

Illini Science Policy Scholars

Scholar Profile

2021 to 2022 Program

Illini Science Policy Legislative Scholars



SKYE LEWIS

Degree/Program: M.S. Public Health

Hometown: Decatur, Illinois

Host: IL Legislative Black Caucus and Black Caucus Foundation

Skye's work with the ILBC/ILBCF focused health equity on underserved and underrepresented communities. Skye coordinated the Dr. Rebecca Crumpler Health Policy Summit, and Innovative Policy Solutions Brain Trust for Black Communities Across Illinois. She also helped develop four grant opportunities for African American doctors to pay down their medical school loans. With her Extension Mentor, Skye focused her efforts on Empowerment Skills for Family Workers. Through this effort, she self-funded her Family Development Credential to better support families in low-income communities.

My efforts help establish trust between the African American community and the medical field. Working with Extension's Illinois Nutrition Education Program, I provide resources to increase awareness on nutrition & oral health within African American communities of Illinois. I am proud to know my work will have a meaningful impact on communities important to me.



MONSERRAT CARRILLO-RODRIGUEZ

Degree/Program: M.S. Public Health

Hometown: Chicago, Illinois

Host: Illinois Legislative Latino Caucus / Latino Caucus Foundation

Monserrat continued the efforts of the ILLC/ILLCF to find solutions for food insecurity among underserved communities in Chicago, particularly Latino communities, and to foster health equity solutions among underrepresented groups in the Chicago / Chicagoland areas. In particular she is providing professional development for Spanish speaking mothers to teach other families about good, healthy family lifestyle habits.

With the guidance of my mentors, being an ISP scholar has allowed me to learn the impact legislative policy has on public health! I've also learned the importance of including Latino voices into all aspects of policy to better serve communities. Being a scholar has renewed my passion for public health and has made me excited for my future in the field!



2022 Illini Science Policy Scholars, from left: Susan Ogwal, Skye Lewis, Shubhika Agarwal, Yasamin Khoshpour, and Adrienne Pickett. Not pictured: Roberto Rojas-Alfaro and Monserrat Carrillo-Rodriguez.



SUSAN OGWAL

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

Hometown: Champaign, Illinois

Host: Office of the Lt. Governor, Juliana Stratton

Susan's work focused on advancing programs that support agricultural equity and address food insecurity. She traveled with the Lt. Governor on a statewide listening tour, gaining insights from rural, urban, and emerging farmers, in addition to meeting with food security advocates across the state. She provided research and strategy support related to the teacher shortage, meeting with university administrators and students in educator programs. Her work with Extension focused on Extension's Poverty Simulation to gain a better understanding of what poverty-stricken communities can do to create personalized, feasible action plans of how they may better reduce poverty-related issues in their communities.

As an ISP scholar with the Office of Lt. Governor, Juliana Stratton, our teams' approach affords us the opportunity to problem solve and strategize effectively, as we work to support local communities throughout Illinois.



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ROBERTO ENRIQUE ROJAS ALFARO

Degree: Ph.D. Curriculum and Instruction

Hometown: Grecia, Costa Rica

Host: IL Legislative Latino Caucus and Latino Caucus Foundation

Roberto helped lead implementation of an innovative community garden, focusing on understanding community needs to support neighborhood-responsive, informed decision-making and pursue financial support. His work with Extension helps sustain community gardens within Humboldt Park and other Chicago neighborhoods.

This community-based, community-led, and community-oriented project impacts Latino communities across Chicago. It supports and enhances so many areas that are important to the health and wellbeing of the Latino households: community health, environmental sustainability, local and family economy, activism and advocacy, cultural heritage, community engagement, learning and leadership components.



SHUBHIKA AGAWARL

Degree: M.S. Urban Planning

Hometown: Uttar Pradesh, India

Host: Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Office of Broadband

Shubhika helped position communities to utilize and benefit from new federal broadband planning and deployment funds. She played an instrumental role in helping communities in Illinois identify their broadband needs, getting local leaders on board to use the funding for broadband, and identifying unserved and underserved areas through broadband mapping. She also played a vital role in working with Illinois Works, balancing the concern of an aging construction workforce with the need for greater representation of minority communities and women in the construction industry. With her Extension Mentor, she is creating a website on current broadband mapping practices across the country to identify best practices, help enhance the Illinois Broadband Mapping system, and create dialogue about how to make broadband mapping more useful and closer to reality for local communities planning their broadband needs.

