

**Friday, March 13**

TRANSFORMING BUSINESS  
**CONNECTING  
DIVERSE  
SCHOLARS**



**Leeds** School of Business  
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

**MARCH 13, 2026**

TRANSFORMING BUSINESS  
**CONNECTING  
DIVERSE  
SCHOLARS**

**Friday, March 13, 2026**

**8:30am – 2:30pm**

**KOBL 352**

**A special experience for prospective graduate students**

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At Leeds, we're determined to create a pipeline of diverse leaders. That's why we're invested in the success of all our graduate students—they are tomorrow's changemakers, CEOs and leaders who will transform business worldwide. While our student body steadily grows more diverse, we continue to push toward equity, both at Leeds and in the world of business.

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**This program is made possible through the generous support of:**

***Ellen Balaguer***

A champion of Leeds students, Ellen established the Mel and Marcy Balaguer Scholarship that gives economically and socially disadvantaged students the opportunity to get a high-quality business education. Ellen named the scholarship for her parents who endured hardships and sacrifices to send her (and her brothers) to college. Now, she hopes to give the same opportunity to others. In 2023, Ellen was recognized as an Influential Leader, by AACSB. The initiative recognizes alumni from AACSB-accredited institutions who are defining what it means to be a societal impact leader committed to positive change. They make a difference through leadership that is compassionate, curious, and resilient, with a focus on purpose, people, and planet. A retired global managing director at Accenture, Ellen serves as an emeritus chair on the Leeds Advisory Board and has earned the Leeds Distinguished Alumni and Service Award in recognition for her service to the school.

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**8:30 – 9:00 am**

**CHECK IN & NETWORKING BREAKFAST**

**KOBL 352**

**WELCOME**

**9:00 – 9:15 am**

- Kristi Ryujin, Associate Dean of Graduate Programs & Special Assistant to the Dean for Faculty Diversity, Equity and Inclusion – Leeds School of Business
- Dean Khatri, Ph.D. Tandeand Rustandy Endowed Dean – Leeds School of Business Former Professor of Organizational Leadership and Information Analytics
- Ellen Balaguer, **Accenture** - Retired Global Managing Director | **Leeds Advisory Board Chair Emeritus**

**KOBL 352**

**9:15 – 9:30 am**

**TED TALK + Q & A: "Finding Your Fit"**

- Janel Forde, Senior Vice Chancellor for Operations – University of Colorado, Boulder

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**LEEDS FACULTY SHOWCASE**

**9:30 – 10:30 am**

- Gloria Urrea, Ph.D., Assistant Professor - Strategy, Entrepreneurship and Operations. Faculty Director for Graduate Distance and Online Learning | Leeds School of Business
- Christina Lacerenza, Ph.D., Assistant Professor – Organizational Behavior | Leeds School of Business
- Liu Liu, Ph.D. Assistant Professor - Marketing | Leeds School of Business

**KOBL 352**

**10:30 – 10:45 am**

**NETWORKING COFFEE BREAK**

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## EXECUTIVE PARTNER PANEL

Facilitator: Amanda Schram, Director of Graduate Career Management | Leeds School of Business

Executive Partner Panelists:

10:45 – 11:45 am

- Maria Meleandez, **Denver International Airport** - Chief of Staff
- Emily Miller, **Office of Governor Jared Polis** - Deputy Director of Operations
- Chasity Parhm, **Crocs** - Group Vice President Global Talent Acquisition, Total Rewards & HR Operations
- Walter Stanley, **Key Bank** - National Sales Leader | **Leeds Advisory Board Member**

