

DEPARTMENT OF

SOCIOLOGY



SOCIOLOGICAL OUTLOOK

A boost for graduate research that comes from gratitude

Alumna Vivian Lin Thurston supports graduate students in sociology



**Vivian Lin
Thurston**

A master's degree in sociology and finance was a recipe for a successful career for Vivian Lin Thurston. Now she wants to give back and use her success to help U of I students achieve their own goals.

Thurston (MA, '98, sociology; MS, '99, finance), Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA), works for William Blair, a Chicago-based global investment management firm, as a partner and portfolio manager for their Emerging Markets Growth, China A-Shares Growth, China Growth, and Emerging Markets ex China Growth strategies. Before joining William Blair in 2015, she was vice president and consumer sector head at Calamos Investments. She previously worked as an executive director and senior investment analyst at UBS Global Asset Management/Brinson Partners, where she was responsible for stock selection and research for consumer sectors in the United States and emerging markets.

Thurston is also the founder and chair of the board of Chinese Finance Association of America, a non-profit 501(c) organization. With a background in sociology and finance, Thurston was able to combine her knowledge of both degrees to be successful in her field.

"I think my background in sociology helped me tremendously in being a good investor in the consumer space and a broader equity market globally," she said. "The biggest benefit from my background in sociology was to learn the method of research and how to analyze certain subjects. For both sides, I benefit quite a lot from my sociology training and study, especially at U of I, and that's one of the reasons my life and career were able to unfold this way."

This year marks Thurston's 25th anniversary of arriving in the United States from China as a graduate student at U of I. She received a university fellowship that provided her the financial ability to study for her master's in the

United States. With that support from the University of Illinois, Thurston was able to receive a student visa from China to enter the United States for graduate studies.

"I'm so grateful for all that I have," Thurston said. "I've always been thinking that, as soon as I can, I'd like to give back to U of I because, without receiving the university fellowship, I wouldn't have started my studies, my career, or my life here in the U.S. It's natural for me to give back after everything I feel like they have given me."

Thurston's dream of creating an endowment fund through the University of Illinois is now coming true through the Vivian Lin Thurston Graduate Fellowship in Sociology Fund. This fund rewards one to two sociology graduate students each year with a fellowship to carry out their research. Thurston hopes this fund will help to continue the academic advancement of the department.

"My goal is very simple. I just want to help fund some of the research interests of graduate students," Thurston said. "I understand that the funding for social sciences and liberal arts can be less available than natural sciences or business. It would be excellent if I can contribute financially to the younger generation and current graduate students in the sociology field. Social sciences long term is very critical for the development of civilization, in my opinion. That's why I think the endowment fund is so important."

Thurston currently holds a position on the LAS Alumni Council, which she says is another way she has enjoyed being involved in the LAS community. She believes that the essence of liberal arts can be applied to all professions and that it teaches the precious habit of continuous learning and pursuit of knowledge. Thanks to the new fund, students in the Department of Sociology can pursue it a little more easily.

News Source, Allison Winans



From the Head's Desk



Welcome to the Spring 2022 issue of The Department of Sociology Newsletter, Sociological Outlook. It has been two years since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted everyone everywhere in important ways, including the department. Although some of our undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, and staff were infected at one time or another, fortunately no one had severe symptoms, and all those who fell

ill have recovered (or are recovering) well. Despite the extensive influence of the pandemic, our educational programs have been proceeding well, offering a range of courses to the best of our capacities for the benefits of our students.

The new faculty who joined us in the past two years have all been doing well. Professors Isak Ladegaard, Reuben May, José Atilos Osoria, and Matthew Soener all received good evaluations from the students in the courses they taught in the Fall 2021 semester, for example. In spite of the challenges posed by the pandemic, they have also integrated well into the department and the campus community. We have continued to build the department. In the 2021-2022 academic year, we conducted a search for a junior scholar with a specialization in health disparities. Dr. Christina Kamis, who has recently completed her PhD in sociology at Duke University, will join us in August 2023 after completing a one-year research residence at the University of Wisconsin as an NIH T32 postdoctoral fellow. This fellowship will give her a valuable opportunity to gain additional knowledge and research experiences.

Our graduate and undergraduate programs are in a healthy status, especially in terms of the number of students. At the beginning of the spring semester, our undergraduate program had 248 sociology majors, 251 criminology, law & society minors, and 52 sociology minors. Last fall, four first-year graduates joined our graduate program, and our graduate students continue to do well in conducting research. Since last summer, they have published at least six research papers.

