



THE COACHES



BRET BIELEMA

HEAD FOOTBALL COACH

IOWA, 1992

THIRD SEASON AT ILLINOIS

Bret Bielema was named as the 26th Fighting Illini Head Football Coach in the history of the program in December 2020. A native of Prophetstown, Illinois, Bielema has 25 years of collegiate coaching experience and a 14-year record of 110-70 (.611) as head coach at Wisconsin, Arkansas, and Illinois.

Bielema, who signed a six-year agreement in 2022 that will keep him at Illinois through 2028, guided the Fighting Illini to an 8-5 record in 2022 and led Illinois back to a bowl game in just his second season in Champaign. The Illini were ranked in the AP Top 25 for five straight weeks, reaching as high as #14, and were ranked in the College Football Playoff rankings for the first time in school history. Illinois led the nation in scoring defense (12.8) for the first time in program history, led the nation and set a school record in interceptions (24), and ranked third nationally in total defense (273.5). Under first-year offensive coordinator Barry Lunney, the Illinois offense made a leap forward behind All-American running back Chase Brown, who finished fourth in the nation in rushing, and quarterback Tommy DeVito, who ranked third in the nation in completion percentage. Illinois' passing offense was the most improved in the nation, as the Illini ranked third in the nation in completion percentage (69.6%), a rise of 122 spots in the national rankings.

Two Illini were national awards finalists in 2022 in RB Chase Brown (Doak Walker Award) and CB Devon Witherspoon (Paycom Jim Thorpe Award). It was the first time a pair of Illini earned finalists status in National College Football Awards Association awards since 1995, and the first time an Illini finished in the top three of either the Doak Walker Award or Thorpe Award. Witherspoon was also Illinois' first winner of the Big Ten's Tatum-Woodson Defensive Back of the Year, one of five Illini to be named an All-American, and one of 19 Illini to earn All-Big Ten honors, the most in program history. Illinois' five All-Americans included Witherspoon, who was the first Illini defensive back in history to be named a Consensus All-American, RB Chase Brown, DB Sydney Brown, DT Jer'Zhan Newton, and OL Alex Palczewski, who was the first Illini offensive tackle in history to earn a first team All-America honor.

After the success of the 2022 season, Illinois had one of its most impressive NFL Drafts in recent history. Witherspoon was selected #5 overall to become the highest drafted defensive back in Illinois history and fellow DBs Jartavius Martin and Sydney Brown went in the second and third rounds, respectively. The Illini were the only team in the nation to have three defensive backs off the board in the first three rounds of the 2023 NFL Draft. RB Chase Brown was also selected in the fifth round, Bielema's 11th running back coached in college to make it to the NFL.



THE BIELEMA FILE

HOMETOWN

Prophetstown, Illinois

BIRTHDATE

January 13, 1970

FAMILY

Wife: Jen

Daughters: Briella and Brexli

EDUCATION

B.S., marketing – Iowa, 1992

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Iowa, 1989-92

Signed free-agent contract with the Seattle Seahawks, 1993

Milwaukee Mustangs, Arena Football League, 1994

BOWL EXPERIENCE (HEAD COACH)

2023 ReliaQuest Bowl

2016 Belk Bowl

2015 Liberty Bowl

2014 Texas Bowl

2013 Rose Bowl *

2012 Rose Bowl

2011 Rose Bowl

2009 Champs Sports Bowl

2008 Champs Sports Bowl

2008 Outback Bowl

2007 Capital One Bowl

* - did not coach in the game

In Bielema's first season in Champaign, Illinois went 5-7 overall with a 4-5 Big Ten record, including ranked road wins over #7 Penn State in the longest game in college football history (9 OT) and #20 Minnesota, the Illini's first ever win over a College Football Playoff ranked opponent. Illinois' scoring defense (31st from 97th), third down defense (31st from 89th), and total defense (52nd from 114th) all improved more than 50 spots in the national rankings from 2020. The Illini made massive gains in the Big Ten defensive rankings as well, jumping 9+ spots in scoring defense (4th from 14th), touchdowns allowed (t-3rd from 14th), yards allowed per game (5th from 14th), and passing yards allowed per game (1st from 10th).

From 2006-12 Bielema was the head coach at Wisconsin, where he led the Badgers to three straight Big Ten championships (2010-12), six consecutive bowl games and a 68-24 record (.739). Bielema then spent five seasons as head coach at Arkansas from 2013-17. After inheriting a depleted roster and enduring a difficult first season, he led the Razorbacks to three consecutive bowl games, including victories against Texas in 2014 and Kansas State in 2015.

In Bielema's debut season at Wisconsin in 2006, the Badgers finished 12-1, including a victory in the Capital One Bowl against Arkansas. He was the first coach in Big Ten history to win 10 games in his first season, the first Wisconsin coach to win 11 games prior to a bowl game and became the third coach in NCAA history to win 12 games in his first season. Bielema won 17 of his first 18 games with the Badgers. The Badgers shared or won Big Ten championships three straight seasons from 2010-12 and he led Wisconsin to victories in the first two Big Ten championship games.

Bielema's coaching pedigree and list of football mentors matches that of any coach in the nation. He played for and coached under Hall-of-Famer Hayden Fry, helping the Hawkeyes share the 1990 Big Ten title with Illinois. After two years as a graduate assistant and six seasons as linebackers coach at Iowa, Bielema spent two years as Co-Defensive Coordinator at Kansas State under Hall-of-Famer Bill Snyder, helping the Wildcats win the 2003 Big 12 Championship. Two seasons later, he was named Defensive Coordinator at Wisconsin under Hall-of-Famer Barry Alvarez and moved into the head coaching role of the Badgers in 2006 when Alvarez retired.

Bielema spent the previous three seasons before Illinois in the National Football League. His first two seasons in the NFL were with the New England Patriots as a consultant to six-time Super Bowl champion head coach Bill Belichick in 2018 and as the team's defensive line coach in 2019, when the Patriots won the AFC East with a 12-4 record and had the NFL's best defense. In Bielema's first season with the Patriots, New England went 11-5 and defeated the Los Angeles Rams in Super Bowl LIII. He was the outside linebackers coach and senior assistant for the New York Giants during the 2020 season.

Bielema was a defensive lineman at Iowa from 1989-92, when he was a four-time letterman under Fry. After joining the team as a walk-on, Bielema earned a scholarship after his first year, started as a junior and was named a team captain for his senior season. Bielema graduated from Iowa in 1992 with a bachelor's degree in marketing.

Following his graduation, Bielema signed a free-agent contract with the Seattle Seahawks and ended his playing career in 1994 as a member of the Milwaukee Mustangs of the Arena Football League.

He and his wife, Jen, have two daughters, Briella Nicole and Brexli Nichole.



Josh Whitman introduced Bret Bielema as Illinois head coach on Dec. 21, 2020.

THE BRET BIELEMA FILE

COACHING EXPERIENCE

| | | |
|-----------|----------------------|---|
| 2021- | Illinois | Head Coach |
| 2020 | New York Giants | Outside Linebackers, Senior Assistant Coach |
| 2019 | New England Patriots | Defensive Line |
| 2018 | New England Patriots | Consultant to the Head Coach |
| 2013-17 | Arkansas | Head Coach (29-34) |
| 2006-12 | Wisconsin | Head Coach (68-24) |
| 2004-05 | Wisconsin | Defensive Coordinator |
| 2002-03 | Kansas State | Co-Defensive Coordinator |
| 1996-2001 | Iowa | Linebackers |
| 1994-95 | Iowa | Graduate Assistant |

BIELEMA'S HEAD COACHING RECORD

| YEAR | TEAM | RECORD | POSTSEASON |
|----------------|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2006 | Wisconsin | 12-1 | Capital One Bowl |
| 2007 | Wisconsin | 9-4 | Outback Bowl |
| 2008 | Wisconsin | 7-6 | Champs Sports Bowl |
| 2009 | Wisconsin | 10-3 | Champs Sports Bowl |
| 2010 | Wisconsin | 11-2 | Rose Bowl |
| 2011 | Wisconsin | 11-3 | Rose Bowl |
| 2012 | Wisconsin | 8-5 | Rose Bowl (did not coach game) |
| 2013 | Arkansas | 3-9 | |
| 2014 | Arkansas | 7-6 | Texas Bowl |
| 2015 | Arkansas | 8-5 | Liberty Bowl |
| 2016 | Arkansas | 7-6 | Belk Bowl |
| 2017 | Arkansas | 4-8 | |
| 2021 | Illinois | 5-7 | |
| 2022 | Illinois | 8-5 | ReliaQuest Bowl |
| OVERALL | 14 SEASONS | 110-70 (.611) | BIG TEN: 46-28 (.622) |



BARRY LUNNEY JR.

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR/QUARTERBACKS

ARKANSAS, 1996

SECOND SEASON AT ILLINOIS

THE LUNNEY FILE

HOMETOWN

Fort Smith, Arkansas

BIRTHDATE

September 11, 1974

FAMILY

Wife: Janelle

Sons: Luke and Levi

EDUCATION

B.S., Kinesiology – Arkansas, 1996

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Arkansas, 1992-95

Barry Lunney Jr. was named the Illinois football team's offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach on January 8, 2022. Lunney and Illinois head coach Bret Bielema were reunited after Lunney spent five years as the tight ends coach at Arkansas under Bielema from 2013-17. Lunney helped Illinois to one of its best seasons in over a decade in 2022, as the Illini finished the regular season 8-4 and earned a trip to the ReliaQuest Bowl, Illinois' first January bowl game in 15 years. The Illini were ranked in the AP Top 25 for five straight weeks and appeared in the College Football Playoff rankings for the first time in school history. Lunney's offense was led by All-American running back Chase Brown, who finished fourth in the nation in rushing and was Illinois' first ever finalist for the Doak Walker Award.

Lunney's position group - the quarterbacks - was the most improved position for the Illini year-over-year, as the Illini ranked third in the nation in completion percentage (69.6%), a rise of 122 spots in the national rankings. Starting quarterback Tommy DeVito ranked third in the nation individually in completion percentage and his 141.22 pass efficiency rating ranked second in Illinois history and sixth in the Big Ten. DeVito, a former starter at Syracuse, posted career highs in completions (257), passing yards (2,650), completion percentage (69.6%), passing efficiency (141.22), and rushing touchdowns (6) under Lunney's offense. The offense was the only unit in the Big Ten that featured four players with 30+ receptions, including Isaiah Williams, who ranked in the top 10 in the Big Ten in receptions per game (2nd, 6.3), receiving yards (7th, 715), receiving touchdowns (10th, 5), and receiving yards per game (10th, 55).

Lunney came to Champaign from UTSA, where he served as associate head coach/offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach in 2020 and 2021. Lunney helped bring UTSA to new heights during his time in San Antonio, reaching No. 15 in the national rankings in 2021. UTSA opened the 2021 season with 11 straight wins, won its first Conference USA championship with a 49-41 win over Western Kentucky in the C-USA title game, and appeared in the Frisco Bowl. The UTSA offense ranked 11th in the nation in scoring and 34th in total offense in 2021, averaging 36.9 points per game and 439.0 yards per game. Running back Sincere McCormick, a two-time All-American and two-time C-USA Offensive Player of the Year under Lunney, ranked seventh in the nation in rushing yards (1,479) and 23rd in total touchdowns (15). McCormick broke his own UTSA record for rushing yards and touchdowns, while earning Doak Walker Award semifinalist honors.

UTSA's balanced attack also featured QB Frank Harris, who threw for 3,177 yards (27th in the nation) and 27 touchdowns (17th in the nation) in 2021, and a trio of receivers that combined to make UTSA one of only three schools in the nation with three receivers with 50+ receptions, 750+ yards, and 5+ touchdowns. WR Zakhari Franklin had 81 receptions for 1,027 yards (37th in the nation) and 12 touchdowns (12th in the nation), WR Joshua Cephus had 71 receptions for 803 yards and six touchdowns, and WR De'orian Clark had 52 receptions for 755 yards.

Lunney's offense made huge strides in his first season overseeing the unit in 2020, as he guided the Roadrunners to a 7-5 record, a runner-up finish in the Conference USA West Division at 6-2, and an appearance in the SERVPRO First Responder Bowl. In his first season, Lunney improved UTSA's offense 60 spots in the national rankings for total offense, 50 spots in scoring offense, 45 spots in rushing offense, and 60 spots in third down percentage. UTSA broke single-season school records for rushing yards (2,585), rushing yards per game (215.4), yards per rush (5.21) and rushing touchdowns (24). The rushing touchdowns record lasted just one season, as Lunney's offense produced 26 rushing touchdowns in 2021. McCormick set UTSA single-season records for yards (1,467), carries (249) and touchdowns (11) in 2020, then broke all three records in 2021 with 1,479 rushing yards, 298 carries, and 15 rushing touchdowns. Lunney came to San Antonio after spending six seasons as the tight ends coach and special teams coordinator at his alma mater Arkansas. He took over as the interim head coach late in the 2019 season and led the Razorbacks in games against No. 1 LSU and Missouri.

Lunney also spent three seasons at Tulsa (2000-02), two at San Jose State (2003-04), nine as the offensive coordinator at Bentonville (Ark.) High School (2005-13), and nine combined years at Arkansas (1998-99, 2013-19). Lunney helped develop the Arkansas offensive attack into one that was spurred through its tight ends. During the 2018 season, the Razorbacks made a living off production out of the tight end position, completing 58.8 percent of the group's targets, which was above the team average. Arkansas finished the year ranked second in the country in tight end touchdowns and tied for fourth in the nation in tight end first downs, as TE Cheyenne O'Grady led

the team in receptions (30) and touchdowns (six). In 2019, O'Grady led the Razorbacks with 33 catches and four touchdowns in 12 games.

From 2014-16, Lunney developed one of the top tight ends in Arkansas history in Hunter Henry, who won the John Mackey Award and was a consensus first-team All-American as a junior in 2015. Henry was the first tight end taken in the 2016 NFL Draft with the 35th overall pick by the Chargers, and he has become one of the top receiving threats in the NFL. Henry led all FBS tight ends with 739 receiving yards on 51 receptions – each career highs – and hauled in three touchdown passes in 2015. In addition, Henry and tight end mate Jeremy Sprinkle combined for a league-best 1,128 receiving yards and eight touchdowns.

During his career, Henry hauled in 116 passes for 1,661 yards and nine touchdowns. He is one of only eight tight ends in SEC history to reach the triple-digit mark in receptions while playing in the conference. Of the eight, he is one of four to tally more than 1,500 receiving yards. In addition, his 1,661 career receiving yards rank second in program history among tight ends, only trailing Williams (1,855, 2007-10). His 116 receptions and 1,661 receiving yards through those three seasons were both tops in the SEC among tight ends.

A year later, Sprinkle followed Henry's footsteps and was taken by the Washington Redskins in the fifth round of the 2017 NFL Draft. During his senior season, Sprinkle set the Arkansas record for career TDs by a tight end with 11 and was also invited to play in the Reese's Senior Bowl. Lunney also oversaw the transition of AJ Derby from quarterback to tight end. Derby finished fifth in the SEC with 303 receiving yards during the 2014 season and was a sixth-round draft choice of the New England Patriots despite playing the position for less than a year.

In his first season coaching the Arkansas tight ends, Lunney led Henry to second-team All-SEC, Freshman All-America and SEC All-Freshman Team recognition. Henry's receiving yards ranked third in the nation among freshman tight ends, and he was the only freshman tight end in the SEC with a 100-yard receiving game. Henry also led SEC tight ends and ranked third in the conference by gaining a first down on 78.6 percent of his receptions.

Before returning to Arkansas, Lunney served as the offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach at Bentonville High School (Ark.) from 2005-12. In his eight years at Bentonville, the Tigers won 78 games, including 25 straight in 2010-11, played four state championships, claiming titles in 2008 and 2010, and won six straight 7A West Conference crowns from 2007-12. Bentonville played in three 7A state championship games and won at least 12 games in four of his last five seasons.

Bentonville quarterback Dallas Hardison broke the Arkansas state single-season completion percentage record in 2010 and bettered the record in 2011 under the direct guidance of Lunney. In 2011 and 2012, the Tigers won their first 12 games to advance to the state championship game with an offense that averaged 42.5 and 36.8 points per game, respectively.

The 2010 Bentonville team finished 13-0 and won the 7A state championship. The offense averaged 47.0 points per game and scored at least 40 points nine times, including 49 points in the semifinal round and the state championship game. Lunney's first state title at Bentonville came in 2008 as the Tigers won 12 games for the first time since 2001. The offense averaged 30.2 points per game and scored more than 30 points in seven of 13 games. Before moving to the high school coaching ranks, Lunney compiled seven years of collegiate coaching experience.

Lunney spent two seasons as the co-offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach at San Jose State from 2003-04. During his tenure, the offense produced six all-conference performers, and tight end Courtney Anderson was selected by the Oakland Raiders in the 2004 NFL Draft. In 2003, the Spartans ranked 17th in the NCAA in passing offense and quarterback Scott Ristolov ranked third in the WAC in passing efficiency and total offense.

Prior to that, Lunney spent three seasons at Tulsa from 2000-02, first working with quarterbacks in 2000 and 2001 and then moving to wide receivers in 2002. In 2000, quarterback Josh Blankenship ranked fifth in the WAC in total offense and receiver Don Shoals led the conference and ranked 11th in the NCAA in receptions per game.

His coaching career began with two seasons as a graduate assistant at Arkansas from 1998-99 following a standout career for the Razorbacks. In 1998, Arkansas won its first eight games and rose to No. 9 in the national rankings on the way to sharing the SEC Western Division title and earning a berth in the Citrus Bowl. Lunney served as the Razorbacks' running backs coach for the bowl game and throughout the spring of 1999. Arkansas spent the majority of the 1999 season in the top-25 rankings and finished the year with a 27-6 win over No. 14 Texas in the Cotton Bowl.

As a player for the Razorbacks, Lunney lettered from 1992-95, starting 40 games at quarterback, and was a team captain on the 1995 team that played in the SEC Championship Game for the first time in school history. In his first game as the starting quarterback, he led Arkansas to an upset win at No. 4 Tennessee. Lunney left Arkansas holding school career records for passing yards, passing touchdowns, pass completions, pass attempts and total offensive plays. Lunney also played baseball at Arkansas. He was drafted by the Montreal Expos out of high school in 1992 and by the Minnesota Twins in 1996 and played one season of minor league baseball in the Twins organization.

Lunney graduated from Arkansas in 1996 with a bachelor's degree in kinesiology. He and his wife, Janelle, have two sons, Luke and Levi. His grandfather, John, lettered at Arkansas from 1946-49. His father, Barry Sr., retired after 28 years as a high school football coach in Arkansas, winning eight state championships at Bentonville High School and Fort Smith Southside High School.

LUNNEY YEAR-BY-YEAR

| | | |
|---------|-----------------------|---|
| 2022- | Illinois | Offensive Coordinator/Quarterbacks |
| 2020-21 | UTSA | Assoc. Head Coach/Offensive Coordinator/QBs |
| 2019 | Arkansas | Special Teams Coordinator/Tight Ends |
| 2013-18 | Arkansas | Tight Ends |
| 2005-12 | Bentonville HS (Ark.) | Offensive Coordinator/Quarterbacks |
| 2003-04 | San Jose State | Offensive Coordinator/Quarterbacks |
| 2002 | Tulsa | Wide Receivers |
| 2000-01 | Tulsa | Quarterbacks |
| 1999 | Arkansas | Running Backs |
| 1998 | Arkansas | Graduate Assistant - Offense |



AARON HENRY

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR

WISCONSIN, 2011

THIRD SEASON AT ILLINOIS, FIRST AS DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR

THE HENRY FILE

HOMETOWN

Immokalee, Florida

BIRTHDATE

November 28, 1988

FAMILY

Wife: Camille

EDUCATION

B.S., business and consumer affairs
– Wisconsin, 2011

M.S., sports management –
Arkansas, 2015

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Wisconsin, 2007-11

Aaron Henry was promoted to Illinois' defensive coordinator in December 2022 after spending two seasons as the Illini's defensive backs coach. Henry led one of the nation's best defensive backs units in his first two seasons in Champaign and was the 2022 FootballScoop Defensive Backs Coach of the Year. He was the youngest coordinator in the Big Ten when he took over for Illinois at the 2023 ReliaQuest Bowl.

Henry's unit was the best in the nation against the pass in 2022, as Illinois led the nation in scoring defense (12.8), interceptions (24), takeaways (32), and passing efficiency defense (92.64). The Illini's pass efficiency defense of 92.64 was more than 10 points better than the next-best defense (Penn State, 103.24), nearly 40 points better than the median pass defense, and trailed only 2013 Michigan State (92.28) for the best in the last decade. Illinois also ranked second in the nation in fewest passing touchdowns allowed (9), second in fewest yards per passing attempt (5.4), eighth in fewest passing yards allowed per game (173.8), as well as seventh in fewest first downs allowed (199), ninth in third down defense (30.1%), and 10th in rushing defense (99.8).

Henry was instrumental in the rise of CB Devon Witherspoon, as the shutdown corner went from relative unknown to the highest drafted defensive back in Illinois history in a two-year span. Witherspoon had started 10 games in his first two seasons in Champaign prior to Henry's arrival, then jumped to an All-Big Ten honorable mention selection in 2021 before becoming Illinois' first ever Consensus All-American defensive back in 2022. Witherspoon was named the Big Ten's Tatum-Woodson Defensive Back of the Year and one of three finalists for the Paycom Jim Thorpe Award, prior to being selected with the No. 5 overall pick in the 2023 NFL Draft by the Seattle Seahawks.

