



Leading Women of IDA

IDA's new facility at Potomac Yard in Alexandria, Virginia, opened for business late last year.

Corporate leadership: Navigating changes wrought by country-wide developments, coupled with a new corporate president and a move to a modern facility.

IDA, like so many other businesses, has undergone a workplace evolution over the last few years, but unlike other organizations, IDA's evolution involved changes wrought by interests beyond the global COVID-19 pandemic and the quest for racial equality. In the midst of those developments, IDA was in the middle of an all-encompassing project to build a new facility in the Potomac Yard neighborhood of Alexandria, Virginia. The new building would house IDA headquarters and the entirety of the Systems and Analyses Center, the largest of three federally funded research and development centers, or FFRDCs, that IDA operates. IDA had broken ground on the construction project in August 2019. Then, at the beginning of 2020, IDA welcomed a new president, retired Air Force general Norton (Norty) A. Schwartz.

Norty picked up the mantle left by his predecessor, David S. C. Chu, to make IDA's name more widely known. IDA had historically prided itself on keeping a low profile. The quality of IDA's research work was consistently exceptional, but the publication or product that came out of that research belonged to the sponsoring agency, which meant IDA didn't publicize its work and was therefore far from being a household name among FFRDCs. Norty envisioned IDA's move to a larger, more modern building as a new start for IDA, one in which new sponsorships were possible. The transformation that had begun under different leadership was easily carried forward by Norty. He had been a member of

IDA's board of trustees and was well aware of IDA's goals and well positioned to move them forward.

Just a few short months after Norty's first company town hall, workplaces across the country began shutting down in the wake of COVID-19. Pandemic notwithstanding, construction continued on IDA's new facility, and staff successfully moved from 4850 Mark Center Drive, also in Alexandria, to 730 East Glebe Road in December 2021 as planned.

The building is a marvel to behold inside and out. A highly-efficient structure, natural light and glass lend to its modern sleekness. The [building](#) is [LEED certified](#) and meets WELL Building certification requirements, meaning it was built with employee health and environmental sustainability in mind.

It's an understatement to say that staff have "pivoted" to make things work during the pandemic, or that IDA has accommodated to changing times. A better word to describe the recent changes at IDA is "metamorphosis." The seeds of change were planted long ago by leaders who came before, but the corporate leaders profiled here are instrumental in seeing IDA through to the endgame of this multi-stage transformation.

Linda A. Hunt

VICE PRESIDENT, MANAGEMENT

Linda assumed the role of vice president for management at IDA in 2016, the second woman to serve in a vice president role at IDA. The first was Linda's predecessor, Ruth Greenstein, who joined IDA in 1990 and served as both vice president for finance and administration and general counsel until her retirement.

Linda worked for nearly 18 years at Johns Hopkins University's Applied Physics Laboratory, which gave her ample experience in the world of nonprofit government research and development organizations. At the laboratory, she advanced through positions such as subcontracts representative, section supervisor, business manager and group supervisor before becoming operations executive, first in the National Security Technology Department and then in the Research and Exploratory Development Department.



IDA Vice President for Management Linda Hunt, Human Resources Director Irene Timm, and Finance and Administration Director and Chief Financial Officer Jean Conley work together on process modernization, risk management, hiring practices and other operational matters.

“How can operations best support IDA’s mission, and what does operations need to accomplish that?”

In her role at IDA as vice president for management, Linda oversees corporate operations. When she joined IDA, she immediately embarked on a mission to ramp up IDA’s business practices. Over the last six years, she has been instrumental in transforming IDA in a number of ways: embracing a corporate business model; navigating the effects of the global pandemic on the workplace; and overseeing the move to Potomac Yard.

She is particularly proud of her role in revamping the employee performance appraisal process. The system was transformed from a backwards look at performance over the previous 12 months to a forward-looking, goal-oriented approach. Employees now receive real-time feedback throughout the year about their progress, which helps them shape their future careers.

Linda prioritizes transparency about the “whys” in all areas of change that the operations staff implements at IDA. She feels strongly about the need to advance IDA’s broader research mission. Her approach also recognizes the value of the operations staff’s contributions.

For Linda, the key to leadership success is seeking a balance between stated requirements and the good of the company overall. As a result, she asks herself and those around her, “How can operations best support IDA’s mission and what does operations need to accomplish that?”

