

Illini Science Policy Program

2022 to 2023



Overview

The Illini Science Policy Program (ISPP) is a unique post-graduate opportunity for graduate students interested in University of Illinois Extension's critical issue areas – food, economy, environment, community, and health – and the policy decisions affecting those resources. The program matches highly motivated and qualified graduate students completing their degree from University of Illinois with hosts in public agencies or the Illinois legislature for a 12-month paid appointment.

Illini Science Policy Scholars explore public service careers at a high level, receiving support through mentoring, training, and networking events while establishing professional connections across multiple agencies and stakeholders. The Illini Science Policy Program began in 2020 and will start its fourth cohort in the summer of 2023, which will kick off with an inaugural collaborative policy summit with the Center for Social and Behavior Science to introduce scholars to Illinois state government, policy-making, communication, and advocacy.

Think Global, Act Local

Illinois Extension embodies the land-grant mission of University of Illinois, providing applied research and education to address societal grand challenges and local issues. Through its partnerships, ISPP and its Scholars create broad impact.



Community

Support strong and resilient youth, families, and communities.

- Digital equity listening sessions
- Community town halls
- Stakeholder surveys



Economy

Grow a prosperous economy.

- Dual credit programming
- College and career pathways
- Enhancing minority- and women-owned businesses



Environment

Sustain natural resources in home and public spaces.

- Smart climate
- Technology research
- Nutrient loss strategies



Food

Maintain a safe and accessible food supply.

- Solutions to food deserts
- Culturally relevant community gardens
- Sustainable agriculture



Health

Maximize physical and emotional health for all.

- Understanding barriers to health resources
- Promotoras' voices towards health equity
- Youth perception on health and well-being

2023 Scholar Impact Snapshot

- Conducted 20+ listening sessions across the state on digital equity, health equity, and food security
- Facilitated 7 listening sessions on rural affairs, women and girls council, and economic development
- Supported 3 broadband grants
- Supported 1 computational thinking grant
- Representation by 3 ISPP Scholars at the Illinois State Fair
- Monthly distribution of STEM / STEAM resource support materials to hundreds of K12 teachers
- Governor's Food Desert Advisory Committee Representative
- Represented by 1 ISPP Scholar at Farm Progress Show (Iowa)
- Facilitated 4 panel discussions across the state on topics ranging from digital, educational, and agricultural equity
- Created a 3-part Cybersecurity Series with 351, 384, and 451 unique opens, showing growth with each distribution
- Over 1100+ community members directly reached by ISPP Scholars; thousands engaged on various topics at Illinois State Fair and Farm Progress Show
- Supported 9 conferences reaching 2300+ people
- Served as lead moderator for 8 public events regarding community issues significant to host agencies
- Delivered 14 presentations across the state related to dual credit, digital equity, health and safety, and STEAM/STEM
- Facilitated 13 focus groups on critical issues areas of health and safety, health equity, food security, digital equity
- Created STEAM statewide resource mapping tool
- Gained 800 new subscribers to STEAM newsletter



MARIA C. ANDERSON

Degree/Program: Ph.D. Education Policy, Organization, and Leadership

Hometown: Seattle, Washington

Host: Illinois Board of Higher Education

Maria Cynthia (MC) Anderson received her Ph.D. in Education Policy Studies (EPS), program in Philosophy of Education, from University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) in December 2021. Her dissertation examined the body as a site of educational value in higher education. MC is currently developing her skills in data analytics to expand her capabilities toward creating a more just world.

Being an ISPP Scholar with the Illinois Board of Higher Education College Readiness project offers me an invaluable experience working with policy experts committed to expanding quality access and equity to higher education in Illinois state.



ALICIA L. ROSS

Degree/Program: ABD, Education Policy, Organization, and Leadership

Hometown: Central Islip, Long Island, New York

Host: Illinois DCEO, Office of Broadband

Alicia has extensive experience in learning technologies. She began her work as a consultant working in several Chicago Public Schools and later joined as a Technology Adviser for CUIP a University of Chicago organization. She conferred her master's degree at University of Chicago with a thesis focused on digital divide in developing countries upon completion of her research in Ghana, West Africa.