After the success of the 2022 season, Illinois had one of its most impressive NFL Drafts in recent history. Witherspoon went No. 5 overall to become the highest drafted defensive back in Illinois history, and fellow DBs Jartavius Martin and Sydney Brown went in the second and third rounds, respectively. The Illini were the only team in the nation to have three defensive backs taken in the first three rounds of the 2023 NFL Draft.

In Henry's first game as defensive coordinator, the Illinois defense held Mississippi State's offense to only 13 offensive points in the ReliaQuest Bowl on Jan. 2, 2023. The Illini were the first team this season to intercept Mississippi State's Air Raid offense twice and gave Bulldogs' QB Will Rogers his first red zone interception of the season.

Henry was part of one of the best defensive turnarounds in the nation in 2021, helping Illinois to a 5-7 record and ranked wins over #7 Penn State and #20 Minnesota. Illinois' scoring defense (31st from 97th), third down defense (31st from 89th), and total defense (52nd from 114th) all improved more than 50 spots in the national rankings from 2020, thanks in large part to the Illini's improved pass defense. Illinois led the Big Ten in fewest passing yards allowed in Big Ten games, a jump of nine spots in the Big Ten rankings with 49.5 fewer passing yards allowed per game year-over-year. The Illini made massive gains in the overall Big Ten defensive rankings as well, jumping nine or more spots in scoring defense (4th from 14th), touchdowns allowed (t-3rd from 14th), and yards allowed per game (5th from 14th). The cornerbacks position group stats improved in nearly every category from the year prior, including passes defended (2.08 from 1.25), TFLs (1.25 from 0.38), and sacks (2.0 from 0.0).

Henry, who was a standout player and coached under Bielema at both Wisconsin and Arkansas, moved to Champaign-Urbana after SEC, ACC and Big Ten stops at Vanderbilt, North Carolina State and Rutgers. He played under Bielema at Wisconsin where he was an All-Big Ten first team defensive back, earning 32 starts from 2007-11 and helping lead the Badgers to consecutive Big Ten titles and Rose Bowl appearances as a junior and senior.

Henry spent the 2020 season as cornerbacks coach at Vanderbilt after three seasons at North Carolina State. He worked under Commodore and Wolfpack defensive coordinator Ted Roof at both schools, and helped NC State to a 9-3 record and Gator Bowl appearance in 2018. Henry has coached in four bowl games, including the 2023 ReliaQuest Bowl, 2018 Gator Bowl, 2017 Sun Bowl, and 2015 Liberty Bowl.

Henry served as a secondary coach while at NC State, starting with the Wolfpack as a safeties coach in 2017 and working with nickelbacks during the 2018 and 2019 seasons. The Wolfpack secondary registered 28 interceptions during Henry's tenure, including 14 picks in 2017, the most by a NC State defensive unit since 2011.

Henry's first full-time coaching position came in 2016 at Rutgers, where he served as defensive backs coach for head coach Chris Ash. That season, the Scarlet Knights ranked 18th nationally in pass defense. He began his coaching career in the SEC, serving as a defensive graduate assistant at Arkansas under Bielema in 2014 and 2015. In his final season at Arkansas, the Razorbacks captured five SEC victories and won six of their last seven games, including a victory in the Liberty Bowl.

Henry finished his Wisconsin playing career with seven interceptions, 23 defended passes and 181 career tackles. As a senior in 2011, Henry was a All-Big Ten first team performer and quarterfinalist for the LOTT IMPACT Trophy. He garnered four interceptions and 67 tackles that season. Henry also earned the Badgers' Big Ten Football Conference Sportsmanship Award and was an All-Big Ten second team pick in 2010 as a junior. Henry appeared in 52 games, starting 32 times.

Henry, three-time Academic All-Big Ten recipient, earned a bachelor's degree in consumer affairs from Wisconsin in 2011. He then completed a master's degree in sports management from Arkansas in 2015.

A native of Immokalee, Florida, Henry played football, basketball, an baseball, and ran track at Immokalee High School. As a wide receiver and defensive back, he helped Immokalee to the 2004 Florida state title and an undefeated regular season in 2006. He was an all-state football player, all-county basketball player, and state qualifier in track.

Henry and his wife, Camille, married in January 2022, and they have twin daughters, Harlow and Dakota.

HENRY YEAR-BY-YEAR

| | | |
|---------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2023- | Illinois | Defensive Coordinator |
| 2021-22 | Illinois | Defensive Backs |
| 2020 | Vanderbilt | Cornerbacks |
| 2018-19 | North Carolina State | Cornerbacks |
| 2017 | North Carolina State | Safeties |
| 2016 | Rutgers | Defensive Backs |
| 2014-15 | Arkansas | Graduate Assistant, Defense |



TERRANCE JAMISON

CO-DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR/DEFENSIVE LINE

WISCONSIN, 2009

THIRD SEASON AT ILLINOIS

THE JAMISON FILE

HOMETOWN

Harvey, Illinois

BIRTHDATE

April 30, 1987

FAMILY

Wife: Ashley

Son: Jayce

Daughters: Ava and Mackenzie

EDUCATION

B.S., agricultural business management – Wisconsin, 2009

M.S., educational leadership and policy analysis – Wisconsin, 2011

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Wisconsin, 2005-07

Terrance Jamison was promoted to co-defensive coordinator/defensive line coach in 2023 following two seasons as defensive line coach for the Fighting Illini.

Jamison led one of the best defensive line units in the nation in 2022, helping Illinois to its best season in 15 years. The Illini won eight games for the first time since 2007 and earned a berth in the ReliaQuest Bowl, the Illini's first January bowl game since the 2008 Rose Bowl. Illinois led the nation in scoring defense (12.8), takeaways (32), and passing efficiency defense (92.6) with the defensive line playing a major role in the unit's success. Illinois also ranked in the top 10 in the nation in total defense (3rd, 273.5), rushing defense (10th, 99.8), fewest first downs allowed (7th, 199), and third down defense (9th, 30.1%).

In Jamison's defensive line room, All-American DT Jer'Zhan Newton tied for the national lead in QB hits (19), ranked seventh in the nation in pressures (59), and together with All-Big Ten DT Keith Randolph the duo led the nation in quarterback pressures among defensive line partners with 81. Newton tied for the nation lead in TFLs among interior defensive linemen with 14.0, while Randolph ranked third in the country among interior d-line players with 13.0 TFLs. Newton and Randolph ranked first and second in the Big Ten in TFLs among interior defensive linemen, more than 3.0 better than the next closest Big Ten player at their position. When adding nose tackle Calvin Avery, Illinois' three interior defensive linemen totaled more tackles (139) and TFLs (29.0) than any other interior defensive line trio in the nation.

Jamison was a part of one of the best defensive turnarounds in the nation in 2021, helping Illinois to ranked wins over #7 Penn State and #20 Minnesota. Illinois' scoring defense (31st from 97th), third down defense (31st from 89th), and total defense (52nd from 114th) all improved more than 50 spots in the national rankings from 2020. The Illini made massive gains in the Big Ten defensive rankings, as well, jumping nine or more spots in scoring defense (4th from 14th), touchdowns allowed (t-3rd from 14th), yards allowed per game (5th from 14th), and passing yards allowed per game (1st from 10th). He led defensive tackles Keith Randolph and Jer'Zhan Newton to All-Big Ten honorable mention honors.

Jamison spent the 2020 season at Purdue and the 2019 season at Air Force as the defensive line coach, where he helped the Falcons to an 11-2 record that included a 31-21 victory over Washington State in the Cheez-It Bowl. That Air Force defensive unit finished in the top 20 nationally in a number of categories, including rushing defense (7th, 100.5), defensive touchdowns (12th, 3), total defense (17th, 319.6), and scoring defense (20th 19.8).

Jamison was also the defensive line coach for two seasons at Texas Tech (2017-18) and three seasons at Florida Atlantic (2014-16) prior to his stop at Air Force. He spent the 2013 season in a quality control role at California before earning his first full-time position at FAU.

Jamison has coached several outstanding players in his career, including 2015 C-USA Defensive Player of the Year Trey Hendrickson, multiple-Pro Bowler J.J. Watt at Wisconsin, fifth-round NFL Draft pick Broderick Washington at Texas Tech, and George Karlaftis at Purdue, who was an All-Big Ten second-team lineman in 2020.

A native of Harvey, Illinois, who graduated from Thornton Township High School, Jamison has two degrees from Wisconsin, a bachelor's in agricultural business management (2009) and a master's in educational leadership and policy analysis (2011). He and his wife, Ashley, have two daughters, Ava and Mackenzie, and one son, Jayce.

JAMISON YEAR-BY-YEAR

| | | |
|---------|--------------------|---|
| 2023- | Illinois | Co-Defensive Coordinator/Defensive Line |
| 2021-22 | Illinois | Defensive Line |
| 2020 | Purdue | Defensive Line |
| 2019 | Air Force | Defensive Line |
| 2017-18 | Texas Tech | Defensive Line |
| 2014-16 | Florida Atlantic | Defensive Line |
| 2013 | California | Defensive Quality Control |
| 2012 | Wisconsin | Graduate Assistant/Linebackers |
| 2011 | Wisconsin | Defensive Quality Control |
| 2010 | Edgewood HS (Wis.) | Assistant Coach (Defensive Line) |
| 2008-09 | Wisconsin | Student Assistant (Defensive Line) |



ANDY BUH

LINEBACKERS

NEVADA, 1996

THIRD SEASON AT ILLINOIS

Andy Buh was named linebackers coach at Illinois in January 2021. Buh enters 2023 with 25 years of collegiate coaching experience, including four different stops as defensive coordinator in three Power-5 conferences.

Buh helped Illinois to its best season in 15 years in 2022. Buh helped in the development and execution of one of the nation's best defensive schemes that ended the year nationally ranked #1 in scoring defense (12.8), #1 in takeaways (32), and #1 in pass efficiency defense (196.6). Illinois also ranked #3 in total defense (273.5), #10 in rushing defense (99.8), #7 in fewest first downs allowed (199), and #9 in third down defense (30.1%). The Illini ended the 2022 season in the ReliaQuest Bowl, the first January bowl game since the 2008 Rose Bowl. Buh's linebacker group was led by All-Big Ten honorable mention performers Isaac Darkangelo and Tarique Barnes, as well as veteran starter Calvin Hart Jr. Darkangelo led the Illini in tackles with 71 and Illinois' rotation of three main linebackers combined for 139 tackles and 17.5 tackles for loss.

Buh was a part of one of the best defensive turnarounds in the nation in 2021, helping Illinois to a 5-7 record and ranked wins over #7 Penn State and #20 Minnesota. Illinois' scoring defense (31st from 97th), third down defense (31st from 89th), and total defense (52nd from 114th) all improved more than 50 spots in the national rankings from 2020. The Illini made massive gains in the Big Ten defensive rankings, as well, jumping nine or more spots in scoring defense (4th from 14th), touchdowns allowed (t-3rd from 14th), yards allowed per game (5th from 14th), and passing yards allowed per game (1st from 10th).

Bielema and Buh spent the 2012 season together at Wisconsin helping the Badgers win the Big Ten Championship. He spent the 2020 season as outside linebackers coach at Arizona. Buh also spent time in the Big Ten as defensive coordinator and linebackers coach at Rutgers in 2019 and three years as defensive coordinator at Maryland from 2016-18. He also served as a coordinator earlier in his career at California, Nevada, and Stanford.

Buh had a successful three-year run at Maryland, guiding a Terrapins defense that collected 37 sacks in 2016. Buh's defense allowed just one 300-yard passer in his first season at Maryland and allowed just 212.3 passing yards per game on the season. The following year, Buh's defense collected 10 interceptions and saw four players earn All-Big Ten honors.

While at Kentucky, Buh, who served as outside linebackers coach, helped a defense that allowed just 198.1 passing yards per game and forced nine fumbles on the season. Before coaching at Kentucky, Buh made his second stint in the Pac-12 at California, serving as the defensive coordinator and linebackers coach. He spent the 2012 season with Bielema at Wisconsin coaching linebackers and helped the defense rank 15th in the nation in total defense.

Buh spent the 2010 and 2011 seasons at Nevada as the defensive coordinator and linebackers coach when he helped the Wolf Pack defense improve from 96th nationally to 52nd in total defense. He spent the three seasons before Nevada at Stanford, first serving as the linebackers coach, before being promoted to co-defensive coordinator for his final two seasons. He helped guide the Cardinal to the Sun Bowl in 2009, the program's first bowl game since 2001.

Buh played collegiately at Palomar College and then at Nevada in 1993 and 1994, helping his team capture a Big West Championship. He began his coaching career at Nevada, serving as a graduate assistant in 1997 and 1998. Buh then coached defensive backs and special teams for the Wolf Pack, before moving on to California in 2000 as a defensive administrative assistant. He spent the next four seasons coaching linebackers at San Diego State, before spending the 2006 season at Fresno State.

He earned his bachelor's degree in physical education at Nevada in 1996. A native of Escondido, California, Buh and his wife, Kelly, have two sons, Luke and Logan.

THE BUH FILE

HOMETOWN

Escondido, California

BIRTHDATE

June 20, 1973

FAMILY

Wife: Kelly

Sons: Luke and Logan

EDUCATION

B.S., physical education – Nevada, 1996

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Nevada, 1993-94

Palomar College, 1991-92

BUH YEAR-BY-YEAR

| | | |
|---------|-----------------|--|
| 2021- | Illinois | Linebackers |
| 2020 | Arizona | Outside Linebackers |
| 2019 | Rutgers | Defensive Coordinator/Linebackers |
| 2016-18 | Maryland | Defensive Coordinator/Safeties/Outside Linebackers |
| 2015 | Kentucky | Outside Linebackers/Co-Special Teams Coordinator |
| 2013 | California | Defensive Coordinator/Linebackers |
| 2012 | Wisconsin | Linebackers |
| 2010-11 | Nevada | Defensive Coordinator/Linebackers |
| 2008-09 | Stanford | Co-Defensive Coordinator/Linebackers |
| 2007 | Stanford | Linebackers |
| 2006 | Fresno State | Graduate Assistant |
| 2002-05 | San Diego State | Linebackers |
| 2000-01 | California | Defensive Administrative Assistant |
| 1999 | Nevada | Defensive Backs/Special Teams |
| 1997-98 | Nevada | Graduate Assistant (Defensive Backs) |



CHARLIE BULLEN

OUTSIDE LINEBACKERS/PASS RUSH COORDINATOR

IOWA, 2008

FIRST SEASON AT ILLINOIS

Charlie Bullen is in his first season as the Illinois football program's outside linebackers coach/pass rush coordinator after being hired by head coach Bret Bielema in January 2023. Bullen joined the Fighting Illini with 11 years of NFL coaching experience, including the last four years with the Arizona Cardinals.

Bullen spent the last three seasons as the Cardinals' outside linebackers coach after originally joining the Cardinals staff as assistant linebackers coach for the 2019 season. He also has seven years of NFL experience with the Miami Dolphins from 2012-18 working with the linebackers and defensive line.

With the help of Bullen's outside linebacker group, the Cardinals ranked fifth in the NFL with 89 total sacks during the two-year span from 2020-21. Of those, 50 came via the outside linebackers position. During that span, three Cardinals outside linebackers posted 10+ sacks: Markus Golden, Chandler Jones, and Haason Reddick.

In 2021, Bullen coached Chandler Jones to the Pro Bowl after becoming the franchise all-time sacks leader (67.0) and finishing the season with 10.5 sacks, one year removed from being limited to five games due to an injury. He tied the franchise single-game record (Haason Reddick) with 5.0 sacks in a win at the Titans. Jones (10.5) and Markus Golden (11.0 sacks) each had double digit sacks in 2021, marking just the fourth time in franchise history that the Cardinals had multiple players with 10+ sacks in a season. Arizona also finished the 2021 season ranked in the top-10 in offensive points allowed (8th), fumble recoveries (1st), and rushing touchdowns allowed (3rd).

In 2020, Haason Reddick had a career-high and team leading 12.5 sacks, 15 tackles for loss, 16 QB hits, and six forced fumbles under the coaching of Bullen. He was the only player in the NFL in 2020 that ranked in the top-5 in sacks (4th), tackles for loss (3rd), and forced fumbles (2nd). Over a three-game span (games 13-15) in 2020, Reddick set a team record with 7.5 sacks and six forced fumbles, becoming the first NFL player in the past 21 years to post those numbers. Arizona had an NFL-high 18 players who recorded at least 1.0 sack in 2020 and an NFL-leading 12 players who had 2.0+ sacks, finishing the season with 48.0 sacks, the fourth-most in the league.

Jones finished second in voting for the NFL Defensive Player of the Year in 2019, was named first-team All-Pro, and was selected to the Pro Bowl after setting a franchise record with 19.0 sacks to go along with a career-high eight forced fumbles and seven strip-sacks. His 19.0 sacks ranked second in the NFL while he tied for the league lead in forced fumbles and led the NFL in strip-sacks.

Prior to joining the Cardinals, Bullen spent seven seasons with the Miami Dolphins, including his final three seasons in Miami (2016-18) as the Dolphins

assistant linebackers coach. He originally joined the Dolphins in 2012 as a defensive assistant before being promoted to assistant defensive line coach in 2013, where he coached for three seasons (2013-15). He worked under defensive coordinator Vance Joseph, who went on to be the Cardinals defensive coordinator while Bullen was with Arizona.

Dolphins LB Kiko Alonso totaled 100+ tackles in each of Bullen's three seasons (2016-18) working with the linebackers. In 2018, Alonso led the team and tied for 10th in the NFL with a career-high 125 tackles, the most by a Dolphins LB since Karlos Dansby in 2012. He was the only NFL player with at least 100 tackles, three interceptions, and three forced fumbles in 2018. Alonso had 115 tackles in both 2016 and 2017, which ranked ninth and eighth, respectively, in the AFC in those two seasons.

During Bullen's first season as assistant linebackers coach in 2016, Miami won nine of its last 11 games to clinch its first playoff berth since 2008. The Dolphins defense held opponents to a 36.2% third down conversion rate in 2016, which ranked 4th in the NFL, and forced 21 turnovers in the final 11 games, the league's fourth most in that span. Alonso was a key contributor to that run, scoring a go-ahead touchdown on an interception return with 1:01 to play in Week 10 at San Diego. Alonso also became the first Dolphins linebacker since at least 1993 with an interception and fumble recovery in a game.

As a defensive line assistant for three seasons, defensive ends Cameron Wake (27.0) and Olivier Vernon (25.5) ranked 10th and tied for 12th, respectively, for the most sacks in the NFL from 2013-15. No other NFL team had multiple players in the top-20 in sacks during that stretch. Wake was selected to the Pro Bowl in back-to-back seasons (2013-14) while working with Bullen. In 2015, Wake had 7.0 sacks in seven games – including four in Week 6 at Tennessee – during an injury-shortened season, joining Julius Peppers as the only NFL players with at least seven sacks in each of the previous six seasons (2010-15). Vernon (7.5), Wake (7.0) and Ndamukong Suh (6.0) were one of just four NFL trios of teammates with at least six sacks each in 2015.

The defensive line totaled 30.5 of Miami's 39 sacks in 2014, including a team-high 11.5 from Wake. The Dolphins defensive line had 34 of Miami's 42 sacks in 2013, including a team-high 11.5 by Vernon and 8.5 from Wake. It was the first time in franchise history that the Dolphins had at least 40 sacks in three consecutive seasons (2011-13).

During Bullen's first season in Miami, the Dolphins ranked seventh in the NFL and third in the AFC in scoring defense (19.8 points per game) and its red zone defense led the league, as opponents scored a touchdown on just 42.6% of their red zone possessions. Bullen worked primarily with the defensive line, which featured Pro Bowlers Randy Starks and Wake, who led the team with a career-high 15 sacks, the fourth most in the NFL that season and sixth highest single-season total in team history.

Prior to working with the Dolphins, Bullen coached for three seasons (2009-11) as a graduate assistant working with defensive backs at his alma mater, the University of Iowa. He also served as a student assistant for two seasons (2007-08), working with Iowa's quarterbacks while working on his bachelor's degree. In 2006, he served as a volunteer assistant at Iowa City High School working with the team's quarterbacks.

Before attending Iowa, Bullen played quarterback at Harper (Ill.) College and St. Norbert (Wis.) College. He earned a bachelor's degree from Iowa in finance in 2008 and a master's degree in sports management in 2011.

Bullen is native of Palatine, Illinois, and a graduate of Fremd High School. He was high school teammates with quarterback Scott Tolzien, who went on to play for Illinois head coach Bret Bielema at Wisconsin.

Bullen and his wife, Megan, have three daughters, Elle, Berkley and Nellie.

THE BULLEN FILE

HOMETOWN

Palatine, Illinois

BIRTHDATE

September 28, 1984

FAMILY

Wife: Megan

Children: Elle, Berkley and Nellie

EDUCATION

B.S., finance – Iowa, 2008

M.S., sports management – Iowa, 2011

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Harper (Ill.) College
St. Norbert (Wis.)