Jean C. Conley

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION, CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER AND TREASURER

Jean Conley joined IDA in 2019 from the MITRE Corporation, where she was vice president and chief financial officer. In her role at IDA, Jean is responsible for all financial and contractual operations of IDA. She took over at a crucial juncture in IDA’s history — when IDA had embarked on a campaign to increase its visibility. IDA was previously known, at least internally, as the “quiet FFRDC,” but times had changed. IDA had grown, transitioning from the Institute for Defense Analyses, an FFRDC whose primary sponsor was within the Office of the Secretary of Defense, to a company that managed three FFRDCs, two for the Defense Department and one for the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

“By coming to IDA with an outsider’s perspective, I arrived with a natural bias for questioning the status quo” when it came time to create a more modern, efficient, automated way of operating at IDA. As a result, Jean says, “I was able to help trigger the Business Modernization Initiative.”

With IDA’s change to becoming a well-known name came a need for robust management and oversight of its financial and administrative business practices. Jean’s purview includes strategic oversight, planning and operation of finance as well as the annual budget process, treasury, contracts, subcontracts, purchasing, facilities and administration.

When asked about her proudest accomplishments since joining IDA, Jean mentions IDA’s Enterprise Risk Management Program. She implemented the program after arriving at IDA and has since managed it, taking on the de facto role of chief risk officer in the

New leadership roles bring fresh perspectives: business modernization and data management

In July 2021, IDA announced the appointments of Heather Wojton and Julie Lockwood, two members of IDA’s research staff, to new leadership roles in the organization. Together they will be heading the Business Modernization Initiative and the Data Initiative, an ambitious pair of enterprise developments that will revitalize the ways in which projects, programs, finances and human resources are managed.

Business Modernization Director Julie A. Lockwood

is passionate about how business modernization advances — which encompass project and program management, human resources, finance and other areas — will enable IDA’s success in its core mission.



The initiative envisions a connected, communicative, nimble IDA. Julie is collaboratively engaging staff from across the organization to achieve that goal. By giving all staff easier access to information, better-integrated workflows and more capable systems, they will find it easier to effectively manage or support research. For Julie, the question is, “How can we spend less energy on routine administrative tasks?” Doing so will free resources, reduce enterprise risk and position IDA for continued success.

Julie says, “modernization means providing the tools, processes and information we need to support our core mission most efficiently and effectively.” By streamlining internal operations and providing a high level of information sharing,

staff will spend less time on administrative matters and more time focused on high-value activities.

As a researcher at IDA, Julie led efforts to encourage open-source model development, to bring machine learning techniques to military personnel analytics, to improve peer review and to expand access to resources for leveraging large data sets.

Data Strategy Director and Chief Data Officer Heather M. Wojton is responsible for enhancing IDA's ability to efficiently and effectively accomplish research and business operations by assessing and evolving data systems, data management infrastructure and data-related practices.



Regarding her role, Heather explains: "I want to help IDA think about data in a new way. Data can change how we work and what we understand about ourselves if we take the time to understand what data we need to support our internal operations."

Heather joined IDA in 2015 as a researcher in the Operational Evaluation Division of the Systems and Analyses Center. She says her experience as a researcher "helped me develop project management skills, learn how to motivate my colleagues and build a broader network within the division and across IDA." Heather is an expert in quantitative research methods, including test design and program evaluation. She held numerous research and leadership roles, including assistant director of the Operational Evaluation Division, before taking on her new role.

process. The program defines a structure around which risk is managed throughout the company. The annual structure cycles through quarterly activities governed by IDA leadership. Since its inception, the program has come a long way in painting an accurate picture of enterprise risks that affect IDA and enabling alignment of resource requirements to key risk areas that could affect success of corporate objectives.

With regard to the future, Jean states, "My number one focus is on two strategic, IDA-wide initiatives — business modernization and data management." She goes on to say that she and her team will be "looking for every way possible to support and positively influence these critical, game-changing initiatives while also balancing our own day-to-day responsibilities."

Her attention will also be heavily focused on staff development and employee engagement. During a period of change, it's important that IDA creates and maintains a diverse, equitable and inclusive work environment for "our team, our partners and our key stakeholders across IDA."

Irene Timm

DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Irene has been a major force in IDA's quest to create a balanced and inclusive staff that integrates a fuller range of experiences and perspectives. IDA's approach towards hiring has gradually changed over the years, especially in the last two years with IDA's enterprise-wide DE&I initiative.

Irene joined IDA in 2016 with more than 20 years of experience in human resources management. In her time with the company, she has overseen changes in IDA's compensation and benefits, employee and leadership development, succession management, organizational effectiveness and diversity and inclusion.

