

**I**

Mannie L. Jackson

**Illinois Academic  
Enrichment and  
Leadership Program**



**2024  
Student Awards**

# I-LEAP

# I-LEAP

# I-LEAP

# I-LEAP



## Message from the Director

Elizabeth Mason

## Message from the Academic Skills Specialists

Joe Cross, Ron Threadgill and Brittany Lopez

## Awards

### Emerging Leader Award

Chloe Trotter

### Excellence in Transition Award

Natalia Mihigo

### Mannie L. Jackson Award

Jesiah Bradshaw

### Outstanding Senior Award

Ramiro Ramirez

### Peer Mentor of the Year Award

Jadore Phillips-Lopez

### Research Scholar Award

Abigail Keasler

## Edmund J. James Scholars

## Graduating Seniors

## Additional Recognition

# Message from the Director

## Elizabeth Mason

Congratulations to my class of risk-takers! Many of you started college in the midst of the pandemic. You came in, not knowing exactly what things would look like and for how long they would be different. Still, you pursued your higher education. Some of you started at other institutions and came in as our first I-LEAP transfer students. Whether it was part of the plan or a change in course, you made the decision to start fresh and complete your goal of completing an undergraduate degree. Now, the risk and investment you made is now paying off. Regardless of your start with I-LEAP and the University of Illinois, I am proud that we were able to be part of your journey. It gives me so much joy to see the growth from being unfamiliar to an established member of the community. Every single one of you has had an impact on our campus. Someone's life was different because you were here. And now you are on your way to having an impact in a new setting or in a new way. I look forward to hearing the stories of how you are changing lives for the better well after your graduation. To our returning students, we are excited to see you continue to grow and thrive. You are out here doing great things, and we look forward to supporting you through your journey. All of you can know that you always have a connection with I-LEAP. And thank you for making I-LEAP great.

Sincerely,  
Elizabeth Mason, Ed.D.



# Messages from the Academic Skills Specialists

## Joe Cross, Ph.D.

YOU DID IT! CONGRATULATIONS!! Savor this sweet memory; you deserve all the hugs, high-fives, pats on the back and smiles. I am so touched that I get to be here sharing this moment with you. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of your collegiate journey. The I-LEAP Staff is very proud of the person you have become. We want you to enjoy today; tomorrow brings your next adventure and you're ready for whatever may come.

Whatever career path you choose, the struggles along the way are only meant to direct you toward your purpose. It's your purpose that's the solution to a problem. We're waiting on your purpose to solve our problem. Hard work is the prerequisite for purpose, but it's through the hard work that makes things happen and that creates the change we're seeking.

So don't waste this moment living for someone else. Don't be trapped in the thoughts of what other people think of you. Don't allow the noise of someone else's opinion scream louder than your own inner voice. You owe it to yourself to be the star of your own movie, the captain of your own ship, the rhythm of your own drum, the lyrics of your own favorite song. You got this ... You just did it and you'll do it again!!

Joe Cross, Ph.D.



# Messages from the Academic Skills Specialists

## Ron Threadgill

Dear senior class,

Congratulations on completing your final semester at Illinois and becoming a graduate! You should feel immensely proud of your four-year academic journey. During this time, you have faced various challenges and have tackled them with exceptional effort.

As you look back at your experience at the University of Illinois, I hope you take time to reflect on your personal growth throughout these four years. I hope you recognize that you have thrived at a world-class institution and that you have made your family proud by achieving this significant milestone. Most importantly, I hope you take a moment to reflect on your journey and identify ways to continue growing and becoming the best version of yourself as you work towards accomplishing your goals.

Remember, the sky's the limit when it comes to your personal growth and future achievements!

Best regards,  
Ron T.



# Messages from the Academic Skills Specialists

## Brittany Lopez, MBA

Congratulations to all the seniors on reaching this incredible milestone! Your hard work, dedication and perseverance have paid off, and you should be tremendously proud of all that you have achieved. Your commitment to excellence is an inspiration to us all, and I have no doubt that your future holds even more success. Together, we have overcome challenges, pursued our passions and supported one another in reaching our goals. Let us continue to strive for excellence, embrace diversity and lift each other in all that we do.

You have all been a shining example to your peers and your efforts have made our community stronger. Keep up the great work and continue striving for greatness in all that you do. I wish you all the best as you embark on the next chapter of your lives.

