



Northeast Session #1

## Lawrence & Leavenworth

Speaker Bios

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### LAWRENCE



**Karen Braman**, LK '21 | Company Name  
*Local Program Co-Chair*

Karen Braman is senior vice president of clinical and strategic initiatives with the Kansas Hospital Association (KHA). Ms. Braman has more than 30 years of experience in pharmacy, health care strategy, policy and quality improvement. She started her career in the hospital setting as a staff pharmacist and has served hospitals as a trauma pharmacy coordinator and as an assistant director of pharmacy. Prior to joining the Kansas Hospital Association in August 2017, Ms. Braman was president and chief executive officer for the Kansas Foundation for Medical Care, an organization focused on improving healthcare quality and outcomes in Kansas and regionally.

Ms. Braman has also served as president of the Kansas Board of Pharmacy and chair of the Kansas Health Information Exchange Board. She received both her pharmacy degree and her master of science degree from the University of Kansas. As part of the KHA team, Karen has leadership roles in quality and patient safety, clinical services, data/analytics, physician leadership development, prescription drug-related issues, healthcare delivery system transformation and strategic planning. Ms. Braman was recognized by the Kansas Council of Health System Pharmacy as Pharmacist of

the Year in 2021 and is a member of the Leadership Kansas Class of 2021.



**Amber Nickel**, LK '19 | Pawsh Wash

*Local Program Co-Chair*

Amber moved to Lawrence in 1994 after graduating from Wichita High School Northwest. She graduated from KU with a Journalism Degree in 2002 and opened Pawsh Wash and Pet Health Market with her sister, Nichele, in 2005. In 2008, her son, Cash was born.

Over the years Amber ran a business, been a lifeguard, a ski lift operator, a bartender, a business and marketing teacher at each Lawrence high school, served as a production assistant at Channel 6 (RIP) and now, is the Events and Operations Manager at KU's performing art venue, "Your Lied Center of Kansas."

Amber graduated from Leadership Lawrence in 2008, Leadership Kansas in 2019 and now serves as a facilitator for Leadership Douglas County. She serves as a board member for: Lawrence Chamber, Leadership Lawrence, Lawrence Parks and Recreation, and The Kansas Retail Council.



**Ray Bechard** | University of Kansas

Head coach Ray Bechard is in his 26th season leading the Kansas Volleyball program in 2022. Bechard, a four-time Big 12 Coach of the Year, has a career record of 447-302 (.597) while at Kansas, which includes a mark of 167-50 (.770) during a stretch that included six consecutive NCAA Tournament for the Jayhawks from 2012-17. During his Hall of Fame career at Kansas, Bechard has taken the Jayhawks to 10 NCAA Tournaments, including three Sweet Sixteen's and the 2015 Final Four, while also leading KU to the 2016 Big 12 Championship. He has coached 10 players who reached All-American status during their time at Kansas.

In a career that spans 38 seasons, Bechard has received inductions into three Halls of Fame: NJCAA Volleyball Coaches, Barton County Community College Sports and Kansas Volleyball Association. In addition, he's a three-time AVCA Region Coach of the Year at KU and he earned several Coach of the Year honors at the junior college level.

The western Kansas native with a lifelong passion for all things KU is the winningest coach in Kansas Volleyball history. He secured his 400th victory at Kansas on October 29, 2020, with a 3-1 win over Kansas State and he has totaled more than 1,100 wins during his head coaching career.

The most recent triumph for Bechard during his time at Kansas came in 2021 as the Jayhawks returned to the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2017. The unseeded Jayhawks were sent to Omaha, Nebraska, for the first weekend and KU brought home two wins after defeating #19 Oregon, 3-0, and #20 Creighton, 3-1, to advance to the Sweet Sixteen for the third time in program history.

Kansas had four players earn All-Big 12 recognition in 2021, including freshman outside hitter Caroline Bien, who was a First Team selection and Big 12 Freshman of the Year. Bien would also be named the AVCA Regional Freshman of the Year and earned an honorable mention selection to the AVCA All-America Team, making her KU's 10th AVCA All-American in program history and first since 2017.

