of building relationships with school districts and promoting apprenticeships throughout the state of Illinois.	Circus Room

Our Trainers and Presenters:



Daniel Serota serves as the Vice President of Government and Public Affairs at Aon, a leading global professional services firm. In his work, he creates meaningful and sustainable connections with a wide variety of stakeholders to further Aon's public service mission and community outreach activities. With over ten years of experience in this role, he leads US public policy and political initiatives for Aon at the federal, state, and regulatory level, and directs Aon's Political Action Committee. He also empowers the Latino Professional Network within Aon as an Executive Sponsor.

Daniel was appointed to the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board by Governor J.B. Pritzker of Illinois and sits as the chair of the Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning Committee, which is focused on growth of apprenticeship programs in Illinois, and advises the U.S. secretary of labor on the national apprenticeship system as part of the Advisory Committee on Apprenticeship.



Julio Rodriguez is Deputy Director for the Office of Employment and Training (OET) at the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). Under Julio's leadership, OET has met or exceeded performance, developed nationally recognized sector based training initiatives, secured over \$50 million additional federal dollars to support new programs, developed training policy to increase the number of individuals receiving credentials, and led a team that launched a successful initiative to expand the use of new technology in the workforce system.

Rodriguez is responsible for the administration of more than \$360 million in grant funding, and he has been working at the senior management level in human services for more than 30 years. Prior to working for DCEO, Rodriguez was the Program Director for the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), Division of Human Capital Development.



Rebecca Daurio is the President and Founder of RADD Training, LLC, a national apprenticeship intermediary that helps employers, industry associations, and group sponsors develop and sustain high-quality Registered Apprenticeship Programs. Her work focuses on transforming apprenticeship from a compliance-based initiative into a practical workforce strategy supported by structured training, strong mentorship, measurable skill development, and clearly defined partnerships.

Rebecca has designed and managed apprenticeship programs across advanced manufacturing, HVAC, automotive, cybersecurity, energy, and other skilled industries. She works closely with employers, education and training providers, workforce organizations, and government partners to build systems that reduce administrative burden, connect individuals to family-sustaining careers, and support long-term program growth. Rebecca holds a master's degree in Training and Development, is a certified human resources professional, and serves as a Registered Apprenticeship Ambassador.



Dr. Curt Rendall is the Executive Director, Program Development and Innovation at Heartland Community College in Normal, Illinois where he works with industry partners, community organizations, and colleagues to develop and expand programming aligned to high-wage, high-skill, in-demand careers. During his time at Heartland, he has helped secure \$17 million in funding to drive innovation in Career Technical Education through flexible programming and embedded, wrap-around student supports, and belonging. Notably, Heartland was awarded a \$7.5 million capital investment to establish an Electric Vehicle — Energy Storage (EVES) Manufacturing Training Academy and launch the nation's first Associate of Applied Science Degree in Electric Vehicle Technology.



Kim Kuchenbrod is a Certified Workforce Development Professional (CWDP) with a Business Service Engagement Endorsement. She also serves as a Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) Fellow and Faculty member for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, bringing more than 30 years of experience in workforce development, talent coaching, and labor market data analysis. She also mentors emerging TPM practitioners nationwide and is a respected talent coach and data analyst, leveraging workforce trends and insights to guide employer-driven solutions.

In her role supporting the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity TPM initiative, Kim partners with local workforce areas and regional economic development organizations to integrate employer-led talent pipeline strategies into the state's workforce investment system. A Hall of Fame inductee with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, she is nationally recognized for her leadership in building sector partnerships, expanding career pathway opportunities, advancing apprenticeship programs, and promoting inclusive workforce strategies for opportunity populations.



Michael Baker joined the Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity in 2001, and conducted statewide economic development research and program and policy development. Michael's workforce experience covered: statewide and regional workforce strategic planning; state and regional sector strategies; Talent Pipeline Management; business engagement; work-based learning and workforce innovation efforts for the Office of Employment and Training. He served as lead staff supporting task forces devoted to workforce issues in agriculture and transportation and was the state director of an innovative accelerated manufacturing training initiative recognized by the US Department of Labor.

Michael assisted Vermilion Advantage in applying for one of the first TPM pilot project grants in 2015; and, working with US Chamber staff, led a proof-of-concept back mapping project to track employment outcomes for WIOA registrants; and continues to serve as a TPM advocate and mentor in Illinois. He earned the Talent Supply Chain Manager and Job Quality TPM credentials and is currently a TPM Fellow and Faculty-in-Training.