Thank you for allowing the I-LEAP staff to lead and serve alongside such an incredible group of people. It has been such a blessing to be a part of your story! Congratulations once again!

Sincerely,  
Brittany Lopez, MBA.



# I-LEAP AWARDS



# Emerging Leader Award

*This award is presented to a freshman student who exemplifies the attributes of a distinguished leader. The recipient of this award has exhibited excellence in community service or in a leadership role within I-LEAP or the campus community and demonstrated a potential for continued leadership.*



## Chloe Trotter

A recreation, sport and tourism major, Trotter plans to graduate in May 2027 and plans to climb the corporate ladder in tourism marketing. Trotter has actively engaged in various volunteer experiences such as her local dog shelter, where she assists with animal care and adoption.

Additionally, she engages in initiatives such as blanket-making for sick children and packing meals for those in need. This demonstrates her commitment to supporting health and wellness within her community. “Receiving this award holds profound significance for me as it represents recognition of my dedication, hard work, and contributions to the community through my involvement in I-LEAP. Being part of I-LEAP has not only been an organization but a catalyst for personal growth, leadership development, and meaningful connections that will continue to inspire and guide me on my journey towards making a meaningful difference in the world,” Trotter said.

# Excellence in Transition Award

*This award is presented to a new transfer student who has successfully transitioned as a student at Illinois. This student has integrated into the Illinois campus community, excelled academically and is actively involved in campus life. The recipient of this award participates in student organizations, research opportunities and/or community service at the campus or Champaign-Urbana level.*



## Natalia Mihigo

An interdisciplinary health science major, Mihigo plans to graduate in May 2025 and looks to attend graduate school to become an epidemiologist. She participates in a research lab, engaging in a study on daily activity challenges faced by individuals with Mild Cognitive Impairment. Additionally, Mihigo

has crafted blankets for crisis nurseries, which extends warmth and support to those in vulnerable situations. She also volunteers with Uniplace, a Christian church offering free meals to the Champaign-Urbana community. Of the award, Mihigo said, “Receiving the award holds profound meaning for me, symbolizing the essence of personal growth and the transformative power of embracing change. Discovering uncharted territories enables us to uncover aspects of ourselves that distinguish us and mold our individual identities. The invaluable life skills I have gained through I-LEAP have empowered me to evolve into a more confident individual, for which I am deeply grateful.”

# Mannie L. Jackson Award

*This award is presented to a student athlete who is a leader on campus. The recipient of this award is a student athlete that has demonstrated the characteristics of Mannie L. Jackson including academic excellence, self-discipline in balancing academic and athletic responsibilities and serving others within the campus and Urbana-Champaign community.*



## Jesiah Bradshaw

A kinesiology major, Bradshaw plans to graduate in May 2026 and plans to become a physical therapist. Bradshaw plans to further his education after obtaining a bachelor's degree by pursuing a Doctor of Physical Therapy degree. Bradshaw recognizes several organizations for contributing to his student and personal development.

He is a member of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc., where he is the new member educator. Bradshaw is the I-LEAP co-volunteer chair and also participates in the Disability Participation and Quality of Life research lab. Of the award, Bradshaw said, "Being a part of I-LEAP has provided me with many opportunities and resources to be successful. I-LEAP has helped me build confidence to get outside of my comfort zone and take control of my education and my future."

# Outstanding Senior Award

*This award is presented to a student who is a model of excellence. The award is based on the ideals of I-LEAP. The recipient of this award best exemplifies outstanding commitment to academics, community service, and leadership.*



## **Ramiro Ramirez**

A community health major, Ramirez plans to graduate in May 2024 and plans to pursue a master's degree in healthcare administration at the University of Iowa. Thereafter, Ramirez plans to pursue positions within a hospital administrative team. Ramirez had the opportunity to work as a cardiac medical inpatient unit intern, where he gained hands-on experience in patient care while developing a deep understanding of the healthcare industry's nuances. Ramirez also served as a residential advisor, where he cultivated leadership abilities while fostering a supportive and inclusive living environment for his peers. Of the award, Ramirez said, "Receiving this award is a testament to the culmination of determination, hard work, nerve and drive; a journey marked by overcoming challenges and celebrating triumphs. This award inspires me to continue striving for excellence and to pay forward the support I have received."