Irene leads the development, implementation and evaluation of practices that support workforce planning and talent acquisition. She has been at the forefront of recent developments that are evolving IDA's culture in new and exciting ways. As IDA embraces "working from home" like so many other office-based organizations, Irene has been responsible for developing and executing IDA's human resources strategy for putting in place a telework policy, something IDA did not have before. Irene stresses the importance for leaders to look at the "big picture" across an organization, not just in individual realms.

Meanwhile, DE&I has become a household term at IDA, thanks to Irene. "You could say that advancing DE&I is one of my proudest accomplishments as HR director," she says. Irene is working to ensure that diversity, equity and inclusion are woven into every fiber of IDA's culture, are embedded into all of the organization's values and guiding principles, and are part of everything IDA does.

This broad DE&I initiative is transforming IDA's traditional recruiting and hiring practices with the clear intention to rectify an obvious imbalance in representation in research and leadership positions throughout the company. Under Irene's leadership, HR is expanding its traditional talent acquisition sources, broadening outreach, and actively developing more robust partnerships with diverse professional associations and institutions of higher learning, including, for example, historically black colleges and universities.

Irene leads IDA's internal DE&I working group with representative members from throughout the company with various backgrounds. One of the first tasks for the working group was developing an "aspire to" culture statement

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to guide all other activities aimed at achieving these aspirational values. Irene underscores the importance of capturing employee voices in the statement about the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion, which ties these principles to IDA's mission and outlines the organization's specific commitments to DE&I.

The working group's other accomplishments and on-going efforts include developing a comprehensive strategy for DE&I education, standing up a network of Employee Resources Groups (ERGs) to support IDA's staff and promote and sustain an inclusive work environment, and creating campaigns to recognize and celebrate diversity events.

One testament to IDA's commitment to DE&I is that IDA has dedicated substantial resources to support various DE&I initiatives, from setting up a dedicated budget for DE&I education, to creating a new, dedicated Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Program Manager position. In October 2021, IDA President Norton A. Schwartz [joined CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion](#) as a signatory and made a pledge to foster DE&I.

Irene recognizes that evolving workplace culture doesn't happen overnight, and she is excited to continue leading IDA on the journey.



Women directors from the research side of IDA: Kristen Kulinowski leads the Science and Technology Policy Institute and Margaret Myers leads the Information Technology and Systems Division.

Research leadership: transitioning to leadership from a research world

At first, IDA's two women research directors seem quite different. Director of the [Information Technology and Systems Division](#) Margaret E. Myers has roots in military service and considers herself an introvert. In contrast, Director of the [Science and Technology Policy Institute](#) Kristen M. Kulinowski came to IDA by way of academic research and government service and is an obvious and self-admitted extrovert. But the two are the only women of 12 research directors at IDA's three FFRDCs. Further, Margaret and Kristen were both recruited to IDA by their predecessors, who were themselves the first women directors in their positions.

Margaret E. Myers

DIRECTOR OF THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND SYSTEMS DIVISION

Margaret Myers' predecessor was Priscilla Guthrie, who had been a long-time friend and colleague since their time in the Defense Department together. Priscilla recruited Margaret to the Systems and Analyses Center's Information Technology and Systems Division (ITSD), and then left the organization, leaving the door open for Margaret to eventually replace her in 2009. Margaret now leads a staff of nearly 100 who address cybersecurity and cyberspace challenges of national and global importance.

Prior to joining IDA, Margaret served as Principal Director for the Department of Defense Deputy Chief Information Officer

and as Director of Information Technology Acquisition and Investment for the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Command, Control, Communications, and Intelligence. Her government service also includes technical leadership positions with the U. S. Army Operational Evaluation Command and the U. S. Army Information Systems Engineering Command. She was appointed to the Senior Executive Service in 1992.

Having served on active duty in the U.S. Army from 1975 to 1978, Margaret continued service in the Army Reserve before retiring from the Army in 2005 in the rank of colonel. Margaret also holds a doctorate in information technology from George Mason University.

Kristen M. Kulinowski

DIRECTOR OF THE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY INSTITUTE

Kristen was recruited to the Science and Technology Policy Institute (STPI) as a researcher in 2011 by then-director Sallie Keller, a former colleague in academia. Keller relinquished her role as STPI director soon thereafter, and Kristen eventually moved on to other pursuits. In 2020, she returned to IDA to lead STPI.

STPI is a federally funded research and development center under the sponsorship of the Office of Science and Technology Policy. Kristen leads a staff of 55 who are collectively responsible for analyzing national and international science and technology issues.

Before taking on her role as STPI director, Kristen was a member and acting head of the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board. Before that, she was a senior faculty fellow in chemistry at Rice University and served as the executive director for the Center for

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Biological and Environmental Nanotechnology and the director of the International Council on Nanotechnology. She holds a doctoral degree in chemistry from the University of Rochester.