As an Illini Science Policy Scholar at the DCEO, I was at the center of all broadband and equity in the construction industry. I got to see the Infrastructure Bill turn into the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and work on implementing the Illinois Works Jobs Act's Apprenticeship Initiative. This past year has certainly taught me about the amount of planning and collaboration it takes to implement the law, and see the intended impact in our societies.



YASAMIN KHOSPOUR

Degree: M.S. Urban Planning

Hometown: Tehran, Iran

Host: Illinois Board of Higher Education

Yasamin conducts groundbreaking research with her colleagues as IBHE. She is creating and analyzing new information and revealing trends in higher education that may help identify ways to create better pathways into graduate and professional fields of study for underrepresented groups. With her Extension Mentor, Yasamin is focused on racial healing practices and how social emotional learning impacts student trajectory and the decisions that may impact student performance and progress.

I think the first step in the process of closing any equity gap is to study them as I find it hard to talk about a solution before knowing the problem well. Both my projects as an ISP scholar are at the study level of equity issues and I'm very happy and grateful about this.



ADRIENNE PICKETT

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

Hometown: Santa Monica, CA

Host: Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Office of Broadband

Adrienne guided Connect Illinois grant recipients toward broadband strategic planning, consulted on deliverables report-writing, and provided support for a major federal grant application. She also led the effort to revise the curriculum, webinar content, and reporting process of the Broadband Regional Engagement Adoption + Digital Equity (READY) program. She served as the recording secretary for the state of Illinois Broadband Advisory Council. In addition, she represented the Illinois Office of Broadband at the Illinois State Fair's STEAM Expo, where she created and staffed a table. Through her work with the Illinois Broadband Lab, she engaged Champaign broadband internet advocates and local university faculty and administrators to determine the feasibility of and framework for a future center for digital excellence and equity. Through her work with her Extension Mentor, Adrienne was inspired to produce the Illinois Women in Broadband Podcast Series. This is scheduled to have 10 episodes, and will air summer 2022.

As an Illini Science Policy Scholar, I put to use my knowledge, skills, and experiences gained from years of teaching, researching, and advising in higher education to facilitate strategic planning for community leaders throughout Illinois who seek improved access, affordability, adoption, and use of digital devices and high-speed internet on behalf of their community members.

Illini Science Policy Program

Public Service Impact Overview

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.



COMMUNITY

Support strong and resilient youth, families and communities

- Broadband READY | Digital Equity
- Language first programming
- Connected Communities



ECONOMY

GROW A PROSPEROUS ECONOMY

- Educational pipeline
- College & Career pathways
- Illinois Works | Workforce equity



ENVIRONMENT

Sustain natural resources in home and public spaces

- Community gardens
- Agricultural equity
- Environmental justice



FOOD

Maintain a safe and accessible food supply

- Lt. Gov. statewide listening tours
- Culturally relevant community gardens
- Food inspection safety standards



HEALTH

Maximize physical and emotional health for all

- Dr. Rebecca Crumpler Health Summit
- Racial Healing Circles
- HEROES (Health Equity Resource and Outreach Extension Supporters)



2021-2022 ISPP Host Offices

- Illinois Board of Higher Education
- Illinois Black Caucus/Black Caucus Foundation
- Illinois Latino Caucus/Latino Caucus Foundation
- Illinois Office of the Lieutenant Governor
- Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Office of Broadband

2021-2022 ISPP Extension Mentors

- Sherri Ambrose | Skye Lewis (*mentee*)
- Durriyyah Kemp | Yasamin Khoshpour (*mentee*)
- Nancy Ouedraogo | Shubhika Agarwal, Adrienne Pickett (*mentees*)
- Ann Silvis | Susan Ogwal (*mentee*)
- Margarita Terran-Garcia | Roberto Rojas Alfaro, Monserrat Carrillo-Rodriguez (*mentees*)

Looking ahead...2022-2023 ISPP Hosts

- 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, Julianna Stratton



Where are they now? Where are they headed?

One of the main goals of the ISP Scholars program is to allow Scholars to consider work in the public sector. We are fortunate to have our Scholars continuing to do good work for communities here 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.

