Meet JFF’s
POSTSECONDARY TEAM

Get to know our team members and our expertise.

DAVID ALTSTADT, MA

- Associate Director
- Strategic Partner for the SSCs in Michigan, Ohio, Oregon
- Leads Postsecondary State Policy
  Strategy, including policy and advocacy services, the Policy Leadership Trust for Student Success, policy research, and communications
- Leads communications services

Expertise/Past Experience

- Research and writing on labor market studies, policy briefs, and case studies about postsecondary, workforce development, and social welfare programs
- Management of statewide coalition on education and workforce development policy
- Management of regional workforce development projects
- Board president of local homeless shelter

What experience do you have that shapes the perspective you bring to the work?

“I bring an analytical, holistic perspective to this work, through a prior career as a public affairs journalist, graduate studies in public policy, and years of experience researching, writing, and advocating for education and skills attainment, career advancement, and poverty alleviation for disadvantaged populations. I have been personally touched by this work, as a son of two parents who attended community college, and as a product of several work-based learning experiences while in high school and college.”

JULITA BAILEY-VASCO, MSM

- Program Manager
- Strategic Partner for SSC in Florida
- Next Chapter Communications relationship manager
- Postsecondary State Network bi-annual meeting logistics lead and content manager
- Postsecondary team strategic communications manager

Expertise/Past Experience

- Student Affairs including advising, new student orientation, multicultural affairs, and residential life
- Student support systems within the community college, including success coaching, tutoring, and peer mentoring services
- Culturally inclusive programs and wrap-around student support services

What experience do you have that shapes the perspective you bring to the work?

“Education is a powerful mechanism that can transform the trajectory of communities and families. I have been a witness of this personally and as an education practitioner advocating for institutional and system level change. My past experience has allowed me to work with hundreds of students from around the country and world, with a variety of backgrounds. Their tireless grit, determination, and courage has shaped the way in which I view my work, reminding me that those of us within this space must continue running hard in reforming the postsecondary world and future of work.”
ASHLEY BLISS LIMA, MPP

- Senior Program Manager
- Strategic Partner for SSCs in California and Texas
- Co-leads policy and advocacy services and policy knowledge management
- Supports Policy Leadership Trust for Student Success

Expertise/Past Experience
- State and federal policy, specifically postsecondary
- Strategic planning and communications
- Qualitative and quantitative research; policy and data analysis; legislative analysis
- Institutional issues such as financial aid, college affordability, enrollment management, early college admissions pathways, campus diversity and inclusion, academic transformation, and educational innovation
- Political engagement

What experience do you have that shapes the perspective you bring to the work?

“I believe in various paths through postsecondary education, as long as each delivers a return on investment for the student. Through programs and policies that improve educational access, choice, transparency, and promote successful outcomes, our communities, states and nation can successfully empower all individuals to make best decisions for themselves and realize the best versions of themselves, which in turn, benefits our society as a whole.”

STACEY CLAWSON, PHD

- Senior Director, Postsecondary Education
- Leads postsecondary programmatic strategy, including network development, stakeholder engagement, and data and evaluation
- Oversees all aspects of the Student Success Center Network
- Oversees design and implementation of comprehensive technical assistance delivery systems
- Leads efforts to create coherence among colleges and across initiatives and policy environments to increase college completion

Expertise/Past Experience
- Leadership in higher education reform in multiple contexts: community college, 4-year research university, for-profit, faculty, state policy, workforce, and foundation officer
- National and state reform movements such as: guided pathways models, competency-based education, improving credit transfer, and comprehensive student supports
- Vision building, stakeholder convening, and integration of solutions within complex, cross-sector environments and policy contexts

What experience do you have that shapes the perspective you bring to the work?

“I bring deep expertise in traditional and for-profit academic institutions combined with foundation experience leading broad national reform. I work with organizations and institutions to help them create their vision, design academic solutions, and facilitate change. I am committed to transforming our education system to ensure every student has the foundation to succeed and thrive in our global society.”
**MICHAEL COLLINS, MPAFF**
- Vice President
- Serves on JFF executive leadership team
- Leads JFF’s postsecondary work
- Represents JFF externally in partnerships and collaborations with diverse stakeholders
- Investor relations

**Expertise/Past Experience**
- State- and systems-level policy—policy lead for Achieving the Dream, Development Education Initiative, Completion by Design
- Leadership in Postsecondary State Network
- Senior leadership in state higher education agency
- Service on multiple governance and advisory boards, including NCHEMS, National Student Clearinghouse Research Board, Guttman College, and BMGF Scaling Partner Network
- Consulting Editor for *Change: The Magazine for Higher Learning*

**What experience do you have that shapes the perspective you bring to the work?**
“The perspective I bring to the work stems from a mix of my professional experience, including teaching in our nation’s urban public schools, formal training in public policy and public affairs, service in state government, collaboration with multiple and diverse actors in education reform at the state, national, and federal levels, and executive leadership in the nonprofit sector.”