Sheryl Morris serves as the Executive Director of the UNITE HERE Chicago Hospitality Institute (UHCHI), where she leads innovative culinary registered apprenticeship programs designed to build diverse, equitable talent pipelines within the hospitality industry. An active member of the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) Work-Based Learning & Apprenticeship Committee, Morris also leads the Illinois Apprentice Ambassador Program, championing peer mentorship and elevating apprentice voices to expand career pathways across the state.



John Barr is the Budget and Planning Manager for the Illinois Department of Commerce's Office of Employment and Training (OET) responsible for the planning, administration and monitoring of a portfolio of more than \$175 million in federal workforce grants. The OET supports Illinois' workforce system in developing qualified workers that fulfill the needs of businesses. He earned his Master of Public Administration from Northern Illinois University and has more than 20 years of experience in developing, supporting and administering workforce initiatives in Illinois.



Dr. Kelly Lapetino serves as Program Division Manager with DCEO's Office of Employment and Training (OET). She is a strategic workforce development administrator dedicated to building sustainable talent pipelines and advancing program outcomes. With extensive experience bridging education and industry, Kelly specializes in designing credentialed workforce programs that align directly with regional employer needs while expanding career pathways for students and alumni. Known for cultivating high-impact cross-sector partnerships and diversifying funding streams, Kelly works collaboratively with business leaders, academic institutions, and labor partners to deliver high-quality service, foster strong labor-management relationships, and drive continuous improvement across workforce initiatives.



Dr. Gina de Rosier Cook serves as Dean for Workforce Development and Continuing Education division at Elgin Community College, where she leads efforts to connect education with real-world opportunity. Under her leadership, ECC partners with local employers, entrepreneurs, and community members to strengthen the regional workforce through customized corporate training, professional development, and continuing education programs. Her division also supports student success and lifelong learning by coordinating the college's academic programs, industry certifications, and support services to ensure learners and employers alike have the tools they need to thrive in today's rapidly changing economy.



Elissa Kojzarek serves as Director of Strategic Partnerships and Experiential Learning at Elgin Community College, where she leads initiatives that connect education and industry through apprenticeships, internships, and other work-based learning opportunities. With more than a decade of experience in communications, workforce development, and partnership building, she collaborates with employers, community organizations, and regional stakeholders to create pathways that address workforce needs while expanding access to high-quality educational and career opportunities.

In her current role, Kojzarek oversees employer engagement strategies and supports the development and growth of registered apprenticeship and experiential learning programs that serve students, job seekers, and businesses throughout the region. She has helped establish innovative workforce partnerships across multiple industries and is committed to advancing equitable access to education and career pathways.



Sara Espeland is an Apprenticeship Specialist with Lake County Workforce Development, where she focuses on developing and expanding Registered Apprenticeship programs across Illinois. She joined the organization in February 2023 after more than 14 years with the Idaho Department of Labor. Throughout her career, Sara has served in a wide range of workforce development roles, including direct support for job seekers, Workforce Investment Act case management, Trade Adjustment Assistance, unemployment insurance adjudication, and local office management. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Health Education from California State University, Chico, and has a USDOL certificate of completion of apprenticeship for Youth Development Practitioner. She brings extensive experience to help individuals, employers, and communities achieve their workforce goals.



Omar Ramirez is an Apprenticeship Specialist at Lake County Workforce Development, connecting job seekers with registered apprenticeship and training opportunities. He is a U.S. Army veteran (2007–2021) and previously served as a Corrections Officer with the Lake County Sheriff's Office. Omar holds a B.A. in Human Services from Columbia College of Missouri and an A.A. in Criminal Justice from the College of Lake County.



Angelique Maguire is the Adult Education Director of Instructional Services at Illinois Eastern Community Colleges. She works with their Adult Education team covering all four colleges to make sure that students get the best wrap around student services possible, and works with the Adult Education Instructors to prepare students for College and Career Readiness. She teaches and assists in the development of Career Bridge and Adult Education courses for lower literacy to advanced level learners and English as a Second Language Classes. She also volunteers as a tutor through the Adult Volunteer Literacy Program. Through her experience with IECC in Adult Education, she has gained valuable opportunities for adult education advocacy and networking with state-level and national level stakeholders. She enjoys advocating for rural communities, non-traditional learners, and seeing lives changed!

