

# PLANNING COMMITTEE BIOGRAPHIES

## 2018 Fall Retreat



**Jenny Russell, Merck Family Fund, 2018 Retreat Co-Chair**

Jenny Russell has been Executive Director of the Merck Family Fund since 1998. The Fund has been a leader in funding and initiating collaboratives related to consumption, land protection, urban green space, and youth organizing. In the past few years she has led the Fund's interest in applying a climate lens to all programs and investments. Prior to this position, Jenny headed the Island Foundation, another family foundation based in Marion, MA.



**Melanie Allen, Mary Babcock Reynolds Foundation 2018 Retreat Co-Chair**

With 12 years in the nonprofit, philanthropic and public sectors, Allen has considerable experience facilitating community-based solutions that ensure those most affected by policy are centered in the decision-making process. She also has a strong background with community development projects in many sectors, including affordable housing, food security, and rural and workforce development. Allen came to the Foundation from the Conservation Trust for North Carolina, where she served as Diversity and Equity Director for four years and Conservation and Diversity Coordinator for two. She has developed curricula to help organizations identify and dismantle systemic inequality, and taught a graduate-level course on diversity, inclusion and equity at Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment.



**Phil Johnson, Program Director, The Heinz Endowments, 2018 Retreat Board Liaison**

Philip Johnson is director of The Heinz Endowments' Environment & Health Program, which is part of the foundation's Sustainability team and focuses on Clean Economy and Environmental & Public Health goals. He currently manages a grants portfolio and community initiatives that focus on environmental systems (including air and water), public health, susceptible populations and vulnerable communities, as well as energy impacts and alternative energy, green infrastructure, community resilience and climate change. Prior to joining the Endowments, Phil worked for government agencies and nonprofits in fisheries/ecological restoration, public health and environmental science. Phil received his Master of Public Health, Master of Environmental Science and PhD in Risk

Management from Yale University. Phil is chair emeritus of the Health & Environmental Funders Network and serves on the board of Environmental Grantmakers Association.



**Paul Beaudet, Wilburforce Foundation**

Paul Beaudet, Executive Director, leads the foundation’s regional and crosscutting program teams, manages the foundation’s capacity building program, and oversees the administrative, financial, planning, evaluation, and communication functions of the Foundation. Paul originally joined Wilburforce in 1999 as Program Officer for Evaluation, and served as Associate Director between 2002 and 2016. Prior to his work at Wilburforce, he was Associate Director of the

Pride Foundation, strengthening the LGBT community in the Pacific Northwest. Paul served for seven years as Chair of the Program Strategies Committee and Vice Chair of the Board of the Environmental Grantmakers Association. Paul earned a Masters in Nonprofit Leadership from Seattle University in 1996, and later served on the program’s Visiting Committee and as adjunct faculty. He and his husband split their time between Seattle and Guemes Island.



**Heidi Binko, Just Transition Fund/RFF**

Heidi is the co-founder and executive director of the Just Transition Fund, which she created with her partner in April 2015. Previously, Heidi served as associate director of Special Climate Initiatives at the Rockefeller Family Fund (RFF). Since October 2008, she has worked closely with key foundations, organizations, and thought leaders working at the nexus of climate and coal in that role. Before joining RFF, she was the executive director of the West Wind Foundation, and also served as co-chair of the board of directors of the

Environmental Grantmakers Association (EGA) and co-chair of the Climate and Energy Funders Group, a project of the Biodiversity Funders Group. She holds degrees from the University of Notre Dame and the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.



**Dennis Creech, The Kendeda Fund**

Dennis joined The Kendeda Fund in 2017 and serves as the fund advisor for a variety of sustainability initiatives in the southeast. In 1978, Dennis co-founded Southface, an Atlanta-based nonprofit promoting sustainable homes, workplaces and communities. He ran the organization for 38 years, and under his direction Southface has become a trusted partner to federal and local governments, utilities, businesses and nonprofits, as well as a valuable resource to consumers. Recognized as a national leader in sustainability, Dennis

has received numerous professional awards, including the prestigious Hanley Award for Leadership in Sustainable Housing, the Argon Award for Leadership in Sustainability, the Energy and Environmental Building Alliance Legacy Award, the Residential Energy Services Network



Environmental Grantmakers Association

Leadership Award, and lifetime achievement awards from the Atlanta Business Chronicle, GreenLaw, Georgia Interfaith Power and Light, the Greater Atlanta Home Builders Association and Urban Land Institute, Atlanta District. He has been designated by Georgia Trend as one of the “100 Most Influential Georgians.”



**Ella Delio, Greater New Orleans Foundation**

Elaine “Ella” Delio joined the staff of the Greater New Orleans Foundation as director of Environmental and Regional Initiatives in September 2014. Previously, she was executive vice president and managing partner at Savior Media, a Boston-based strategic communications firm. Prior to that role, Ella worked in Washington, D.C., at the World Resources Institute, an environmental think tank, where she served as Global Director of the New Ventures program. Ms. Delio received her MBA and MPA degrees from the Harvard Business School and Harvard Kennedy School and her Management Engineering and Economics degrees from the Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines. She was awarded the Don K. Price Award by the Harvard Kennedy School for academic distinction and leadership in public service.