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11:45 am – 11:55 pm

**BREAK AND GET LUNCH**

## NETWORKING LUNCH WITH EXECUTIVES & STUDENTS/ALUMNI

11:55 – 12:55 pm

- Ellen Balaguer, **Accenture** - Retired Global Managing Director | Leeds Board Chair Emeritus
- Maria Meleandez, **Denver International Airport** - Chief of Staff
- Emily Miller, **Office of Governor Jared Polis** - Deputy Director of Operations
- Chasity Parhm, **Crocs** - Group Vice President Global Talent Acquisition, Total Rewards & HR Operations
- Walter Stanley, **Key Bank** - National Sales Leader | **Leeds Advisory Board Member**
- Shay Cardenas, **Ford Motor Co.** – HR Business Advisor | MBA 2022, Leeds School of Business, University of Colorado Boulder
- Judy Maaliki, **DaVita Kidney Care – Redwoods** (Leadership Development) | MBA, Data Analytics 2025 Leeds School of Business, University of Colorado Boulder
- Ethan Nguyen, MS Finance Candidate 2026, Leeds School of Business | BA, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology / Business Minor, University of Colorado Boulder
- Eric Parton MBA/MS Analytics Candidate 2026, Leeds School of Business,

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University of Colorado Boulder | Sergeant – US Army

- Paula Valencia, MBA Candidate 2026, Leeds School of Business, University of Colorado Boulder

## **PANEL DISCUSSION: What Makes Leeds Graduate Programs & Boulder Special**

Facilitator: Ellen Balaguer, Retired Global Managing Director –  
Accenture Leeds Advisory Board Chair Emeritus

Leeds Students and Alumni Panelists:

**12:55 – 1:55 pm**

- Shay Cardenas, **Ford Motor Co.** – HR Business Advisor | MBA 2022, Leeds School of Business, University of Colorado Boulder
- Judy Maaliki, **DaVita Kidney Care – Redwoods** (Leadership Development) | MBA, Data Analytics 2025 Leeds School of Business, University of Colorado Boulder
- Ethan Nguyen, MS Finance Candidate 2026, Leeds School of Business | BA, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology / Business Minor, University of Colorado Boulder
- Eric Parton MBA/MS Analytics Candidate 2026, Leeds School of Business, University of Colorado Boulder | Sergeant – US Army
- Paula Valencia, MBA Candidate 2026, Leeds School of Business, University of Colorado Boulder

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## **CLOSING REMARKS**

**1:55 - 2:00 pm**

- Ellen Balaguer, Retired Global Managing Director – Accenture | Leeds Advisory Board Chair Emeritus

**KOBL 352**

## **MEET AND GREET RECEPTION: Cookies and Coffee**

**2:00 – 2:30 pm**

- Prospective Students
- Current Students & Alumni
- Leeds Faculty
- Leeds Graduate Programs Staff

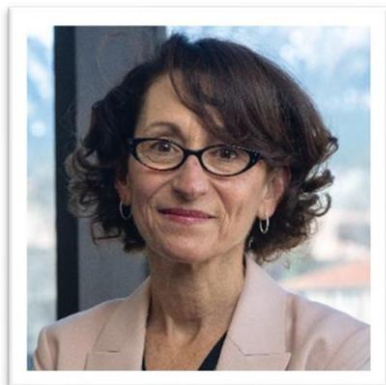
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*Please note: While the event content is focused on the perspectives and experiences of specific communities, all are welcome to attend.*

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## Participant Biographies



**Ellen Balaguer – Chair emeritus, Leeds Advisory Board Philanthropist | Retired Global Managing Director, Accenture**

Ellen was a senior executive with Accenture for 27 years and is now retired. During her tenure at Accenture, Ellen held a variety of roles, most recently of which included Global Managing Director for HR & Learning Services and Global Managing Director for Innovation and Offer Management for the Outsourcing business.

While at Accenture, Ellen spearheaded many top strategic growth initiatives for the organization and led some of the largest and most complex deals done on a global basis. She also successfully turned

around several distressed business units and drove significant growth in several areas of both the outsourcing and consulting businesses. Ellen also served on several Accenture corporate boards including the Global Leadership Council, the Global Investment Committee, various corporate strategic growth plan initiatives, Accenture Development Partnerships and several corporate citizenship initiatives.