BULLEN YEAR-BY-YEAR

| | | |
|---------|-------------------|---|
| 2023 | Illinois | Outside Linebackers Coach/Pass Rush Coordinator |
| 2020-22 | Arizona Cardinals | Outside Linebackers Coach |
| 2019 | Arizona Cardinals | Assistant Linebackers Coach |
| 2016-18 | Miami Dolphins | Assistant Linebackers Coach |
| 2013-15 | Miami Dolphins | Assistant Defensive Line Coach |
| 2012 | Miami Dolphins | Defensive Assistant |
| 2009-11 | Iowa | Graduate Assistant (Defensive Backs) |
| 2007-08 | Iowa | Student Assistant (Quarterbacks) |



ROBBY DISCHER

SPECIAL TEAMS COORDINATOR/TIGHT ENDS

WILLIAM JEWELL, 2009

FIRST SEASON AT ILLINOIS

THE DISCHER FILE

HOMETOWN

Kansas City, Missouri

BIRTHDATE

July 9, 1986

FAMILY

Wife: Erin

Children: Quinn, Connor, and Sydney

EDUCATION

B.S., physical education – William Jewell (Mo.) College, 2009

M.S., exercise science – Sam Houston State, 2012

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

William Jewell (Mo.) College, 2006-08

Robby Discher is in his first season as Illinois football program's special teams coordinator/tight ends coach in 2023. Discher came to Illinois from Tulane, where he helped the Green Wave to AAC and Cotton Bowl championships as special teams coordinator last season.

Discher spent one season at Tulane, one of the best in program history, as the Green Wave finished 12-2 and ranked No. 9 in the final AP Poll. Tulane's special teams ranked in the top 30 in six major categories, including punt return defense (3rd, 1.1), blocked kicks (19th, 3), yards per kick return (20th, 22.9), kickoff touchbacks (23rd, 47), yards per punt return (28th, 9.9), and kick return defense (29th, 17.6). Discher had individuals rank in the top 10 in the nation in both kickoff and punt returns, as Lawrence Keys III averaged 27.1 yards per kickoff return to rank eighth in the nation and Jha'Quan Jackson averaged 10.1 yards per punt return to rank 10th in the nation. Tulane's return units combined to outgain their opponents by 478 yards in 2022, with the kick units going +260 yards (754-494) and the punt units posting a margin of +218 yards (227-9) on the season.

Discher arrived at Tulane following a season as the special teams quality control coach for the 14-1 National Champion Georgia Bulldogs in 2021. Georgia ranked first in the SEC and top 25 nationally in punting, averaging 46.8 yards per punt.

Discher was the special teams coordinator and a defensive assistant at Louisiana in 2020. The Ragin' Cajuns finished the season ranked No. 15 in the final AP Poll with help from the No. 2 special teams unit in the nation, according to Phil Steele's Special Teams Efficiency metric. Louisiana finished with a record of 10-1, including a 31-24 win over UTSA in the First Responder Bowl, extending their winning streak to seven games. Discher was named to the American Football Coaches Association's 35 under 35 list while on staff at Louisiana.

Prior to joining the Louisiana staff, Discher spent four seasons as special teams coordinator and tight ends coach at Toledo. From 2016-19, Toledo averaged more than eight wins per season, including an 11-3 season in 2017 that featured a victory in the Mid-American Conference Championship Game over Akron.

Toledo's special teams unit earned nation-wide praise during Discher's tenure, including a No. 1 national ranking in efficiency from Phil Steele in 2018 and No. 2 ranking from ESPN. Toledo led the MAC in return touchdowns that season, taking three punts and one kickoff back for scores, as Discher was nominated for the Broyles Award, given annually to the nation's top assistant coach. He was also named Special Teams Coordinator of the Year by Phil Steele following Toledo's 2018 campaign, after the Rockets led the nation in blocked punts with six.

Discher helped Toledo lead the MAC in punt return average and kickoff coverage in 2017, averaging 15.2 yards per return and 42.5 yards allowed per kickoff. In back-to-back seasons from 2017-18, Toledo ranked in the top 25 nationally in both punt return average and kickoff touchbacks, with the Rockets leading the MAC in the latter category both years.

Throughout his career, Discher has coached three NFL tight ends: Blake Jarwin (Oklahoma State), Mike Roberts (Toledo), and Reggie Gilliam (Toledo).

Prior to his time at Toledo, Discher spent two seasons as a graduate assistant at Oklahoma State from 2014-15. Discher handled a variety of duties, including coaching wide receivers, and tight ends, and serving as special teams coordinator. Oklahoma State's special teams helped the Cowboys secure one of its biggest wins of the 2014 season, a 38-35 overtime win at No. 18 Oklahoma in which Oklahoma State returned a punt 92 yards for a touchdown to tie the game at 35-35.

Discher was named the 2014 FootballScoop Special Teams Coordinator of the Year, becoming FootballScoop's first graduate assistant winner of any Coach of the Year award. Deservedly so, Discher's unit tied for the national lead with six kicks or punts blocked in 2014.

From 2010-13, Discher was at Sam Houston State, where he began as a graduate assistant and eventually was named special teams coordinator. At Sam Houston, Discher was part of teams that won Southland Conference championships in 2011 and 2012. The Bearkats made it to the FCS Playoffs three times in Discher's tenure, advancing to the FCS Championship Game in 2011 and 2012.

A Kansas City, Missouri, native, Discher attended William Jewell (Mo.) College, where he played wide receiver for the Cardinals from 2006-08. He began his coaching career at Kearney (Mo.) High School in 2009, coaching quarterbacks and linebackers for the Class 4 state champions.

Discher earned a bachelor's degree in physical education from William Jewell in 2009 and added a master's degree in exercise science from Sam Houston State in 2012.

Discher and the former Erin Wilson were married in July 2017. He has two stepchildren, Connor and Sydney. The couple has a baby girl, Quinn, who was born in February 2018.

DISCHER YEAR-BY-YEAR

| | | |
|---------|-------------------|---|
| 2023 | Illinois | Special Teams Coordinator/Tight Ends |
| 2022 | Tulane | Special Teams Coordinator |
| 2021 | Georgia | Special Teams Quality Control |
| 2020 | Louisiana | Special Teams Coordinator/Defensive Assistant |
| 2016-19 | Toledo | Special Teams Coordinator/Tight Ends |
| 2014-15 | Oklahoma State | Graduate Assistant |
| 2012-13 | Sam Houston State | Special Teams Coordinator |
| 2010-11 | Sam Houston State | Graduate Assistant |
| 2009 | Kearney HS (Mo.) | Quarterbacks/Linebackers |



ANTONIO FENELUS

DEFENSIVE BACKS

WISCONSIN, 2008

FIRST SEASON AT ILLINOIS

THE FENELUS FILE

HOMETOWN

Boca Raton, Florida

BIRTHDATE

January 15, 1990

FAMILY

Wife: Jordan

Children: Alani, Arrow, Ace, A.J.

EDUCATION

B.S., community and nonprofit leadership – Wisconsin, 2013

M.S., educational leadership policy analysis – Wisconsin, 2018

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Harper (Ill.) College
St. Norbert (Wis.)

Antonio Fenelus was named Illinois' new defensive backs coach on Dec. 30, 2022. A former All-Big Ten first-team selection at Wisconsin, Fenelus spent the 2021 and 2022 seasons as a defensive analyst at LSU.

At Illinois, Fenelus is reunited with Bielema, his college head coach, and defensive coordinator Aaron Henry, his college teammate. A four-year letterwinner at Wisconsin, Fenelus helped Wisconsin to Big Ten titles in 2010 and 2011, including a win in the inaugural Big Ten Football Championship Game in 2011. He was a two-time All-Big Ten first-team selection, earning the honor after 56 tackles, four interceptions, and seven pass breakups as a junior, then again as a senior when he had 51 tackles, 3.0 TFLs, four interceptions, and nine pass breakups.

In his career, Fenelus recorded 155 tackles, 22 passes defended, nine interceptions and three forced fumbles in 52 games (32 starts). As a senior, he earned UW's Jimmy Demetral Team MVP award for defense.

Following his collegiate career, Fenelus signed as an undrafted free agent with the Indianapolis Colts before stints with the Saskatchewan Roughriders of the Canadian Football League and the Arizona Rattlers of the Arena Football League.

Fenelus' coaching career started back at Wisconsin where he was a graduate assistant working with the Badgers' defensive backs from 2015-17 under defensive backs coach Jim Leonhard. He then served as defensive coordinator and defensive backs coach at East Central University (Division II) from 2018-20,

before moving on to LSU for the past two seasons, where he worked directly with the defensive backs.

A native of Boca Raton, Florida, Fenelus was a three-time Academic All-Big Ten honoree and graduated from Wisconsin with a bachelor's degree in community and nonprofit leadership in 2013 and earned a master's degree in educational leadership policy analysis in 2018.

Fenelus and his wife, Jordan, have four children, Alani, Arrow, Ace, and A.J.

FENELUS YEAR-BY-YEAR

| | | |
|---------|--------------|---------------------------------------|
| 2023 | Illinois | Defensive Backs |
| 2021-22 | LSU | Defensive Analyst |
| 2018-20 | East Central | Defensive Coordinator/Defensive Backs |
| 2015-17 | Wisconsin | Graduate Assistant (Defensive Backs) |



GEORGE McDONALD

ASSISTANT HEAD COACH/WIDE RECEIVERS

ILLINOIS, 1999

THIRD SEASON AT ILLINOIS

THE McDONALD FILE

HOMETOWN

Born in Ft. Wayne, Indiana;
Graduate of Buena Park (California) HS

BIRTHDATE

May 10, 1976

FAMILY

Wife: former Heather Anderson
Sons: Roman and Maverick

EDUCATION

B.S., health planning and
administration – Illinois, 1999

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Illinois, 1995-98
(4-year letterman in football/
2-year letterman in track and field)

George McDonald is in his third season as assistant head coach/wide receivers coach at the University of Illinois in 2023. McDonald returned to his alma mater following six seasons at North Carolina State and with experience in three Power-5 conferences and the NFL.

McDonald helped Illinois to one of its best seasons in over a decade in 2022, as the Illini finished the regular season 8-4 and earned a trip to the ReliaQuest Bowl, Illinois' first January bowl game in 15 years. The Illini were ranked in the AP Top 25 for five straight weeks and Illinois was ranked in the College Football Playoff rankings for the first time in school history. McDonald's group was led by All-Big Ten wide receiver Isaiah Williams, who ranked in the top 10 in the Big Ten in receptions per game (2nd, 6.3), receiving yards (7th, 715), receiving touchdowns (10th, 5), and receiving yards per game (10th, 55). Williams was second in the nation in yards after catch (683), according to PFF, and ranked 15th in the nation in receptions per game (6.3). Illinois was the only team in the Big Ten that featured four wide receivers with 30+ receptions.

McDonald helped Illinois to a pair of road ranked wins in his first season back in Champaign in 2021, first a 9 OT thriller at #7 Penn State in the longest game in college football history, then a win at #20 Minnesota. McDonald's wide receiver unit was led by Isaiah Williams, who had 47 receptions for 525 yards and six total touchdowns, after he transitioned from quarterback for the final two practices of Spring Ball. During Illinois' game at #18 Iowa, McDonald served as head coach while Bret Bielema was out due to COVID-19 protocols.

McDonald began his coaching career as a graduate assistant at Ball State before earning his first full-time position at Northern Illinois from 2001-03. While in DeKalb, he coached First-Team All-MAC receiver, and current Minnesota head

coach, P.J. Fleck, second-team All-American Dan Sheldon, and All-American Darrell "The Thrill" Hill.

After a season at Stanford as tight ends coach in 2004 where he coached Mackey Award finalist Alex Smith, McDonald followed Bill Cubit from the Cardinal to Western Michigan as offensive coordinator and wide receivers coach of the Broncos. Cubit later was interim head coach at Illinois in 2015. One of his players at WMU was 2005 MAC Player of the Year, Biletnikoff Award semifinalist and All-American Greg Jennings. McDonald then took a position on former Illini tight end Tim Brewster's first staff at Minnesota from 2007-08, where he coached First-Team All-Big Ten performer Eric Decker.

McDonald made the jump to the NFL's Cleveland Browns from 2009-10 as wide receivers coach under Eric Mangini. He then was named wide receivers coach/passing game coordinator at the University of Miami from 2011-12 under Al Golden. He was actually named the receivers coach at Arkansas under then-new head coach Bret Bielema in December 2012, but was offered the offensive coordinator position at Syracuse under former Illini assistant coach Scott Shafer a few weeks later where he spent the 2013-14 seasons. His six-year stint at NC State began in 2015 under former Bielema assistant Dave Doeren as wide receivers coach and has watched his role grow to passing game coordinator, co-offensive coordinator, and most recently as assistant head coach of the Wolfpack. Under McDonald's tutelage, for the first time in ACC history, NC State had a pair of wide receivers named to the All-ACC first-team in 2018 when Kelvin Harmon and Jakobi Meyers both topped 1,000 receiving yards. During his career, he has mentored 27 players who have gone on to play in the NFL.

McDonald was a four-year letterwinner at receiver for the Fighting Illini and completed his Illinois football career with 57 receptions for 589 yards and four touchdowns. He led the Big Ten in kickoff return yardage in 1996 (736) while returning 57 kickoffs for 1,276 yards (22.4 avg.) during his career. McDonald also ran track his freshman and senior years, earning All-Big Ten honors his senior year when he set an Illinois record with a time of 6.74 in the 60 meters, a mark that still ranks seventh on the Illini top times list, to win the 1999 Big Ten Indoor Championships 60m title.

Born in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, McDonald graduated from Buena Park High School in California before his collegiate career at Illinois where he played for Lou Tepper and Ron Turner, and was a teammate of Fighting Illini Athletics Director Josh Whitman. He earned his bachelor's degree in health planning and administration from Illinois in 1999. He and his wife, the former Heather Anderson, have two sons, Roman and Maverick.

McDONALD YEAR-BY-YEAR

| | | |
|---------|----------------------|--|
| 2021- | Illinois | Assistant Head Coach/Wide Receivers |
| 2020 | North Carolina State | WR/Pass Game Coordinator/Recruiting Coordinator/Asst. HC |
| 2019 | North Carolina State | WR/Co-Offensive Coordinator/Recruiting Coordinator |
| 2017-18 | North Carolina State | WR/Passing Game Coordinator |
| 2015-16 | North Carolina State | Wide Receivers |
| 2013-14 | Syracuse | Offensive Coordinator/Asst. Head Coach |
| 2011-12 | Miami (Fla.) | Wide Receivers/Passing Game Coordinator |
| 2009-10 | Cleveland Browns | Wide Receivers |
| 2007-08 | Minnesota | Wide Receivers |
| 2005-06 | Western Michigan | Offensive Coordinator/Wide Receivers |
| 2004 | Stanford | Tight Ends |
| 2001-03 | Northern Illinois | Wide Receivers |
| 2000 | Ball State | Graduate Assistant |



BART MILLER

OFFENSIVE LINE

NEW MEXICO, 2007

THIRD SEASON AT ILLINOIS

Bart Miller is in his third season as offensive line coach at the University of Illinois in 2023. Miller joined Bret Bielema's coaching staff for the second time and came to Champaign-Urbana after two successful seasons as offensive line coach and offensive run-game coordinator at Wyoming.

Miller helped Illinois to one of its best seasons in over a decade in 2022, as the Illini finished the regular season 8-4 and earned a trip to the ReliaQuest Bowl. Illinois' first January bowl game in 15 years. The Illini were ranked in the AP Top 25 for five straight weeks and in the College Football Playoff rankings for the first time in school history. Miller's group was one of the most dominant for the Illini, as Illinois' offensive line was named a Joe Moore Award semifinalist for the first time in program history. All five starters on the offensive line earned All-Big Ten honors, and RT Alex Palczewski was the first tackle in Illinois history to earn a first-team All-American selection. The offensive line also paved the way for running back Chase Brown, who ranked fourth in the nation in rushing and was Illinois' first ever Doak Walker Award finalist.

Miller coached one of the most veteran offensive line groups in the nation in 2021, including All-Big Ten performers Doug Kramer (second team), Vederian Lowe (honorable mention), and Alex Palczewski (honorable mention). The group paved the way for Chase Brown to be Illinois' 14th 1,000-yard rusher in program history and pull off ranked road wins at #7 Penn State and #20 Minnesota. The season-defining win at Penn State was fueled by the offensive line, as Brown rushed for 223 yards - the most ever by an opponent at Beaver Stadium - and freshman Josh McCray had another 142 rushing yards, the most ever by an Illini true freshman against a top-25 opponent. For the season, the Illini run blocking was graded #14 in the nation according to Pro Football Focus. Following the season, Lowe (Vikings) and Kramer (Bears) were both selected in the sixth round of the 2022 NFL Draft.

Miller's first full-time coaching position came as the offensive line coach at Wisconsin under Bielema in 2012. He took over the unit in September of 2012 after serving as a graduate assistant coach the previous season at UW. The Badgers ranked No. 13 in the nation in rushing offense in 2012, averaging 236.4 rushing yards per game. Wisconsin won its third straight Big Ten Championship that season, defeating Nebraska 70-31 in the Big Ten Championship Game, and played in a third consecutive Rose Bowl.

At Wisconsin, Miller coached All-Big Ten first team selections Travis Frederick (center) and Rick Wagner (left tackle) in 2012. Frederick earned All-America first team honors from Pro Football Weekly and went on to be the first-round selection of the Dallas Cowboys in the NFL Draft. Wagner received All-America second team recognition from CBS and was a fifth-round selection by the Baltimore Ravens. A junior on that offensive line, guard Ryan Groy, went on to earn All-Big Ten first team honors in 2013 and was a third team Associated Press All-American in 2013. He also went on to play in the NFL. Wisconsin's offensive line unit blocked for running back Montee Ball, the 2012 Doak Walker Award Winner, a two-time (2011 and '12) consensus All-American, the 2012 Big Ten Offensive Player of the Year, and a 2012 Heisman Trophy finalist.

Miller joined the Wyoming Cowboys staff in 2019 as offensive line coach and was promoted to Offensive Run-Game Coordinator in addition to his offensive line duties for the 2020 season. In his first season coaching the offensive line, the Cowboys were named to the 2019 Joe Moore Award Honor Roll, honoring the top collegiate offensive line unit in the nation. Wyoming's offensive line also paved the way for the Cowboys to rank No. 2 in the Mountain West Conference and No. 23 in the nation in rushing offense

in 2019, averaging 214.8 rushing yards per game, and the Cowboys produced the conference's leading rusher in back-to-back seasons in 2019 and 2020.

Miller coached the offensive line at Ohio University in 2018 when the Bobcats posted a 9-4 overall record, including a 6-2 mark in the Mid-American Conference to place second in the East Division. Ohio earned a berth in the DXL Frisco Bowl in Frisco, Texas, where the Bobcats defeated San Diego State, 27-0.

Ohio ranked No. 9 in the nation in rushing offense in 2018, averaging 258.5 yards per game. The Bobcats ranked No. 12 in the NCAA in scoring offense (40.1 points per game) and were No. 16 in total offense (466.8 yards per game). The offensive unit also ranked No. 8 in the nation in third-down conversions (48.7%), was No. 9 in time of possession (33:18), tied for 17th in first downs gained (318), and ranked No. 23 in red-zone offense as it converted 88.9% of its red-zone opportunities into scores.

While coaching the tight ends at Air Force in 2017, Miller was part of an offensive unit that averaged 417.5 yards of total offense per game to rank No. 3 in the Mountain West and averaged 307.4 rushing yards per game to lead the league and rank No. 4 in the nation. The Falcons also averaged 31.4 points per game to rank No. 3 in the conference. Miller's tight end unit averaged 19.5 yards per reception.

Miller coached the offensive line at Minnesota during the 2016 season when the Golden Gophers enjoyed one of their most successful seasons in recent history, winning nine games (9-4 record) for the first time since 2003 and placing fourth in the Big Ten West Division. The Gophers earned a bid to the 2016 Holiday Bowl, where they defeated Washington State, 17-12. Miller coached offensive lineman Jonah Pirsig, who earned All-Big Ten third team honors from both the coaches and the media. Miller's offensive line helped pave the way for the rushing tandem of Rodney Smith (1,158 yards, 16 touchdowns) and Shannon Brooks (670 yards). Minnesota averaged 183.6 rushing yards per game to rank No. 5 in the Big Ten, and the Gophers ranked No. 19 in the nation in fewest sacks allowed (1.31 per game).

Prior to Minnesota, Miller coached the offensive line at Florida Atlantic for the 2014 and '15 seasons. Miller's offensive line at Florida Atlantic allowed only 21 sacks in 869 plays in 2014, and only 26 sacks in 887 opportunities in 2015. In the four seasons before Miller arrived, the Owls had allowed an average of 31 sacks per season.

As the offensive line coach at New Mexico State for the 2013 season, Miller helped create a new offensive system for the Aggies which in the last five games of the season averaged 27.4 points per game and 165.2 rushing yards per game. He took over a line that had allowed 45 sacks the year prior to his arrival and improved that protection by more than half to only 20 sacks allowed in more than 400 plays in 2013.

