

Leading the Way: Women in Business

Series Interviews conducted by Krissi Barr

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Melissa J. Baumann, Ph.D. Provost, Xavier University



Dr. Melissa Baumann became Provost and Chief Academic Officer at Xavier in June 2017. Prior to Xavier, Dr. Baumann was Assistant Provost for Undergraduate Studies at Auburn University in Alabama, where she also served as Director of the Auburn University Honors College. Prior to joining Auburn in 2013, Dr. Baumann served as an administrator and engineering faculty member at Michigan State University.

Dr. Baumann earned her master's and Ph.D. in materials science and engineering at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. Following her doctorate, Dr. Baumann was a postdoctoral researcher at the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority. She earned a bachelor's in metallurgical engineering from Michigan Technological University.

[To view Melissa's interview, click here.](#)

Jennifer E. Bennett, Senior Vice President, Head of Strategic Market, Fidelity



Ms. Bennett currently serves as Senior Vice President, Head of Strategic Market in Fidelity's Workplace Investing organization. In this role, she is responsible for Fidelity's largest and most complex Workplace Investing benefits outsourcing relationships encompassing 250 clients and \$1.2T in assets under administration. Her team of Managing Directors is responsible for leading world-class service delivery for these clients. In addition, Jennifer currently serves as a member of Fidelity's regional leadership team for our campus in Covington, KY, home to over 4,000 associates and 20+ business units with the privilege of serving our customers every day.

Jennifer has over 25 year's experience in benefits consulting and outsourcing, and she has worked extensively with clients of all sizes and industries in the design, development, and administration of their benefits programs. Prior to her current role, Jennifer held a series of senior leadership positions within Fidelity including Senior Vice President, Select Segment Leader and Senior Vice President, Large Segment Leader. Previously, she was also Senior Vice President Communications & Education serving clients in our Large Market client organization. She joined Fidelity in 1993 as a Relationship Manager in the Emerging Corporate Market organization, where she spent her first ten years at Fidelity helping to build and develop this business.

Prior to Fidelity, Jennifer worked in the Trust Employee Benefits division of Fifth Third Bank in Cincinnati. Jennifer received a B.S. from Carnegie Mellon University and an M.B.A. from Xavier University. She also holds Series 6, 7, 24, 26, and 63 licenses with the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA).

[To view Jennifer's interview, click here.](#)

Bonnie A. Curtis, Chief Human Resources Officer, Castellini Group of Companies



Ms. Curtis has a long track record of accelerating growth for two very different companies, Procter & Gamble and Castellini. Her experience brings expertise in management, supply chain, human resources and sales. Notably, she lived in Guangzhou, China for eight years where she ran the largest P&G plant in Asia.

Ms. Curtis is a graduate of the University of Arizona with a degree in Chemical Engineering. She is in a dual career marriage, has moved five times and raised four children over the course of her career. In her spare time, Bonnie has been an Instructor of Tae Kwan Do at Countryside YMCA and serves at Perfect North with the National Ski Patrol. She is also a Ph.D. candidate for Leadership and Change.

[To view Bonnie's interview, click here.](#)

Sheri Harper, Chief People Officer, Frisch's Big Boy



Ms. Harper is the Chief People Officer at Frisch's Big Boy, a senior leadership position with the Company. She serves as a strategic business advisor and executive coach to the President & CEO, and senior leadership team. In recognition of her work and accomplishments, she was nominated as one of 2019's One Hundred Wise Women, the Cincinnati Business Courier's 2019 Women Who Mean Business and 2020 Women of Influence honoree. Sheri holds a M.B.A. with a concentration in Human Resources Management from Upper Iowa University and a B.A. in Accounting, Business and Economics from Muskingum College.

Aside from her myriad of professional contributions, Sheri is an active volunteer, having served on the Portaluca Business Plan and YWCA "Toward Equity Change Team" Committees, and serves as Executive Sponsor for Frisch's Big Boy Adopt-A-Class. She also serves on the Advisory Board for University of Cincinnati's MAHR program, and is a member of Leadership Cincinnati Class 43.

[To view Sheri's Interview, click here.](#)

Lisa Hillenbrand, Growth Consultant, Jim Stengel Companies



Ms. Hillenbrand was Director Global Marketing at P&G for many years leading marketing innovation work for all of P&G's brands around the globe. Since leaving P&G, she works for the Jim Stengel Company on brand purpose, marketing and strategy projects with many of the country's biggest companies.