Our Trainers and Presenters (Continued):



Tara May is CEO of Aspiritech, a tech services company with a team of 100+ autistic adults. She is an advocate for embracing neurodiversity in the workplace and in the world. Prior to joining Aspiritech, Tara was EVP of Media & Chief Digital Officer at Winsight as well as VP of Content and Product Strategy for Patch Media. She helped launch 900 hyperlocal sites for the AOL network as well as a digital reverse-published local news product for the Chicago Tribune. Tara's career is focused on using technology and product innovation to drive growth. She is a sought-after speaker on user experience and digital transformation. She's overseen large and small teams with a focus on career development and leading with kindness. She resides in Lake County with her husband and teen and tween children.



Barb Kain is the Director for Career Discovery at High School District 214, overseeing the District's Center for Career Discovery. The Center for Career Discovery engages with local industry partners to support work-based learning, with a goal of helping students identify a post-secondary goal and affirm a career path prior to graduation. District 214's Center for Career Discovery program facilitates work-based learning opportunities for all students through internships, apprenticeships, and a vocational program. Barb has been with District 214 for 10 years, supporting student experiences in their nationally recognized career pathways program.

Prior to her role within the Center for Career Discovery, Barb held various roles within the Teaching and Learning Department at District 214, including coordinating Summer School, managing district events to showcase career pathway programming, and managing the district's Academic Programs and Pathways Guidebook. In her life before transitioning to education, Barb managed a team of researchers dedicated to new product development research as a Vice President at Ipsos. Barb holds a Master's Degree in Strategic Educational Leadership from National Louis University, a Bachelor of Science in Business from the University of Illinois, and a CTE teaching license.



Kathy Gannon currently serves as the Partnership Manager and Apprenticeship Program Supervisor for High School District 214, the largest High School District in the state of Illinois, which is located in the Northwest Suburbs of the Chicagoland area. In her role, Kathy engages with local community partners to enhance relationships and create opportunities for work-based learning experiences. A strong focus is on fostering holistic community engagement and the stewardship of community partners.

Kathy's responsibilities include managing the D214's Youth and RA Apprenticeship Program. In 2018, D214 enrolled the first cohort of Registered Cybersecurity Apprentices. Now in its eighth year, the youth apprenticeship program has expanded into over twenty career sectors and efforts continue to increase student opportunities and external employer partner participation. All aspects of the apprenticeship program have been developed to support student and employer success.



Bob Lemke has been quantifying the effectiveness, impact, and value of workforce initiatives and investments for over 30 years. Bob has served as a consultant and practitioner where he has led the development of HR strategy, total rewards, workforce planning and analytic capabilities. As a consulting practice leader for NextView, Bob advises boards and senior leadership on wide range of value-driven and purpose-led human capital issues.

He is an active board member of Chicago SHRM and its Education Committee and serves as a Board member and the Director of Workforce Readiness for Illinois State Council for the Society for Human Resource Management, focusing on workforce readiness initiatives across the State. Bob also serves as an adjunct faculty member at Northwestern University's School of Professional Studies, facilitating courses in human resources management. Bob completed his master's in industrial/organizational psychology from Illinois State University and has additional postgraduate certificates in decision science from Stanford University and executive management from the Wharton School of Business. Bob maintains his professional credentials as SHRM-SCP from SHRM, CCP from World at Work, and SPHR from HRCI.



Susan Meehan is a Vice President and Head of Talent Acquisition for Zurich North America. She leads enterprise talent acquisition strategies that help connect business priorities with exceptional talent. Her responsibilities span executive, professional, and early career recruiting, talent acquisition operations, technology, vendor partnerships, and workforce planning initiatives that support long-term business success.

Throughout her career, she has been passionate about building the workforce of the future. From leading nationally recognized apprenticeship programs and expanding early career talent pipelines to advancing AI-enabled recruiting and talent acquisition transformation, Susan focuses on creating innovative, scalable talent solutions that deliver meaningful business impact while expanding opportunities for individuals to build rewarding careers.



David Jaeger works at Zurich North America as the Program and Operations Lead for the Office of Apprenticeship team within Human Resources, developing early career workforce solutions. Prior to Zurich, David spent nine years in Higher Education, where he coordinated student success initiatives and instructed courses on college acclimation and leadership in the workplace. David has a passion for helping individuals develop and execute their career aspirations.



Sirena Arnaout is a workforce development and apprenticeship leader who helps connect business, education, and talent to create meaningful career opportunities. As Apprenticeship Business Execution Lead for Zurich North America's Office of Apprenticeship, she oversees program strategy, operations, partnerships, and compliance for an established apprenticeship program that has supported more than 400 apprentices. Her work is driven by a belief that the right support and partnerships can help people discover and pursue careers they may not have previously considered.