In 2011 as a graduate assistant in his first stint with Bielema, Miller helped coach a Wisconsin team that ranked No. 11 in the country in rushing offense, averaging 235.6 rushing yards, working directly with the offensive line and tight ends. The 2011 offense averaged 44.1 points per game, sixth in the nation. Wisconsin won the Inaugural Big Ten Championship Game over Michigan State, captured its second consecutive Big Ten title, and appeared in the Rose Bowl for the second straight season. Miller helped coach First Team All-Big Ten honorees Peter Konz (center), Josh Oglesby (tackle), and Kevin Zeitler (guard). Konz and Zeitler were All-America first-team selections by both the American Football Coaches Association (AFCA) and Pro Football Weekly. Zeitler was a first-round selection by the Cincinnati Bengals in the NFL Draft, and Konz was taken in the second round by the Atlanta Falcons. That offensive line aided in the success of running back Ball and All-Big Ten first team quarterback Russell Wilson.

Miller began his coaching career as a graduate assistant in 2010 at New Mexico State, where he worked primarily with the offensive line.

As a player at the University of New Mexico from 2003-07 under head coach Rocky Long, Miller was a starter and two-year letterman on the offensive line. He earned Academic All-Mountain West honors as a junior and senior. The Lobos had a 1,000-yard rusher, two 1,000-yard receivers, and a 3,000-yard passer in 2007. UNM appeared in four bowl games during Miller's career: the 2003 Las Vegas Bowl, 2004 Emerald Bowl, and 2006 and '07 New Mexico Bowls. New Mexico won the 2007 New Mexico Bowl over Nevada by a score of 23-0.

Miller played football and graduated from Elk Grove High School in the Chicago area prior to completing his bachelor's degree in organizational communication from New Mexico in 2007. He obtained a master's degree in education from New Mexico State in 2011. Originally from Omaha, Nebraska, Miller and his wife, Amy, have two sons, Barrett and Gunner.

THE MILLER FILE

HOMETOWN

Omaha, Nebraska

BIRTHDATE

May 6, 1985

FAMILY

Wife: Amy

Sons: Barrett and Gunner

EDUCATION

B.A., business communications –
New Mexico, 2007

M.S., education – New Mexico State,
2011

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

New Mexico, 2004-07

MILLER YEAR-BY-YEAR

| | | |
|---------|------------------|---|
| 2021- | Illinois | Offensive Line |
| 2020 | Wyoming | Offensive Run-Game Coordinator/Offensive Line |
| 2019 | Wyoming | Offensive Line |
| 2018 | Ohio | Offensive Line |
| 2017 | Air Force | Tight Ends |
| 2016 | Minnesota | Offensive Line |
| 2014-15 | Florida Atlantic | Offensive Line |
| 2013 | New Mexico State | Offensive Line |
| 2012 | Wisconsin | Offensive Line |
| 2011 | Wisconsin | Graduate Assistant |
| 2010 | New Mexico State | Graduate Assistant |



THAD WARD

RUNNING BACKS COACH

UCF, 2001

FOURTH SEASON AT ILLINOIS (SECOND STINT)

Thad Ward is in his fourth season and second stint as running backs coach at Illinois in 2023. Ward brought over 20 years of college football coaching experience back to Champaign, including three years as running backs coach at Illinois from 2016-18, when he was rehired in January 2023.

Ward rejoins the Fighting Illini from Kansas State, where he was the wide receivers coach in 2022 for K-State's Big XII championship team. Kansas State went 10-4, including a 31-28 win over eventual national runner-up TCU in the Big XII title game, and earned a spot in the New Year's Six (Sugar Bowl) before finishing the season ranked No. 14 in the final AP Top 25. Ward's wideouts were the top three receivers for the Wildcats, combining for 139 receptions for 1,768 and 11 receiving touchdowns, and two were signed to NFL clubs following the season - Malik Knowles (Minnesota) and Kade Warner (Tampa Bay).

Ward has deep roots in the state of Illinois with over a decade of coaching experience in the state. He first spent time in the state of Illinois for six seasons at Western Illinois (2005-10), then for three seasons at both Northern Illinois (2013-15) and Illinois (2016-18).

Between his last stop at Illinois and his previous stop at Kansas State, Ward spent three seasons at Temple (2019-21), where he coached the Owls' wide receivers and served as the pass game coordinator. He coached Jadan Blue to a pair of All-AAC honors, including the 2019 season when Blue set the school's all-time record for receptions (95) and yards (1,067), becoming the first player in school history to top the 1,000-yard receiving mark. Opposite Blue, Branden Mack caught 59 passes for 904 yards and seven touchdowns, each of which ranked among the best in school history. In 2021, Ward's top three wideouts combined for 152 catches for 1,568 yards and 10 touchdowns.

Ward went to Temple following three seasons as the running backs coach for the Fighting Illini. Under the direction of Ward in 2018, running back Reggie Corbin rushed for 1,085 yards and nine touchdowns on 8.5 yards per carry, the third-best mark in the

nation. Corbin was the 13th Illini in program history to reach 1,000 rushing yards in a single season and tied with Buddy Young's 1944 season for the most 70+-yard runs in Illinois single-season history with four.

In 2017, Ward coached freshman Mike Epstein, who was the fifth true freshman in program history to lead the team in rushing yards and also tied for the team lead with four total touchdowns. In his first season with the Fighting Illini in 2016, Ward helped junior running back Kendrick Foster have a breakout year, finishing third in the Big Ten in yards per carry (5.7) and seventh in all-purpose yards per game (110.7). Corbin also had a big season, ranking 14th in the nation in yards per carry among freshmen (6.1), the best mark by an Illini freshman since at least 2000.

Ward went to Illinois following three seasons coaching the wide receivers at Northern Illinois from 2013-15, helping the Huskies to a 31-11 record and three bowl appearances. His success was highlighted by two-time All-MAC honoree Da'Ron Brown, who was selected by the Kansas City Chiefs in the 2015 NFL Draft. Brown caught 68 passes for 1,065 yards and six touchdowns to lead the Huskies to the 2014 MAC Championship. He also helped develop Kenny Golladay, drafted by the Detroit Lions in the third round in 2017, and Tommylee Lewis, a 2013 All-American who went on to become an undrafted free agent signed by the New Orleans Saints in 2016.

Ward spent the 2012 season at Western Michigan as he developed wide receiver Jaime Wilson into the MAC Freshman of the Year thanks to 67 receptions for 792 yards and six touchdowns.

Prior to WMU, Ward spent one season at Gardner-Webb as the wide receivers coach/passing game coordinator in 2011, which followed six seasons as the running backs coach at Western Illinois from 2005-10. During his time in Macomb, Ward coached three players to All-America status in Travis Glasford (2005), Herb Donaldson (2007 and 2008) and Dre Gibbs (2008). In his final season at WIU, Ward helped the Leathernecks finish with an 8-5 record, which included a victory in the first round of the FCS Playoffs.

Ward began his coaching career as a graduate assistant at Florida A&M before spending two years coaching at Tallahassee Rickards High School in 2003 and 2004, the final year serving as the interim head coach.

Ward played three seasons at UCF from 1999-2001. As a senior, he was the team's second-leading receiver for 44 catches for 446 yards and a touchdown. In 1999, Ward returned a pair of blocked punts for touchdowns, one at Georgia and the other at Middle Tennessee. He went to UCF after spending two seasons at Coffeyville Community College (Kan.).

Ward earned his bachelor's degree in criminal justice at UCF in 2001. He and his wife, Jocelyn, have two daughters, Jayda and Journie, and one son, Thaddaeus, Jr.

THE WARD FILE

HOMETOWN

Tallahassee, Florida

BIRTHDATE

September 17, 1978

FAMILY

Wife: Jocelyn

Son: Thaddaeus Jr.

Daughters: Jayda, Journie

EDUCATION

B.S., criminal justice – UCF, 2001

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

UCF, 1999-2001

Coffeyville Community College,
1997-98

WARD YEAR-BY-YEAR

| | | |
|---------|--------------------------------|---|
| 2023 | Illinois | Running Backs |
| 2022 | Kansas State | Wide Receivers |
| 2019-21 | Temple | Wide Receivers/Pass Game Coordinator |
| 2016-18 | Illinois | Running Backs |
| 2013-15 | Northern Illinois | Wide Receivers |
| 2012 | Western Michigan | Wide Receivers |
| 2011 | Gardner-Webb | Wide Receivers/Pass Game Coordinator |
| 2005-10 | Western Illinois | Running Backs |
| 2003-04 | Tallahassee Rickards HS (Fla.) | Wide Receivers/Defensive Backs/Interim Head Coach |
| 2002 | Florida A&M | Graduate Assistant |



THE STAFF



VINCENT JEFFERIES JR.

OFFENSIVE GRADUATE ASSISTANT

FLORIDA A&M, 2017

SECOND SEASON AT ILLINOIS

Vincent Jefferies Jr. is in his second season as an offensive graduate assistant at Illinois in 2023. Jefferies spent the 2021 season at North Carolina State, working as an offensive assistant before coming to Illinois for the 2022 season.

Jefferies helped Illinois to an 8-5 record in 2022. The Illini were ranked in the AP Top 25 for five straight weeks, reaching as high as No. 14, and were ranked in the College Football Playoff rankings for the first time in school history. Under the direction of first-year offensive coordinator Barry Lunney, the Illinois offense made a leap forward. Illinois' passing offense was the most improved in the nation, as the Illini ranked third in the nation in completion percentage (69.6%), a rise of 122 spots in the national rankings, and All-Big Ten wide receiver Isaiah Williams ranked in the top 10 in the Big Ten in receptions per game (2nd, 6.3), receiving yards (7th, 715), receiving touchdowns (10th, 5), and receiving yards per game (10th, 55).

Jefferies started his coaching career at the high school level at Garner Magnet in his hometown of Garner, North Carolina. At Garner, Jefferies was the quarterbacks coach and passing game coordinator.

Jefferies finished his playing career at Florida A&M in 2016-17. He was a quarterback and graduated from Florida A&M with a degree in psychology. After graduation, Jefferies participated in the Historically Black Colleges and Universities Spirit of America Bowl where he scored the game winning touchdown.

He also played one season at Santa Rosa Junior College, where he threw for 1,920 yards and 12 touchdowns in 10 games.

Jefferies graduated from Florida A&M's College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities with an undergraduate degree in psychology and a cumulative GPA of 3.5. He was a semifinalist for the 2017 William V. Campbell Trophy, the most prestigious academic award in college football.

THE JEFFERIES FILE

HOMETOWN

Garner, North Carolina

EDUCATION

B.S., psychology – Florida A&M, 2017

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Santa Rosa Junior College, 2015
Florida A&M, 2016-17



TYLER KING

OFFENSIVE GRADUATE ASSISTANT

BOWLING GREEN, 2018

SECOND SEASON AT ILLINOIS

Tyler King is in his second season as an offensive graduate assistant at Illinois in 2023. King spent the 2021 season as an offensive analyst at Northern Colorado, before joining the Fighting Illini for the 2022 season.

King helped Illinois to an 8-5 record in 2022, the Illini's first 8-win season in 15 years. Illinois ranked in the AP Top 25 for five straight weeks, reaching as high as No. 14, and were ranked in the College Football Playoff rankings for the first time in school history. Under the direction of first-year offensive coordinator Barry Lunney, the Illinois offense made a leap forward behind All-American running back Chase Brown, who finished fourth in the nation in rushing, quarterback Tommy DeVito, who ranked third in the nation in completion percentage, and the Illini's first offensive line that earned Joe Moore Award finalist status.

King played college football at Bowling Green before starting his coaching career. He spent two seasons as an offensive line graduate assistant at Ottawa University (NAIA) in 2018 and 2019 following his playing career, then spent the 2020-21 season as an offensive quality control coach at Fordham.

King is a member of the American Football Coaches Association Minority Issues Committee.

King is a native of Lorain, Ohio, and graduate of St. Edward High School. He graduated from Bowling Green State University with a bachelor's degree in business administration and management, before finishing a master's degree in leadership from Ottawa University.

THE KING FILE

HOMETOWN

Lorain, Ohio

EDUCATION

B.S., business administration and management – Bowling Green, 2018

M.S., leadership – Ottawa, 2020

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Bowling Green, 2016-18



GRANT MORGAN

DEFENSIVE GRADUATE ASSISTANT

ARKANSAS, 2019

FIRST SEASON AT ILLINOIS

Former Arkansas All-American Grant Morgan joined the Illinois staff as a graduate assistant coach in 2023. Morgan enters his first year of coaching after finishing his playing career at Arkansas in 2021 and spending the 2022 season with the Jacksonville Jaguars.

Morgan had a historic career at Arkansas, first joining the Razorbacks as a walk-on before becoming an All-American and Burlsworth Trophy winner as the nation's best former walk-on. He totaled 313 tackles and 23.5 tackles for loss during 58 career games, and left Arkansas with two degrees. Morgan was inducted to the NFF National Scholar-Athletes Hall of Fame in 2021 and was a finalist for the prestigious Campbell Trophy.

Morgan started 22 games over his last two seasons in 2020 and 2021, while also serving as a captain during both seasons. He earned All-SEC first-team honors and Walter Camp All-America second-team honors in 2020 after 111 tackles during the COVID season. He again eclipsed the 100-tackle mark in 2021 with 101 to lead Arkansas to nine wins, including an Outback Bowl victory over Penn State.

Morgan started his career at Arkansas playing for then-head coach Bret Bielema for his first two seasons with the Razorbacks.

Morgan earned an undergraduate degree in Kinesiology at Arkansas in 2019 and a master's degree in operations management in 2021. He and his wife, Sydnie, married in 2020.

THE MORGAN FILE

HOMETOWN

Fayetteville, Arkansas

EDUCATION

B.S., Kinesiology – Arkansas, 2019

M.S., operations management – Arkansas, 2021

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Arkansas, 2016-21



ALEX PANOS

DEFENSIVE1 GRADUATE ASSISTANT

ST. THOMAS, 2022

SECOND SEASON AT ILLINOIS

Alex Panos is in his second season at Illinois and his first as a defensive graduate assistant in 2023. Panos spent the 2022 season in a defensive quality control role for the Illini.

Panos helped Illinois to an 8-5 record in 2022 during his first season in Champaign. The Illini were ranked in the AP Top 25 for five straight weeks, reaching as high as No. 14, and were ranked in the College Football Playoff rankings for the first time in school history. Illinois led the nation in scoring defense (12.8) for the first time in program history, led the nation and set a school record in interceptions (24), and ranked third in total defense (273.5). The Illini also ranked in the top 10 in the nation in total defense (3rd, 273.5), rushing defense (10th, 99.8), fewest first downs allowed (7th, 199), and third down defense (9th, 30.1%).

Panos played college football at St. Thomas (Minn.), where he was a defensive lineman. He was a member of the prestigious NFF Hampshire Honor Society as a senior in 2021. He graduated with a degree in communication and journalism.

Panos is a native of Hartland, Wisconsin, where he helped Arrowhead High School to three state title game appearances.

Panos' father, Joe, was an All-American at the University of Wisconsin and captain of the 1993-94 Rose Bowl team. His brother, George, played college football at Wisconsin.

THE PANOS FILE

HOMETOWN

Hartland, Wisconsin

EDUCATION

B.S., communication and journalism – St. Thomas, 2022



JIM LEONHARD

SENIOR FOOTBALL ANALYST

WISCONSIN, 2006

FIRST SEASON AT ILLINOIS

Jim Leonhard was named Senior Football Analyst for the Illinois football program in July 2023. Leonhard joined the Illini from Wisconsin, where he spent the previous seven seasons on staff, including serving as interim head coach for seven games in 2022.

Leonhard spent six seasons as Wisconsin's defensive coordinator from 2017-22, including last year while serving as interim head coach. He started his coaching career at Wisconsin in 2016 after a 10-year NFL career and one of the most successful playing careers in Wisconsin history. A 2015 inductee to the Wisconsin Athletic Hall of Fame, Leonhard's long list of accolades includes being a three-time first-team All-American, three-time All-Big Ten first-team selection, two-time Academic All-American, and two-time team captain.

Leonhard became a defensive coordinator less than a year after starting his coaching career and went on to be named a finalist for the Broyles Award, presented to the nation's top assistant coach, in his first season running Wisconsin's defense in 2017.

Leonhard's Wisconsin defenses were one of the nation's most complete and high-performing units during his time in Madison. In Leonhard's first five seasons as defensive coordinator, Wisconsin ranked among the nation's top five in total defense and top 10 in scoring defense four times. During that time, the Badgers ranked third in scoring defense (17.3 points per game), first in total yards allowed (284.8 yards per game), first in pass efficiency defense (110.5), third in rushing defense (103.4 ypg) and first in opponents' third down conversions (30.5%). Wisconsin forced 112 turnovers over that span, tied for fourth-most among Power-5 programs.

Leonhard assumed interim head coaching duties on Oct. 2, 2022 after Wisconsin started 2-3 in the 2022 season. As interim head coach, Leonhard guided UW to a 4-3 record, propelling the Badgers to a bowl-eligible 6-6 regular-season record. Leonhard's Badgers tallied Big Ten wins over Northwestern, Purdue, Maryland, and Nebraska.

Leonhard and his wife, Katie, have three sons, Reese, Graham and Pierce.

THE LEONHARD FILE

HOMETOWN

Tony, Wisconsin

EDUCATION

B.S., education – Wisconsin, 2006

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Wisconsin, 2001-04

Buffalo Bills, 2005-07

Baltimore Ravens, 2008

New York Jets, 2009-11

Denver Broncos, 2012

Buffalo Bills, 2013

Cleveland Browns, 2014



BEN MILLER

HEAD COACH ANALYST

AIR FORCE ACADEMY, 2002

THIRD SEASON AT ILLINOIS

Ben Miller transitioned to Illinois' head coach analyst in 2023 after previously serving as the Fighting Illini's special teams coordinator and tight ends coach. Miller coached the Illini's special teams and tight ends in 2021, before going on health-related leave during the 2022 season due to being diagnosed with colon cancer in February 2022. He stayed in communication with the Illinois staff and student-athletes as much as possible in 2022, while continuing his medical plan and treatments.

Miller coached one of the top special teams units in the nation and one of the best tight end duos in the Big Ten in 2021, helping Illinois to a 5-7 record and ranked wins over #7 Penn State and #20 Minnesota. Illinois' veteran special teams unit, led by All-Big Ten performers K James McCourt and P Blake Hayes, helped the Illini finish #1 in the nation in special teams, according to ESPN's SP+ rating. McCourt tied a program record with four 50+-yard field goals and two-time Big Ten Special Teams Player of the Week Hayes left Champaign with nearly every punting record in Illini history,

including landing half of his punts inside the 20 for an Illini-record 34 punts inside the 20.

Illinois' tight end duo of Luke Ford and Daniel Barker was a highlight of the Illini offense in 2021. The combo helped Illinois produce the 14th 1,000-yard rusher in program history in Chase Brown, and Barker was second on the team with five touchdowns and broke Illinois' career receiving touchdowns record by a tight end with 11.

A 2002 Air Force Academy graduate, Miller spent the 2006 season as the offensive graduate assistant at Illinois under Ron Zook before returning to the Academy. He spent his first five seasons at Air Force coaching the tight ends, then nine seasons as the running backs coach. Miller also had 13 years coaching the Air Force specialists, including the previous 10 as the special teams coordinator before arriving for his second stint in Champaign.

Miller is married to the former Meghan Carney. The couple has two daughters, Quinn and Keeley, and a son, Lochlan.

THE MILLER FILE

HOMETOWN

Cleveland, Ohio

FAMILY

Wife: Meghan

Son: Lochlan

Daughters: Quinn and Keeley

EDUCATION

B.S., management – Air Force Academy, 2002

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Air Force, 1998-2001



ADAM KLEFFNER

OFFENSIVE ANALYST

PORTLAND STATE, 2011

SECOND SEASON AT ILLINOIS

Adam Kleffner is in his third season as an offensive analyst at Illinois in 2023. He joined the Fighting Illini from Stephen F. Austin, where he spent the 2020 season as an offensive assistant.

Kleffner helped Illinois to an 8-5 record in 2022, the Illini's first 8-win season in 15 years. Illinois ranked in the AP Top 25 for five straight weeks, reaching as high as No. 14, and were ranked in the College Football Playoff rankings for the first time in school history. The offensive line was one of the most dominant position groups for the Illini, as Illinois' offensive line was named a Joe Moore Award finalist for the first time in program history. All five starters on the offensive line earned All-Big Ten honors and RT Alex Palczewski was the first tackle in Illinois history to earn a first-team All-American selection. The offensive line also paved the way for running back Chase Brown, who ranked fourth in the nation in rushing and was Illinois' first ever Doak Walker Award finalist.

Kleffner helped coach one of the most veteran offensive line groups in the nation in 2021, including All-Big Ten performers Doug Kramer (second team), Vederian Lowe

(honorable mention), and Alex Palczewski (honorable mention). The group paved the way for Chase Brown to be Illinois' 14th 1,000-yard rusher in program history and pull off ranked road wins at #7 Penn State and #20 Minnesota. The season-defining win at Penn State was fueled by the offensive line, as Brown rushed for 223 yards - the most ever by an opponent at Beaver Stadium - and freshman Josh McCray had another 142 rushing yards, the most ever by an Illini true freshman against a top-25 opponent. For the season, the Illini run blocking was graded #14 in the nation according to Pro Football Focus.