**BECKY EIDELMAN**
- Program Manager
- Leads creation and facilitation of the SSCN Message Board
- Manages technical support for SSCN webinars
- Coordinates processing of contracts with SSCN service providers

**Expertise/Past Experience**
- Problem Based Learning STEM curriculum
- Integration of PBL curriculum modules in Advanced Manufacturing courses
- Content development and editing for newsletters and email campaigns
- Development and production of marketing materials

**What experience do you have that shapes the perspective you bring to the work?**
“I have worked directly with community colleges and their instructors, bringing new modes of interactive learning to the classroom. I believe the strength of our Postsecondary Network lies in its ability to adapt to—as well as propel—changes in the postsecondary ecosystem.”
JENNIFER GIFFELS

- Program Manager
- Strategic Partner for the SSC in Oregon
- Co-leads and designs SSCN Coaching Training Program, including year-long curriculum, community of practice, communications, and events
- Supports new Center/ED onboarding; creates and maintains network infrastructure, including stakeholder engagement
- Manages convening and communication strategy, including liaising with JFF’s Events, Knowledge Management, and Communications teams

Expertise/Past Experience

- Strategic planning and performance measurement, including theories of change, in nonprofits with social justice oriented missions
- Design of hiring and onboarding strategies for nonprofits
- Support for low-income adults with housing, employment, and public benefits; and immigrant high school and college aged students with academic and life situations

What experience do you have that shapes the perspective you bring to the work?

“I enjoy bringing critical thinking and new perspectives to our work, including challenging assumptions, asking questions, and making sure we’ve considered all factors.”

AMY GIRARDI, MED

- Senior Program Manager
- Strategic Partner for SSCs in Hawaii, New Jersey, Wisconsin
- Leads SSCN guided pathways coaching program-training and grants and institutional assessment services
- Member of the JFF/PSN research team
- Contributor to state engagement tool development

Expertise/Past Experience

- Strategies for connecting guided pathways reforms with adult basic education and workforce development
- Instructional programs, including work-based learning and competency-based education
- Strategic planning and technical assistance implementation, particularly institutional coaching for systems change
- Development of on-ramps to college for underserved populations—particularly opportunity youth and individuals transitioning out of incarceration
- Non-credit to credit articulation strategies, program and career pathways mapping

What experience do you have that shapes the perspective you bring to the work?

“I bring a practitioner’s heart to this work. I have taught at the community college level, the state and municipal systems level, and provided professional development to instructor practitioners in multiple national initiatives. These experiences have shaped my commitment to facilitating learning in all forms and all contexts to transform lives.”
**STACY HOLLIDAY, EDD**

- Senior Program Manager
- Strategic Partner for SSCs in Arizona, Hawaii, and North Carolina
- Leads network services coordination, strategic engagement, and collaboration between providers
- Assists with the postsecondary team’s emerging equity work
- JFF-wide diversity and inclusion efforts, JFF Research Team

**Expertise/Past Experience**

- Proactive academic advising, career advising, student success software implementation and management, and wrap-around holistic student support strategy
- Institutional Effectiveness, Institutional Research, accreditation liaison and external reviewer, and grant proposal development
- Statewide policy and support strategies for at-risk student populations, including undocumented students
- Faculty development strategy, equitable culturally responsive teaching and learning principles
- Assessment and strategic data analysis, building a culture of inquiry that maximizes widespread ongoing engagement in data informed decision making

**What experience do you have that shapes the perspective you bring to the work?**

“I have always championed equitable opportunity for marginalized populations and believe systemic transformational change in our postsecondary system is key to empowering all of our students to create a successful future for themselves and for our global society.”

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**ANDREA JUNCOS, MED**

- Associate Director
- Strategic Partner for SSCs in New Jersey, New York, Virginia
- Leads services related to both advising and student supports redesign and change leadership
- Leads network services strategy, infrastructure development, and provider engagement
- Co-leads Postsecondary team’s emerging equity work and is engaged in JFF’s diversity and inclusion efforts

**Expertise/Past Experience**

- Marketing and communications leadership in K-12 and higher education
- Research and writing on organizational diversity and inclusion efforts
- Nonprofit leadership, operations, development, and partnership management
- Writing and writing instruction (particularly with high school students)
- Mentoring programs and practices, especially related to high school to college transitions