- Susan Ogwal (2022) Policy Director, Office of the Lieutenant Governor, Juliana Stratton
- Shubhika Agarwal (2022), Visiting Coordinator for Broadband, Illinois Innovation Network
- Adrienne Pickett (2022), Visiting Coordinator for Broadband, Illinois Innovation Network
- Roberto Rojas Alfaro (2022), Assistant Prof, Linguistic, Salt Lake Community College
- Skye Lewis (2022), TBD, consulting public sector
- Yasamin Khoshpour (2022), *in process*
- Monserrat Carrillo-Rodriguez (2022), *in process*
- Hannah Price (2021), Food Safety Coordinator, American Foods Group
- Allison Wheeler (2021), Assessment Specialist, Research Park
- 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: <https://defensores.org.gt/>



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Overview



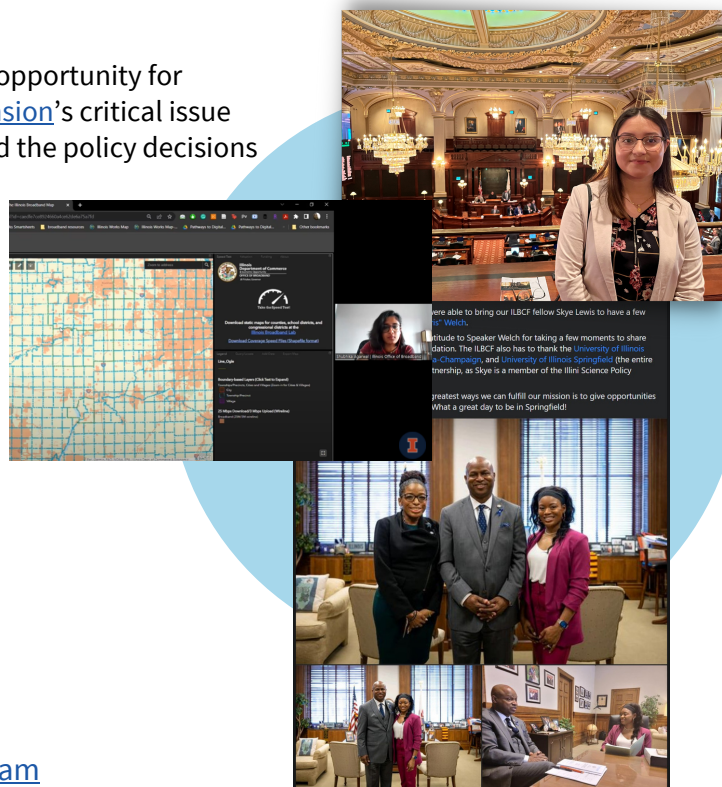
Illini Science Policy Program

The Illini Science Policy Program (ISPP) is a unique post-graduate opportunity for graduate students who are 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 UIUC 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 and establishing professional connections across multiple agencies and stakeholders. The Illini Science Policy Program began in 2020 and will start its third cohort in summer of 2022.



Learn more at:
go.illinois.edu/ISPprogram



📷 ISPP Impact Snapshot 2021, 2022

- Surveyed 60 BMPI compliance officers to improve inspection safety
- Supported health, well-being and sustainability of beef production (4 cattle producers / 550 cattle) with study on anaplasmosis
- Conducted three 1-hour webinars on dangers of lead-based paint & healthy living habits in Spanish
- STEM / STEAM resource support materials distributed monthly to hundreds of K12 teachers
- Designed & facilitated a 16-week community health worker training program for eight Latina mothers in Spanish
- Planned one Chicago site tour for an urban agriculture initiative in Humboldt Park
- Planned nine health equity presentations
- Facilitated four racial healing circles
- Moderated panel on digital equity
- Presented two presentations on education pathways and Broadband READY
- Presented at three Broadband Mapping / Accelerated Broadband Infrastructure Program meetings
- Engaged 60+ stakeholders in statewide listening sessions: Agricultural & Food Insecurity Initiative
- Supported 11 public university visits for the Office of the Lt. Gov. with focus on discussions with students pursuing a career in education, university leadership, and leaders of teacher education programs.

For more information on the ISPP, contact:

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