



# CHICAGO CIRCLES SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

*April 3, 2025*

## *Paula Conrad, Arts '94*

is vice president of corporate relations at Exelon and president of the Exelon Foundation. She manages the company's social-responsibility strategy and initiatives, including charitable contributions, executive leadership with non-profit organizations, and employee-engagement activities in the community.

Paula joined Exelon's Illinois utility, ComEd, in 2006 from Misericordia, where she worked in fundraising and communications. Prior to Misericordia, Paula served as an account supervisor at Cramer & Krasselt and worked as the events coordinator of the Illinois Executive Mansion and aide to First Lady Brenda Edgar. Paula began her career at The Canadian Embassy in Washington as an intern in the cultural affairs department.

Paula serves on the boards of Misericordia, NEED (National Energy Education Development) Project, and the Civic Federation, and is an active volunteer with nonprofits focused on animals, people with disabilities, and cancer survivorship. She graduated from Marquette University with degrees in Political Science and French.

## *Genevieve Grdina, Comm'09*

is a Director of Corporate Communications at Rivian, the American automotive manufacturer that develops and builds category-defining electric vehicles. In this role, Genevieve oversees communications for multiple Rivian executives, including the company's founder and CEO. She also oversees a team of people responsible for communications related to Sustainability, Policy, Manufacturing and Operations. Prior to Rivian, Genevieve had her own consulting company, Genevieve Grdina Communications, where she worked with some amazing clients across a variety of industries. She also spent nine years at Meta (formerly Facebook), where she oversaw a team of people focused on supporting Meta's narrative related to various antitrust lawsuits worldwide. While at Meta, Genevieve also spent time leading Executive Communications for Instagram, and on the Corporate Communications team at Facebook. She began her career at Edelman New York where she spent 3.5 years on the Consumer Communications team building narratives, creating events and securing press for a variety of consumer lifestyle brands.

In her free time, Genevieve enjoys reading, baking and spending time outdoors. She is passionate about social justice, women's rights, and access to education. She currently resides in Chicago, and is a proud Marquette alumna.



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## *Dr. Christopher K. Merker, CFA, Grad '17* is the

executive-in-residence, co-director of the *S-Lab* at Marquette University and director of Private Asset Management at Baird. Chris publishes the blog, *Sustainable Finance*, and is co-author of the book, *The Trustee Governance Guide: The Five Imperatives of 21st Century Investing*. Chris serves on the ESG Advisory Panel for CFA Institute and is a past member of the ESG Working Group. Chris received his Ph.D. from Marquette University and MBA from Thunderbird, School of Global Management.

## *Andrew DeGuire, Arts '93* is the James H. Keyes Dean of the College of

Business Administration. DeGuire received his Honors Bachelor of Arts in economics from the College of Arts and Sciences, followed by an M.A. in international economics and finance from Brandeis University. He has also studied at the London School of Economics and Copenhagen Business School.

DeGuire most recently served as the vice president of corporate strategy at Northwestern Mutual, where his team's responsibilities included leading development and driving the company's multi-year strategy, performance reporting, corporate, consumer and competitive research, and analytics. He was a member of the Northwestern Mutual Venture Fund investment committee and board chairman for Wysh Life & Health, the life insurance carrier for the company's direct-to-consumer subsidiary.

Prior to that, he was the vice president of corporate development and mergers and acquisitions at Quad/Graphics and vice president of strategy and acquisitions for the building efficiency business of Johnson Controls.

DeGuire is the co-author of *Betting the Company: Complex Negotiation Strategies for Law and Business*. He was recognized by the *Milwaukee Business Journal* as a "40 Under 40" winner and serves on the board of the Association for Corporate Growth's Wisconsin chapter. In addition, DeGuire has given guest lectures at Marquette and served on the College of Business Administration's leadership council.