Bechard led Kansas to six straight NCAA Tournament appearances from 2012-17, which included a national semifinalist finish in 2015. In 2016, the Jayhawks earned its highest national seed (No. 5) in the NCAA Tournament and hosted first and second rounds in Lawrence. During that span, Kansas was also nationally-ranked in the AVCA Coaches' Poll 45-consecutive times.

The 2016 Kansas team accomplished something no team in the 40-year history of Kansas Volleyball had accomplished by winning the Big 12 Conference regular season title. KU tore through the Big 12 schedule with a 15-1 record, including wins in each of its last 14 conference matches. The Jayhawks secured the league title with a

five-set Senior Day victory over Iowa State on the same day the program bid a fond farewell to seniors Maggie Anderson, Tayler Soucie and Cassie Wait, a group who helped KU achieve unprecedented success during their playing careers. The trio guided Kansas to 104 victories and the highest four-year winning percentage (.819) in program history.

The dean of Big 12 head coaches, Bechard has built a solid fan base for Kansas Volleyball as the Jayhawks have consistently finished among the nation's top atmospheres in both capacity percentage and match-day environment. In back-to-back seasons – 2016 and 2017 – Kansas sold out its entire allotment of season tickets for Horejsi Family Athletics Center.

Bechard came to KU in 1998 following 13 seasons on the sidelines of Barton County Community College in Great Bend, Kansas. In his time at Barton, Bechard posted a career record of 716-60 (.923) and coached 23 Academic All-Americans. He completed his time at Barton County with the highest all-time winning percentage among two-year college coaches and ranked fourth all-time with 716 wins. Following his departure from Barton, Bechard was inducted into the National Junior College Athletic Association Volleyball Hall of Fame in 1998.

In 1995, Bechard was an assistant coach for the USA Volleyball Youth National Team, which won the Slovakian Cup Championship in Zilina, Slovakia. As the only non-Division I coach on staff, Bechard coached alongside TCU's Sandy Troudt and Penn State assistant Erin Tomblin as Team USA competed against youth teams from Poland and Slovakia.

Bechard began his coaching career as the head coach of girls volleyball and boys basketball at Lewis High School in Lewis, Kansas, from 1980-83. There he coached LHS to a pair of conference titles in volleyball.

An active member of the American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA), Bechard served as the president of the organization in 2010. He was also a member of the board of directors of AVCA from 1992-08 as he has presented at the AVCA National Convention on two

different occasions. Bechard was also president of the NJCAA Volleyball Coaches Association from 1989-92.

A native of Grinnell, Kansas, Bechard played basketball at Barton Country, where he helped the Cougars to a 45-13 record in his two seasons. Following his junior college playing career, Bechard attended Fort Hays State University, where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in Physical Education in 1980. Two years later, he received his master's degree in Physical Education from FHSU.



**Alan Cobb, LK '21 | Kansas Chamber**

Alan joined the Kansas Chamber as the President and CEO in March 2017. A Kansas native, Alan earned his undergraduate degree from Wichita State University, a Master's in Public Administration from the University of Pennsylvania and a Juris Doctor from the Washburn School of Law. He has been involved in politics and public policy at the local, state and federal levels for more than 25 years.

In addition to directing his own public affairs consulting firm, he has managed statewide political and issue campaigns and served on the staffs of U.S. Senators Bob Dole and Sheila Frahm.

Alan served as an election observer in the 2014 Ukrainian Presidential election and as a campaign advisor to the 2014 campaigns of Congressman Mike Pompeo and Senator Pat Roberts. He was a senior advisor and National Coalitions Director for the 2016 Trump for President Campaign. He also served on the Trump-Pence transition team working with the Public Liaison office and the Department of Agriculture.

His public affairs clients have included aviation component parts manufacturers, health systems and hospitals, small businesses, technical colleges and financial concerns.