Where managing meets leading

Margaret garnered leadership skills from the Army that she has used in other civilian jobs, including at IDA, but she attests that leadership and management are two very different things. In the decade-plus since she took her current position, the most significant change to her division's operations has been the increased use of machine learning and data science to solve problems.

Margaret explains, “We have iteratively grown our expertise in finding relevant data, often from unanticipated and nontraditional sources, applying the right analytic tools, and helping sponsors visualize the outcomes to inform and improve their decision-making.”

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In terms of managing her division, this change has heightened Margaret’s responsibility and eagerness to recruit the right kind of talent that can keep pace with innovative, data-driven work. In her time as director, Margaret has hired two-thirds of her current staff.

After fewer than two years directing STPI, Kristen can’t speak to long-term changes to the extent that Margaret can, but the two directors’ priorities look similar. Recruiting and retaining top talent is likewise integral to Kristen’s long-term goals for STPI. She has already developed a general strategy for managing the wide range of talent among her staff. As she explains “What’s different about STPI is the breadth of topics we explore in our analyses. Management here is more about making sure the very bright and talented staff have the tools, resources and support they need to do their best work.”

Fomenting a favorable workplace environment

Margaret and Kristen also wholeheartedly agree on the environment that IDA needs to provide in order to secure the type of talent they are so eager to recruit. Both women are no strangers to being

marginalized or undermined as a result of their gender as they had been at times during earlier periods of their careers. Margaret can testify to the “coping skills” that she and other women once had to learn to deal with discrimination they faced in the workplace. “Just dealing with it,” though, is a thing of the past, Margaret believes.

One way she sees herself and her compatriots as different from younger generations in leadership or other traditionally male roles is that she just “dealt with” sexism in the workplace whereas today, women are unwilling to do so. “They want what they want, and they don’t want to wait,” Margaret says, referring to women today who speak out against discrimination more fearlessly than ever before. Plenty more women, as well as men, are now more attuned to the nuances of sexism, harassment and inequality in the workplace. To accommodate the demands of women today, “The workplace has to change, and is changing,” says Margaret.

Like Margaret, Kristen has been victim to sexist incidents in her career, including a time she was told she could always get married if her plans for graduate school didn’t “work out.” STPI is now over 50% women, including two assistant directors, Asha Balakrishnan and Xueying “Shirley” Han. Kristen explains that more diversity education is facilitating a better work culture and environment at STPI. This includes, at times, discussions with staff about issues like sexism. Kristen describes these conversations as difficult but necessary.

“As leaders we are called to confront these issues directly. If we don’t change the culture and have these conversations, it is a risk to the future of hiring at IDA,” she says. Both Kristen and Margaret are well-aware of the harm that an inequitable culture at IDA would cause to recruiting and retaining indispensable talent.

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Embracing leadership skills

Of course, directing a research organization extends well beyond hiring talent. Consolidated under a single director is a staff composed of experts not only with an expansive range of knowledge but also with a range of personalities. Margaret and Kristen describe how versatility and adaptability are not always easy, but they are necessary qualities to exhibit in their day-to-day leadership roles.

Throughout her career, Kristen has learned the importance of understanding that motives and values oftentimes vary from person to person in any given workplace, and that it is crucial to try to understand those differences. During a team-building exercise when Kristen was in a previous position, participants were asked about their core workplace values. She was surprised to hear major discrepancies in her answers compared to some of her colleagues. Kristen’s answers included things like “integrity” and “excellence” while others had indicated that “connection,” and “family” were at the top of their list of priorities. This exercise was key to Kristen understanding what is required to lead a team with diverse values and motivations.

Margaret has similarly found in her career that being flexible and rising above personal dispositions is crucial to her success as a leader.

Margaret first learned that she was an introvert when she took a Myers-Briggs personality assessment many years ago. Simply put, [the assessment](#) is a way of determining personality type based on an individual’s preferred way of perceiving and dealing with the world around them. One aspect of the test determines whether your preference is to focus on the world around you (extroversion) or on your inner world (introversion). Margaret learned to overcome her natural introversion for the sake of meeting others’ expectations for how a leader should act and helping them feel more comfortable. This meant being more outgoing than would otherwise be natural for her.

Although managing expectations, getting along with others and catering to the needs of others can be daunting, managing these tasks does not necessarily have to come at a personal cost. Having self-awareness and being in control of your reactions are important. According to Kristen, it was “empowering” for her to realize that she did not have to act upon every personal feeling she had to a situation. Clearly, both Margaret and Kristen are doing something right.