Kleffner lettered four years at Portland state (2008-11) and made 20 career starts on the offensive line with the Vikings, including most of his final two seasons. He earned a degree in business management at Portland State.

THE KLEFFNER FILE

HOMETOWN

Portland, Oregon

EDUCATION

B.S., business management –
Portland State, 2011

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Portland State, 2008-11



KEVIN LAEONE RICHARDSON II

DEFENSIVE ANALYST

ARKANSAS, 2019

SECOND SEASON AT ILLINOIS (SECOND STINT)

Kevin Richardson is in his first season as a defensive analyst for the Illinois football program and his second stint with the team. Richardson rejoined the Illini from Long Island University, where he spent the 2022 season as defensive backs coach.

Richardson led Long Island's defensive backs to a substantial rise in 2022. Long Island led the NEC in interceptions with 13, including 11 by defensive backs. Long Island defensive back Victor Nelson Jr. was named an All-American after ranking second in the FCS with six interceptions.

Richardson previously served as a defensive graduate assistant at Illinois in 2021. Prior to his first year at Illinois, he coached defensive backs at Northeastern State (Division II) in 2020 and served as a graduate assistant at MidAmerica Nazarene (NAIA) in 2019.

Richardson helped coach one of the best defensive turnarounds in the nation in 2021, helping Illinois to a 5-7 record and ranked wins over #7 Penn State and #20 Minnesota. Illinois' scoring defense (31st from 97th), third down defense (31st from 89th), and total defense (52nd from 114th) all improved more than 50 spots in the nation rankings from 2020. The Illini made massive gains in the Big Ten defensive

rankings, as well, jumping 9+ spots in scoring defense (4th from 14th), touchdowns allowed (t-3rd from 14th), yards allowed per game (5th from 14th), and passing yards allowed per game (1st from 10th).

Richardson is reunited with his college head coach Bret Bielema, who he played for at Arkansas. Richardson played in 48 games for Arkansas from 2013-18 at defensive back, recording 125 tackles, four interceptions, and eight pass breakups, while also serving as a team captain and earning Phil Steele All-SEC third team honors in 2017. The former walk-on's biggest moments included a 22-yard fumble return for a touchdown against Ole Miss in 2017 with six minutes left in the fourth quarter to help Arkansas win 38-37, and interceptions against SEC standouts Jalen Hurts (Alabama) and Jarrett Stidham (Auburn). Following his Arkansas career, Richardson signed with the CFL's Hamilton Tiger-Cats before beginning his coaching career.

Richardson graduated from the University of Arkansas with a degree in Sociology in 2017. He is the son of Kevin and Sancí Richardson and has five siblings: Airic Hughes, Chanel Richardson, Sacha Richardson, Keilen Richardson and Zylah Richardson.

THE RICHARDSON FILE

HOMETOWN

Jacksonville, Arkansas

EDUCATION

B.S., Sociology – Arkansas, 2017

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Arkansas, 2013-18



THE HURD FILE

HOMETOWN

Killeen, Texas

EDUCATION

B.S., criminal justice – North Texas, 2004

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

North Texas, 2000-03

CHRIS HURD

SPECIAL TEAMS ANALYST

NORTH TEXAS, 2004

FIRST SEASON AT ILLINOIS

Chris Hurd joined the Illinois staff in 2023 as the special teams analyst. He brings 19 years of collegiate coach experience to Champaign, including eight years as a special teams coordinator.

Hurd came to Illinois from Arkansas, where he spent the 2022 season as a special teams analyst. He had spent the previous eight seasons as a special teams coordinator with stints at Akron (2019-21), Chattanooga (2017-18), and Florida Atlantic (2014-16).

Hurd worked under head coach Tom Arth at both Akron and Chattanooga, following him to Akron after two seasons as the Chattanooga special teams coordinator and running backs coach. At Chattanooga, Hurd helped freshman Brandon Dowdell lead the SoCon and finish No. 6 in the FCS with 12.6 yards per punt return, while junior RB Tyrell Price earned 2018 All-Southern Conference second-team honors.

Hurd's first coordinator job came at Florida Atlantic, where he also coached tight ends for three seasons. He had an immediate impact in both areas, as the tight ends caught six touchdowns in his first season, while Lucky Whitehead finished in the top-10 in the nation in kick return yards and Dalton Schomp averaged 45.4 yards per punt.

The 2015 special teams unit at FAU excelled in its second season under Hurd's direction. Most notably, Schomp led the nation with 48.0 yards per punt. Nearly half of Schomp's punts (22-of-45, 49%) were for 50 yards or more and he

pinned 18 inside the 20. FAU tight ends also emerged as a solid unit in 2015 with Nate Terry leading Florida Atlantic with four touchdown receptions.

In 2016, Kerrith Whyte's 1,002 kick return yards ranked third in the nation, as the all-conference performer averaged 25.7 yards per return. Schomp averaged 42.6 yards per punt and earned honorable mention all-conference recognition. Tight end Harrison Bryant emerged as a significant contributor with six catches for 63 yards and a spot on the Conference USA All-Freshman Team.

Prior to FAU, Hurd was on staff as special teams quality control with Arkansas in 2013 as part of Bret Bielema's first staff with the Razorbacks. He joined Bielema after two years at Tennessee, where he served in special teams quality control role with the Volunteers. Hurd was the defensive coordinator at Cisco College from 2007-10 and was a graduate assistant at North Texas from 2004-06.

Hurd earned a bachelor's degree in history with a minor in criminal justice from the University of North Texas in 2004. He was a walk-on on the football team, lettering four seasons from 2000-03, earning a scholarship, and becoming a two-year starter for the three-time Sun Belt Champions (2001-03). The 2002 and 2003 recipient of the team's Byron Gross Award as the team's best linebacker, Hurd was 2003 Sun Belt Defensive Player of the Year.

A native of Killeen, Texas, Hurd and his wife, Emily, have a son, Ryker, and three daughters, Landrie, Brynn, and Bennett.



THE CAMERON FILE

HOMETOWN

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

EDUCATION

B.S. – New Mexico Highlands, 2019

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Indiana, 2014-16
New Mexico Highlands, 2017-18

DANNY CAMERON

OFFENSIVE QUALITY CONTROL

NEW MEXICO HIGHLANDS, 2019

SECOND SEASON AT ILLINOIS

Danny Cameron is in his second season in an offensive quality control role at Illinois in 2023. Cameron came to Champaign from McNeese State, where he was a defensive analyst in 2021.

Cameron helped Illinois to an 8-5 record in 2022, the Illini's first 8-win season in 15 years. Illinois ranked in the AP Top 25 for five straight weeks, reaching as high as No. 14, and were ranked in the College Football Playoff rankings for the first time in school history. Under the direction first-year offensive coordinator Barry Lunney, the Illinois offense made a leap forward behind All-American running back Chase Brown, who finished fourth in the nation in rushing. Brown rushed for 1,643 yards and 10 rushing touchdowns on his way to becoming Illinois' first ever Doak Walker Award finalist.

Cameron is a former Big Ten player at Indiana, where he was a quarterback for three seasons. He finished his playing career at New Mexico Highlands of Division II as a two-year starting quarterback, throwing for 4,570 yards and 36 touchdowns for the Cowboys.

Cameron is a native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and played at Catholic High School. He graduated from New Mexico Highlands in 2019.



THE SIMERSON FILE

HOMETOWN

Cudahy, Wisconsin

EDUCATION

B.S., sports and recreation management – Carroll, 2020

RYAN SIMERSON

DEFENSE QUALITY CONTROL

CARROLL, 2020

THIRD SEASON AT ILLINOIS

Ryan Simerson is in his third season on the University of Illinois staff in 2023. He started with the Fighting Illini as a football analyst in 2021 before serving as a defensive quality control role in 2022.

Simerson helped Illinois to an 8-5 record in 2022. The Illini were ranked in the AP Top 25 for five straight weeks, reaching as high as No. 14, and were ranked in the College Football Playoff rankings for the first time in school history. Illinois led the nation in scoring defense (12.8) for the first time in program history, led the nation and set a school record in interceptions (24), and ranked third in total defense (273.5). The Illini also ranked in the top 10 in the nation in total defense (3rd, 273.5), rushing defense (10th, 99.8), fewest first downs allowed (7th, 199), and third down defense (9th, 30.1%).

Simerson helped Illinois to a pair of road ranked wins in 2021. The Illini won at #7 Penn State in nine overtimes, the longest game in college football history, and won at #20 Minnesota, the program's first ever win over a College Football Playoff ranked opponent.

Previously, Simerson worked as a student assistant at his alma mater Carroll University for two seasons. He was on the Carroll football team before joining the staff.

Simerson graduated from Carroll with a bachelor's degree in sports and recreation management, while also minoring in coaching.



THE ROSENTHAL FILE

HOMETOWN

Glencoe, Illinois

EDUCATION

B.S., advertising management – Illinois, 2021

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Illinois, 2021
Michigan State, 2017-20

MAX ROSENTHAL

OFFENSIVE/SPECIAL TEAMS QUALITY CONTROL

ILLINOIS, 2021

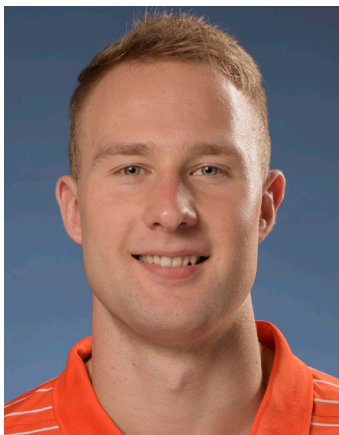
SECOND SEASON AT ILLINOIS

Max Rosenthal is in his second season as a student assistant coach at Illinois in 2023.

Rosenthal finished his playing career at Illinois in 2021, when he played in eight games in Bret Bielema's first season as the Illini head coach. He had joined Bielema's Illini as a transfer following four seasons at Michigan State from 2017-20.

Rosenthal was an Academic All-Big Ten selection, while being primarily used as a blocking fullback. He had two receptions for four yards and a touchdown in 2019. The TD came at rival Michigan in Rosenthal's first career start.

Rosenthal graduated with a degree in advertising management in May 2021. He is enrolled in the strategic brand communication master's program.



ARTUR SITKOWSKI

STUDENT ASSISTANT

NEW MEXICO HIGHLANDS, 2019

FIRST SEASON AT ILLINOIS

THE SITKOWSKI FILE

HOMETOWN

Old Bridge, New Jersey

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Illinois, 2021-22

Rutgers, 2018-20

Artur Sitkowski is in his first season as a student assistant in 2023 following five seasons playing college football. He finished his playing career at Illinois under head coach Bret Bielema in 2021 and 2022, after a three-year stint at Rutgers from 2018-20.

Sitkowski threw for 2,838 yards and 14 touchdowns during his career, including 807 yards and six touchdowns at Illinois. He threw only two interceptions on 229 attempts (1 INT per 114.5 attempts) from 2020-21, the third-best among Power 5 quarterbacks over the two-year stretch (average: 39.7).

Sitkowski's career highlights including leading Illinois to a 20-18 win at #7 Penn State in the longest game in college football history (9 OT) in 2021. The next season he entered the Iowa game in place of injured starter Tommy DeVito and helped lead the Illini to a 9-6 victory over the Hawkeyes as part of a six-game winning streak.

Sitkowski is a native of Old Bridge, New Jersey, and played high school football at Old Bridge High School for three years, before he transferred to IMG Academy (Fla.) as a senior.

CHIEF OF STAFF



MARK TAURISANI

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF ATHLETICS, FOOTBALL CHIEF OF STAFF

NEW YORK AT FREDONIA, 2003

THIRD SEASON AT ILLINOIS

THE TAURISANI FILE

HOMETOWN

Utica, New York

FAMILY

Wife: Tara

Daughters: Rose, Avery

EDUCATION

B.S., sociology – State University of New York at Fredonia, 2003

M.S., sport administration – Louisville, 2005

Mark Taurisani was named Assistant Athletics Director/Chief of Staff for the Illinois football program in January 2021. He enters his third season with the Fighting Illini in 2023, overseeing much of the administrative aspects of the football program along with the day-to-day needs of Bret Bielema and the football program.

Taurisani helped Illinois to an 8-5 record in 2022, as the Fighting Illini returned to a January bowl game for the first time in 15 years in just Bielema's second season in Champaign. The Illini were ranked in the AP Top 25 for five straight weeks, reaching as high as No. 14, and were ranked in the College Football Playoff rankings for the first time in school history. Illinois led the nation in scoring defense (12.8) for the first time in program history, led the nation and set a school record in interceptions (24), and ranked third in total defense (273.5).

Taurisani has worked with Bielema in each of his 14 years as a head coach and came to Illinois after three seasons as the Director of Operations for Michigan football. He spent five seasons with Bielema at Arkansas, where he worked as Director of Football Operations, including the last four as Assistant Athletics Director. Prior to his stop in Fayetteville, Taurisani spent seven seasons at Wisconsin, including the final four as Director of Football Operations. He had been football operations coordinator in 2008-09, following two seasons as an operations assistant in 2006-07.

At Wisconsin, Taurisani was part of three Big Ten Championship-winning teams and seven bowl trips, including the 2010, 2011 and 2012 Rose Bowls. He has coordinated 12 bowl trips throughout his career, and has served as a member of the Rose Bowl Advisory Committee since 2010.

A native of Utica, New York, Taurisani graduated from State University of New York at Fredonia in 2003 with a bachelor's degree in sociology and a minor in sports and exercise, earning all-conference first team honors as captain of the baseball team. He spent the summer of 2005 as a training camp assistant with the Seattle Seahawks, which went on to win the NFC and appear in Super Bowl XL. Taurisani earned a master's degree in sport administration from Louisville in 2005.

Taurisani and his wife, Tara, have two daughters, Rose and Avery.

STRENGTH & CONDITIONING



TANK WRIGHT

DIRECTOR OF FOOTBALL STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING

ARKANSAS, 2012

THIRD SEASON AT ILLINOIS

THE WRIGHT FILE

HOMETOWN

Memphis, Tennessee

FAMILY

Wife: Ashley

Sons: Quinten, Tank Jr.

EDUCATION

Bachelor's of Science and Arts –
Arkansas, 2012

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Arkansas, 2008-12

Tenarius “Tank” Wright was named Director of Football Strength and Conditioning in January 2021. Wright is in his third season with the Fighting Illini in 2023, after coming to Illinois following seven seasons on strength and conditioning staffs at Arkansas and Michigan and a stint as the defensive line coach at Army West Point during the 2020 season.

Wright helped Illinois to an 8-5 record in 2022, as the Fighting Illini returned to a January bowl game for the first time in 15 years in just head coach Bret Bielema's second season in Champaign. The Illini were ranked in the AP Top 25 for five straight weeks, reaching as high as No. 14, and were ranked in the College Football Playoff rankings for the first time in school history. Illinois led the nation in scoring defense (12.8) for the first time in program history, led the nation and set a school record in interceptions (24), and ranked third in total defense (273.5).

Two Illini were national awards finalists in 2022 in RB Chase Brown (Doak Walker Award) and CB Devon Witherspoon (Paycom Jim Thorpe Award). It was the first time a pair of Illini earn finalists status in National College Football Awards Association awards since 1995 and the first time an Illini finished in the top three of either the Doak Walker Award or Thorpe Award. Witherspoon was also Illinois' first winner of the Big Ten's Tatum-Woodson Defensive Back of the Year, one of five Illini to be named an All-American, and one of 19 Illini to earn All-Big Ten honors, the most in program history. Illinois' five All-Americans included Witherspoon, who was the first Illini defensive back in history to be named a Consensus All-American, RB Chase Brown, DB Sydney Brown, DT Jer'Zhan Newton, and OL Alex Palczewski, who was the first Illini offensive tackle in history to earn a first team All-America honor.

In 2020, Wright helped Army lead the nation in total defense and win the Commander-in-Chief's Trophy with victories over Navy and Air Force.

Named one of college football's rising stars in 2019, Wright made the move to Army after serving as the Associate Director of Football Strength and Conditioning at Michigan for the 2018 and 2019 seasons, where he helped coach and mentor four first-round draft picks, one second-round pick, six third-round draft picks, one fourth-round pick, and 12 picks from the fifth-seventh rounds.

Prior to his time at Michigan, Wright was the Assistant Strength and Conditioning Coach at his alma mater, Arkansas, from 2014-17, where he worked on Bielema's staff for the first time. Wright helped Arkansas produce one first-round pick, one second-round pick, two fourth-round picks, and nine picks from the fifth-seventh rounds.

Wright was a standout for the Razorbacks from 2008-12 as a linebacker/defensive end, posting nine quarterback sacks and 20 tackles for loss and serving as team captain as a senior in 2012. He was named SEC Defensive Lineman of the Week after Arkansas' 47-19 win over Texas A&M at Cowboys Stadium for his three tackles, two TFLs, one sack, and two forced fumbles.

Wright was signed as an undrafted free agent by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers before trying out for the Kansas City Chiefs in a rookie mini-camp and spent time with the Montreal Alouettes of the Canadian Football League before ultimately returning to his alma mater as a member of the strength and conditioning staff.

A native of Memphis, Tennessee, Wright graduated from Arkansas in 2012 with a bachelor's of science and arts.



GC YERRY

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING

STONY BROOK, 2013

THIRD SEASON AT ILLINOIS

THE YERRY FILE

HOMETOWN

West Shokan, New York

FAMILY

Wife: Erika

EDUCATION

B.S., health science – Stony Brook, 2013

M.A., liberal studies – Stony Brook, 2015

GC Yerry joined the Illinois football strength staff in 2021 as an assistant strength and conditioning coach and was promoted to Associate Director of Strength & Conditioning in 2023. Yerry came to Champaign after two years with the Army West Point football team in a similar role.

Prior to Army, Yerry was the Director of Athletic Performance at his alma mater Stony Brook for three years (2016-18). While in that role, Yerry oversaw an assistant director and graduate assistant, while also designing and implementing all strength and conditioning programs for the Seawolves football team. He coordinated team and individual nutritional counseling for 118 collegiate football athletes in accordance with a nutrition performance coach. Yerry also worked closely with the athletic training staff to create modified training programs for injured athletes and implemented return to play protocol for post-surgical athletes.

Prior to being promoted to the director, Yerry spent one year as the assistant director (2015) and two years as a graduate assistant at Stony Brook (2013-14).

As a graduate assistant, Yerry focused on all components of strength training and conditioning for softball, men's soccer, as well as men's and women's tennis. During that time, he oversaw baseball's conditioning programming, while also assisting with football, men's and women's basketball, men's and women's lacrosse, and volleyball.

After moving into the position of assistant director, Yerry's responsibilities shifted to all aspects of strength training and conditioning for women's basketball, men's lacrosse, baseball and volleyball, while also assisting with football.

He holds his certification as a CSCS (Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist), and is accredited as a USAW Sport Performance Coach.

Yerry received varsity letters in baseball and basketball from Stony Brook, including a College World Series appearance in 2012. He earned two degrees from the university – a bachelor's of science degree in health science in 2013 and a master's of arts in liberal studies in 2015.

Yerry and his wife Erika married in 2021.



MATT MANNINGER

ASSISTANT STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING COACH

NEBRASKA, 2013

THIRD SEASON AT ILLINOIS

THE MANNINGER FILE

HOMETOWN

Omaha, Nebraska

FAMILY

Wife: Danielle
Sons: JJ and Landon

EDUCATION

B.S., dietetics and nutrition/exercise and health sciences – Nebraska, 2013

M.S., human nutrition – Eastern Michigan, 2015

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Nebraska, 2008-12

Matt Manninger joined Illinois as an assistant strength and conditioning coach in 2021. Manninger moved to Champaign after six years as an assistant strength coach at Vanderbilt.

Before joining the Vanderbilt program, Manninger worked as a strength intern at Maryland during the 2014 football season. He also served as a strength intern with Idaho student-athletes during the summer of 2014.

As an undergraduate student at Nebraska, Manninger earned a letter in 2012 as a linebacker with the Cornhuskers football team. He earned a bachelor's degree in dietetics and nutrition/exercise and health sciences from the University of Nebraska and later completed a master's in human nutrition from Eastern Michigan.

Manninger is certified through the Collegiate Strength and Conditioning Coaches Association.

He married Danielle Manninger (formerly Eckert) in May 2020. They have two sons, JJ and Landon.



THE ELICONE FILE

HOMETOWN

Hanover, Massachusetts

EDUCATION

B.A., exercise science and sports psychology – Westfield State, 2016

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Westfield State, 2014-16

NICK ELICONE

ASSISTANT STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING COACH

WESTFIELD STATE, 2016

THIRD SEASON AT ILLINOIS

Nick Elicone joined the Illinois football staff as an assistant strength and conditioning coach in 2021. Elicone came to the Illini after serving as the Lead Strength and Conditioning Coach at REEF Systems Corporation since May 2019.

At REEF Systems Corporation, Elicone was the Lead Strength Coach for 4-27 Field Artillery Battalion for the United States Army at Fort Bliss, the Strength and Conditioning Coach for 1/1 Ready First Brigade, and the Head Strength Coach for 2-3 Field Artillery Battalion for the United States Army at Fort Bliss. He designed programs and trained rehabilitating and injured soldiers to increase soldier readiness, as well as communicated program and weekly reports to Chain of Command and conducted educational classes daily for form and technique regarding ACFT equipment.