Since retiring from Accenture in late 2009, Ellen is now a philanthropist and works with several education organizations and non-profits in the U.S. and around the world. She is an active member of the Leeds Board of Alumni and Friends and has also served as an advisor/board member at the University of Colorado Denver campus, the Jane Goodall Institute, the Florence Crittenton School Denver, United Way and the Colorado Ballet.

In 2012, Ellen was the Leeds commencement speaker and was also the recipient of the Leeds Distinguished Alumni and Service Award in recognition for her service to the school and exceptional achievements in business. A champion of Diversity Equity and Inclusion efforts, last year Ellen established the Mel and Marcy Balaguer Scholarship here at Leeds that gives economically and socially disadvantaged students the opportunity to get a high-quality business education. Ellen named the scholarship for her parents who endured hardships and sacrifices to send her (and her brothers) to college. Now, she hopes to give the same opportunity to others. Through the same gift from Ellen, we were also able to enhance our DEI activities in graduate programs, including launching this event last spring to recruit and enroll students from underrepresented backgrounds and creating a Diverse Scholars Program to support students as they work to obtain their master's degree.

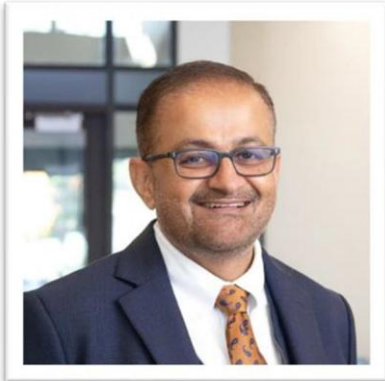
Ellen was recognized as an Influential Leader, by AACSB. The initiative recognizes alumni from AACSB- accredited institutions who are defining what it means to be a societal impact leader committed to positive change. They make a difference through leadership that is compassionate, curious, and resilient, with a focus on purpose, people, and planet.

Ellen and her family live in Denver and travel extensively on a worldwide basis. Ellen attended the University of Colorado at Boulder where she earned both a BS in Finance and a BA in Psychology.

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**Vijay Khatri, Ph.D. – Tandean Rustandy Endowed Dean | Professor of Information Analytics, Leeds School of Business, University of Colorado**

Dean Khatri is a Professor of Information Analytics, and his research focuses on the information economy and spans design, management, governance, and use—through data analytics—of data repositories. He has a strong leadership record of accomplishment in student success, furthering research and scholarship, advancing diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging initiatives, and in community engagement.

Prior to joining the Leeds School of Business in July 2023, Khatri was a professor of operations and decision technologies at Indiana University's Kelley School of Business. Khatri served in various leadership roles at Kelley, including Executive Associate Dean for Strategy, Innovation, and Technology; Associate Dean for Information, Instructional Technologies, and Academics; chairperson of the Department of Operations & Decision Technologies; co-director of the Institute for Business Analytics, which he helped create; and director of an Indian-registered company that operates Indiana University's India Gateway in New Delhi. He led the development and multi-year funding of the Digital Intelligence Initiative, which included the establishment of the Institute for Digital Enterprise. He also led the development and multi-year funding of the Grant Thornton Institute for Data Exploration for Risk Assessment & Management (GT-IDEA), collaborating with the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs, and the Luddy School of Informatics, Computing, and Engineering.

Khatri's research and teaching has earned him over a dozen awards, including the IU Provost's Award for Supporting Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity, the MBA Teaching Excellence Award, IU Trustees' Teaching Award, Kelley's Innovative Teaching Award, the Harry C. Sauvain Teaching Award, Outstanding MSIS Faculty Award, among others.

Khatri's education exemplifies a strong commitment to both business and engineering disciplines. He earned his PhD from the Eller School of Business at the University of Arizona, a master's degree in business from the University of Bombay, and a bachelor's degree in engineering from Malaviya National Institute of Technology.