Alan worked nine years with Americans for Prosperity and Americans for Prosperity Foundation, beginning as the Kansas State Director and then as Vice President for State Operations. During his tenure, AFP State Chapters grew from 18 to 31.

He has been an adjunct instructor for the Business School at Baker University teaching undergraduate and graduate business courses.

He and his wife, Holly, live in Topeka where Holly is a nurse practitioner and is the co-owner of Oasis Family Medicine Associates, a direct primary care clinic, which takes only monthly subscription fees, not insurance. They have three adult children.



**Michelle Fales, LK '16 | Guardian Mortgage**

Michelle is a Mortgage Originator at Guardian Mortgage in Lawrence. She has worked for over 30 years in the financial industry in the Douglas County community.

She lives in Lawrence with her husband, Leon, and dog, Hobbes. Michelle has one son, Adam, who is currently completing his PhD at the University of Chicago.

When Michelle is not working, she keeps herself busy serving on several boards and committees. She is a board member for Cottonwood Inc Foundation, City of Lawrence Public Incentive Review Committee (currently serves as chair), Junior Achievement, KS Suicide Prevention HQ (currently serves as Treasurer), and the State of Kansas Real Estate Appraisal Board (currently serving as vice-chair). Michelle is a 2007 Graduate of Leadership Lawrence and 2016 Graduate of Leadership Kansas.

Michelle has been recognized with The Lawrence Chamber Wally Galluzzi Volunteer of the Year in 2010; United Way Volunteer of the Year in 2014, and several Lending Awards.



**Kevin Kelley | Peaslee Technical Training Center**

Dr. Kelley currently serves as the CEO of the Dwayne Peaslee Technical Training Center. Before entering the field of higher education and after serving in the United States Marine Corps, Dr. Kelley spent 10 years as the founder and president of Kansas City-

based IPAC Corporation, a manufacturer of industrial adhesives and coatings.



**Chuck Magerl | Free State Brewery**

When it comes to his love for beer, Chuck Magerl comes by it honestly. You see, many years before Chuck founded Free State Brewing Company, his grandfather was getting into the business himself – an act that was highly illegal during the height of Prohibition, and leading to a stint in Leavenworth.

And while you may think that breaking even the stupidest, most controversial laws may be wrong, you can't help but admire the passion. And that same passion, passed down two generations, is what drove Chuck to change the laws in Topeka, and open the first brewery in Kansas in over a century.

But don't worry – Free State wasn't founded on passion alone. Chuck's background in biology, engineering and history is the foundation of the brewery, and he remains an avid student of all things beer.

Today, Chuck can be found roaming the halls of the brewpub or the bottling facility, making sure his passion and knowledge come through in every pint served at the bar and bottle shipped to your local liquor store. If you see him, say hi. Because after all, good beer and good conversation are what Free State is all about.



**Kaye Monk-Morgan, LK '21 | Kansas Leadership Center**

A third-generation Kansan, Dr. Kaye Monk-Morgan is the president and CEO of the Kansas Leadership Center (KLC), an internationally recognized center of excellence for leadership development and civic engagement. She previously served as the inaugural chief impact officer. Her work fosters civic leadership for stronger, healthier, and more prosperous communities in Kansas and beyond.

Service and education have been hallmarks of Monk-Morgan's personal and professional story for decades. Prior to her time at the KLC, Monk-Morgan dedicated her talents to higher education. Over 30 years, she served in roles ranging from residence hall director to Assistant Dean of Fairmount College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and ultimately the Vice President for Strategic Engagement and Planning. Her areas of responsibility varied over the years and included community and economic development, strategic planning, assessment and accreditation, and coordination of WSU's First-Generation student services. Her longest appointment was as director of the TRIO Upward Bound Math Science program.