Elicone did internships at four FBS institutions before moving to REEF, including a one-year stint with the football program at Michigan from May 2018-May 2019. Elicone helped the Wolverines to a 10-3 record and co-Big Ten East Division

championship at 8-1 in Big Ten play. He previously interned at South Carolina, Alabama, and Connecticut.

Elicone was a two-year football letterwinner at Westfield State after a three-sport career at Hanover High School in Hanover, Massachusetts. He graduated from Westfield State University with a degree in exercise science and sports psychology.

He is a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist and professional member of the National Strength and Conditioning Association.



THE MAYO FILE

HOMETOWN

Dundee, Michigan

EDUCATION

B.S., exercise science – Toledo, 2020

M.S., applied exercise science –
Concordia University Chicago, 2022

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Concordia University Ann Arbor,
2016-17

TYLER MAYO

ASSISTANT STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING COACH

TOLEDO, 2020

FIRST SEASON AT ILLINOIS

Tyler Mayo joined the Illinois strength and conditioning staff in January 2023 and currently serves as an assistant strength and conditioning coach for the Fighting Illini football program.

Mayo came to Illinois from San Jose State, where he served as an assistant athletic performance coach working primarily with the Spartan football program as the lead athletic performance coach for the defensive backs, wide receivers, and tight ends. The Spartans finished 7-5 and participated in the Idaho Potato Bowl. Mayo was responsible for the design and implementation of comprehensive performance training programs that included all aspects of strength, power, speed, agility, plyometrics, position specific drills and position specific conditioning. He developed corrective return-to-play protocols for injured players working collaboratively with the Sports Medicine staff and incorporated recovery sessions for all in-season and off-season training to improve each individual athlete's functional mobility and flexibility. As the department intern coordinator, Mayo was responsible

for recruiting, professional development, and oversight of day-to-day intern operations. Mayo also served as the head athletic performance coach for women's soccer and helped the Spartans to the 2022 Mountain West Tournament championship and a berth in the NCAA Tournament.

Mayo played linebacker at Concordia University Ann Arbor, helping the team achieve its first winning season in program history and a #23 ranking in the NAIA. Injuries prompted him to retire from the sport in 2017 and pursue coaching. Originally from Dundee, Michigan, Mayo was an all-state linebacker and all-league wrestler for Dundee High School, where he helped his school to a Division 3 wrestling state championship. He completed his undergraduate degree at the University of Toledo in 2020, graduating Magna Cum Laude, earning his bachelor of science in exercise science.

Mayo and his wife, Lacie, reside in Champaign with their dog, Maxwell.

OPERATIONS



PETER WEIDEN

DIRECTOR OF FOOTBALL OPERATIONS

ST. CLOUD STATE, 2007

FIRST SEASON AT ILLINOIS

THE WEIDEN FILE

HOMETOWN

Madison, Wisconsin

EDUCATION

B.S., sports management – St. Cloud State, 2007

M.S., sports administration – Wisconsin-La Crosse, 2010

Peter Weiden was named the Illinois football program's Director of Operations on Jan. 17, 2023. Weiden joined the Illini with more than a dozen years of FBS operations experience, including spending last season as the Chief of Staff at Wisconsin.

Weiden reunited with head coach Bret Bielema after spending seven years together at Wisconsin (2010-12) and Arkansas (2013-16). Weiden's experience includes 11 bowl games, four trips to the Rose Bowl, and three Big Ten championships.

Weiden spent the previous four seasons at Wisconsin, first as Director of Operations for three years, then as the Chief of Staff in 2022. Weiden oversaw the day-to-day operations of the football program, as well as coordinating alumni programs and engagement and development efforts for current student-athletes.

Weiden returned to Wisconsin after spending the 2018 season as assistant director of football operations at Mississippi State. He served as director of football operations at Minnesota in 2017.

From 2013-17, Weiden spent four seasons as assistant director of football operations at Arkansas, where he also served as director of the Razorbacks' summer football camps.

Weiden originally was part of the Badgers' staff from 2010-12, including two seasons as Wisconsin's assistant director of football operations. His responsibilities included advance team travel, coordinating community service opportunities and running summer football.

Prior to his first stint at Wisconsin, Weiden was a graduate assistant football coach at Wisconsin-La Crosse in 2009. That followed a year as an assistant football and basketball coach at Madison West High School, which he had attended while growing up in Madison.

Weiden spent the 2007 season with the Baltimore Ravens, working internships in scouting, the ticket office and operations. He also worked as an intern in compliance, academics and marketing at Georgia Tech.

Weiden graduated from St. Cloud State in 2007 with a degree in sports management and earned his master's degree in sports administration from Wisconsin-La Crosse in 2010.



Jake Manning

Operations and Recruiting Assistant

RECRUITING AND PERSONNEL



PATRICK EMBLETON

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PERSONNEL AND RECRUITING

OHIO WESLEYAN, 2011

11TH SEASON AT ILLINOIS

THE EMBLETON FILE

HOMETOWN

Chesterland, Ohio

FAMILY

Wife: Jessica

Children: Isabella, Gibson, Lenora

EDUCATION

B.A., health and human kinetics –
Ohio Wesleyan, 2012

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Ohio Wesleyan, 2008-11

Patrick Embleton is in his 11th season on the recruiting staff at Illinois in 2023. He was promoted to Executive Director of Personnel and Recruiting in February 2021 and enters his third season in the role for head coach Bret Bielema in 2023.

Embleton oversees all recruiting efforts for the Fighting Illini, including high school and collegiate transfer efforts. He manages Illinois' recruiting team, which coordinates all on-campus admissions for incoming freshmen and transfers, performs preliminary transcript evaluations for those prospective student-athletes, and manages all official and unofficial visits for football recruits. The recruiting department serves as football admissions coordinators and works closely with the academics staff in that pursuit, and also works with the compliance staff regarding the recruitability of prospective student-athletes.

Illinois has seen huge improvements in recruiting results under Embleton's direction. The two-year stretch of recruiting from 2022-23 was Illinois' best since 2008-09 according to 247Sports and Rivals. The 2023 class was Illinois' highest ranked class since 2009 according to Rivals and highest ranked since 2011 according to 247Sports, as Illinois had back-to-back top 50 recruiting classes for the first time since 2008-09 according to 247Sports. The Illini also signed back-to-back Illinois Gatorade Players of the Year (WR Hank Beatty, RB Kaden Feagin) for the first time in program history in 2022 and 2023.

Embleton served as Director of Recruiting at Illinois from 2015-20 following a stint as a player personnel/football operations graduate assistant from 2013-14. In that role he assisted with on-campus recruiting including scheduling visits and itineraries, scheduling meetings with academic professors and arranging campus tours. He also coordinated recruiting travel for coaches and served as the program's liaison for NFL scouts. During his time as a graduate assistant, Embleton helped the Fighting Illini bring in the No. 6 recruiting class in the Big Ten in 2014.

Prior to coming to Illinois, Embleton was the wide receivers coach and assistant academic coordinator at Division III Ohio Wesleyan University. He earned a bachelor of arts in health and human kinetics from Ohio Wesleyan in 2012 and was a four-year starter at tight end for the Battling Bishops from 2008-11, earning All-NCAC honors and serving as team captain in 2011.

Embleton and his wife, Jessica, have three children, Isabella, Gibson, and Lenora.



NATE McNEAL

DIRECTOR OF PLAYER PERSONNEL

NORTHERN ILLINOIS, 2013

SIXTH SEASON AT ILLINOIS (SECOND STINT)

THE McNEAL FILE

HOMETOWN

Chicago, Illinois

EDUCATION

B.S., communications – Northern Illinois, 2013

M.S., sports management – Northern Illinois, 2015

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Northern Illinois, 2011-13

Nate McNeal rejoined the Illinois staff in February 2021 as Director of Recruiting after serving as Director of High School Relations for the Illini from 2016-18. He was promoted to Director of Player Personnel in 2022 and will begin his third season of his second stint at Illinois, and sixth season overall, in 2023.

Illinois has seen huge improvements in recruiting results in McNeal's second stint in Champaign. The two-year stretch of recruiting from 2022-23 was Illinois' best since 2008-09 according to 247Sports and Rivals. The 2023 class was Illinois' highest ranked class since 2009 according to Rivals and highest ranked since 2011 according to 247Sports, as Illinois had back-to-back top 50 recruiting classes for the first time since 2008-09 according to 247Sports. The Illini also signed back-to-back Illinois Gatorade Players of the Year (WR Hank Beatty, RB Kaden Feagin) for the first time in program history in 2022 and 2023.

McNeal spent the 2019 and 2020 seasons at Temple as Director of Player Personnel, overseeing all recruiting efforts for the Owls.

McNeal has deep ties to the state of Illinois, including playing and working on the football staff at his alma mater, Northern Illinois. He spent three years on staff at NIU as a graduate assistant for football operations and two seasons for video before being promoted to director of player personnel for one season.

McNeal played at Northern Illinois from 2011-13. He played in 16 games, including 13 as a redshirt senior in 2013. McNeal helped the Huskies win the 2012 MAC championship and become the first MAC team to make a BCS bowl when they played in the Orange Bowl and the following year helped the 2013 Huskies to the Poinsettia Bowl.

McNeal graduated from Northern Illinois with a degree in communications in 2013 and completed a masters in sports management in 2015.



PATRICK PIERSON

DIRECTOR OF FOOTBALL BRANDING AND CREATIVE MEDIA

ROBERT MORRIS, 2004

THIRD SEASON AT ILLINOIS

THE PIERSON FILE

HOMETOWN

Frewsburg, New York

FAMILY

Wife: Sarah

EDUCATION

B.S., sport management – Robert Morris, 2004

Patrick Pierson is in his third season as Illinois' Director of Football Branding and Creative Media in 2023. Pierson oversees all branding of the football team, and recruiting content, and leads the Illini's efforts on name, image, and likeness reform.

Illinois has seen huge improvements in recruiting results since Pierson's arrival in Champaign. The two-year stretch of recruiting from 2022-23 was Illinois' best since 2008-09 according to 247Sports and Rivals. The 2023 class was Illinois' highest ranked class since 2009 according to Rivals and highest ranked since 2011 according to 247Sports, as Illinois had back-to-back top 50 recruiting classes for the first time since 2008-09 according to 247Sports. The Illini also signed back-to-back Illinois Gatorade Players of the Year (WR Hank Beatty, RB Kaden Feagin) for the first time in program history in 2022 and 2023.

Pierson came to Champaign from Oregon, where he was Associate AD/Communications for the Ducks from 2018-20. Pierson was the main media contact for the Oregon football team that won back-to-back Pac-12 titles and the 2020 Rose Bowl, while managing a communications staff of six that promoted Oregon's 20 athletic programs.

Prior to Oregon, Pierson was the Assistant AD/Communications at Arkansas from 2015-18, where he worked with current Illinois head coach Bret Bielema. He started at Arkansas as the Director of Men's Basketball Communications from 2013-15 before transitioning to lead the football team's communications efforts and oversee the athletic department's communications office.

Pierson moved to Arkansas from Florida Gulf Coast, where he was the primary communications contact for the 2012-13 FGCU men's basketball team that made a run to the NCAA Sweet Sixteen under the famous #DunkCity branding to become the first No. 15 seed in NCAA history to advance to the Sweet Sixteen. He was named the school's Director of Sports Information in 2010 before being promoted to Assistant AD for Communications in 2012.

Pierson was the main basketball contact and Sports Information Director at St. Bonaventure University from 2007-10. He started his career in college athletics as Assistant Sports Information Director for the Bonnies from 2004-07.

Pierson graduated from Robert Morris University in 2004 with a degree in sport management.

He and his wife, Sarah, reside in Savoy, Illinois.



THE KAISER FILE

HOMETOWN

Liberal, Kansas

FAMILY

Wife: Camille

Children: Karson, Payton

EDUCATION

B.S., health and physical education – Bethany, 1997

M.S., physical education and health – Northwest Missouri State, 1998

JAY KAISER

DIRECTOR OF COLLEGE PERSONNEL AND NFL LIAISON

BETHANY COLLEGE, 1997

THIRD SEASON AT ILLINOIS

Jay Kaiser joined the Illinois staff in February 2021 as Director of College Personnel and NFL Liaison. Kaiser develops and manages Illinois' collegiate personnel department, encompassing student-athlete oversight, development, and roster management, while also acting as the Illinois football team's liaison to the NFL and all other professional leagues and events, including the NFL Combine and Pro Days. He also educates Illini student-athletes through the process to become a professional football player.

Kaiser joined Illinois with 16 years of collegiate experience, all in the Midwest, and 10 years in the NFL. He brings a strong relationship with the NFL league office to Champaign and a vast knowledge of the college-to-NFL process after recruiting and helping players like first-rounder Josh Freeman (Kansas State) and walk-on turned Super Bowl champion and Pro Bowler Jordy Nelson (Kansas State) during their collegiate careers.

Kaiser has worked with three National Football Foundation Hall of Fame coaches - Bill Snyder (Kansas State), Mel Tjeerdsma (Northwest Missouri State), and Dr. Ted Kessinger (Bethany College) - during his time in college football. During Kaiser's time at Kansas State as Director of Recruiting Operations, he worked with Bret

Bielema and the staff that helped the Wildcats win the 2003 Big 12 title.

Kaiser spent 10 seasons as an assistant to the head coach in the NFL, including a seven-year stint with the Miami Dolphins from 2012-18. He assisted head coaches Joe Philbin (2012-15), Dan Campbell (2015), and Adam Gase (2016-18) in organizing football operations for the Dolphins. Kaiser managed several elements of Miami's off-field agenda, involving the day-to-day schedule, player and staff communications and the football calendar, including the offseason programs, minicamps, and training camp.

Kaiser received his start as a student coach at Bethany College from 1993-96. He earned a bachelor's degree in health and physical education from Bethany in 1997 and added a master's degree in physical education and health from Northwest Missouri State in 1998. While on staff with Northwest Missouri State, Kaiser helped the program finish 15-0 and win the NCAA Division II national title in 1998.

A native of Liberal, Kansas, Kaiser and his wife, Camille, have two children, Karson and Payton.



THE GREEN FILE

HOMETOWN

Germantown, Maryland

EDUCATION

B.S., sport management – Towson, 2018

M.S., sport management – Louisiana State, 2021

MAYA GREEN

DIRECTOR OF RECRUITING OPERATIONS

TOWSON, 2018

SECOND SEASON AT ILLINOIS

Maya Green is in her second season as Illinois' Director of Recruiting Operations in 2023. Green came to Champaign from Cal, where she was the Director of Business Operations in 2021.

Illinois has seen huge improvements in recruiting results since Green's arrival in Champaign. The two-year stretch of recruiting from 2022-23 was Illinois' best since 2008-09, according to 247Sports and Rivals. The 2023 class was Illinois' highest ranked class since 2009 according to Rivals and highest ranked since 2011 according to 247Sports, as Illinois had back-to-back top 50 recruiting classes for the first time since 2008-09 according to 247Sports. The Illini also signed back-to-back Illinois Gatorade Players of the Year (WR Hank Beatty, RB Kaden Feagin) for the first time in program history in 2022 and 2023.

Green was a recruiting and operations assistant for the track and field program at LSU from 2019-21. She worked with budgets, facilitated travel plans, and worked on eligibility for over 90 student-athletes. Prior to LSU, Green was an undergraduate recruiting staff assistant at Towson for four years.

Green earned a bachelor's degree in sport and fitness administration from Towson in 2018. She earned a master's degree in sport and fitness administration from LSU in 2021



PAT RYAN

DIRECTOR OF ILLINOIS HIGH SCHOOL RELATIONS

SOUTHEAST MISSOURI STATE, 1986

THIRD SEASON AT ILLINOIS

THE RYAN FILE

HOMETOWN

Metamora, Illinois

FAMILY

Wife: Nancy
Children: Morgan, Sam, Audrey, Erin

EDUCATION

B.S., physical education – Southeast Missouri State, 1986

Illinois High School Football Coaches Association Hall of Famer Pat Ryan was named the Illinois football team's Director of Illinois High School Relations in April 2021. Ryan joined the Illini following a 30-year head coaching career at Metamora High School.

One of the most decorated coaches in Illinois high school football history, Ryan led Metamora to seven state championship games, two state titles (2007, 2009), and a 268-75 (.781) record in 30 seasons. He has the 14th-most wins in Illinois high school history and the 11th most of any coach at one school. Ryan was inducted to the Illinois High School Football Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 2016.

Ryan has spent most of his life at Metamora High School, first as the team's quarterback prior to his graduation in 1981. His coaching career started as a student assistant at Southeast Missouri State under Peoria native Bob Smith, before he came back to Metamora to be an assistant coach. He was an assistant at Metamora for three seasons before taking over the program for the next 30 years.

Ryan was a six-time Greater Peoria Area Football Coach of the Year, three-time Greater Peoria Area Sports Hall of Fame Male Coach of the Year, and three-time Shrine Game coach.

He served as a trustee for the Illinois High School Football Coaches Association for 20 years, was the 1999 President of the Illinois High School Football Coaches Association, and was a member of the IHSA Football Advisory Board from 2010-13.

Ryan's teams went on an incredible run during a 16-year period from 1995-2010, winning 10+ games in 15 of the 16 years. Metamora appeared in seven state championship games, and won both of their state titles during the period, while featuring a style of play built on strong defenses and a physical running attack. Overall, Ryan's teams qualified for the IHSA playoffs in 24 of 30 seasons, had six undefeated regular seasons, and won 18 Mid-Illini Conference titles.

Ryan retired from his role as head football coach, department chair for physical education, health and driver's education, and assistant track and field coach at Metamora High School in 2020.

He was inducted into the Greater Peoria Sports Hall of Fame in 2023.

Ryan and his wife, Nancy, have four children: Morgan, Sam, Audrey, and Erin. They have one son in law, Nick Ryba, and one grandson, Everett Ryba.



DRAKE LEEPER

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF PERSONNEL

ST. AMBROSE, 2017

SECOND SEASON AT ILLINOIS

THE LEEPER FILE

HOMETOWN

Rochester, Illinois

EDUCATION

B.A., physical education teaching – St. Ambrose, 2017

M.A., education – McKendree, 2020

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

St. Ambrose, 2013-15

Drake Leeper is in his second season as assistant director of personnel at Illinois in 2023. Leeper came to Champaign from Division II's McKendree University, where he was the linebackers coach and recruiting coordinator.

Leeper was with McKendree since 2018, starting as a graduate assistant with the running backs before moving to a full-time coaching role. Leeper arrived at McKendree after spending the 2017 season as the offensive and defensive line coach at Ottawa High School. There, he was responsible for installing the run and pass blocking schemes along with installing player improvement drills and managing the special teams unit. Leeper also gained valuable experience serving as an offensive coach for Don Beebe's House of Speed and with the Illinois Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

As a player, Leeper captured three consecutive state championships at Rochester High School from 2010-12. The Rockets' 2011 squad racked up the most total yards in Illinois High School Association (IHSA) history with nearly 6,800. A two-time All-Conference honoree, Leeper earned second-team All-State accolades in 2012.

Leeper played three seasons as a defensive lineman at St. Ambrose University in Davenport, Iowa, and graduated with a bachelor's degree in physical education teaching in 2017. He finished a master's degree in education from McKendree in 2020.



JON PROTO

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF PERSONNEL

MOUNT IDA, 2014

FIRST SEASON AT ILLINOIS

THE PROTO FILE

HOMETOWN

North Haven, Connecticut

EDUCATION

B.S., business administration –
Mount Ida College, 2014

M.S., business administration –
Mount Ida College, 2016

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Mount Ida, 2010-13

Jon Proto is in his first season as assistant director of personnel at Illinois in 2023. He comes to Champaign with nearly a decade of NCAA Division I experience, primarily focused on scouting, talent evaluation, and recruiting.

Proto joined the Illini after spending the 2022 season as a player personnel assistant at Wisconsin. During his time in Madison, Proto played a vital role in the Badgers' recruiting efforts by helping to identify, evaluate, and collect data on prospects to provide direction to the coaching staff.

His experience with Wisconsin came on the heels of a two-season stretch at Buffalo (2020-22), and three seasons at UTSA (2017-20). During his time with UB, Proto served as the Bulls' director of recruiting operations/NFL and CFL Liaison, not only overseeing the program's overall recruiting efforts, but also working as the team's contact for all professional football personnel. He helped UB to a 6-1 mark in 2020, including a Camellia Bowl Championship.

While at UTSA, Proto spent three full seasons as the Roadrunners' administrative assistant/scouting assistant from 2017-19, before being promoted to assistant director of player personnel to close out his tenure in San Antonio.

A native of North Haven, Connecticut, Proto's career began on the East Coast with stops for one year each at Yale (2014-15), Florida Atlantic (2015-16), and Boston College (2016-17). The 2014 Yale squad posted a mark of 8-2 with Proto working as a recruiting coordinator with additional responsibilities to help manage head coach Tony Reno's social media. Proto also worked as the Bulldogs' assistant tight ends coach. In 2015 he moved on to become FAU's assistant director of player personnel, before going to Boston College as a recruiting coordinator for the Eagles' 2016 season.