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**Kristi Ryujin - Associate Dean for Graduate Programs  
Special Assistant to the Dean for Faculty Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion  
Leeds School of Business, University of Colorado**

As the Associate Dean for Graduate Programs, Kristi is responsible for the advancement, quality, vibrancy and continuation of graduate programs at the Leeds School of Business, with oversight of recruitment, retention, graduation, and placement of nearly 500 graduate students, annually. Prior to joining Graduate Programs, Kristi served in the Office of Diversity Affairs as the Assistant Dean for Diversity and Inclusion and Director of the Office of Diversity Affairs. In these roles, Kristi created programs to support underrepresented students including the Diverse Scholar's Research

Initiative and the Diversity and Business Ethics Case Competition. Kristi has also instituted academic tutoring, academic boot camps, implemented a faculty-led mentoring program for Diverse Scholars Program students and increased corporate engagement. In 2017 Kristi created *End the Gap* gender-equity programs to support the school-wide initiative to increase diversity and gender parity.

In addition to these student-focused efforts, Kristi has been instrumental in increasing faculty diversity by working with division chairs and search committees, creating the dual career hiring program, and supporting similar efforts at central campus.

In 2020 the YWCA in Boulder County honored Kristi with the Community Impact Maker Award. The award recognizes a community leader committed to creating a "more equitable, inclusive and empowering place for all who live in Boulder County."

Prior to joining Leeds, Kristi served as the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Diversity Initiatives at the University of Missouri – Kansas City. At UMKC, she created and implemented speaker programs that brought diverse speakers and perspectives to the campus and provided diversity training for UMKC offices and departments. She also developed fundraising programs for UMKC Pride Empowerment Scholarships and in spring 2009, she received the prestigious Outstanding Staff Award from the LGBT office at UMKC for her work to support Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender students, staff and faculty. In 2013, Kristi received the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce Ace Award for her work in diversity. Kristi holds an M.Ed. in Education, Culture and Society from the University of Utah.

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### Janel Forde, Senior Vice Chancellor for Operations – University of Colorado, Boulder

Janel Forde joined CU Boulder in June 2025 as Senior Vice Chancellor for Operations. A dynamic leader whose career spans city and state government, K-12 education, and consulting in the areas of finance and operations, Janel oversees the units of Human Resources, Public Safety, Information Technology, Health and Wellness Services, and Compliance, Ethics and Policy at CU Boulder.

Janel came to CU Boulder from the City and County of Denver where she served as Chief Operating Officer for Mayor Mike Johnston, overseeing core government operations and all agencies, including public safety. Prior to Denver, she was a partner and associate director with the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) where she was a core member of the Public Sector, State and Local practice area, supporting clients on various topics including core government operations, logistics, and large-scale change. Before returning to BCG, she served as the director of the Illinois Department of Central Management Services (CMS), the operational engine enabling the state's more than 80 agencies, boards and commissions.

Prior to her CMS appointment by Gov. JB Pritzker, Janel served in several leadership roles for the City of Chicago, including as Chief Operating Officer for Mayor Rahm Emanuel. She also held leadership positions supporting education, first as a director in the office of the CEO for Chicago Public Schools and then as Chief Operating Officer for the Illinois State Board of Education. Those roles followed her first stint with BCG as a consultant in the firm's Chicago office.

Janel has a master's degree in business administration (MBA) from Stanford University's Graduate School of Business, where she became a Toigo Fellow, and a bachelor of science in economics with a dual concentration in marketing and management from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. She is also an alumna and associate board member of the Winsor School in Boston and a board member for the American Red Cross, Greater Chicago Chapter.

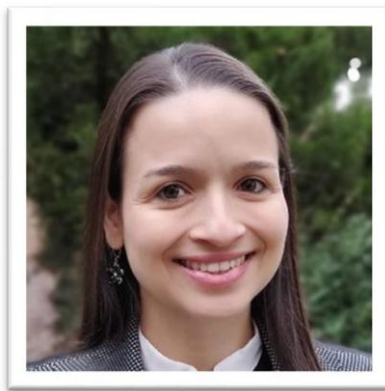
Janel lives in Denver and enjoys traveling, baking, and all types of arts and crafts.