Dawn McNulty, our undergraduate academic advisor for the past four years, has recently left the department and moved to Chicago with her family. She made important contributions to building our undergraduate major, minor, and the ambassador programs, and we will all miss her. We welcomed Reba Daniels, Dawn's successor, who joined us in May and has settle into her role well by hitting the ground and running. You will find her bio in this newsletter.

I am very proud to announce the department's 2021-2022 Outstanding Alumni Awards. The two recipients of this year's awards are Dr. Clarendia Phillips (PhD, '97, sociology) and Leslie Vermillion (BA, '84, sociology). Phillips is Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and professor of sociology at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, and Vermillion was senior director of advancement operations in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences at Illinois until her retirement in 2021. Congratulations! You will find their achievements elsewhere in this newsletter.

Finally, we hope you are all keeping well and healthy, and we always love to hear from you about your recent achievements and milestones. So, please keep us posted on what has happened in your lives. Have a great year!

Tim Liao

Department of Sociology head

Outstanding Alumni Award

Dr. Clarenda Phillips (PhD, '97, sociology)



Dr. Clarenda Phillips has had an outstanding career as an academic and administrator. After completing her PhD in sociology at the University of Illinois in 1997, Phillips went on to serve as a senior research associate at Policy Studies Associates, Inc. in Washington, D.C., where she conducted research on youth development and education outcomes.

Research projects at Policy Studies Associates, Inc. were funded primarily by the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Justice, DeWitt Wallace Foundation, Pew Charitable Trusts, Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, and the Boys & Girls Clubs of America. It was there that Phillips had a chance to become acquainted with policy-based research. After two-years, Phillips returned to academia as an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology, Social Work, and Criminology at Morehead State University, a regional state university in Morehead, Ky. She had a distinguished career at Morehead State University attaining the rank of full professor and serving as the department chair from 2007-2012, and then serving as Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs for the university from 2012-2016.

In this role, Phillips was responsible for overseeing undergraduate programs and curricula, general education, registrar's office, university college, distance education and regional campuses, Center for Leadership and Professional Development, the honors program, international student services, academic and curricular

policies, and the university appeals and grievances processes as well as serve as the academic affairs liaison with the Council on Postsecondary Education (state higher education coordinating board). She served Morehead State University's nearly 11,000 undergraduate and graduate students, 141 undergraduate degree programs, and 71 graduate degree programs for four years. In addition to her administrative responsibilities, Phillips taught an array of courses including First Year Seminar, Introduction to Sociology, American Social Problems, and Minority Relations. Hence, not only did Phillips influence the overall administrative activities at the university, but she also engaged students in direct instruction. This indeed is impressive, given that many administrators retire from teaching to lead. In 2016, Phillips left Morehead State University to serve as the Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs at Notre Dame of Maryland, before accepting her current position as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

Given my own initial impression of Dr. Clarenda Phillips' strong leadership abilities, I suspect that she has had a profound impact on faculty, staff, and students for whom she has served as an administrator. It is clear from her continued success that she is the kind of alumna who deserves the highest recognition that we can bestow upon our alumni. Her achievements represent the possibilities that we wish to convey to successive cohorts of our graduate students. It is for these reasons that the department awards Dr. Clarenda Phillips the 2021-2022 Sociology Alumni Award.

- Reuben A. Buford May, professor of sociology



Outstanding Alumni Awards *continued*

Leslie Vermillion (BA, '84, sociology)



I am pleased to have this opportunity to introduce Leslie Vermillion as this year's BA recipient of the Sociology Outstanding Alumni Award.

Leslie and I worked together in the Office of Advancement for the College of LAS here at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. The advancement

team is charged with raising money to support the college and works primarily with alumni and friends to achieve annual fundraising goals. Leslie joined the team in 1993, and I came in 1995. We worked together for 26 years, and during that time I was able to observe the many ways Leslie made a profound and lasting impact on the College.

Over the 28 years that Leslie worked in advancement for the college, she achieved many accomplishments. Early in her tenure, she oversaw the annual fund which required analysis of data, observation of trends, attention to detail, and an ability to match communication styles with diverse audiences. In this role, she hired and supervised an entire team of student callers and raised millions of dollars in support of the college and its priorities. Later in her career she served as a major gift officer which drew on her ability to listen, to discern where individuals want to make an impact with their monetary support, and to meet people—including unit leaders—in order to achieve mutual goals. She personally raised more than \$9 million

in support of departmental and college level priorities during that portion of her tenure. At the end of her career, as our senior director of advancement operations, she and I worked very closely together to lead our team of more than 20 people. In this role, Leslie was not only an invaluable sounding board and strategic partner for me but was also particularly well known for her supportive yet very effective management style. One of her supervisees shared that Leslie “listened to, advised, and advocated for the employees she supervised. I always felt valued and heard. She strived to bring out the best in others and helped them become better in their current roles as well as prepare for the next. She was, and still is, a wonderful mentor.”