An active community servant, Monk-Morgan has served on non-profit and corporate boards at the local, state, regional and national levels. She currently serves as a board member for: NXTUS, a non-profit that catalyzes startup ecosystems, The African American Museum of Kansas; and Emprise Bank. She is a trustee for the Wichita Land Bank; and advisor to the Ulrich Museum at Wichita State University.

Her professional service record includes service as the board chair of tri-state, regional and national boards including Council for Opportunity in Education, a Washington-based, college access and success professional association and advocacy group. She is an advocate and faculty member for NASPA's Center for First Generation Success, faculty for the Higher Learning Commission's Advancing Strategy Institute, and member of the International Leadership Association.

A proud first-generation college graduate, Kaye has an earned Bachelor of Chemistry/Business, a Master of Arts in Public Administration, and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership. Her research interests center on women in leadership and first-generation student success. She presents internationally on both topics.

While all of this is important, what really counts to Kaye is that she is a teacher, student, mentor, mentee, daughter, sister, auntie, wife, and most importantly a mother. She is a life-long learner, aspiring yogi, wannabe long-distance runner and tried and true girlfriend. She lives



in Wichita, KS with her husband Derek. They share two, Wichita-based, young adult sons, Payton, and Cameron.

## Artificial Intelligence in Business Panel



### *MODERATOR*

**Lindsey Slater** | KU Innovation Park

Lindsey Slater is KU Innovation Park's first-ever vice president of strategic communications. In this role, Slater raises brand awareness of the Park to drive market expansion, supports resident companies and works to expand business development opportunities to assist private industry recruitment. Before coming to the Park, Slater served as the director of communications and storytelling for the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives, an organization representing 9,000 leaders from 1,300 chambers of commerce around the world. Slater started her career in broadcast journalism as a reporter and producer, eventually becoming news director at 6News in Lawrence. She then spent six years as communications director at The Chamber of Lawrence. Slater has spoken at several regional and national conferences on topics including social media, video basics and best practices for business storytelling. Slater earned a bachelor's degree in journalism from the Medill School at Northwestern University. Slater and her husband, George Diepenbrock, reside in Lawrence and have two children, Will and Neve.



### *PANELIST*

**Katie Conrad** | University of Kansas

Kathryn Conrad is professor of English at the University of Kansas (KU), where she also serves as Fellow of the Center for Cyber-Social Dynamics (Institute for Information Sciences) and Faculty Fellow for Humanities Advancement (College of Liberal Arts and Sciences). She is the author of *A Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights for Education* (Critical AI 2.1) and, with Lauren M. E. Goodlad, "Teaching Critical AI

Literacies” (Policy Insights: AI and Digital Inequities, NORRAG). She has published widely on technology and culture and runs an occasional Substack blog, Pandora’s Bfot. This summer, she will co-direct the “AI & Digital Literacy Institute: Toward an Empowering and Inclusive Teaching Practice,” in partnership with the National Humanities Center, the Hall Family Foundation, and the William T. Kemper Foundation; and this fall, she will serve as faculty for the American Association of Colleges and Universities’ year-long institute, “AI, Pedagogy, and the Curriculum.” She serves as Associate Editor on Education Policy for Critical AI (Duke University Press) and on the founding advisory board for Harvard’s AI Pedagogy Project. Over the past year, she has spoken on critical AI literacy at KU, Rutgers, K State as well as on several podcasts, panels and webinars.



*PANELIST*

**Brandon Hutton** | Kansas Department of Commerce

Brandon Hutton is an experienced technology leader with over 14 years of experience in driving innovation in STEM education, workforce development, and research. Currently, he holds the position of Director of Advanced Technology at the Kansas Department of Commerce, where he uses his expertise to expand access to emerging technologies across the state.

Brandon's educational background includes a bachelor's degree in Sociology from Kansas State University and a master's degree in Instructional Technology from Fort Hays State University. These qualifications have provided him with a strong foundation for understanding people and systems, as well as blending his interests in education, technology, and human-computer interaction.