Proto, played collegiately at the former Mount Ida College in Newton, Massachusetts, now the UMass Amherst Mt. Ida Campus, where he was a four-time all-conference defensive tackle and earned team MVP honors as a senior after compiling 164.5 tackles, 15.5 sacks, 34.5 TFLs and two interceptions, while helping Mount Ida to a conference championship and an NCAA Division III playoff berth. Proto completed a bachelor's degree in business administration, with a sports management concentration, from the school in 2014 before going on to complete his graduate degree in business administration.



JAMAR MORRIS

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF RECRUITING

NORTHWESTERN OKLAHOMA STATE, 2019

FIRST SEASON AT ILLINOIS

THE MORRIS FILE

HOMETOWN

Madison, Wisconsin

EDUCATION

B.S., health and sports science
education – Northwestern Oklahoma
State, 2019

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Northwestern Oklahoma State,
2015-18

Jamar "Popcorn" Morris joined the Illinois recruiting staff in 2023 as an assistant director of recruiting. Morris came to Champaign with recruiting experience at Big Ten programs Northwestern and Wisconsin.

Morris most recently served as a recruiting assistant intern at Northwestern during the 2022 season. He joined Northwestern after stints as a behavioral education assistant at Madison Memorial High School (Wis.), scouting for the East-West Shrine Game and Optimum Scouting, and a recruiting assistant intern position for the Wisconsin football program during the 2020 season.

Morris graduated from Northwestern Oklahoma State University in 2019 with a degree in health and sports science education. He was a four-year member of the football team as a tight end and a team captain. Prior to Northwestern Oklahoma State, Morris was a standout player on both sides of the ball for Madison Memorial High School (Wis.), where he earned All-State honors.



HOUSTON GRIFFITH

RECRUITING ASSISTANT

NOTRE DAME, 2021

FIRST SEASON AT ILLINOIS

THE GRIFFITH FILE

HOMETOWN

Chicago, Illinois

EDUCATION

B.A., film, television, and theatre –
Notre Dame, 2021

PLAYING EXPERIENCE

Notre Dame, 2018-22

Houston Griffith joined the Illinois recruiting staff in July 2023 following a five-year playing career at Notre Dame.

A native of Chicago, Illinois, Griffith set the Notre Dame all-time record in career games played with 62. He finished his career with 94 tackles, including 71 over his last two seasons with the Fighting Irish from 2021-22.

Griffith started his high school career at Mount Carmel in Chicago before transferring to IMG Academy (Fla.). He was a consensus top-100 player in the 2018 class after leading IMG Academy to a 9-0 record and No. 2 ranking in the final 2017 MaxPreps rankings.

Griffith is the son of Illinois all-time great Howard Griffith, who played running back for the Fighting Illini from 1987-90. The elder Griffith helped the Illini to a share of the Big Ten title in 1990 and a 10-victory season in 1989. He became team captain and proceeded to break several records including, Jim Brown's 48-point game NCAA record and Harold "Red" Grange's school-record 33 touchdowns in a career.



CONNOR HANNAN

DIRECTOR OF FOOTBALL GRAPHIC DESIGN

NORTHERN ILLINOIS, 2012

SECOND SEASON AT ILLINOIS

THE HANNAN FILE

HOMETOWN

Palatine, Illinois

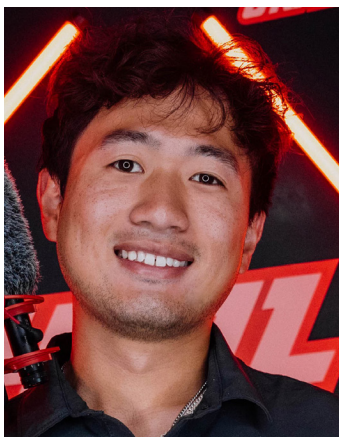
EDUCATION

B.A., art— Northern Illinois, 2012

Connor Hannan joined the University of Illinois Football staff as the Director of Football Graphic Design in 2022. Hannan oversees graphic design for football recruiting, designing creative materials for prospective student-athletes, while assisting with creative materials for the program. Hannan also assists with photography for current and prospective student-athletes.

Hannan's design experience includes work in advertising, athletics and digital printing industries with companies such as Revolution Global and the United States Equestrian Federation. Hannan is an experienced photographer specializing in sport, portrait and concert photography. He has freelanced his design and photography talent throughout his career.

Hannan is a graduate of Northern Illinois University.



KEVIN GAO

DIRECTOR OF FOOTBALL CREATIVE VIDEO

ILLINOIS, 2023

FIRST SEASON AT ILLINOIS

THE GAO FILE

HOMETOWN

New York, New York

EDUCATION

B.S., advertising— Illinois, 2023

Kevin Gao joined the Illinois football staff as the Director of Football Creative Video in May 2023. He is a 2023 graduate of the University of Illinois, where he served as an intern in football video during his undergraduate years.

Gao creates social content for Illinois football program's social channels and recruiting efforts. He oversees the production of creative video for the recruiting staff and leads the planning and execution of social media content.

Gao also worked for some of the top sports entities during his undergraduate years, including work with the College Football Playoff, Bleacher Report, and the WNBA's Chicago Sky, as well as freelance roles with Red Bull, Samsung, and the NBA. He worked with the College Football Playoff social media team on two occasions, producing video social content for both the 2021 Playoff Semifinals at the Orange Bowl and the 2023 National Championship game in Los Angeles.

Gao played club lacrosse at Illinois, while also helping with the team's social channels. He graduated in 2023 with a degree in advertising.

ATHLETIC TRAINING



JEREMY BUSCH

ASSISTANT ATHLETIC DIRECTOR FOR SPORTS MEDICINE, HEAD FOOTBALL ATHLETIC TRAINER
IOWA, 2002
NINTH SEASON AT ILLINOIS

THE BUSCH FILE

HOMETOWN

Cedar Rapids, Iowa

FAMILY

Wife: Peggy
 Son: Landon
 Daughter: Emma

EDUCATION

B.S., athletic training – Iowa, 2002

M.Ed., sports management – Minnesota, 2005

Jeremy Busch is in his ninth season as Head Football Athletic Trainer at the University of Illinois in 2023. He is responsible for managing all the healthcare needs of the Illinois football team. Busch supervises a staff of four certified and licensed athletic trainers with the Illini football team.

Previously, Busch served as the head football athletic trainer for Texas Tech University in 2014. He spent the previous two years at the University of Nebraska, as the assistant football athletic trainer/rehabilitation coordinator assisting with the year-round preventive care, immediate care for injured student-athletes at practice and games and reconditioning of injured athletes.

Prior to his stint at Nebraska, Busch was the assistant athletic trainer at Colorado State University from 2006-12 with the football program. He spent 2005 working for Indiana University as an intern assistant football athletic trainer and was an athletic training intern for the Minnesota Vikings.

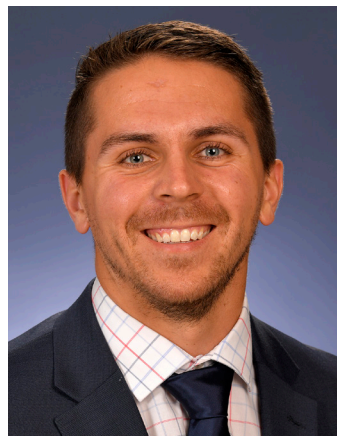
Busch was a graduate assistant athletic trainer with the University of Minnesota football program and worked as an undergraduate at the University of Iowa with its football and men’s basketball programs.

Originally from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Busch graduated from Iowa with a bachelor’s degree of science in athletic training in 2002. He graduated from Minnesota with a master’s degree in sports management in 2005.

Jeremy is married to the former Peggy Manning, and the couple has twins, Emma and Landon.



Chase Louthan
 Assistant Athletic Trainer



Nick Eller
 Assistant Athletic Trainer



Emily Hahn
 Assistant Athletic Trainer



Zac Williams
 Assistant Athletic Trainer

FOOTBALL VIDEO



JOE MAGGIO

DIRECTOR OF FOOTBALL VIDEO

STONY BROOK, 2012

THIRD SEASON AT ILLINOIS

Joe Maggio is in his third season as Illinois' Director of Video in 2023. Maggio oversees all day-to-day video operations for the Fighting Illini, coordinates Illinois and opponent scouting video for coach and student-athlete review, handles recruiting film, and manages a team of student assistants.

Maggio joined the Illini after five seasons with the UNLV football program, where he oversaw the Rebels' video operations. He spent the 2013-15 seasons in the same capacity at Florida International, where he worked with former Illinois head coach Ron Turner.

Maggio joined FIU after a long stint at his alma mater, Stony Brook, where he eventually served as video operations manager and pro liaison assistant for the Seawolves. Maggio, who received his bachelor's in business management economics from Stony Brook in 2012, also worked with the Stony Brook lacrosse program and served as a videographer for the Major League Lacrosse Long Island Lizards franchise.

THE MAGGIO FILE

HOMETOWN

Huntington, New York

EDUCATION

B.A., business management
economics – Stony Brook, 2012



Brendan McGuire

Assistant Director of Football Video

FOOTBALL EQUIPMENT



JAKE ROSCH

DIRECTOR OF FOOTBALL EQUIPMENT OPERATIONS

IOWA STATE, 2009

SECOND SEASON AT ILLINOIS

THE ROSCH FILE

HOMETOWN

Hartland, Wisconsin

FAMILY

Wife: Megan

Daughters: Elizabeth, Margaret

EDUCATION

B.S., criminology –Iowa State, 2009

Jake Rosch is in his second season as Illinois’ Director of Football Equipment Operations in 2023. Rosch is responsible for all of Illinois’ equipment needs, including fitting, ordering, maintaining, laundering and inventory. Rosch is one of the athletic department’s key Nike liaisons.

Rosch helped Illinois to an 8-5 record in 2022 and its first January bowl game (ReliaQuest Bowl) in 15 years. The Illini were ranked in the AP Top 25 for five straight weeks, reaching as high as No. 14, and were ranked in the College Football Playoff rankings for the first time in school history.

Rosch’s duties also extend to game-day logistics for home and away games, highlighted by postseason competition. Rosch is also responsible for maintaining the football equipment budget.

Rosch came to Illinois from Arkansas, where he was the Director of Football Equipment Operations since 2014. During his time at Arkansas, Rosch worked with five bowl teams.

During the 2014 season, Rosch helped reintroduce Arkansas’ 1964 uniforms to help celebrate the 50th anniversary of Arkansas’ National Championship. In 2017, Rosch helped create an Arkansas Razorback-Dallas Cowboys crossover uniform to honor Arkansas letterwinner and alum Jerry Jones’ induction to the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Prior to Arkansas, Rosch spent three years at Iowa State as the Assistant Director of Equipment and two years at California as the Head of Football Equipment operations, where he helped the athletic department and Nike successfully partner to produce a complete rebrand. He began his career in the equipment industry as a student manager at Iowa State. He is a certified member of the Athletic Equipment Managers Association (since 2009) and is an active member of the AEMA Certification Steering Committee.

A native of Hartland, Wisconsin, Rosch graduated from Iowa State University with a degree in criminology. He and his wife, Megan, met as undergraduate student managers at Iowa State and have two daughters, Elizabeth and Margaret.



Kenny Pleimann
Assistant Equipment Manager



Dominic Magrini
Equipment Graduate Assistant

NUTRITION



LEAH KNIZNER

DIRECTOR OF FOOTBALL PERFORMANCE NUTRITION

PENN STATE, 2019

FIRST SEASON AT ILLINOIS

THE KNIZNER FILE

HOMETOWN

Greensburg, Pennsylvania

EDUCATION

B.S., nutritional sciences (dietetics)
– Penn State, 2019

M.S., nutrition – Tufts, 2021

Leah Knizner is in her first season as Illinois' Director of Football Performance Nutrition in 2023. She oversees all of the nutrition needs for the Fighting Illini football program, providing fueling, performance nutrition education, and counseling services to the student-athletes.

Knizner joined the Illini from UPMC Shadyside in Pittsburgh, where she was a Clinical Inpatient Dietitian. She previously worked with the Clemson football team in 2021 as part of the Gatorade Sports Nutrition Immersion Program, providing education and counseling, nutrition supplemental support, and performance testing for the nationally-ranked Tigers. Knizner also has experience as a Dietetic Intern at the Frances Stern Nutrition Center at Tufts Medical Center in Boston.

Knizner was a Big Ten student-athlete at Penn State from 2015-19, where she played basketball for four seasons. She joined the Nittany Lions program as a walk-on in October 2015, before earning a scholarship in 2016. Her father, Matt, was also a student-athlete at Penn State, playing football for five seasons and helping Penn State to the 1986 national title after a 12-0 record and win over Miami (Fla.) in the Fiesta Bowl.

Knizner was born and raised in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, where she was a two-time captain and one-time MVP of the basketball team at Hempfield Area High School.

Knizner is a Registered Dietitian (RD), a Licensed Dietitian-Nutritionist (LDN), and a member of the CPSDA (Collegiate and Professional Sports Dietitians Association).



Kendall Pozulp
Nutrition Fellow



Jordan Giese
Nutrition Graduate Assistant



JASON EPPERSON

LIFE COACH

NEBRASKA CHRISTIAN COLLEGE, 2000

SECOND SEASON AS LIFE COACH

Jason Epperson is in his second season as Life Coach for the Illinois football team and his 13th season overall associated with Illinois Athletics. He has previously worked as team chaplain for Illinois Athletics teams from 2006-11 and again from 2017-22.

Epperson helped Illinois to an 8-5 record in 2022 during his first season as Life Coach. The Fighting Illini qualified for their first January bowl game (ReliaQuest Bowl) in 15 years and were ranked in the AP Top 25 for five straight weeks, reaching as high as No. 14. The Illini were also ranked in the College Football Playoff rankings for the first time in school history.

Along with his football duties, Epperson works with the Fighting Illini men's basketball team and numerous other programs within the Illinois Division of Intercollegiate Athletics. He is also active in the Champaign-Urbana community, including preaching at the local CU Church.

Epperson is a native of Grinnell, Iowa, and graduated from Nebraska Christian College with a degree in

theology/youth work in 2000. He and his wife, Lacy, have four children - Abe, Bo, Kate, and Zeke.

THE EPPERSON FILE

HOMETOWN

Grinnell, Iowa

FAMILY

Wife: Lacy

Children: Abe, Bo, Kate, Zeke

EDUCATION

B.A., theology/youth work – Nebraska Christian College, 2000

FOOTBALL ACADEMICS



MIKE MAZIARZ

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, FOOTBALL ACADEMICS

MILLIKIN, 2011

12TH YEAR AT ILLINOIS

Mike Maziarz is in his 12th year at Illinois and his seventh year working with the football program.

Maziarz assists student-athletes in balancing the academic, athletic, and social responsibilities associated with Division I athletics in the Big Ten Conference. In addition, his role focuses on evaluating continuing eligibility, tracking academic progress, and assisting in recruiting student-athletes.

Prior to working as an assistant director in football academics from 2017-22, Maziarz worked with the Fighting Illini men's and women's gymnastics programs and the swimming & diving team. He also coordinated Illinois' tutorial program from 2014-2016.

In May 2014, Maziarz earned his M.S. in sport management from the University of Illinois. The Pana, Illinois, native graduated Summa Cum Laude with a B.S. in management from Millikin University in 2011, in addition to, earning prestigious Academic All-American honors while completing his A.A. in Journalism from Lincoln Land Community College in 2009.

Maziarz is a member of the National Association of Academic and Student-Athlete Development Professionals (N4A) and is an alumnus of N4A's elite Professional Development Institute. At Lincoln Land Community College and Millikin University, he was a student-athlete on the Loggers and Big Blue baseball teams.

THE MAZIARZ FILE

HOMETOWN

Pana, Illinois

EDUCATION

B.S., management – Millikin, 2011

M.S., sports management – Illinois, 2014



Rachel Kaltwasser
Academic Counselor



Shanika Mungin
Director of Educational Enrichment



Madison Rayam
Academic Counselor

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Leigh McGuirk Travis Perry Al Campion Jen Fisher Hannah Penington Nathan Ripple

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BUSEY BANK ILLINI SPORTS NETWORK



Martin O'Donnell, Steve Kelly, and Brian Barnhart

The 50+-station Busey Bank Illini Sports Network – plus SiriusXM satellite radio and Tuneln internet radio – brings the Illinois football program to fans across the state and Midwest with Brian Barnhart and Martin O'Donnell calling the action of every game.

In 2023, Barnhart will be in his 22nd season as the “Voice of the Illini” after a long stint in professional baseball, including two years as the play-by-play voice of the Anaheim Angels. Barnhart serves as the voice of the Busey Bank Fighting Illini Sports Network, providing play-by-play coverage of football and men’s basketball and as the host of the statewide coaches shows.

A native of nearby Tolono, Barnhart graduated from Liberty University before beginning a 15-year career in professional baseball in 1986. In 1998, Barnhart was named the play-by-play announcer for the Angels and spent two full seasons with the American League club before returning to the Champaign-Urbana area in 2000. He currently is a news and sports announcer at WDWS-AM 1400 in Champaign, hosting the popular “Penny for your Thoughts” show weekday mornings.

During the 2007 season, Barnhart was honored by the Illinois Broadcasters Association with the “Silver Dome Award for Best Sports Play-by-Play” for his call of Illinois’ football upset of No. 1 Ohio State. In 2008, Barnhart was named “Sportscaster of the Year” in the state of Illinois by the National Sportscasters and Sportswriters Association.

Former Illini All-American offensive lineman Martin O'Donnell returns to the Fighting Illini Sports Network for his ninth season as an expert analyst in 2023. O'Donnell, who lettered at Illinois from 2004-07 and earned All-America honors at left guard in 2007 after helping lead the Illini to the 2008 Rose Bowl, replaced former Illini quarterback Kurt Kittner in the booth in 2015.

Along with Barnhart and O'Donnell on the broadcast again this fall is Steve Kelly, a veteran Illini sportscaster who handles pregame, halftime, and postgame host duties. Kelly has covered Illini athletics for over two decades on television and radio. He hosts “Saturday Morning Sportsline” along with Loren Tate Saturday mornings on WDWS-AM 1400 in Champaign.

The statewide Busey Bank Fighting Illini Sports Network is managed by Fighting Illini Sports Properties and encompasses all sponsorship and operational elements. Illini Sports Network programming includes hour-long pregame and postgame shows around live football and men’s basketball games, plus coverage of women’s basketball, volleyball and baseball.



2023 FOOTBALL STATIONS (as of Aug. 2023)

| | | | |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Aledo | WRMJ 102.3 FM | Marshall | WMMC105.9 FM |
| Alton | WBGZ 94.3 FM | Mt. Carmel | WSJD 100.5 FM |
| Alton | WBGZ 1570 AM | Murphysboro | WINI 93.5 FM |
| Bloomington | WWHX100.7 FM | Murphysboro | WINI 1420 AM |
| Carthage | WCAZ 99.1 FM | Paxton | WPXN 104.9 FM |
| Carthage | WCAZ 1510 AM | Peoria | WZPN 101.1 FM |
| Champaign | WDWS 1400 AM | Pittsfield | WBBA 97.5 FM |
| Champaign | WDWS 93.9 FM | Quincy | WTAD 103.3 FM |
| Champaign | WHMS 97.5 FM | Quincy | WTAD 930 AM |
| Chicago | WLS 890 AM | Robinson | WTAY 94.3 FM |
| Danville | WDAN 1490 AM | Robinson | WTAY 1570 AM |
| Danville | WDNL 102.1 FM | Robinson | WTYE 101.7 FM |
| Davenport, IA | WFXN 1230 AM | Rockford | WRCK 1440 AM |
| Decatur | WSOY 1340 AM | Rockford | WROK 96.1 FM |
| Dwight | WJEZ 98.9 FM | Rushville | WKXQ 92.5 FM |
| Effingham | WHQZ 98.9 FM | Sparta | WHCO 97.3 FM |
| Fairfield | WHWV 1390 AM | Sparta | WHCO 1230 AM |
| Galesburg | WGIL 1400 AM | Springfield | WCVS 96.7 FM |
| Greenville | WPMB102.7 FM | Springfield | WFMB 1450 AM |
| Jacksonville | WJIL 97.1 FM | St. Louis, MO | KFNS 590 AM |
| Jacksonville | WJIL 1550 AM | Taylorville | WMKR 94.3 HD |
| Jacksonville | WJVO 102.9 FM | Taylorville | WMKR104.1 FM |
| Jerseyville | WJBM 1480 AM | Vandalia | WPMB104.7 FM |
| Litchfield | WAOX 105.3 FM | Vandalia | WPMB 1500 AM |
| Marion | WGGH 98.1 FM | Watseka | WGFA 94.1 FM |
| Marion | WGGH 1150 AM | | |

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Brenda Lindsey
Faculty Athletic Representative



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Brian Russell, Ph.D.
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Brett Stillwell
Senior Associate Director of
Athletics, Capital Projects &
Facilities



Benji Wilber
Associate Director of Athletics,
Compliance



Tiffany White
Faculty Athletic Representative



Dr. Jerrad Zimmerman
Team Physician

2023-24 ATHLETIC BOARD

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| | Eric Larson | | | |
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JOSH WHITMAN

DIRECTOR OF ATHLETICS

ILLINOIS, 2001

EIGHTH YEAR AT ILLINOIS



Illinois alumnus Josh Whitman was hired as the University's 14th permanent director of athletics on February 17, 2016. Now in his eighth year, Whitman has infused the Fighting Illini program with energy, strategic direction, and a fierce drive to see the Illini succeed in the competitive arena and in the classroom.