In an online video interview on the sociology departmental website, Leslie credits her study of sociology as being crucially important to her work in advancement. I agree with her assessment, as over the years I was able to observe Leslie's profound ability to view individuals holistically, to adapt her communication style to that of her audience, and to seek to understand the backgrounds and orientations of the individuals with whom she worked in order to help further the mission of the college. Leslie is a walking embodiment of the impact a successful alumnae can accomplish with her degree in sociology, and I am pleased to help honor her with this award today.

- Joan Volkmann, retired associate dean for advancement,
College of Liberal Arts & Sciences



Sociology Student Ambassadors Fall 2021



Alpha Kappa Delta Induction Fall 2021

Department Updates

New Faces

Assistant Professor José Atilés



Before assuming his new appointment as assistant professor of sociology, José Atilés was a visiting assistant professor of criminology, law, and society in our department (2019-2021). Prior to this, Atilés was a visiting assistant professor of legal studies at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, faculty member at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez, and researcher at the Center for Social Studies at the University of Coimbra. Atilés holds a PhD in sociology from the University of Coimbra (Portugal), a PhD in philosophy from the University of the Basque Country (Spain), and a MA in sociology of law from the International Institute for the Sociology of Law (Oñati). His research and publications focus primarily on the sociolegal and criminological implications of US colonialism in Puerto Rico, and to elucidate how the uses of law and exceptionality exacerbates the unequal and undemocratic condition of Puerto Rico. Atilés has published peer-reviewed international journals and several book chapters in peer-reviewed edited volumes and has published four peer-reviewed books in Spanish. Currently, Atilés is co-editing a special issue entitled “Viral Legalities: Can Law Help Prevent Future Pandemics?” for the “Law and Policy Journal,” and working on his book manuscript “Law in/as Crisis: Emergency Powers, Corruption and Resistance in Puerto Rico.” The book manuscript analyzes the role of law, the state of emergency, and anticorruption mobilizations in the current multilayered crisis of Puerto Rico: economic instability and insurmountable debt since 2006, devastation generated by hurricanes Irma and María in 2017, a swarm of earthquakes in January of 2020, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Atilés is looking forward to working with graduate students interested in qualitative studies/analysis in the fields of critical criminology (i.e crime of the powerful, state crime, corporate crime, and white-collar crime), law and society (including law and political economy, law and policy, and legal mobilizations); transnational and global sociology; Latin America and the Caribbean; and global south and decolonial sociology.

Reba Daniels, undergraduate academic advisor

Before Reba accepted this role in May, she coordinated First Year Experience at Lamar University where she led the program to a near 60 percent growth in two years by building collaborative relationships with faculty and campus stakeholders. Her additional professional experiences include coordinating academic coaching, workshops, athletic tutoring, peer mentoring, living learning communities and civic engagement. She has presented at regional and national conferences, conducted research, and served multiple terms with AmeriCorps. As a first-generation college graduate, she is a champion for student success and identifying ways to support students so they can thrive socially, emotionally, and academically. She specifically enjoys the broad nature of her work to collaborate with faculty, staff, and students. She holds a BS in psychology from the College of Charleston and an MA in student affairs and higher education from Stephen F. Austin State University.



Department Updates *continued*

Sociology faculty achievements



Tim F. Liao, head of the Department of Sociology, has been awarded the American Sociological Association Section on Methodology's Paul F. Lazarsfeld Award. This prestigious award, recognizing sociologists who have contributed to the field of sociological methodology, is given by the American

Sociological Association and was founded in 1986 in honor of Paul F. Lazarsfeld.

Recently, **Liao** and College of Agriculture, Consumer & Environmental Sciences colleague Angela Lyons have been awarded a Chancellor's Call to Action to Address Racism and Social Injustice Research Program grant. The full amount of the grant is \$75,000 and involves research and public engagement with University of Illinois students, along with local high school students.



Kevin T. Leicht, with Ian Brooks and Katie McDowell received a \$110,000 grant from the World Health Organization for "A Health-Related Infodemic Center for the Pan American Region."



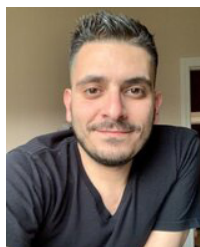
Anna-Maria Marshall was involved in a project involving phosphorus sustainability where a \$25 million grant was obtained from the National Science Foundation. Science and Technologies for Phosphorus Sustainability (STEPS) will accelerate fundamental scientific discoveries and the development of novel

and sustainable technologies and practices to control, recover, reuse, and manage phosphorus.