**Allie Garret, Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation**

Allie Garret is an Associate Program Officer at the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation. Allie joined the Foundation in 2015 as the 2015-2017 Fellow. In January 2017, she transitioned to the role of Associate Program Officer, in which she led the Foundation's Democracy and Environment portfolios. Allie now leads the Environment portfolio. Prior to joining the Foundation, Allie received her undergraduate degree in Sustainable Development from Appalachian State University in Boone, NC. While at Appalachian, Allie coordinated service-learning programs, chaired and served on a committee that aims to reduce the university's carbon footprint, and worked as a Resident Assistant. Allie is a native of the mountains of Western North Carolina.



**Lavastian Glenn, Mary Babcock Reynolds Foundation**

Lavastian Glenn directs the Program Team and the Foundation's efforts in mission investing, including program-related investments. Lavastian also is responsible for strategic grantmaking, relationship and network development in South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama. Prior to joining the foundation in 2007, Lavastian served as Executive Director of Neighbors for Better Neighborhoods (NBN), a grassroots support organization in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Lavastian received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology from Wake Forest



Environmental Grantmakers Association

University. Lavastian serves on the steering committee of Grantmakers for Southern Progress.



**Jessica Halverson, Hewlett Foundation**

Jessica Halverson is a Grants Officer in Environment at the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. She works across the grantmaking portfolio on the program's strategies in climate change, clean energy, and conservation. She also works on the foundation's efforts to build more financially resilient nonprofit organizations. Previously, Jessica was a senior manager at Ceres, a nonprofit organization advocating for sustainability leadership in the private sector. From 2007 to 2012 she was Treasurer of the Board of Directors for Our Bodies Ourselves, a global women's health organization. Jessica graduated with a bachelor's degree in sociology from Grinnell College and holds an MBA with concentrations in nonprofit management and strategy and innovation from Boston University's Graduate School of Management.



**Jean-Ann James, Turner Foundation**

As Program Associate, Jean-Ann James helps to implement the Foundation's programs supporting clean air/energy, urban sustainability, and growing and diversifying the movement. Jean-Ann received her PhD in Environmental Engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology, with a concentration in Sustainable Urban Systems. She has a wealth of volunteer and leadership experience with Engineers without Borders, Georgia Tech education programs for high school students, and local nonprofits Atlanta Audubon and Greenhouse Accelerator (a nonprofit green business accelerator).



**Jane Patterson, Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation**

Jane Smith Patterson is an advisor to Governor Jim Hunt for science and technology and prior to that as Chief Administrator of the business side of the North Carolina State Government under Governor Hunt. She was the Vice President of ITT Networks Systems Group which became Alcatel. They worked in 120 countries on networks systems and developed the first digital system switch and the first fiber network in the world. Patterson is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and has completed post-graduate degree work at N.C. State University and additional studies at Harvard University. She serves on a number of boards for nonprofit organizations, including the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation.



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**Michael Roberts, 11th Hour Project**

Michael Roberts is a Program Manager on the Ecological Agriculture team of The 11th Hour Project, a program of The Schmidt Family Foundation. Michael oversees the team’s Regional Food Systems portfolio and supports movement-building efforts, with a focus on California. He was a founding funder of the San Joaquin Valley Sustainable Agriculture and Environmental Justice collaborative, working to advance agricultural and environmental policy towards justice for communities bearing the burden of the California food system. Michael

also lead’s the foundation’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiative.



**Arlene Rodriguez, Colorado Plateau Foundation**

Along with her certification in professional coaching, Arlene brings over 35 years of experience in the non-profit, public, and philanthropic sectors in program development and delivery, senior management, collaboration and partnership building, strategic planning and program delivery, organizational development and sustainability, and grantmaking. Arlene is currently the principal consultant at ARC Associates and an acting senior fellow with Regional Plan Association in New York. In the past, Arlene has served as Director of Membership and Public Engagement for Living Cities, Director of Environment at the

San Francisco Foundation and led the foundation’s Organizational Resiliency Program. Arlene was also one of the first Program Officers at the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. She recently served on the board of directors for the Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation and is on the Board of the Center for Environmental Health.



**Christine Reeves Strigaro, Sapelo Foundation**

Christine Reeves Strigaro is the Executive Director of The Sapelo Foundation, a private family foundation in Savannah, GA with a mission to: “promote progressive social change affecting vulnerable populations, rural communities, and the natural environment in the state of Georgia.” Active in national and Georgia communities, Christine serves on the board of Funders Committee for Civic Participation and on the public policy committee of Georgia Grantmakers Alliance. Previously, she served as Director of Foundation Programs at Alliance for Justice and Senior Field Associate at National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy. She also served on the boards of Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy and Alliance for Nonprofit Management. Christine graduated Phi

Beta Kappa and magna cum laude from Emory University in Atlanta, GA. She earned her master’s degree from Duke University’s Terry Sanford School of Public Policy in Durham, NC.



Environmental Grantmakers Association



**Rachael Young, Mertz Gilmore Foundation**

Rachael Young is a Program Officer at the Mertz Gilmore Foundation in New York City. She manages grantmaking initiatives for two program areas, one supporting efforts to fight climate change in a just and equitable way, and the other supporting local community organizing and advocacy across a range of social and economic justice issues. Rachael previously held positions in philanthropy and local government. Born and raised in Asheville, North Carolina, she received a B.A. from UNC-Chapel Hill and an M.P.A. from New York University. She lives in New York with her husband and toddler son.