An experienced leader of purpose-driven marketing strategic development, Lisa has been helping businesses articulate and activate their purpose for 30+ years. She is an inspiring workshop leader and keynote speaker as well as an expert in targeting, positioning and marketing plans. Lisa is the author of *Stragility: Excelling at Organizational Changes* (University of Toronto Press, 2016). Named a top book of the year by Forbes Magazine, they called *Stragility* "a vital and practical guide to taking action, adapting systems and empowering people." She has worked with hundreds of brands in a variety of industries including beauty care, food, restaurant, health care (hospitals and pharma), hospitality, publishing, fashion, insurance and entertainment. Lisa has lived and worked in Europe, North America and Asia and has worked with teams in nearly every region of the world. Lisa currently lives in Boston and has two children.

[To view Lisa's interview, click here.](#)

Barbara Howard, Principal, Barbara J. Howard Co., L.P.A.



A native of Toledo, Ohio, Ms. Howard graduated magna cum laude in 1976 from Xavier University with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. She then obtained her legal education from the University of Cincinnati College of Law and was awarded her Juris Doctor in 1979. Admitted to practice before all Ohio state courts, Ms. Howard is also admitted to practice before the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio.

Ms. Howard is a member of Xavier University's Board of Trustees. She has served in that position since 1995 and served as Chair of the Board from 2014 to 2019. She is currently Chair of the Presidential Search Committee for the successor to Father Michael J. Graham.

Serving clients throughout the greater Cincinnati metropolitan area, including Hamilton, Clermont and Warren counties, Barbara J. Howard focuses her practice exclusively on family law matters at Barbara

J. Howard Co., L.P.A. She has been certified as a specialist in Family Relations Law by the Ohio State Bar Association since 1999. Ms. Howard assists people who are facing the end of their marriage and who are dealing with divorce-related issues that can include the division of retirement accounts and other complex marital assets, child custody and visitation, spousal support, and child support. A strong advocate for her clients in the courtroom, Ms. Howard often attempts to seek resolution of these matters through collaborative law. Ms. Howard has extensive experience in other areas of family law, including post-divorce order modifications and paternity disputes.

Ms. Howard is a former President and member of the Board of Governors of the Ohio State Bar Association. She is also a past President of the Cincinnati Bar Association, and she serves on the Supreme Court of Ohio Commission on Continuing Legal Education, having previously served on its Commission on the Certification of Attorneys as Specialists. She will become Chair of the American Bar Association's House of Delegates this August. This is the second-highest office in the ABA. As such, she will oversee the business of the House of Delegates, a body of approximately 580 attorneys from across the US who serve as the ABA's legislative body. Ms. Howard has served as a delegate to the House since 1986 and as the Ohio State Delegate to the House and a member of the ABA Nominating Committee for the last several years.

[To view Barbara's interview, click here](#)

Jill Meyer, President & CEO, Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber



Jill Meyer leads the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber on an aggressive course designed to grow the vibrancy and economic prosperity of the Cincinnati region. Almost 4,000 member businesses engage with the Chamber to help drive the economics of the Cincinnati MSA, encompassing 16 counties across Southwest Ohio, Northern Kentucky, and Southeastern Indiana.

Jill is well-versed in the role of advocate for businesses. An attorney, she practiced for twenty years at Frost Brown Todd LLC, and served as the Member-in-Charge of the law firm's biggest office, in Cincinnati. A dedicated volunteer for many civic and community causes over the years, she currently serves on the boards of 3CDC, CincyTech, Cincinnati USA Convention & Visitors Bureau, Hamilton County Transportation Improvement District, and Art of the Piano. Jill also serves as an independent director of the Cincinnati Financial Corporation and as a member of its audit committee, as well as on the Executive

Committee of the Cincinnati Insurance Company. Passionate about her community, she is a member of the United Way Tocqueville Society and ArtsWave Women's Leadership Roundtable, and is an alum of the Chamber's inaugural Women Excel (WE) Lead class and Leadership Cincinnati Class 34. She earned her J.D. at Northern Kentucky University's Salmon P. Chase College of Law, and her B.A. at Mount St. Joseph University, both *magna cum laude*. In 2016, she was awarded a Doctor of Humane Letters from Mount St. Joseph University.