In his personal time, Brandon is an avid computer builder and game enthusiast. He keeps up to date with the latest advancements in computer hardware, software, artificial intelligence, and cutting-edge inventions. He combines his technical understanding with his background in sociology and education to make technology more accessible and create equitable opportunities for his community.

Beyond his professional pursuits, Brandon enjoys tabletop gaming, spending time outdoors, and creating lasting memories with his family. He resides in Topeka with his wife, daughter, and two dogs.



*PANELIST*

**John Symons** | University of Kansas

Dr. Symons is a professor of philosophy at KU and a member of The Academic Center for Biomedical and Health Humanities (HealthHum). His current work is centered in philosophy of technology with ties to formal epistemology, philosophy of psychology, and metaphysics of emergence.

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## LEAVENWORTH



**Chris Croft, LK '21**

*Local Program Co-Chair*

Christopher D. Croft, Sr. served for 30 years of active service in the U.S. Army. Croft retired February 1st, 2018 as a Colonel at Fort Leavenworth, KS. He led many organizations and served / visited 22 countries. Croft deployed twice to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom; first during the initial invasion in 2003 - 2004 and again during the surge in 2007 - 2008. During the latter deployment, he commanded Task Force 106 consisting of 1,440 National Guard Soldiers from across the U.S. He finished his career as the Executive Director for the Army's Leadership Center.

COL Croft attended Columbia University as a U.S. Army War College Fellow in 2012 - 2013, studying leadership, leader development, and change management while also serving as the U.S. Army's ambassador to New York City. He also graduated from the School of Advanced Military Studies and the Command General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth where he received his Master's degree in Operational Art of War (Strategy). COL Croft earned the Pathfinder, Airborne, Air Assault and Combat Action badges.

COL Croft's military decorations and awards include the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star (2 awards), the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal (5 awards), Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Iraqi Campaign Medal, the Humanitarian Service Medal, and the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal.

After retiring, COL Croft continued his public service by running and winning District 8 of the Kansas State House of Representatives. He serves or has served on the following committees: Redistricting (Chair); Insurance and Pensions (Vice-Chair); Water; Veteran and Military Affairs; Commerce; and Taxation. Rep. Croft authored and led passage of Reciprocal Occupational Licensing legislation. He co-authored several bills to create a Soldier's Home in Northeast Kansas;

to eliminate food (groceries) sales taxes; to freeze property tax for seniors, disabled veterans and those making under \$50,000; and, to streamline the property tax appeals process. As the Redistricting Chair, Rep. Croft established public listening tours with 25 cities / towns around Kansas and a virtual component to enable all citizens an opportunity to provide input.

Rep. Croft was selected by his peers to serve on the board of the Republican House Campaign Committee (RHCC) focused on fundraising to support House members and candidates. The members of the board selected him to serve as the Chairman in 2019 and again in 2021, the first time a freshman legislator was selected and he was subsequently selected for a second term. During his tenure, Rep. Croft expanded the mission of the organization to include recruiting, vetting, supporting and training members. He also professionalized the organization, breaking fundraising records for all chambers, doubling the results of the previous committees, gaining national recognition for the results and for conducting the first ever joint events in Kansas with the House, Senate and the state GOP.



**Marcus D. Majure** | Assistant Chief of Staff, U.S. Army Combined Arms Center Deputy G3/5/7, U.S. Army Combined Arms Center

Marcus D. Majure is a retired U.S. Army officer with nearly 30 years experience of having served successfully leading and accounting for Soldiers, Officers, Army Civilians, and Contractors. He was commissioned in 1987 as a Second Lieutenant Aviation Officer upon graduation from Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) as a distinguished military graduate from the great state of Mississippi.

Mr. Majure has over 45 years of flying civilian airplanes and military helicopters to include serving as a Maintenance Test Pilot resulting in thousands of safe flight hours. A graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC), and a Master's Degree in Human Relations Administration from Central Michigan University. Mr. Majure is a Combat Veteran, who commanded and deployed to many foreign countries and has served in numerous leadership positions in combat.