My experiences in school have given me an opportunity to explore my interest in the policy field, and I want to now begin applying my course experiences. I want to learn about policy work here in Illinois and believe in the important work that each Illinois State Department is doing for all of us here in Illinois, nationally, and internationally.



OLUWASEUN OJO

Degree/Program: Master of Laws

Hometown: Lagos, Nigeria

Host: Illinois Department of Agriculture, Division of Natural Resources

Oluwaseun is a Nigeria-qualified attorney who previously worked as an associate with top-tier and leading commercial law firms in Nigeria, with significant experience providing legal advisory to private and public sector entities in connection with corporate and project finance transactions, acquisitions and corporate restructurings, infrastructure development and policy advisory. Oluwaseun is passionate about policy issues around climate change, sustainability, energy transition, and the development and financing of renewable energy projects.

I believe the program provides an excellent platform for me to express my long-nurtured interests in public policy and fully explore issues around climate change, energy transition and sustainability directly impacting the community.



YU TIAN (田宇)

Degree/Program: M.S. Civil Engineer & Urban Planning

Hometown: Shanghai, China

Host: Illinois Department of Innovation & Technology

Yu Tian is passionate about sharing his expertise in spatial and demographic data analysis. His work in DoIT focused on linking resources with people, moving accessible STEAM resources forward, and analyzing resource capacity for policymaking. He leverages additional video editing and animation skills to promote events and share information with the public. Apart from academic domains, he is interested in history and traveling, where he enjoys learning firsthand about different places and cultures worldwide. Yu Tian enjoys meeting people and expects to learn from everyone.

I am looking forward to putting into practice the skills and ideas I learned, utilizing my knowledge in different fields, and exploring potential chances to improve social equity.



**CHUKWUEMEZIE
CHARLES EMEJUO**

Degree/Program: Master of Laws
Hometown: Eziagu, Anambra State, Nigeria
Host: Illinois Department of Community and Economic Opportunity, Office of Broadband

Chukwuemezie is a Nigeria-qualified attorney with considerable experience in advising on legal and policy issues, non-profit administration, and management. He provides solutions to clients through legal advisory, dispute resolution, and interfacing with regulatory authorities in Nigeria. He has a Master of Laws (LL.M.), with a concentration in Intellectual Property and Technology Law, from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is passionate about developing policies that affect the use, access, and adoption of technology.

I consider public service as a significant bedrock to positive impacts. I want to leverage my interest and experience in the development of policies in increasing the use, access, and adoption of technology that will help Illinois communities.



ELIZABETH GUTIERREZ

Degree/Program: M.S. Public Health
Hometown: Chicago, Illinois
Host: Illinois Legislative Latino Caucus / Latino Caucus Foundation

Elizabeth's passion lies in policy and advocacy, focusing on public health and nutrition. She found a calling for promoting health equity through establishing nutrition security within communities through her time working and volunteering. New experiences at ILLCF have inspired her to learn and do more for her community. In her free time, she volunteers with the Illinois Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access team, and is the public policy co-coordinator. When not checking stuff off her to-do list, she's cooking, playing with her chihuahua Moped, or enjoying local music outside.

I have a passion for health equity and understand that policy has an impact to change individuals' lives. With that said, I am interested in honing my skills for a future career working with a diverse group of individuals so I can excel in my next position.



PATROBAS S. WAFULA

Degree/Program: Master of Laws
Hometown: Kampala, Uganda
Host: Office of the Illinois Lieutenant Governor, Juliana Stratton

Patrobas completed his Master of Laws (LLM) with a concentration in International and Comparative Law. He advocates for human rights: equal opportunities, inclusion of vulnerable groups, young people involvement, and social justice – with an interest in growing Policy Development and Management. Work experiences include public service, financial education, banking, and aviation industries. He has a passion for leadership training, mentoring, and development. Patrobas is a Rotarian and believes that equity, as well as restorative justice, are key components of progressive community life.

The ISPP aligned with my interests in policy development, review, and management and I am looking forward to engaging deeply in conversations around the policy.



