Leveraging Veteran Talent in Registered Apprenticeship

Speaker Biographies

Matthew Eldridge is a policy program manager in the Urban Institute's Research to Action Lab. His research, policy, and technical assistance work center on how innovative public, private, and philanthropic investments can yield improved social and environmental impacts. His work has covered various approaches and models, including pay for success and impact bonds, blended finance, performance-based contracting, place-based impact investing, and innovations in local resource mobilization. The principles of equity, impact, and evidence guide his work and interests. Some of his recent work at Urban has included reviewing enabling environments for public-private partnerships, identifying barriers to policy implementation in Africa, researching the role of regional business partnerships in supporting inclusive growth, and evaluating a federal grant program for African American history and culture. Before joining Urban, Eldridge spent two years consulting on financial regulations and spent three years at the World Bank, working on corporate reform and helping manage the Central Asia portfolio. He holds a bachelor's degree from Virginia Tech and a master's degree from the London School of Economics.

Diana Elliott is a principal research associate in the Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population at the Urban Institute. Her work focuses on families' financial security and economic mobility and the programs and policies that support them, including housing affordability, apprenticeships, and financial empowerment. Elliott was previously research manager of the Pew Charitable Trusts' work on financial security and economic mobility, where she was instrumental in fielding a major national survey on American family finances and published numerous reports and briefs about the state of financial well-being and economic mobility in the United States. Before joining Pew, Elliott was a family demographer in the fertility and family statistics branch in the Social, Economic, and Housing Statistics Division at the US Census Bureau. Elliott holds a doctoral degree in sociology from the University of Maryland, College Park.

Janice Fisher is the team chief for the agreements and federal approvals team in the Veterans Benefits Administration within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). She is responsible for staff performance, project completion, and administration and oversight of 53 State Approving Agency cooperative agreements. State Approving Agencies approve education and training programs to ensure veterans and their beneficiaries can obtain quality training and education benefits. Fisher is also responsible for the Yellow Ribbon Program, through which institutions of higher learning can enter into an agreement with VA to fund tuition and fees exceeding the national cap. She has held numerous positions in her 19-year career with the VA, from claims processing and training to senior leadership, and works closely with numerous stakeholders and federal partners. Fisher holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Buffalo.

Courtney H. Jackson is the founder and chief executive officer of Paragon Cyber Solutions LLC, a woman-, minority-, and veteran-owned small business in Tampa, Florida. She has more than 20 years of certified hands-on experience in information technology (IT), encompassing both executive leadership and entrepreneurship. Through her work, she helps government agencies, tech startups, and commercial companies protect the integrity of their business operations through specialized cybersecurity and risk management solutions. Jackson earned a bachelor's degree in business and IT management and master's degree in information security and assurance from Western Governors University. She also holds several professional industry certifications, including Certified Information Systems Security Professional, Certified Information Security Manager, Certified Ethical Hacker, Computer Hacking Forensic Investigator, Certified Penetration Tester, GIAC ISO-27000 accreditation, Microsoft Certified Technology Specialist certification, and CompTIA A+, Security+, and Network+.

Meg O'Grady has more than 25 years of experience creating outreach, transition, education, entrepreneur, and employment programs that engage the military community, transitioning service members, employers, and federal agencies. She has led programs, campaigns, and strategic partnerships across the highest levels of the armed forces, government, and corporate America. As a senior leader in the Department of Defense, she was instrumental in creating the Spouse Education and Career Opportunities program. This included launching the Military Spouse Employment Partnership with the White House Joining Forces Program in 2012. At the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service, she supports the Office of Strategic Outreach as the national veterans' employment manager. She has contributed to numerous articles and publications. O'Grady was a member of the United States Military Academy class of 1990 and holds a master's degree in education from National Louis University.

Michael Pruitt is a lieutenant in the United States Navy currently working at the Urban Institute through the SkillBridge program. In his eight years in the Navy, Pruitt has served as communications officer onboard the USS Fort McHenry, damage control officer onboard the USS Shoup, and, most recently, senior analyst and team lead at the Office of Naval Intelligence. His work at Urban focuses on registered apprenticeship. Pruitt completed his bachelor's degree at Duke University and his master's degree in policy management at Georgetown University.