Ruby Mendenhall, professor of sociology, African American studies, urban and regional planning, and social work, has been named the Kathryn Lee Baynes Dallenbach Professor in Liberal Arts & Sciences. The five-year appointment will begin Tuesday, Aug. 16. Mendenhall is well-known for her deep studies of social inequality and public policies.

Mendenhall has received the 2021 Pearl Birnbaum Hurwitz Humanism in Healthcare Award for her work "decreasing health disparities and promoting health equity through innovative programs." This annual award is presented to a woman who has advanced the well-being of underserved or at-risk populations in the healthcare arena. She has also received a \$500,000 MacArthur Foundation grant to reduce disparities in healthcare. Mendenhall will create programming and wellness tools to foster healing from racial trauma such as police killings, gun violence, and higher rates of COVID-19 deaths.



Ghassan Moussawi, professor, has received the Gloria E. Anzaldúa Book Prize from the National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) for his book "Disruptive Situations: Fractal Orientalism and Queer Strategies in Beirut." According to the NWSA, this prize includes "recognition for groundbreaking

monographs in women's studies that makes significant multicultural feminist contributions to women of color/transnational scholarship."

Moussawi has received the Sociology of Sexualities Early Career Award from the American Sociological Association's Sexuality Section. This award highlights an exceptional scholar whose contributions to the discipline of sociology and the sociological study of sexualities are evident across a range of contributions. He also received this year's Distinguished Book Award from the Section for his book "Disruptive Situations: Fractal Orientalism and Queer Strategies in Beirut."

Student Awards

We would like to recognize the excellence displayed by our students this year.

Undergraduate awards

- **Cassidy Marcum** - Best Undergraduate Award Student Paper Award
The Best Undergraduate Student Paper Award recognizes outstanding achievement in a sociology student's research and writing abilities.
- **Stephania Izaguirre** - Highest GPA Award
This award acknowledges the senior in sociology who has attained the Highest Overall Grade Point Average.
- **Shacara Adams** - Outstanding Senior in Sociology Award
This award is given to a senior who demonstrates involvement with the community, leadership achievements, academic success, and a dedication to sociology.
- **Ritika Datta** - Student Engagement Award
The Student Engagement Award highlights a student in sociology who has been active in the University of Illinois and/or Champaign-Urbana community. This student stands out for their activism and leadership within the community.

Graduate awards, fellowships, and scholarships

- **Miguel Avalos** - Beslow Graduate Paper Award
The Beslow Graduate Paper Award is for a relevant paper on any sociological subject/area.
- **Hany Zayed** - Douglas A. Barnes Scholarship, Summer 2021
A scholarship for the student whose research relates to development issues, with preference given to development in underdeveloped countries—to which Barnes has dedicated his career.
- **Brian O'Neill and Professor Zsuzsa Gille** - McPhail Collaborative Research Paper Award
Graduate student and faculty advisor jointly developing and submitting a paper for publication.
- **Brian O'Neill** - The inaugural Vivian Lin Thurston Fellowship, Fall 2021
Fellowship awarded to recognize the "Outstanding Performance" of a graduate student in the sociology department who has demonstrated excellence in research, teaching, and service.
- **Rasheed Umair** - Bastian summer award
The Bastian Dissertation Fellowship in Sociology supports especially promising graduate students whose area of concentration is transnational studies or whose dissertation research is substantively transnational.

Department Stats

We would like to recognize the sociology instructors ranked as excellent by their students this year:

José Atilés
Asef Bayat
Cynthia Buckley
Brian Dill
Miri Eliyahu

Zsuzsa Gille
Kevin Leicht
Tim Liao
Anna-Maria Marshall
Reuben May

Ghassan Moussawi
Ilana Redstone



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Invest in the Future



Joseph Baldwin
Director of
Development

When you give to the department, you make an impact on the future of our students and faculty. We are grateful to so many of you who continue to generously invest in us and ensure our excellence in teaching, learning, research, and outreach. If you are interested in giving opportunities, please contact our director of development, Joseph Baldwin, who can be reached at jbbaldw2@illinois.edu or (217) 300-5967. Gifts can be made outright or through options such as a gift from your will/estate, appreciated stock, and home/farmland donations.

There are many ways to give and direct your donations to sociology at Illinois. If you are interested in establishing a focused endowment, like Doug Barnes, or want more information about donating, please contact Joseph Baldwin.

Our website, sociology.illinois.edu, is a great place to see updates on everything going on at the department. Please also feel free to reach out to our office via email at: sociology@illinois.edu.

Gifts can easily be made online at sociology.illinois.edu/giving

Or, if you would prefer send your donation by mail, please send it to:

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