Illinois is coming off a successful 2022-23 athletics campaign under Whitman's leadership. During the last year, it was one of just 14 schools to have its football team play in a bowl game and both its men's and women's basketball teams participate in the NCAA Tournament. Of those 14 schools, Whitman is one of only two current athletic directors to have hired all three of the involved head coaches. The Fighting Illini also captured Big Ten championships in both men's and women's golf and had three student-athletes win NCAA individual titles.

Nowhere has Whitman's influence been more notable than on the gridiron. A former Illini letterman himself, Whitman has helped engineer the football team's return to the national spotlight, highlighted by hiring three-time Big Ten champion head coach Bret Bielema in December of 2020. In Bielema's first season, the Illini won their most conference games in 14 years, including back-to-back road victories at No. 7 Penn State and No. 20 Minnesota.

That set the stage for 2022, the second year of Bielema's tenure, which became Illinois Football's best season since 2007. Illinois started the regular season 7-1 en route to winning eight regular season games and narrowly missing a place in the Big Ten Championship Game. The Illini were ranked in the Top 25 for five straight weeks, reaching a high of 14th, while also appearing in the College Football Playoff rankings for the first time in program history. Led by its defense, which led the nation in scoring defense for the first time in school history, the Fighting Illini participated in a January bowl game for the first time since the 2008 Rose Bowl.

Another season of note from Whitman's tenure was 2019, which saw the Illini post two of the biggest wins in program history: an upset victory over sixth-ranked Wisconsin and an incredible come-from-behind win at Michigan State. The victory over the Spartans made Illinois bowl eligible for the first time since 2014 and resulted in the Fighting Illini playing California in the Redbox Bowl.

On the basketball court, Whitman has prompted a national resurgence that began with his hiring of head coach Brad Underwood in 2017. During the last four seasons, the men's basketball team has posted the best record in the Big Ten.

In 2019-20, the Illini accomplished one of the nation's largest turnarounds, improving by nine total wins from the previous season and finishing only one game out of first place in the Big Ten standings. The team concluded the season ranked in the Associated Press Top 25 for the first time since 2006 and was poised for a deep postseason run until games were cancelled because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The basketball program's remarkable ascent was highlighted by the 2020-21 campaign, which, by many measures, was one of the most successful in Illinois history. The Illini topped the Big Ten standings in wins, setting a school record with 16 league victories. Illinois then captured its first Big Ten Tournament Championship in 17 years and earned a No. 1 seed in the 2021 NCAA Tournament. Illinois ended the season at No. 2 in the AP poll, the second-highest final ranking in school history.

In 2021-22, the team won 15 Big Ten games and captured a share of the Big Ten regular-season championship, the 18th in program history and its first since 2005. For the second consecutive year, the team earned a Top 4 seed to the NCAA Tournament and won its opening round game.

Last season, Illinois recorded its fourth straight 20-win regular season and made its third straight NCAA Tournament, extending the program's longest tournament streak in 16 years.

Staying on the hardwood, Whitman's hiring of Shauna Green in women's basketball has ignited another turnaround in Fighting Illini Athletics. In 2022-23, Green's first year at the helm, she led the team to a historic 15-win improvement, the best year-over-year change ever at Illinois and the third-largest in Big Ten history. Illinois won 22 games, the third-most victories in program history, and made the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2003.

In total during Whitman's tenure, Illinois teams have made 82 NCAA postseason appearances, highlighted by 22 teams finishing in the top 16 nationally and seven finishing in the nation's top four. In addition, six Illinois student-athletes have captured eight individual national championships (wrestler Isaiah Martinez, 2016; men's gymnast Brandon Ngai, 2016; men's gymnast Alex Diab, 2018 and 2019; men's gymnast Ian Skirkey, 2021; and Skirkey, fellow men's gymnast Ashton Anaya, and women's track athlete Olivia Howell, 2023).

In Big Ten competition, the men's golf program has won the Big Ten crown every year of Whitman's tenure and eight consecutive titles overall, women's golf won its first title in program history in 2023,



During his first year on the job, Whitman launched the Illinois Athletics Hall of Fame and celebrated the 28-person inaugural class with a black-tie Gala in Chicago in June 2017.



The Bielema family with Hope and Josh Whitman at Bret Bielema's introductory press conference, Dec. 21, 2020.

men's basketball won the regular season championship in 2022 after taking the tournament title in 2021, men's tennis captured the championship in 2021, and men's gymnastics earned the conference title in 2018.

Whitman's leadership was never more on display than during the COVID-19 pandemic, when care, concern and communication were staples of Illinois Athletics. Illinois was the only athletic program in the Big Ten, and one of the only programs in the country, not to miss a single competition in any sport during the 2020-21 seasons due to COVID-19 disruption in its own program. Financially, Whitman led a department-wide cost containment effort that resulted in more than \$15 million in spending reductions and a final COVID-19-related budget shortfall that was among the lowest in college athletics.

Whitman has executed an aggressive facilities agenda since his hiring. The marquee building is the \$79.2 million, 110,000-square-foot Henry Dale and Betty Smith Football Center, which was formally dedicated in October 2019. A multi-year renovation and expansion of the Ubben Basketball Complex was a \$40 million project that finished in the fall of 2022 and was officially dedicated in February of 2023. Other completed projects include the \$21 million Demirjian Park, home for the Illinois soccer and track and field programs that opened in the spring of 2021, and the \$8 million Susan and Clint Atkins Baseball Training Center and \$6 million Rex and Alice A. Martin Softball Training Center, both dedicated in October of 2022.

To assist Illinois' nationally ranked men's and women's golf programs, Whitman orchestrated the acquisition of the former Stone Creek Golf Club as part of a \$15 million, multi-faceted gift of real estate to the University from long-time friends of Illinois Athletics, the Atkins family. The course, now rebranded the Atkins Golf Club at the University of Illinois, underwent extensive renovations using funds from a \$5 million anonymous gift to provide Illinois Golf with a championship-caliber home.

To support this facility plan and various other strategic initiatives, Whitman has teamed with DIA's Office of Athletic Development to achieve unprecedented success on the fundraising trail. Whitman's arrival synchronized with the public launch and execution of the campus-wide With Illinois fundraising campaign. As part of the With Illinois campaign, DIA secured more than \$321 million in fundraising production, easily surpassing its fundraising goal of \$300 million. The campaign featured several of the largest single gifts in program history, including a \$20 million donation from the H.D. Smith Foundation, led by brothers Dale and Chris Smith, to name Smith Football Center.

Under Whitman's leadership, Illinois is amid six consecutive fiscal years of recording more than \$30 million in new gift commitments (FY18 through FY23), with three consecutive years (FY18 through FY20) exceeding \$40 million. In FY20, Illinois secured more than \$45 million in new gifts, the second-highest single-year total in Illinois Athletics history. In total, DIA has received 45 gifts of \$1 million or more during Whitman's tenure.

Whitman has become a strong advocate and leader in the areas of diversity and inclusion. Shortly after his arrival in 2016, Whitman reorganized the department's leadership structure and charged DIA's first Committee on Diversity and Inclusion. In 2021, he created the first full-time executive leadership position tasked with daily leadership of DIA's diversity and inclusion efforts. During Whitman's tenure, DIA has hosted a Diversity Summit (spring of 2018) and a Title IX Summit (fall of 2022), the latter intended to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Title IX's passage.

In 2016, Whitman announced the creation of the University's Athletics Hall of Fame, which will induct its seventh class in the fall of 2023. In the winter of 2022, following an extensive community effort, the

Illinois High School Association returned its Boys State Basketball Championship series back to State Farm Center, after an absence of more than 25 years.

Whitman has also been a regular presence in Springfield, testifying in committee and working with state lawmakers on a variety of issues impacting college athletics, including name-image-likeness and sports gambling. In the summer of 2020, Whitman joined Governor J.B. Pritzker in State Farm Center while the Governor signed into law the Student-Athlete Endorsement Rights Act, the state's inaugural NIL bill.

Whitman, a former Academic All-American at Illinois, emphasizes strong performance by Fighting Illini student-athletes in the classroom as well. In each year of his tenure, student-athletes have posted a combined GPA of above 3.12. Under Whitman's leadership, the student-athlete population as a whole and individual teams have set school records for GPA, APR scores and GSR scores. Illini student-athletes enter the 2023-24 academic year with a school-record streak of 26-consecutive semesters with a combined GPA above 3.0.

During his tenure, Whitman has become increasingly involved in Big Ten and NCAA governance. From 2021-23 he co-chaired the Big Ten's Administrators' Council and served on the

ILLINOIS ATHLETIC DIRECTOR HISTORY

| | |
|-----------|------------------------------|
| 1892-94 | Edward K. Hall |
| 1894-95 | Fred D. Dodge |
| 1895-98 | Henry H. Everett |
| 1898-1901 | Jacob K. Shell |
| 1901-36 | George A. Huff |
| 1936-41 | Wendell S. Wilson |
| 1941-66 | Douglas R. Mills |
| 1966-67 | Leslie Bryan (interim) |
| 1967-72 | E.E. (Gene) Vance |
| 1972 | Charles E. Flynn (interim) |
| 1972-79 | Cecil N. Coleman |
| 1979 | Ray Eliot (interim) |
| 1980-88 | Neale R. Stoner |
| 1988 | Ronald E. Guenther (interim) |
| 1988 | Dr. Karol A. Kahrs (interim) |
| 1988-91 | John Mackovic |
| 1991-92 | Robert Todd (interim) |
| 1992-2011 | Ronald E. Guenther |
| 2011-15 | Michael J. Thomas |
| 2015-16 | Paul Kowalczyk (interim) |
| 2016- | Josh Whitman |



Whitman and football coach Bret Bielema embrace following Illinois' 9-6 win over Iowa on October 8, 2023, the Illini's fourth straight win in the middle of a six-game winning streak.

Conference's Joint Group Executive Committee. In addition, he represented the Big Ten on the Rose Bowl Management Committee through 2023. Whitman has recently been appointed to two national panels, serving on the NCAA Division I Council and the NCAA Division I Strategic Vision and Planning Committee through 2027. He previously served on two iterations of NCAA working groups that studied and proposed dramatic changes to longstanding transfer policies.

At the time of his hiring in early 2016, Whitman, then at age 37, was the youngest athletics director in the Autonomy 5. Prior to returning to Illinois, Whitman, now 45 years old, spent nearly six years as an athletics director at two universities. He came to Champaign-Urbana following almost two years as director of athletics at Washington University in St. Louis, a nationally recognized NCAA Division III program with 19 varsity sports and approximately 500 student-athletes. Before joining Washington University, Whitman served four years as the director of athletics at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, another of the nation's leading Division III programs. Combined at those two institutions, Whitman's teams earned four national titles and 24 NCAA top-five team finishes, plus 34 conference championships.

Whitman has two Illinois degrees. He graduated with Bronze Tablet honors in 2001 while earning a bachelor's degree in finance. In 2008, he graduated summa cum laude from the Illinois College of Law before serving as a judicial law clerk for Judge Michael Kanne on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. From 2005 to 2008, he worked for DIA and former Illini athletics director Ron Guenther in various administrative capacities.

On the gridiron for the Fighting Illini, Whitman played in 45 games from 1997-2000, catching 52 career passes and seven touchdowns. He was a two-time First Team Academic All-American and earned Honorable Mention All-Big Ten honors his senior season. He then spent parts of four seasons as a player in the National Football League, including stints with the San Diego Chargers, Miami Dolphins, Seattle Seahawks, and Buffalo Bills.

Prior to embarking on his career in athletics administration, Whitman practiced law in Washington, D.C., with Covington & Burling LLP, a firm with a preeminent sports practice that represents, among other clients, the National Football League. Whitman remains a licensed attorney and is a member of the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics and LEAD1 Association. He also served on the national board of directors for the Sports Lawyers Association from 2019-23.

Whitman's leadership has earned national attention, highlighted in early 2018 when Sports Business Journal named him to its prestigious Forty Under 40 list. In July 2017, Whitman was selected Central Illinois Business Magazine's Forty Under 40 Man of the Year.

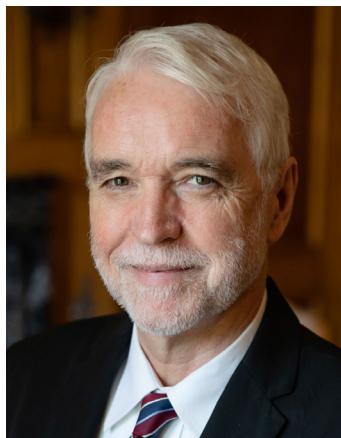
Whitman grew up in West Lafayette, Ind., and is married to Hope Whitman. They have two children: a daughter Tate, who is seven, and a five-year-old son, Will. The Whitmans have become engaged in several Champaign-Urbana community organizations, including United Way, Champaign County Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for Children, Courage Connection, Coaches vs. Cancer, and the Tom Jones Challenger League. Whitman has been recognized as a Paul Harris Fellow by the Champaign Rotary and was recently selected as the 2023 Distinguished Citizen by the Prairieland Council of the Boy Scouts of America. He and Hope are members of the I FUND's Loyalty Circle and made a significant gift to the Smith Football Center to honor football alumni inside the facility.



Whitman played tight end for the Fighting Illini from 1997-2000.



The Whitman family.



TIMOTHY L. KILLEEN

PRESIDENT

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

NINTH YEAR AT ILLINOIS



Timothy L. Killeen is the 20th president of the University of Illinois System, which includes universities in Urbana-Champaign, Chicago and Springfield. He took office in May 2015 and received a new contract in 2020 that extends his term through June 2024.

Since taking office, Killeen has helped lead a surge of growth across the state's flagship university system. Enrollment is at record highs, including increases among in-state and underrepresented students. Student costs have been held in check by affordability initiatives that include a tuition freeze for new Illinois students six of the last eight years and substantial increases in institutional financial aid. Retention and graduation rates top national norms, while student debt rates are lower than U.S. averages. The system plans to add 300 faculty members in three years on top of those hired to fill vacancies. A capital program will build or upgrade nearly 350 facilities over the next decade to ensure classroom and research space matches the system's academic excellence, and the system's largest fundraising campaign ever exceeded its \$3.1 billion goal.

A leading researcher in geophysics and space sciences, Killeen champions efforts to expand research discovery that drives progress and job creation. That includes helping lead the creation of two pioneering initiatives to drive innovation and workforce development – Discovery Partners Institute, a world-class research, technology talent development and business-building center in downtown Chicago, and Illinois Innovation Network, a system of satellite hubs that combine research, public-private partnerships, entrepreneurship and workforce training to spur inclusive economic development across the state.

In alignment with its mission, The University of Illinois System contributes \$19 billion annually to the state's economy through research, hospital and entrepreneurial activities, along with the universities' students, visitors and alumni. A 2022 study showed the system's impact on the state grew by 8.6 percent – roughly \$1.5 billion – since 2018.

In addition, Killeen reaffirmed the system's commitment to the arts and humanities, launching a program that pumped nearly \$3.5 million into faculty initiatives that underscore their importance to a well-rounded education.

The ongoing growth is rooted in the Strategic Framework that Killeen helped develop early in his presidency to guide the U of I System for the next decade. The roadmap set high-aspiration goals to make the U of I System a model for higher education in the 21st century, and build on its more than 150-year legacy of service to students, innovation and the public good.

In 2021, Killeen launched the annual U of I System leadership state tour with the goal of connecting with businesses, communities, schools, lawmakers, alumni and more to strengthen existing partnerships and forge new ones that improve the lives of Illinois residents.

When he joined the U of I System, Killeen brought more than three decades of experience as an educator, researcher and administrator in public higher education and in leadership positions with national scientific research agencies.

Earlier, he served as vice chancellor for research and president of the Research Foundation at the State University of New York, one of the nation's largest higher education systems. He also served as assistant director for geosciences at the National Science Foundation (NSF), as the Lyall Research Professor at the University of Colorado, and as director and senior scientist for the National Center for Atmospheric Research. Additionally, Killeen spent more than 20 years as a

faculty member and researcher at the University of Michigan, where he also served as associate vice president for research.

He was elected to the National Academy of Engineering in 2007, and is a member and past president of the American Geophysical Union and a fellow of the American Meteorological Society and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Killeen has authored more than 150 publications in peer-reviewed journals, along with more than 300 other publications and papers.

A native of Wales and a U.S. citizen, Killeen received his bachelor's degree in physics and astronomy at University College London, where he also earned his doctoral degree in atomic and molecular physics and was later awarded an honorary doctorate degree for his significant contribution to research.

Killeen's wife, Roberta M. Johnson, holds B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees in geophysics and space physics from the University of California, Los Angeles. She has published more than 60 peer-reviewed papers, review articles, abstracts and non-referred reports and articles in the area of upper mesosphere and lower thermosphere research, as well as on educational programs.

She was a research physicist at SRI International in Menlo Park, Calif., from 1987-89. She continued her research at the University of Michigan Space Physics Research Laboratory as a research scientist from 1989-2000. While at the University of Michigan, beginning in 1995, she initiated the Windows to the Universe project, which brings multi-level scientific background content and new research results to students, educators and the public, and continues to the present day.

From 2000-10, Johnson served as the founding director of education and outreach at the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colo., and a scientist at the High Altitude Observatory from 2000-11. From 2006-15, she directed the National Earth Science Teachers Association. From 2012-15, she served as a clinical professor at the State University of New York at Albany in the Department of Atmospheric and Environmental Sciences.

Johnson has extensive experience advising NASA, NSF and professional societies on topics in education and outreach, the uses of cyber-infrastructure for education and diversity, and has served on numerous advisory boards for projects in these areas. She led an ad hoc review of science education for the International Council for Science in 2010, and served as a member of the National Academy of Sciences Climate Change Education Roundtable from 2010-12.

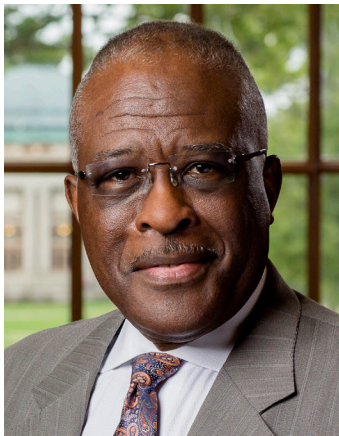
In 2016, she was recognized with the American Geophysical Union's Athelstan Spilhaus Award for her work to bring the excitement and beauty of the geosciences to the public. In 2017, she received the National Earth Science Teachers Association Jan Woerner and Harold B. Stonehouse Lifetime Achievement Award.

The Killeens have three children and two grandsons.

2023-24 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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ROBERT J. JONES

CHANCELLOR

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

EIGHTH YEAR AT ILLINOIS



Robert J. Jones became chancellor of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign on September 26, 2016. He previously served as president of the University at Albany, State University of New York (SUNY) and is an experienced and accomplished scientist and research university leader.

At the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Jones serves as chancellor of the state's flagship, land-grant university. At Urbana, Jones' tenured faculty home is in the Department of Crop Sciences, College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES). Jones is the first African American scholar appointed as Urbana chancellor since the office was created in 1967. He is the current Chair of the Board of Directors for the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), serves on the Big Ten Council of Presidents and Chancellors and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

At Illinois, he launched a year-long celebration of the university's Sesquicentennial that honored its history while establishing a new vision of the land-grant university for the 21st century. Under his leadership that future is taking shape quickly and visibly. The university recently completed a \$2.7 billion philanthropic campaign that was the largest in the university's history and included two of the largest private gifts ever made to Illinois. He has implemented the vision of creating the Carle Illinois College of Medicine, the first engineering-based medical school in the world. The hiring of an inaugural vice chancellor for diversity, education and inclusion was a major step in fostering an even more open and collaborative community of students and faculty. And with the Illinois Commitment, a program that guarantees four years free tuition to state residents with family incomes less than \$67,100, Jones has continued to deliver on the university's founding promise of making a world-class college education affordable and accessible.

A Georgia native, Jones, earned a bachelor's degree in agronomy from Fort Valley State College, a master's degree in crop physiology from the University of Georgia, and a doctorate in crop physiology from the University of Missouri, Columbia. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and is a fellow of the American Society of Agronomy and the Crop Science Society of America. He began his academic career as a faculty member at Minnesota in 1978 and became an internationally respected authority on plant physiology.

Throughout his distinguished, 34-year career at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus, Jones held several progressively responsible positions at the Big Ten institution. While senior vice president for system academic administration, Jones had administrative and budgetary responsibilities for the four constituent campuses in Duluth, Crookston, Morris and Rochester and the offices for public engagement, equity and diversity, Extension Service, Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Stations, information technology and human resources.

From Minnesota, Jones became the President of the University at Albany, one of SUNY system's leading research universities. During his tenure there, Jones launched that university's largest and most strategic academic expansion in 50 years.

Throughout his career, Jones has worked to make education available to promising young scholars around the world. From 1984-1994, he worked with Archbishop Desmond Tutu's South African Education Program (as an academic and scientific consultant) which educated more than 3,000 black South Africans in American Universities.

Jones is married to Dr. Lynn Hassan Jones, MD, a muscular skeletal diagnostic radiologist. Together they have five children and a growing number of grandchildren.