In 2015, Mr. Majure began serving the Department of Defense as an Army Civilian Professional and in 2019 to his current position as the Assistant Chief of Staff, Deputy G3/5/7 U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

In addition, he serves his community as a Lansing City Councilman and is the Leavenworth County Chairman for the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Mr. Majure and his wife Lisa recently celebrated 36 years of marriage and have two sons who are dentist and have two grandsons.



**Colonel Duane L. Mosier** | Garrison Commander, Fort Leavenworth

COL Duane L. Mosier was commissioned from Vanderbilt University Army ROTC, becoming the third consecutive generation of his Family to serve in the military.

COL Mosier began his career as an Infantry officer and, following a 2002 peacekeeping deployment to Bosnia-Herzegovina, pursued a career in Special Operations. He successfully completed Special Forces Assessment and Selection in 2003 and graduated from the Special Forces Qualification Course in 2005.

COL Mosier served as commander of a Special Forces Operational Detachment-Alpha, Company Commander, and Battalion Executive Officer in 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne). He completed a joint assignment at Special Operations Command-Central as a Plans Officer. His more recent assignments include Deputy Director of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command - Commander's Initiative Group, Deputy Commander of 1st Special Warfare Training Group (Airborne), Battalion Commander of 1-1st Special Warfare Training Group (Airborne), and Executive Officer to the Commander of U.S. Forces Afghanistan - Forward. At the rank of Captain, he deployed to Iraq three times and once to Mongolia as commander of a Special Forces Operational Detachment - Alpha. As a Major, he again deployed to Iraq and later to the Gulf region as a Regional Task Force

Commander. Following three years in battalion command, he deployed to Afghanistan in 2021 and then to Qatar following the withdrawal. He is now serving as the Garrison Commander at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

COL Mosier is a graduate of the Infantry Officer Basic and Maneuver Captain Career Courses, Airborne School, Special Forces Qualification Course, Survival Evasion Resistance and Escape Course (Level-C), Military Freefall Course, and Command and General Staff College. He holds a Master of Arts in Interagency Studies from Kansas University and a Master of Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College. COL Mosier's awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal (3 OLC), the Defense Meritorious Service Medal (1 OLC), the Meritorious Service Medal (4 OLC), the Combat Infantryman's Badge, Special Forces Tab, Parachutist Badge, and the Military Freefall Parachutist Badge.

COL Mosier and his wife, Mandy, have two teenage sons, Logan, and Noah.

**Dr. Melissa Wolfe | Center for Army Leadership**

Melissa R. Wolfe is the Chief, Leadership, Research, Assessment, and Doctrine Division for the Center for Army Leadership (CAL) at Fort Leavenworth. Specializing in leadership and behavioral measurement, Dr. Wolfe leads an inter-disciplinary team that is responsible for Army-wide leader assessment programs, for both development and talent management, leader development, and doctrine.

Prior to joining CAL, Dr. Wolfe served as the Director of Assessment for the Air Force Culture and Language Center. Dr. Wolfe also has experience within the private sector as a strategic talent management consultant for Personnel Decisions International (currently Korn Ferry). She holds Ph.D. and Master's degrees in Industrial and Organizational Psychology from Central Michigan University. She is a member of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology.

**Lieutenant Colonel Rufus Shumate** | Center for Army Leadership

Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Refus Shumate has over 26 years of military service both as Non-Commissioned Officer and Officer. He has served in leadership positions from small teams to large formations. He was instrumental for the training and leadership development at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, CA and participated in 26 rotations improving Brigade sized elements combat readiness.

LTC Shumate was responsible for the ensuring leadership training requirements were met at U.S. Army Europe and Africa for over 30,000 Soldiers. His last assignment at Seventh Army Training Command, he directly oversaw over 200 exercise and training requirements across the European and Africa continents that ensured U.S., NATO, and Partners nations deterrence measures. His current assignment is with the Center for Army Leadership where he is the Deputy Director for Army Leadership Development.