Awards and Recognition: First African American Vice President of NASCA (2021), Part of first all-female leadership team of NASCA executive committee, National Association of State Chief Administrators (NASCA) Walton Leadership Award (2020), Ariel Investments/WVON Chicago's 40 Game Changers (2020).

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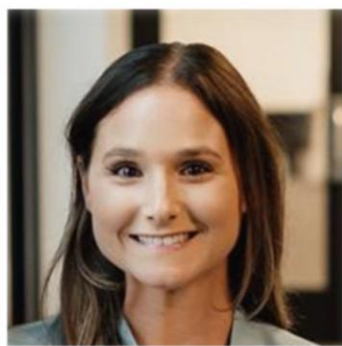
## Participant Biographies



**Gloria Urrea, Ph.D. – Assistant Professor, Strategy, Entrepreneurship and Operations | Leeds School of Business, University of Colorado**

Gloria studies operations of humanitarian organizations (HOs), whose mission is to alleviate human suffering and improve the quality of life of the most vulnerable population. Her research focuses on three main questions. First, how HOs can make their operations more efficient. Second, how HOs can access and manage the required donations to perform their work. Third, how HOs can leverage emerging technologies such as crowdfunding and online volunteering platforms to raise the monetary and time donations needed to deliver aid to those in need. To answer these questions, Gloria uses empirical methods, such as econometric analysis and behavioral experiments.

Before joining the Leeds School of Business, Gloria held a position as Visiting Scholar at the Kelley School of Business, Indiana University. She holds a Ph.D. from the Università della Svizzera italiana (University of Lugano), Switzerland. She also holds a Master's in Economics with a major in Management, and another Master's in Humanitarian Logistics and Management. Gloria also worked as a manager and entrepreneur for several years in the private sector, and has collaborated in applied projects in the humanitarian sector with UNICEF and the Red Cross Movement.



**Christina Lacerenza, Ph.D. – Assistant Professor, Organizational Leadership and Information Analytics | Gordon and Susan Trafton Faculty Scholar | Leeds School of Business, University of Colorado**

Dr. Lacerenza is an assistant professor in the Organizational Leadership and Information Analytics division at the Leeds School of Business at University of Colorado Boulder. With her work, she aims to improve organizational leadership, with an emphasis on increasing positive leadership practices, mitigating power abuse, and understanding the team within which the leader is embedded. To accomplish this goal, Dr. Lacerenza examines the growth and development of leaders and right-hand partners, as well as the intricacies at play within the teams that managers lead. She conducts both quantitative and qualitative work, aligning the

methodology used with the focus of the research question(s). Her research has been published in *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, and other high-quality outlets. At Leeds, Dr. Lacerenza teaches Foundations of Teamwork and Collaboration in the full-time MBA program, Organizational Development and Leadership to undergraduates in business and engineering, and Organizational Theory in the doctoral program. Prior to joining Leeds, she earned her PhD from Rice University. Prior to her academic career, she worked in talent management at Amazon and for the Orlando Magic NBA Team.

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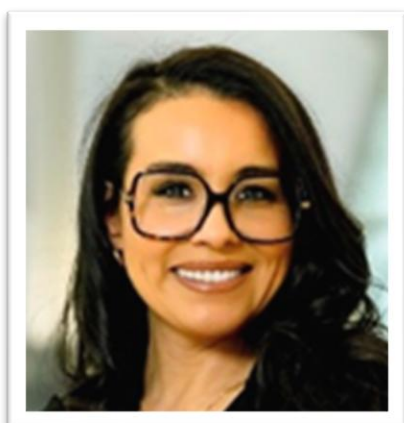


**Liu Liu, Ph.D. – Assistant Professor, Marketing | Leeds School of Business, University of Colorado**

Liu Liu is an Assistant Professor of Marketing in the Leeds School of Business at the University of Colorado Boulder. She received her PhD in Marketing from New York University Stern School of Business. She also holds a BE from Tsinghua University and an MS from Carnegie Mellon University, both in Computer Science. Prior to her academic career, Liu worked at Google for three years as a Software Engineer, developing large-scale machine learning models to predict consumers' ad click-through rates for the AdSense system.