Berenice Jaquez serves as Executive Director of The Workforce Connection, bringing several years of experience in workforce development, employer engagement, and apprenticeship development. Her work focuses on connecting employers, education partners, community organizations, and workforce resources to create career pathways that make sense for both businesses and individuals. A key focus of Berenice's work has been expanding apprenticeship into nontraditional industries and occupations and showing employers how the earn-and-learn model can be adapted to meet their workforce needs. She has supported apprenticeship development across a variety of industries, working with partners from the initial idea through program development and implementation, using resources such as on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, internships, and other work-based learning opportunities to support apprenticeship development and help employers build stronger training pathways.



Collin Ruthe is the Apprenticeship Specialist for The Workforce Connection and Apprentice Administrator for the Rock River Valley Tooling and Machining Association (RRVTMA). Based in Northern Illinois, he works with employers, educators, and community partners to develop and expand apprenticeship opportunities that strengthen the regional workforce. Before joining The Workforce Connection Collin worked in both manufacturing and higher education, including several years at Rock Valley College. His experience as an instructor and manufacturing professional gives him a practical understanding of how hands-on learning, classroom instruction, and employer training come together to build skills and prepare individuals for careers.

A second-generation manufacturing professional, Collin was introduced to apprenticeship early through his father, a Tool and Die Maker who trained through RRVTMA in the early 1990s. That connection, along with his own experience in industry and education, continues to shape his approach to apprenticeship development and his work connecting employers, education, and workforce resources.



Jay Rosati serves as Head of Career Development at Rosati's, where for the past three years he has focused on building programs that create career and skill-development opportunities for young professionals. A native of Downers Grove, Illinois, Jay graduated from Downers Grove North High School and earned his bachelor's degree in Business Management from Indiana University. Prior to Rosati's, he gained experience in retail, logistics and freight, sales, and marketing. Jay is passionate about creating opportunities within local communities and partnering with programs that support and empower the next generation of the workforce.



Elizabeth Ketchum serves as a Program Coordinator in the School of Education at McKendree University, where she supports students pursuing educator licensure and works closely with faculty, school districts, and educational partners to develop innovative pathways into the teaching profession. Elizabeth has played a key role in the development, implementation, and growth of McKendree University's Paraprofessional Program that is an Apprenticeship Model, creating an accessible pathway for current paraprofessionals to earn their teaching license while continuing to work in their schools. Through this innovative model, paraprofessionals can complete their education online while gaining the practical experience and support needed to transition successfully into the teaching profession. Through her work, Elizabeth is committed to addressing the teacher shortage, expanding access to educator preparation, and creating sustainable pathways that allow school employees to advance their careers while remaining connected to the students and communities they serve.



Patrick Hall is the Manager of Work-Based Learning & Outreach at Joliet Junior College (JJC). He has worked in workforce development for over 10 years primarily focused on connecting students and job seekers to the workforce through internships, apprenticeships, and other career pathways. Also oversees and coordinates all current JJC apprenticeship programming including the ECE RAP. A workforce enthusiast and eager participant in all things apprenticeships.



Julie S. Brancalion, M.B.A., M.Ed., serves as the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Apprenticeship Coordinator and Adjunct Instructor at Joliet Junior College. With 20 years of experience as an early childhood educator, Julie brings extensive industry knowledge and practical expertise to her work. Since joining JJC, she has held various roles in grant-funded programs and now oversees apprentices participating in the ECE apprenticeship program while teaching college courses. She holds a Bachelor of Science from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, an M.B.A. from DePaul University, and a Master of Education from National Louis University.



Dain Meza-Gotto is the Director of Workforce Development at Joliet Junior College (JJC), where he supports initiatives that connect education, workforce training, and regional employer needs. He focuses on developing talent pipelines to meet the evolving workforce demands of Chicagoland employers. Dain brings experience in higher education, student engagement, and workforce development, with a commitment to expanding career pathways and strengthening partnerships between educational institutions and industry.

Our Trainers and Presenters (Continued):



Dr. Michael Kuhn is the Director for the Des Plaines Valley Region Office of Education for Employment. He is a school administrator and counselor with proven success assisting students within diverse educational settings. Drawing upon his experiences working with at-risk students in secondary schools and postsecondary settings, he helps students turn their passions into careers. Dr. Kuhn earned his Ed.D in Educational Leadership and Administration from National Louis University, and holds an MBA from Elmhurst University.