[To view Jill's interview, click here](#)

Nerissa E. Morris, Senior Vice President & Chief Human Resources Officer, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center



Ms. Morris serves as the Senior Vice President & Chief Human Resources Officer for Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. She provides leadership for human resources, diversity and inclusion, and community relations as a champion for the employee experience and our community.

Ms. Morris joined Cincinnati Children's in April 2018, after serving as the Vice President of Human Resources for the University of Miami for eight years. In her role at the University of Miami she led the human resources function for one of the largest private employers in Miami, overseeing the university-wide functions of total rewards, staff talent management, organization and leadership development, workforce engagement, and business partner relationships.

Her leadership at the University of Miami followed a human resources career in private industry from toy manufacturing to automotive manufacturing to financial services. Prior to joining the University, Ms. Morris had more than 20 years of human resources experience with the Ford Motor Company and Ford Motor Credit Company. During that time she held a variety of roles, including senior human resources positions with Ford in the U.S. and Brazil, as well as with Volvo Car Corporation in Sweden. Her career began in the toy industry with marketing and human resources roles at Kenner Products.

She holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and Master of Business Administration from Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio, and currently serves on the Williams College of Business Dean's Executive Board of Advisors. Throughout her career, Ms. Morris has been active in professional and civic organizations including, the Society for Human Resources Management, College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA –HR) where she served as a member of the national Board of Directors and Chair of the Learning and Development Committee, Fidelity Client Advisory Board, Evanta CHRO Summit Governing Body, the American Red Cross of Greater Miami and the Keys Board of Directors, and United Way of Miami Dade Finance and Administration Committee.

[To view Nerissa's interview, click here.](#)

Ashli Watts, President and CEO, Kentucky Chamber



Ms. Watts was named the President and CEO for the Kentucky Chamber, the state's largest business association, in November 2019. Ashli joined the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce in November of 2012 and during her tenure a Senior Vice President of Public Affairs at the Chamber led efforts in passing significant pieces of legislation such as felony expungement in 2016, right to work legislative in 2017, workers' compensation reform in 2018 and reinstating arbitration agreements in 2019. As part of the Chamber's leadership team, the Kentucky Chamber was named National State Chamber of the Year in 2017. Prior to joining the Chamber, she worked at the Kentucky Bar Association and the Legislative Research Commission.

Ashli graduated from Campbellsville University with a Bachelor's degree in Political Science and History in 2004 and holds a Master's Degree in Public Policy and Administration from the University of Louisville. She served as the commencement speaker for Campbellsville University's graduation in 2019 and was also awarded the Algernon Sydney Sullivan award. Ashli is a 2016 graduate of Leadership Kentucky and currently serves on the boards for Campbellsville University and Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky. She currently resides in Frankfort with her husband Ryan and two children, Emma and Carter.

[To view Ashli's interview, click here.](#)

Thank you to interview host Krissi Barr for your continued support of Xavier University!



Krissi Barr helps companies and individuals identify, implement and achieve their goals. She focuses on separating daily distractions from the real issues to get organizations on the right path to grow and prosper. She converts strategy into practical action so the most important work gets accomplished, and optimizes human and functional capacities to create, implement and achieve. Results are immediate, growth sustainable and profitability long-term. Krissi's expertise is in cultural transformation, visioning, strategy and execution, executive and team coaching, leadership and sales training, keynote speeches and assessment programs. Krissi works with local, regional and global companies ranging from Fortune 50, to large family businesses, to start ups and non-profits. She was featured in *Inc. Magazine* as one of the country's top ten "super-efficient".

A speaker and writer, Krissi co-authored a business/golf fable about getting the right things done called *Plugged* and her latest book *The Fido Factor* reveals the leadership traits canines embody – and shows how to unleash your inner leader of the pack. She earned her BA and MBA from Miami University and has completed The Wharton School Executive Coaching Program. She is an expert in behavior assessments and a member of the Worldwide Association of Business Coaches. She serves on the Executive Advisory Board of Xavier's Williams College of Business and on the boards of dozens of Cincinnati's most respected non-profits, including the Cincinnati Park Foundation, FreeStore/FoodBank, Association of Retarded Citizens, Winning Over Cancer, Association for Corporate Growth and many more.