**What experience do you have that shapes the perspective you bring to the work?**

“My work with high school and college students in New York City initially sparked my passion for our work, particularly in supporting first generation and immigrant students in getting to and through college. And as a lifelong writer, I’ve continued to think about how we can tell impactful stories and elevate voices of those we serve.”
ELIZABETH MCWHORTER, MPM
- Senior Director, Strategy and Operations
- Oversees reporting and budget monitoring
- Co-leads strategic planning and business development
- Oversees Postsecondary State Network meetings
- Oversees knowledge management

Expertise/Past Experience
- Leadership across the international and domestic nonprofit and philanthropic sectors
- Project and program design and management
- Strategic planning and fundraising
- Change management/leadership and complex systems change

What experience do you have that shapes the perspective you bring to the work?
“My experience as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Romania is foundational to all I do. I learned explicit and tacit skills I bring to my work to this day. Perhaps most important among these is an emphasis on empathy and the need to “de-other” and creatively collaborate to cultivate sustainable change.”

NYEMA MITCHELL, MS
- Senior Program Manager
- Strategic Partner for SSCs in Florida, New York, and Ohio
- Leads services related to supporting underprepared students and supports data and evaluation services
- Leads data collection and analysis for the SSCN learning agenda, and engages with external data and evaluation partners

Expertise/Past Experience
- Design, development, and analysis of large-scale, multi-year evaluations in topic areas such as online learning, college and career readiness, educator effectiveness, and STEM education
- Program evaluation, survey design, and data analysis
- Federal and foundation grant proposal writing

What experience do you have that shapes the perspective you bring to the work?
“My experience as an education researcher has given me in-depth knowledge of a range of education policies and practices and inspired my passion for improving academic outcomes for all students. I hope to use my experience to provide high-quality technical assistance and collaborate with my colleagues to make valuable contributions to the field.”
**RACHEL PLEASANTS MCDONNELL, MED**

- Associate Director
- Strategic Partner for SSCs in North Carolina, Washington, Wisconsin
- Documenting and communicating the impact of the SSCN through evaluation, data collection, and knowledge management
- Leads data and evaluation services and coordinates engagement with external data and evaluation partners

**Expertise/Past Experience**

- Strategies for connecting guided pathways reforms with adult basic education and workforce development
- Collection, analysis, and application of institutional and student-level data to inform strategy
- Project support for North Carolina’s First in the World grant studying the impact of data-informed student success coaching
- Leadership of Accelerating CTE, an initiative to blend career and technical programs with basic academic skill-building
- Leadership of Accelerating Opportunity, a national initiative to integrate adult basic education with credit-bearing college programs
- Author of *Framing the Opportunity*, a publication focused on how states can use policy and practice to close equity gaps for underserved populations

**What experience do you have that shapes the perspective you bring to the work?**

“My perspective is partly shaped by my pre-JFF work with children and their parents, which helped me appreciate the importance of education as a tool for economic mobility. It is also shaped by the opportunities I have had at JFF to meet students and educators at community colleges and hear firsthand about the transformational power of postsecondary education. Finally, it is shaped by my love of systems and data and my desire to work towards large-scale change.”

**SARAH UNNINAYAR, MA**

- Senior Project Manager, Grants and Operations
- Supports the coaching program administration (e.g., RFP) and other opportunities for funding to Centers (e.g., PDP)
- Oversees contracting, budgeting, and subawarding
- Strategic focus on improving the postsecondary team processes and workflows
- Supports new business development

**Expertise/Past Experience**

- Project management systems support (e.g., formats and processes for work planning or activity planning)
- Public health and international development
- Geographic information systems (GIS) and spatial data analysis

**What experience do you have that shapes the perspective you bring to the work?**

“I joined JFF from the world of public health and international development, where I saw the dual power that health care and education have in improving economic mobility. I believe there is huge potential for the use of geographic information systems and other data systems to inform the design and implementation of the targeted educational reforms that communities most need.”
ALEXANDRA WAUGH, MPP

- Senior Program Manager
- Strategic Partner for SSCs in Arkansas, Connecticut, and Virginia
- Leads strategy and sustainability and guided pathways foundations service areas
- Facilitates the SSC Network Leadership Team
- Leads work focused on enhancing state engagement

Expertise/Past Experience

- Author of a publication and tool for designing meta majors.
- Career and guided pathways work, including strategies for integrating adult basic education and workforce development.
- Postsecondary state policy focused on career pathways and integrated education and training models.
- Strategic planning and support for a variety of stakeholders in the postsecondary and workforce development sectors.

What experience do you have that shapes the perspective you bring to the work?

“I’ve experienced firsthand the impact of education on economic mobility and attempt to bring this perspective to all of my work. It is critically important to connect systems change to the individuals whose lives are directly impacted by these changes.”