Ericka Kouba is the College and Career Pathway Coordinator at the Des Plaines Valley Region Office of Education for Employment. She is a strategic education and workforce development leader dedicated to expanding equitable college and career pathways across secondary and postsecondary systems. In her role, she provides regional leadership in career and technical education (CTE), aligning rigorous curriculum, dual-credit options, and work-based learning opportunities directly with regional economic priorities and high-demand labor markets. A skilled convener of cross-sector partnerships, Ericka specializes in launching innovative workforce initiatives, securing and stewarding high-impact grant funding, and driving systemic change. Their work consistently strengthens regional talent pipelines while delivering measurable, sustainable outcomes for students, educational institutions, and industry partners alike.



Frank Holthouse is the Director of Careers at Leyden High School District 212. In his role, he empowers high school students to take ownership of their futures by expanding access to early college credit, career credentials, and authentic real-world experiences. Through strategic partnerships, equitable programming, and a focus on workforce readiness, he helps students graduate not just with a diploma — but with confidence, purpose, and competitive options.



Dr. Paul Jensen is the Associate Vice President for Academic Innovation and Workforce Education at Triton College. He is an experienced higher education professional with progressive leadership, management, and fiscal responsibility, with skills in operations, organizational consensus building, project management, and working with diverse staff and faculty to develop and deliver high quality educational programs.