Liu's research focuses on the intersection of marketing and machine learning (AI), with particular emphasis on the elicitation, measurement, and prediction of consumer preferences and choices. Her work spans areas such as Consumer Preference Modeling and Elicitation, Machine Learning, Generative AI, Visual Marketing, Branding, and Product Design.

Liu currently teaches "Modern AI: Introduction to AI for Business" in the MSBA program, for which she has been awarded the MSBA Faculty Award for Teaching Excellence.



**Maria G. Meleandez, Chief of Staff, Denver International Airport**

As Chief of Staff at Denver International Airport, one of the world's most complex aviation enterprises, Maria leads Government Affairs and Global Public Policy, Culture and Strategy, Systems Integration, and the Center of Equity and Excellence in Aviation (CEEA).

Leading the implementation of the industry's first-of-its-kind, Center of Equity and Excellence in Aviation, Maria institutionalized CEEA as a premier aviation talent hub. Under her leadership, CEEA is positioned as a global thought leader and convener for the future of aviation, delivering scalable experiences and infrastructure that strengthen workforce pipelines, elevate industry leadership, and support

long-term sustainability.

Maria operates at the intersection of vision and execution; an executive who can architect a strategy and then build the institution to sustain it. Founding DEN's Systems Integration Management Office (SIMO), a dedicated division designed to serve as the enabler that connects vision to execution. Through SIMO, Maria aligns people, processes,

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and strategy into one cohesive operational ecosystem, streamlining decision-making and enabling cross-functional execution at scale.

Before DEN, Maria served as Deputy Executive Officer at the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the nation's second-largest public transit system. There she drove high-impact economic development initiatives and played a central role in development and implementation of The SEED School of Los Angeles County: the country's first college-preparatory boarding school dedicated to transportation infrastructure career pathways.

Her career spans education, healthcare, and large-scale infrastructure, industries that demand both systems thinking and deep human commitment. She is a first-generation college graduate, holds an MBA, is a licensed Registered Nurse, and Hudson-trained Executive Coach.

*Maria believes the most transformative thing an organization can build is a culture where talent rises, strategy executes, and impact compounds.*



### **Emily Miller, Deputy Director of Operations, Office of Governor Jared Polis**

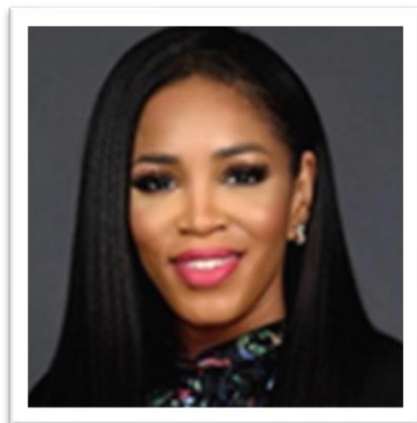
Emily is a public servant, entrepreneur, and combat veteran with 20+ years of experience leading tech modernization efforts across the public and private sectors. She currently leads the Governor's Operational Agenda for the State of Colorado. Emily is also co-founder of Rumi Spice, a Y Combinator-backed social enterprise featured on Shark Tank.

She began her career as an engineer officer in the U.S. Army, leading a platoon in Iraq and serving on two deployments to Afghanistan with the 75th Ranger Regiment. As a member of one of the first female teams attached to Special Operations, her service was chronicled in the New York Times bestseller Ashley's War. Emily holds a BS from West Point and an MBA from Harvard Business School.

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**Chasity Parhm, Group Vice President of Talent, Total Rewards, and HR Operations - Crocs**

Chasity brings more than 20 years of Human Resources leadership experience. In this role, she leads the talent acquisition and total rewards strategies that attract and retain top talent and oversees a modern, world-class HR service delivery model. Her career also includes leadership roles at NCR, Herman Miller, Rheem Manufacturing, Intercontinental Hotels (IHG), and Southern Company. Chasity holds an Executive MBA from Georgia State University and recently relocated to Colorado from Atlanta, Georgia. Outside of work, she enjoys fashion, interior design, outdoor activities, and traveling with her husband, Alex, and their two children, Gracen (7) and Aislinn (4).