OLUWAKEMI ADEYEMI

Degree/Program: Master of Laws
Hometown: Osun State, Nigeria
Host: Illinois Legislative Black Caucus / Illinois Legislative Black Caucus Foundation

Oluwakemi Adeyemi is a Nigeria-qualified legal practitioner with over five years of post-call experiences which cut across government agencies and private legal practice in dispute resolution and corporate/commercial practice. Oluwakemi uses his skills, knowledge, and experiences to overcome challenges faced by populations with limited resources and funding.

The Illini Science Policy Program provides a framework to allow me to deploy my skills, knowledge, and experiences in finding solutions to problems that affect underserved communities.



Lasting Impact & Connections

The Illini Science Policy Program allows Scholars to consider work in the public sector where they continue to do good work for communities in Illinois, in our nations, and around the world. Our alumni network is growing with leaders of tomorrow who demonstrate compassionate intellect and creative energy in the communities they serve.

WHERE ARE THEY HEADED? WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

- Oluwakemi Adeyemi** (2023), Doctorate, Law (UIUC)
- Maria Cynthia Anderson** (2023), TBD in July
- Chukwuemezie Charles Emejuo** (2023), Doctorate of Public Administration (UIS)
- Elizabeth Gutierrez** (2023), Chief of Staff, Latino Caucus Foundation
- Oluwaseun Ojo** (2023), M.S. Law & Finance, Oxford
- Alicia Ross** (2023), Visiting Coordinator, Broadband Lab
- Yu Tian** (2023), Traveling, pursuing Doctorate, Urban Planning
- Patrobas Wafula** (2023), Doctorate, Public Administration/ALEC
- Susan Ogwal** (2022), Policy Director, Illinois Office of the Lieutenant Governor, Juliana Stratton
- Shubhika Agarwal** (2022), Visiting Coordinator for Broadband
- Adrienne Pickett** (2022), Visiting Coordinator for Broadband
- Roberto Rojas Alfaro** (2022), Assistant Professor, Linguistics, Salt Lake Community College
- Skye Lewis** (2022), Public Health Liaison, CDC Foundation
- Yasamin Khoshpour** (2022), Assistant Director of Data and Accountability Systems, Illinois Board of Higher Education
- Monserrat Carrillo-Rodriguez** (2022), Visiting Specialist, Integrated Health Disparities, Illinois Extension
- Hannah Price** (2021), Food Safety Coordinator, American Foods Group
- Allison Wheeler** (2021), International Global Education and Training Coordinator, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- Ruth Adekale** (2021), Med School applicant, Crisis Nursery
- Diamond Ruffin** (2021), Allendale Assoc., Clinical Case Manager
- Ana Paula Bustamante** (2021), Preserving Guatemala's natural resources: defensores.org.gt/

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Hosts and Mentors

2022 to 2023 ISPP Hosts

- Illinois Board of Higher Education
- Illinois Black Caucus/Black Caucus Foundation
- Illinois Latino Caucus/Latino Caucus Foundation
- Illinois Office of the Lieutenant Governor, Juliana Stratton
- Illinois Department of Agriculture, Division of Natural Resources
- Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Office of Broadband
- Illinois Department of Innovation & Technology

2022 to 2023 ISPP Extension Mentors

- Willene Buffett | Oluwakemi Adeyemi (*mentee*)
- Keith Jacobs | Yu Tian (*mentee*)
- Shibu Kar | Oluwaseun Ojo (*mentee*)
- Margaret Larson | Maria C. Anderson (*mentee*)
- Joseph Malual | Patrobas Wafula (*mentee*)
- Nancy Ouedraogo | Charles Emejuo, Alicia Ross (*mentees*)
- Margarita Teran-Garcia | Elizabeth Gutierrez (*mentee*)

2023 to 2024 ISPP Hosts (*Scholar announcement June 2023*)

- Illinois Board of Higher Education
- Illinois Department of Agriculture, Division of Natural Resources
- Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Office of Broadband
- Illinois Department of Innovation & Technology
- Illinois Black Caucus/Black Caucus Foundation
- Illinois Latino Caucus/Latino Caucus Foundation
- Illinois Office of the Lieutenant Governor, Juliana Stratton



For more ISPP information, contact:
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Illinois Extension
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences
University of Illinois, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local Extension councils cooperating.
University of Illinois Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.