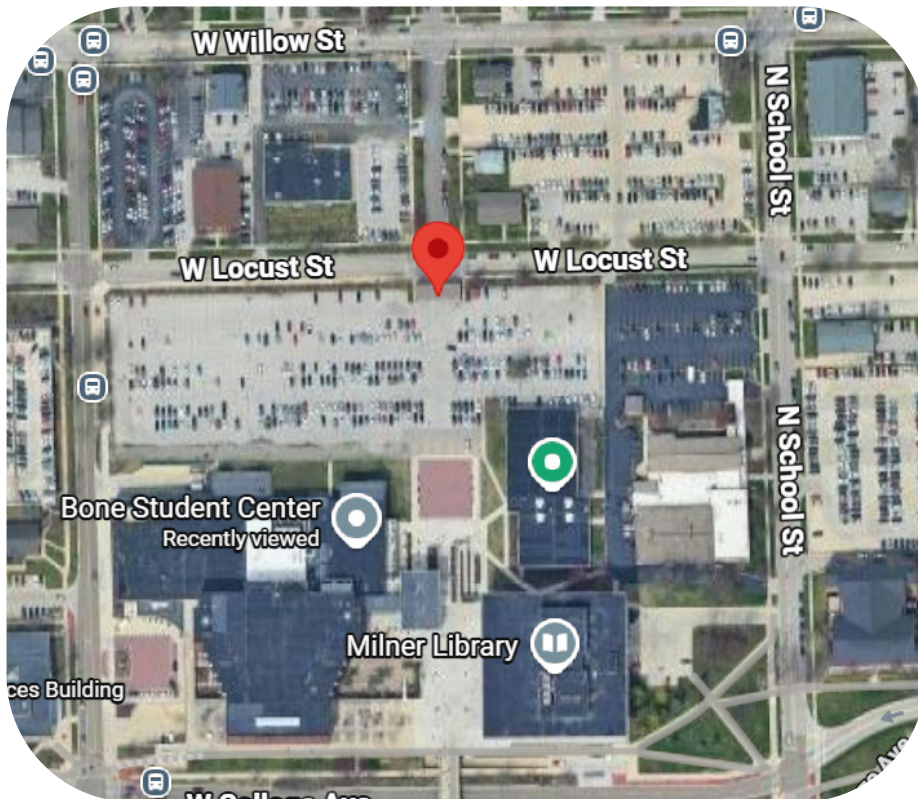
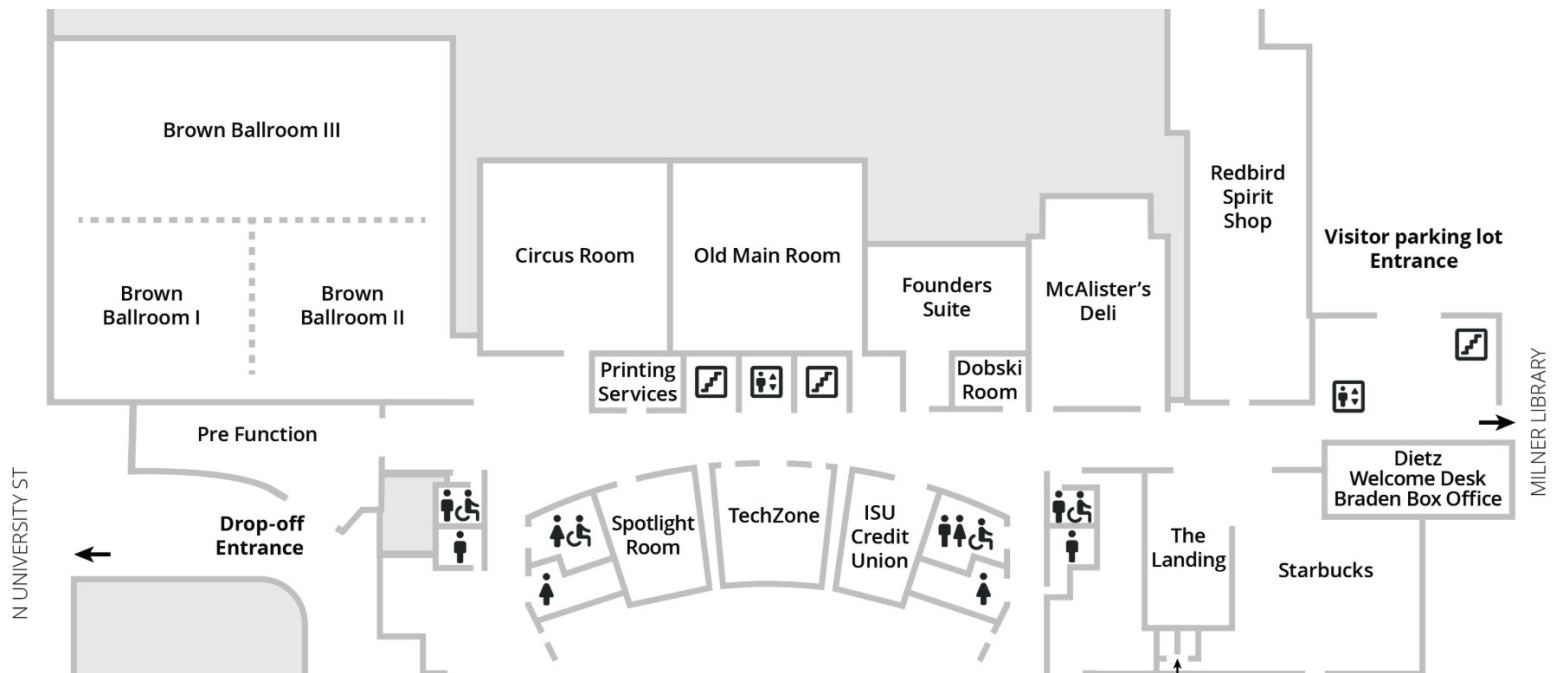
Nate Carlson is the Technical Assistance Program Manager for the Apprenticeship Illinois grant programs, where he develops training solutions and resources to expand work-based learning in Illinois. He and his colleagues are based out of the Workforce Policy Lab at Northern Illinois University, which works to evaluate, administer, and improve workforce programs to improve outcomes for businesses and career seekers. Nate also serves as the State Apprenticeship Mentor, working with any business or organization in need to help develop and register apprenticeship programs with the United States Department of Labor.

Prior to his work in registered apprenticeship, Nate worked as an adjunct Communication instructor and Digital Literacy Program Lead at Eastern Illinois University and Danville Area Correctional Center. He is driven to help foster an environment in which everyone has the ability to succeed and thrive. He holds a Master's degree in Communication Pedagogy and is a U.S. Chamber-certified practitioner of Talent Pipeline Management.



#ApprenticeshipIL

VENUE MAP AND PARKING



Paid hourly parking is available at 397 W Locust St.

Parking in the Bone Pay Lot is \$1.00 an hour. There is no overnight parking in the Bone Student Center pay lot and is closed from 4:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. Vehicles are subject to overtime charges and towing unless removed by 4:00 a.m.



**TO ACCESS SLIDE DECKS, HANDOUTS, AGENDAS,
AND OTHER RESOURCES FROM THIS YEAR'S
APPRENTICESHIP ILLINOIS BOOTCAMP,
SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW:**



OR VISIT [APPRENTICESHIPILLINOIS.COM/BOOTCAMP](https://apprenticeshipillinois.com/bootcamp)