**Walter Stanley, National Sales Leader – Key Bank Community Bank | Leeds Advisory Board Member**

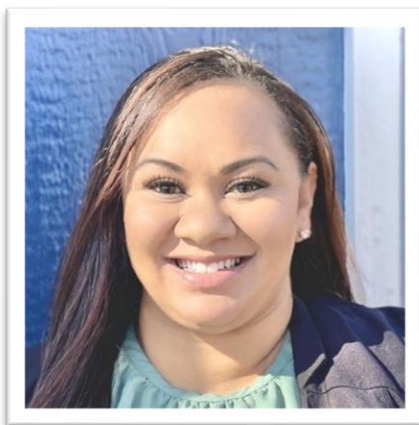
Walter brings over two decades of experience in retail and business banking. Over his 22-year career at Key Bank, he has held leadership roles, including 14 years as an Ara Retail Leader and several years as the Small Business Territory Leader for the West. His leadership has earned him numerous accolades including Key Bank's prestigious Signature Circle award, several years of winning the Area champion Award, and Market Top Performer Award for the district. A graduate of the University of Colorado and the CBA Executive Consumer Banking School, Walter is passionate about driving financial access and inclusion in underserved communities. He leads his team with a strong focus on relationship-building, strategic growth, and empowering low-to moderate-income communities through tailored banking solutions. Beyond his banking career, Walter is a former NFL player, having spent 10 years in the league. He brings the same discipline, teamwork, and leadership from his professional football career into his role at Key Bank. His family is also deeply connected to athletics-his son, Dimitri Stanley, is pursuing a professional football career sense graduating from the University of Colorado.

When he's not leading his team, Walter enjoys, Skiing, biking, hiking, and vacationing with his wife, Elizabeth Stanley, and their children, Daisha, and Dimitri.

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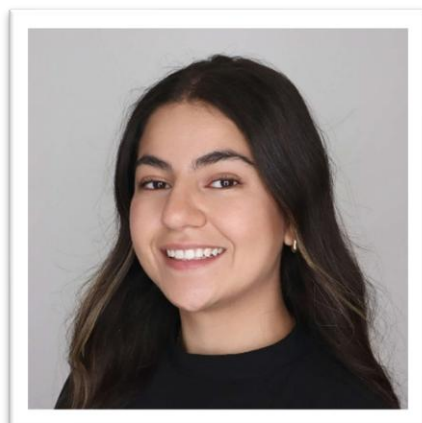
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**Shay Cardenas, HR Business Partner at Ford Motor Company | Leeds MBA 2022**

Shay is a growth minded business professional who learns quickly, adapts as needed, and is highly motivated to create an impact and see results. She is passionate about helping others and loves to use creativity to problem solve. Shay has over 13 years of professional experience and have won several national leadership awards. As an MBA graduate from the University of Colorado (Leeds School of Business), Shay leveraged her education, diverse work experience, and passion for people to create an impact as a business leader.



**Judy Maaliki, Data Analyst and Leadership Development at DaVita Kidney Care | Leeds MBA, Data Analytics 2025**

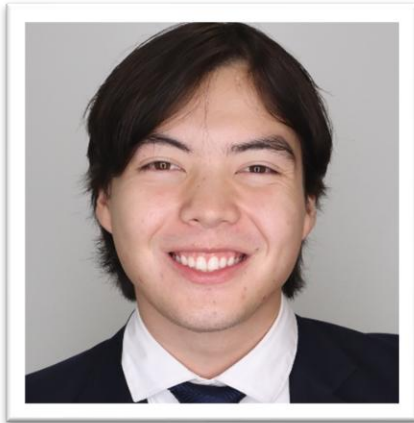
Judy is currently an analyst in DaVita's Redwoods Leadership Development Program. In her role, she focuses on data analytics, reporting, and transformation initiatives that help drive decision-making and ultimately improve the care and service provided to patients. Judy works closely with the finance teams on reporting, problem solving, and identifying opportunities for innovation through data.