## Peer Mentor of the Year Award

*This award is presented to a student who has shown an outstanding commitment to mentoring first year I-LEAP students. The individual has had a significant impact on his/her mentee by helping them transition to college, encouraging I-LEAP and campus involvement and promoting academic success.*



### **Jadore Phillips-Lopez**

An interdisciplinary health major, Phillips-Lopez plans to graduate in May 2026 and plans to become a pediatric nurse practitioner. She wants to specialize in oncology, while also actively participating in various philanthropic activities. Phillips-Lopez had the opportunity to work at Lurie's Children's Hospital where she

supported inpatients and their families. She has contributed to addressing food insecurity in underserved communities by volunteering with Allied for Better Living Foundations food pantry. Of the award, Phillips-Lopez said, "Receiving this holds significant meaning to me. I've strived to be an exemplary leader on our campus and that's started with mentoring three freshmen. The I-LEAP program has been instrumental in helping me find my place on campus."

# Research Scholar Award

*This award is presented to a student who has participated in individual or faculty-led research. Research activities include conference or poster presentations, publications, etc.*



## Abigail Keasler

A speech and hearing science major, Keasler plans to graduate in May 2024 and plans to become a speech-language pathologist. Keasler has had the opportunity to be involved in SHS Associate Professor Marie Channell's Intellectual Disabilities Communication Lab since 2022. She has presented at the 2023

Undergraduate Research Symposium on a project studying caregiving education and its relationship with expressive language in children with Down Syndrome. Of the award, Keasler said, "Receiving this award is an honor and a reflection of the commitment I-LEAP has to its members. One of my goals was to be an involved student and researcher and through hard work, determination, and support from family, friends, University faculty and staff, and I-LEAP I have been able to accomplish my goals."

# Edmund J. James Scholar

*The Edmund J. James Scholar Program is among the most prestigious honors that an undergraduate can earn at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The program is named after the fourth president of the University, who believed that scholarship and research were fundamental to human progress. The James Scholar program in the College of Applied Health Sciences seeks to recognize the highest academically achieving undergraduate students and to challenge them to engage in advanced scholarly activity. The following students in the I-LEAP program were 2022-2023 James Scholars:*

Aamina Adebayo	Zamantha Figueroa	Allison Page
Sam Adeoye	Danielle Fuller	Anjali Patel
Anastasia Adjei	Brenda Galan	Ramiro Ramirez
Angela Anum	Alanis Garcia	Fernanda Romero
Beatrice Benavent	Savanna Guo	Brielle Ross
Emily Butryn	Samaria Harris	Rahil Sadruddin
Aubrey Cervantes	Elena Hawkins	Ariana Sanchez
Valerie Chen	Jules Heberer	Jorie Schirmacher
Jaquelin Conchas Lopez	Daniela Hernandez	Camryn Shirley
Linda Corral	Mia Jayes	Haley Smith
James Cuevas	Claire Kakac	Nia Smith
Cassidy Das	Rijha Kamran	Sofia Vasquez
Kalia Davis	Jacob Katsifarakis	Taski Velasquez
Brenda de Souza Soares da Rosa	Abigail Keasler	Lauren Vicencio
Alejandra Diaz Ortiz	Grace Kim	Pedro Young
Karly Dolin	Katherine Kondelis	
Martine Duplessy	Josephine Lapapa	
Stella Emezue	Elvia Malacara	
Eghonghon Eromosele	Naima Mays	
	Jillian Moffat	
	Kirsten Osborn	