Judy completed her Master's in Business Analytics at the University of Colorado Boulder, where she developed a strong passion for solving complex problems and improving systems. Judy is excited to be here today to share a bit about her journey and hopefully provide some insights from her experience at Leeds.

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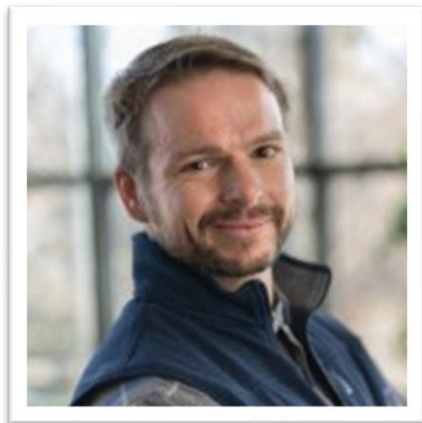
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**Ethan Nguyen, MS Finance 2026 Candidate | Leeds School of Business**

Ethan is an MS Finance 2026 Candidate on the investment management track. His undergraduate degree was in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology with a minor in business, at CU Boulder. Ethan was born and raised in Colorado. In his free time, Ethan likes weightlifting, hiking, and model kits!



**Eric Parton, MBA / MS Analytics 2026 Candidate | Leeds School of Business**

Eric grew up in Wisconsin and brings an unconventional journey to the Leeds School of Business, where he is currently pursuing his MBA and MS in Business Analytics. His path to business school spans several industries and roles, shaped by a curiosity about how organizations function and how they can be improved.

Early in his career, Eric worked across sales, and nonprofit roles before serving in the United States Army as a Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear Specialist. Following his military service, he continued building experience in human-centered, analytical roles including work at a crisis center and as a staff accountant.

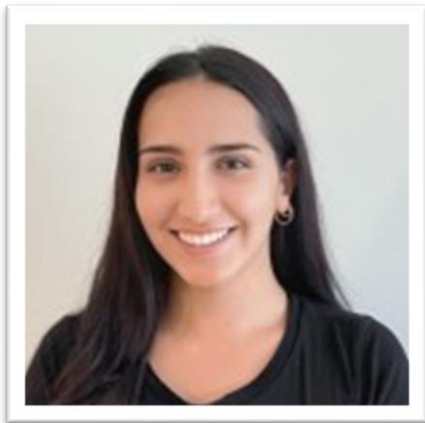
At Leeds, Eric focuses on strategy, analytics, and operations, with a particular interest in how organizations can better integrate data and analytics into everyday decision-making and workflows. His academic and professional interests center on improving systems so they produce better outcomes for both organizations and the people they serve.

Outside the classroom, Eric spends as much time as possible outdoors. He is an avid trail runner who loves the Colorado foothills, and enjoys baking, reading & yoga on calmer days. He also serves on the Board of Boulder Community Housing Corporation, reflecting his commitment to community involvement and building diverse, equitable, and inclusive communities wherever he goes.

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**Paula Valencia, MBA 2026 Candidate | Leeds School of Business**

Paula, born and raised in Colombia, has spent the past ten years living in the United States. She earned her undergraduate degree in Marine Biology in Miami before beginning her career as a high school science teacher, where she spent two years fostering curiosity, a love of learning, and a passion for conservation and protecting our oceans in her students.

This commitment to inspiring others naturally evolved into a love for marketing, brand strategy, and product management, especially the creativity involved in building meaningful brands and experiences. She is currently pursuing an MBA at the University of Colorado Boulder's Leeds School of Business, with a focus on

opportunities in the hospitality and consumer packaged goods industries, where she is passionate about creating the best possible experiences for people and connecting them to brands in meaningful ways. Outside of her professional pursuits, Paula enjoys exploring the outdoors, traveling to new places, and expressing her creativity through arts and crafts.

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