# Graduating Seniors

*Congratulations and good luck, Class of 2024!*

Aamina-Nikole Adebayo	Jared Espino	Alyssa Ryann Norris
Opeyemi Adesioye	Andrea Eudave-Rodriguez	Thais Alexandra Ocana
Hidayah Fatima Afzal	Alexis Pearl Ferguson	Favour M Ojerinde
Joselynne Aguilar Landa	Otniel Fernandez	Allison Taylor Page
Mariam Aguilar Landa	Anayeli Francisco	Anjali B Patel
Paige Lindsey Alcorn- Priest	Vincent Garcia	Monserrat Ponce
Abigail R Allen	Arian Gil	Andrea Protti
Angela Anum	Christian J Grays	Diana Quirino
Vincent Ryan Aranas	Sydney Lynn Gruenert	Ramiro Antonio Ramirez
Janet Onyinyechi Azuma	Jacky Guo	Angel D Rodriguez
Brooklyn Taylor Balsan	Citlali Maritsa Guzman	Melanie Isabel Rodriguez
Albert Sik Bang	Samaria Madison Harris	Madelyn Sheree Roseman
Ryareon D Brown	Dionicia Hernandez	Brielle Muriel Ross
Jahaira Marie Bustos	Samantha Hernandez	Rahil Sadruddin
Emily Elise Butryn	Brenna Amelia Hurtado	Marlen Salto
Julian Dijon Campbell	David Jang	Jordan Simone Smith
Myia A Carter	Melinda Jara	Tera Marie Sparks
Joy M Chavez	Serena Ashlin Jimdar	Johan Thorne
James Joseph Cuevas, Jr	Jacob W Jimdar	Xochitl Tovar
Nasyaarabella Awusi Danso	Ethan Juarez	Taski Edith Velasquez Perez
Cassidy Das	Abigail Elizabeth Keasler	Erika Karina Velazquez
Brenda De Souza Soares Da Rosa	Katherine Ariana Kondelis	Joanna Maria Verzosas- Dolezal
Alexander Delgado	Tiana Marie Lawrence	Vinh T Vo
Alegandra Diaz	Naomi Faith Lindquist	Ymari Alexis Weed
Denise Diaz	Naina Sarai Mays	Anthony Earl White
Leilani S Diaz	Tori Lynn McQueen	Cloie Marie Kay Widell
Julia Rose Eichenbaum	Helena Konabu Mensah	
Stella Ifeanyichukwu Emezue	Mekhiya M Minor	
	Jocelyn Miranda	
	Alexis Mora	



# ADDITIONAL RECOGNITION

# Dean's List (spring and fall 2023)

*To be eligible for Dean's List recognition, students must successfully complete at least 12 graded semester hours and have a grade point average in the top 20 percent of their college class. The following I-LEAP Scholars were in the top 20 percent of their degree programs (Community Health, Interdisciplinary Health Sciences, Kinesiology, Speech and Hearing Science and Recreation, Sport, and Tourism).*

Samuel Adeoye

Josephine Lapapa

Charles-Phillip Ampadu

Citlaly Leyva

Albert Bang

Aidan Maher

Cole Basden

Sofia Marin

Emilee Bates

Elizabeth Martinez

Jahaira Bustos

Maryely Medina

Emily Butryn

Allison Page

Alexandra Carbajal

Fatima Pantoja Lara

Martina Cibulkova

Anjali Patel

Cassidy Das

Ishan Patel

Karly Dolin

Nicole Roddan

Stella Emezue

Rahil Sadruddin

Eghonghon Eromosele

Ariana Sanchez

Jacky Guo

Jaeda Thompson

Savannah Guo

Julia Wronska

Dong-In Han

Pedro Young

Samaria Harris

Samantha Hernandez

Grace Kim

Aniah Knight

Katherine Kondelis

# Student Advisory Board

*The I-LEAP Student Advisory Board is an important part of the I-LEAP leadership team. Working alongside the faculty and staff, these elected board members assist in planning and delivering events and workshops designed to help I-LEAP students meet their academic and professional goals.*

## Fall 2023

**Rahil Sadruddin**, Kinesiology

**Aubrey Cervantes**, Kinesiology

**Tera Sparks**, Interdisciplinary Health Science

**Denise Diaz**, Community Health

**Alexandra Carbajal**, Speech & Hearing Science

**Monserrat Ponce**, Community Health

**Bea Benavent**, Community Health

**Jae'da Thompson**, Interdisciplinary Health Science

**Samyla Williams**, Interdisciplinary Health Science

**Nicole Roddan**, Interdisciplinary Health Science

**Julia Wronska**, Community Health

**Ishan Patel**, Kinesiology

**Talitha Akoto**, Community Health

**Tasdiq Khan**, Community Health

**Emily Butryn**, Interdisciplinary Health Science

## Spring 2024

**Clarissa Harrington**, Community Health

**Jesiah Bradshaw**, Kinesiology

**Natalia Duarte**, Kinesiology

**Stephanie Hu**, Kinesiology

**Jada Johnson**, Community Health

**Kedzie Griffin**, Recreation Sport and Tourism

**Tolu Aremu**, Interdisciplinary Health Science

**Sam Adeoye**, Kinesiology



**College of Applied  
Health Sciences**

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN