

Discoveries in Safety™

Building the Future of Safety Science

Office of Research
Experiences & Education



Research
Institutes

Research Experiences
& Education



Building the Future of Safety Science

Stories of how we're educating, inspiring, and uplifting future generations of scientific thinkers, bringing them into places to explore the science of safety and discovery, inviting them to share their voices, and empowering them to make decisions.



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Letter from the Senior Director

At UL Research Institutes' (ULRI) Office of Research Experiences and Education (OREE), **building the future of safety science** is our mission. That means educating, engaging, inspiring, and uplifting future generations of scientific thinkers, bringing them into places to explore the science of safety and discovery, inviting them to share their voices, and empowering them to make decisions. Because it's their future and their lives that are impacted by the real-world problems ULRI is seeking to solve.

To do this, we're intentional about workforce and research development supporting students

and boosting their career readiness through programs that help students enter the workforce with a well-rounded understanding and knowledge of safety science research, professional development opportunities, and hope for the future.

At OREE, we're **rethinking** education across the continuum from middle school to graduate school, **reinventing** how we create persistence in careers, particularly for overlooked students, and **reworking** how we support high school, college, and graduate students along with their educators in communities and classrooms.



Kelly Keena, PhD
Senior Director
Office of Research
Experiences & Education
UL Research Institutes



I'm thrilled we are kicking off an annual publication that shares the stories of students and educators who were part of launching several new programs in our office in 2023, including the following:

- The teacher fellowship programs help us live our mission of supporting educators in their communities and connecting them to the discoveries at UL Research Institutes.
- Our internship programs include high school students, undergraduates, and graduate fellows providing professional development and mentorship support that promote persistence in rewarding, yet challenging, careers.

These programs are grounded in the applied expertise of our team in the field of secondary to postsecondary teaching and learning, as well as research conducted by our team to understand the needs of our audiences and areas where we are able to address those needs. We're excited to share these profiles of students and educators who spent their valuable time and efforts with ULRI and OREE this year.

If you'd like to learn more about getting involved with our work, please reach out. We're looking forward to continuing our collaborations and connections to build the future of safety science rooted in equity and access.



STEM Career Access Begins Early

Cristo Rey Corporate Work-Study Program

A student's pathway into safety science requires awareness, knowledge, and skills along their journey through middle and high school, and into their career or college experiences. By creating access early along that pathway, we stand a greater chance of encouraging and engaging talented students in STEM careers.

The Office of Research Experiences and Education's mission is to build the future of safety science through equity and access. Through a partnership with Cristo Rey St. Martin (CRSM), located in Waukegan, IL, the office is working to fulfill that mission by bringing high school students into the professional world of safety science at UL

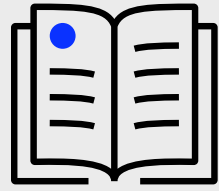
Research Institutes. The partnership with CRSM's Corporate Work-Study Program supports equity building by removing institutional barriers to engage underrepresented and under-resourced high school students with professional networks and environments. By engaging with CRSM students throughout their high school career, there is potential to ignite their interest in STEM fields and provide exposure in safety science career options.

Eight high school student interns currently work alongside UL Research Institutes' communications team as well as OREE's education and communications teams, collaborating on projects that

bring positive impact to the organization. Students work remotely on projects such as user-experience testing on UL Research Institutes' websites, internal communications writing, and offering valuable feedback on ULRI materials targeted toward secondary students.

The partnership will continue in coming years, offering students access to safety science careers they might not have otherwise considered and providing opportunities to build knowledge and skills in the safety sciences. Institutes and offices are welcome to host a student intern in their areas with support from OREE.





Cristo Rey 2023-24 Cohort

- **Allison Izaguirre Morazan,** *Freshman*
- **Camila Valenzuela,** *Freshman*
- **Valerie Martinez,** *Sophomore*
- **Romeo Young,** *Sophomore*
- **Jacquelin Garcia,** *Junior*
- **Derrick Gonzalez,** *Junior*
- **Jason Gonzalez,** *Senior*
- **Israel Zarate,** *Senior*

“ The Cristo Rey Corporate Work Study Program creates meaningful opportunities for their students to gain invaluable work experience. UL Research Institutes is proud to partner with Cristo Rey to provide students with knowledge and experience that not only prepares them for college, but also enables them to compete with their peers in the global marketplace.

Terrence Brady

President and CEO of UL Research Institutes
Board Chair of UL Standards & Engagement



Persistence in STEM

OREE engages undergraduate, graduate, postgraduate, and early career professionals to create persistence in STEM.

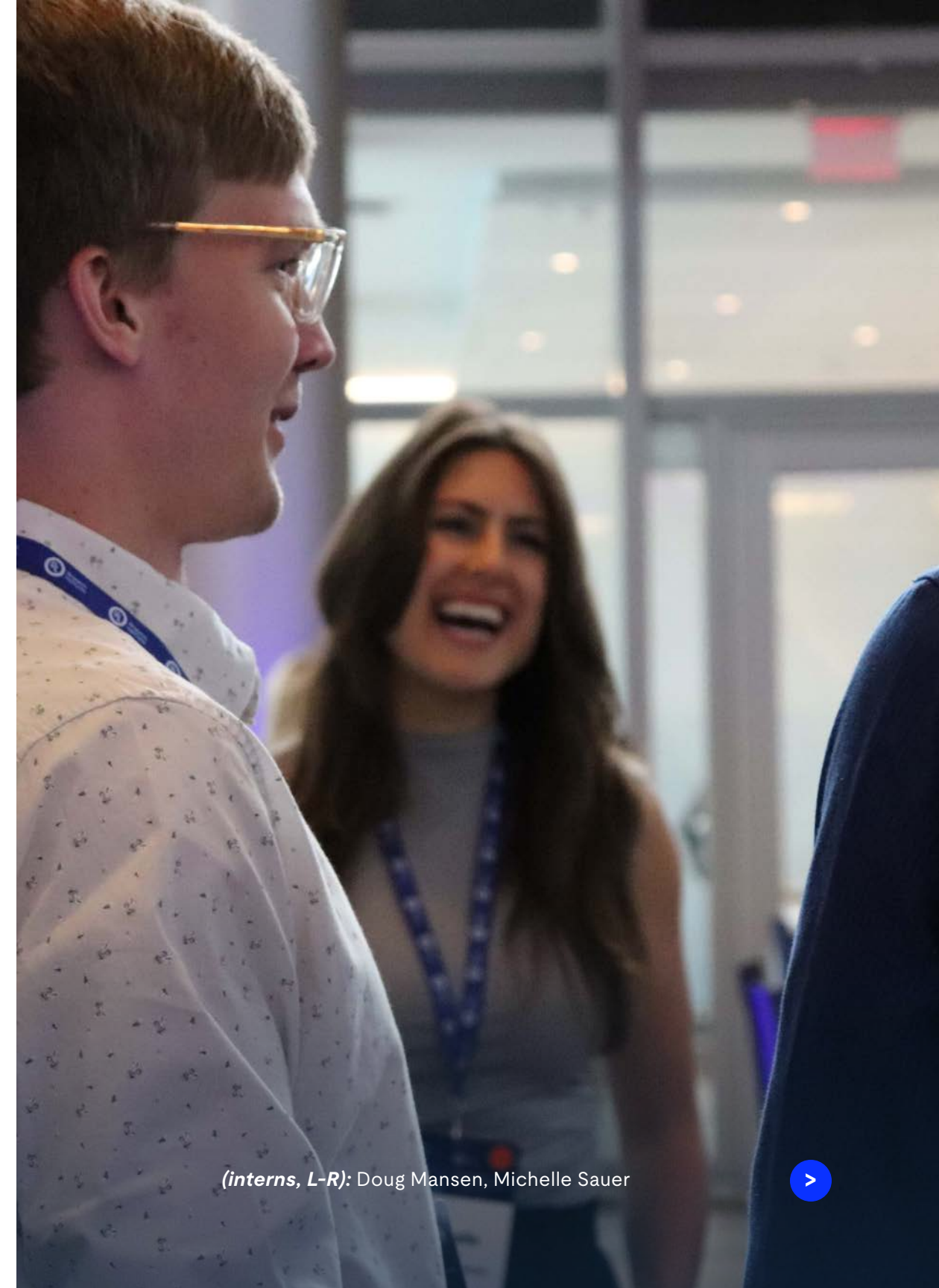
Internships allow students to discover and explore different career paths, network, and gain confidence in the workplace. The Office of Research Experiences and Education (OREE) strives to help students gain access to those internships and creates awareness of STEM careers they may never have encountered in their coursework.

OREE developed and piloted the Intern Engagement Initiative to support and engage interns and early career professionals across UL Research Institutes (ULRI) and UL Standards and Engagement (ULSE) through professional development, mentorship, and connection building. The initiative seeks to increase connection between the interns and the larger ULRI/ULSE organizations as well as to support relationship building, networking, and confidence in the workplace.

The initiative also supports early career professionals beginning their careers at ULRI/ULSE, and it supports a transition from intern to full-time employee.

In the pilot cohort, 10 interns and early career professionals participated in trainings, workshops, and mentorship meetings with one of three Drexel University mentors certified in culturally responsive mentoring. The interns also presented research posters at the 2023 ULRI Research Symposium, where more than 300 experts in research and STEM fields were in attendance. Interns have a major impact every year and leave behind a legacy in their departments and across the organization.

Persistence in STEM is supported by OREE at the graduate and doctoral levels through our participation and support with the National Graduate Education for Minorities (GEM) Consortium. GEM aims to increase recruitment and retention of underrepresented students, including African Americans, American Indians, and Hispanic Americans, in masters- and doctoral-level science and engineering programs. ULRI became a GEM Employer Member in 2022, hosting paid summer interns finishing their graduate programs. ULRI and ULSE supported two GEM fellows in 2022 and one fellow in 2023.



(interns, L-R): Doug Mansen, Michelle Sauer





“ The future of safety science relies on diverse talent and STEM expertise that GEM continues to supply through its research fellowships and corporate partnerships. My first research experience was a result of my GEM fellowship, and the learnings that I gained have supported me in various engineering roles, including my current role within ULSE.

Denice Durrant

Director of Engineering
& Data Science
UL Standards & Engagement

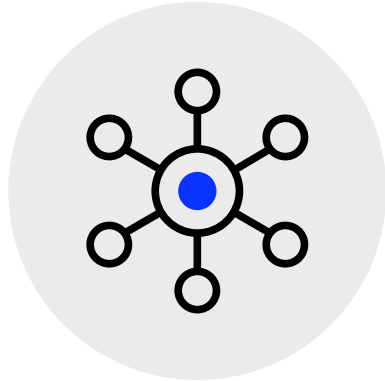
“ It was an honor to help the interns and early career professionals reflect and distill their individual experiences and learnings and then communicate, own, and articulate these gains into actionable tools to support and refine future career aspirations.

Merle Ward

Senior Talent Acquisition Advisor
Human Resources
UL Research Institutes

(intern): Omid Ahmadzadeh





Intern Engagement Initiative Participants

- **Omid Ahmadzadeh**, *Intern*
- **Alexis Castillo**, *Intern*
- **Rebecca Kamensky**, *Intern*
- **Max Marino**, *Intern*
- **James McCaan**, *Intern*
- **Jordan Pearson**, *Intern*
- **Naya Quartey**, *Intern*
- **Michelle Sauer**, *Intern*
- **Doug Mansen**,
Early Career Professional
- **Madi Michael**,
Early Career Professional



(interns, L-R): Rebecca Kamensky, Doug Mansen, Alexis Castillo, Jordan Pearson, Michelle Sauer, Madi Michael, Omid Ahmadzadeh



Alexis Castillo

Communications Intern, Fire Safety Research Institute
UL Research Institutes | **Supervisor: Nicole Sanders**

Alexis Castillo is a first-generation college student, an optimist, and a connoisseur of creativity. With her skills in copywriting and content development, she's lending her talents to UL Research Institutes as a communications intern with the Fire Safety Research Institute (FSRI).

Castillo's role is to amplify the Institutes' research, resources, and educational content with an audience of fire safety professionals. Together with her team and the subject matter experts within the institute, Castillo combines creativity and organization to support the institute's mission, message, and goals.

As a child, Castillo attended six elementary schools and moved around often. That experience lent itself to helping her develop the skills she uses every day now in her current role.

"I was used to being the new kid, and I think this helped me develop my people skills and brought out the extrovert in me," she said. "I love people—I love working together,

collaborating, helping, and leading."

Together with her team, Castillo shares the important, relevant messages of FSRI with the fire safety community and informs them of the resources available through FSRI. She says this role is important to her and her future career because of the new skills she's learned, the network she's created, and how it's impacted the way she navigates the STEM field as a non-STEM major.

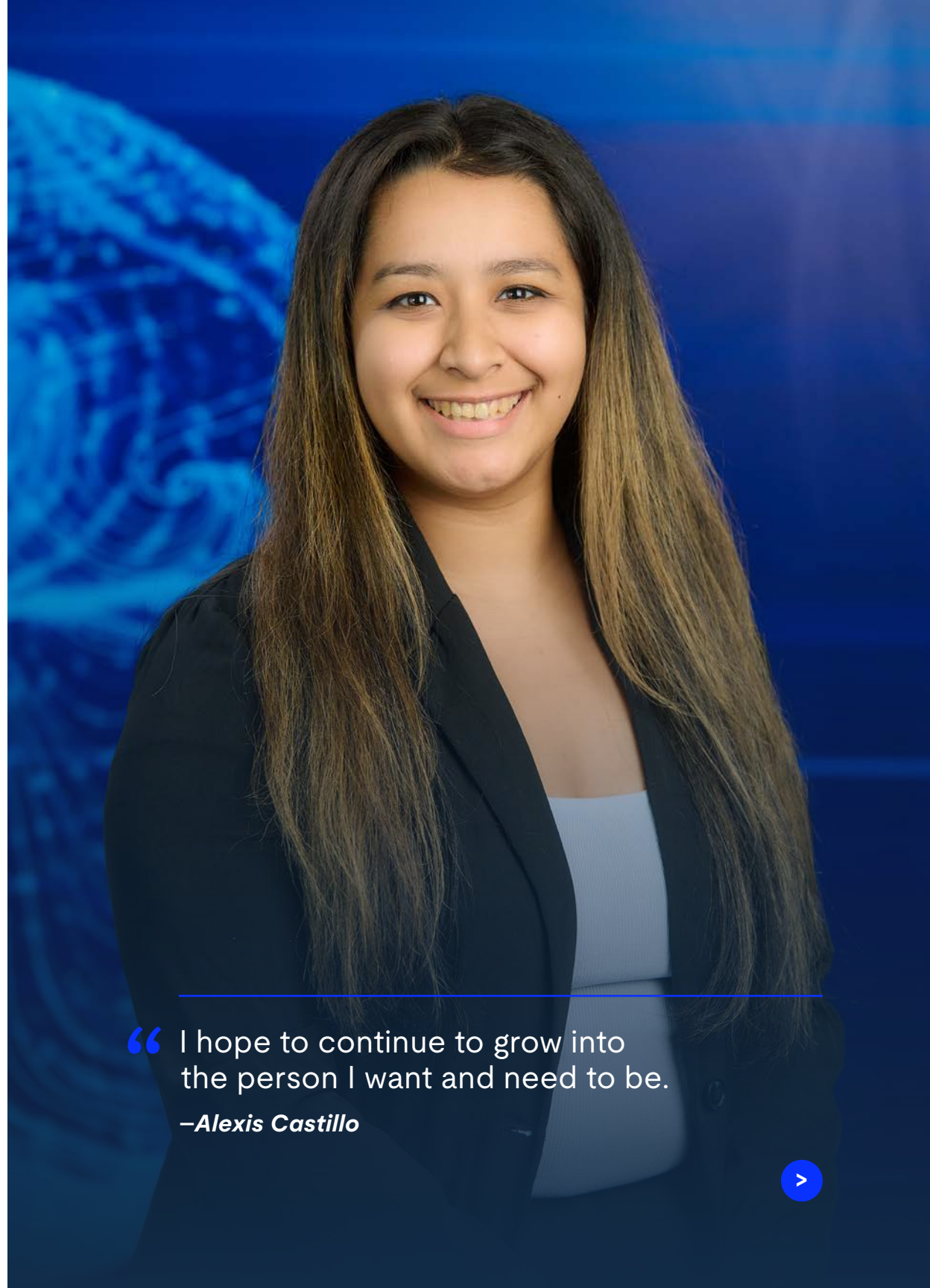
"I get to help people be in the know," she said. "It's meaningful to me to be able to let people know about the resources we've created and share out the accomplishments of our team with the niche, but incredibly supportive, community that works in the fire safety field."

At the conclusion of her internship and beyond, Castillo hopes the future holds a lot of highs and things that bring joy into her life.

"I hope to continue to grow into the person I want and need to be," she said.

“I hope to continue to grow into the person I want and need to be.

—Alexis Castillo



Jordan Pearson

Multimedia Intern, Fire Safety Research Institute
UL Research Institutes | **Supervisor: Kelsey Biggs**

UL Research Institutes' Fire Safety Research Institute (FSRI) helps educate fire safety professionals and the public on fire safety and prevention through a variety of educational resources and programs. Responsible for the media creation of those resources, Jordan Pearson is helping support the continued education of fire professionals nationwide.

Pearson is a game development and programming major and has a deep passion for animation and visually interactive storytelling. In his role at FSRI, he manages media assets, creates files, and edits videos to be used for the production team, and he creates 3D visuals for experiment layouts. His work has a major impact on FSRI's resources for fire safety professionals. Pearson recognizes this and says media is not only a tool for viewing material but for making a real difference.

"This internship will impact my career in the future because it taught me to always strive for better in my work," he said. "I have learned to always push for the highest quality possible with a key attention to detail."

Pearson hopes that the impact of his work is felt not only at FSRI but throughout the fire service.

"It's inspiring and a pleasure to be able to work alongside the people who dedicate their time to keep their loved ones and others around the country safe," he said.

“It's inspiring and a pleasure to be able to work alongside the people who dedicate their time to keep their loved ones and others around the country safe.

—Jordan Pearson



Naya Quartey

Communications Intern, Fire Safety Research Institute
UL Research Institutes | **Supervisor: Dawn Ey**

Fire safety professionals across the nation know what UL Research Institutes' Fire Safety Research Institute (FSRI) is, what it provides, and how it can help develop their skills as fire professionals and increase their safety as well as the safety of the public. Naya Quartey had a part to play in building that strong brand image and sharing the important work of the FSRI.

A college senior double majoring in English and communications, Quartey supports the FSRI team as a communications intern. In her role, she's attentive to detail, engaged with subject matter experts across the field, and organized in her message delivery.

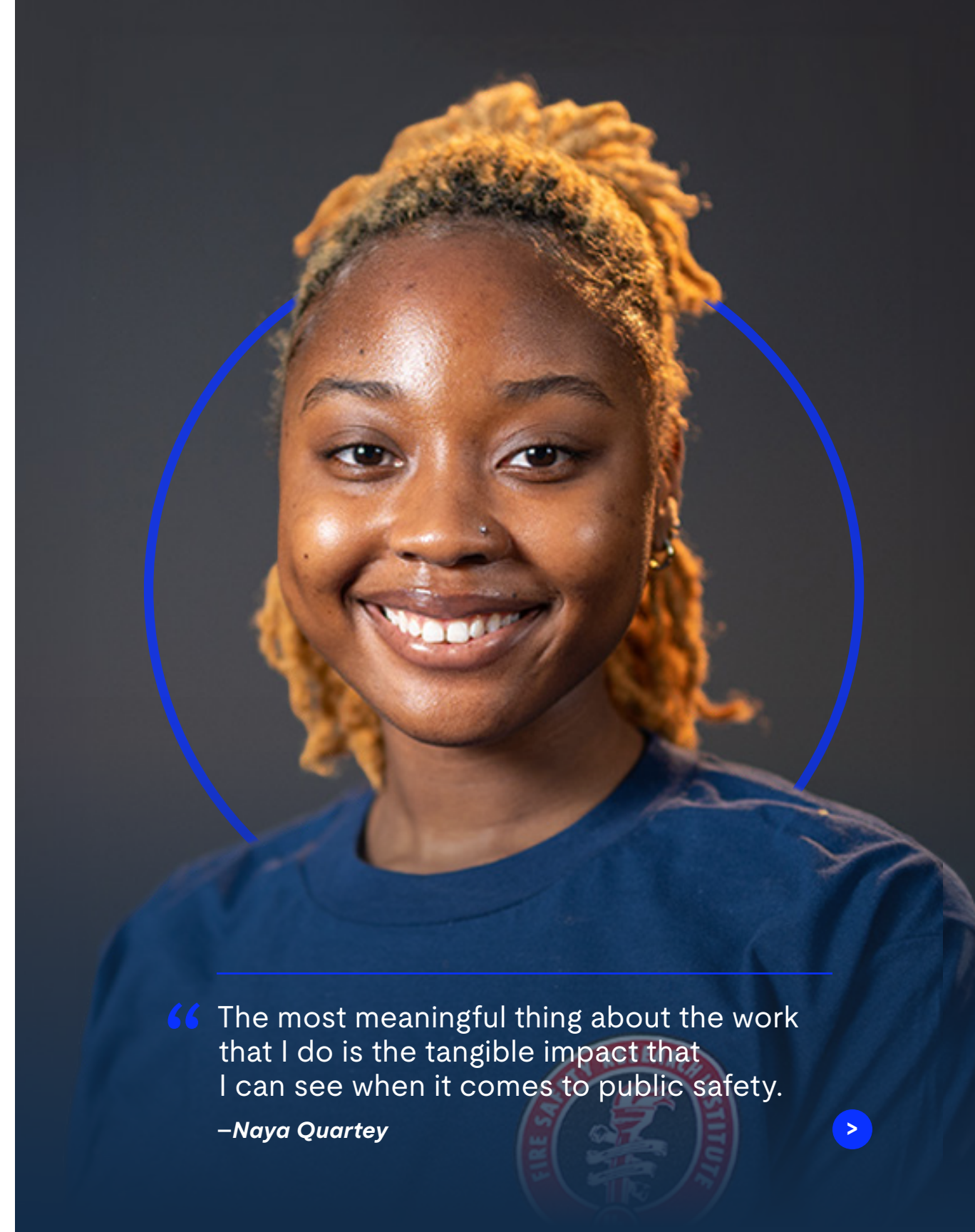
"The most meaningful thing about the work that I do is the tangible impact that I can see when it comes to public safety," she said.

Quartey's experience with writing and communications started long before her college career—she remembers writing stories in elementary school and crafting stories later on for classmates to read. She said that's what made her realize how much she loved writing and getting feedback from others on her stories.

Quartey brings a lot to the table at FSRI and hopes that her warmth and willingness to reach out to people will be what she's remembered for after her internship ends.

“The most meaningful thing about the work that I do is the tangible impact that I can see when it comes to public safety.

—Naya Quartey



Michelle Sauer

Instructional Design Intern, Fire Safety Research Institute
UL Research Institutes | **Supervisor: Angie Bennett**

Michelle Sauer always thought her career path would be education. Moving around constantly in her childhood, Sauer always felt welcomed by her teachers, and it made her want to have a positive impact on others' social and emotional well-being through teaching.

After a few years of teaching middle school, Sauer realized that she was still missing a sense of fulfillment that she needed in her life, which led her to an unlikely new place of work—the Fire Safety Research Institute (FSRI) at UL Research Institutes.

In her internship, Sauer focused on reducing cardiovascular and cancer risks on the fireground. Sauer now works as an instructional designer for FSRI, making interactive training modules for fire departments to use for the purpose of developing safer and more effective practices.

“I’m so glad my work contributes to the safety of firefighters around the world while also granting me the space to cultivate my interests,” she said. “I’ve found a new field that I love, and instructional design has many pathways for growth.”

At the end of last school year, Sauer didn’t see her path diverging from the middle school classroom. Now, she believes the possibilities are endless for combining her passion for public service and her interest in curriculum development. She said her new role has brought her the happiness and fulfillment she sought.

“Every lesson I contribute to helps to keep firefighters safe,” she said. “These are the people who put their health and safety on the line every day for the sake of others. What could be more meaningful than helping them keep themselves safe while they save others?”

A portrait of Michelle Sauer, a woman with long brown hair, smiling. She is wearing a dark blue shirt with a red and white circular logo on the left chest. The background is dark blue with a thin blue circle around her head.

“Every lesson I contribute to helps to keep firefighters safe. These are the people who put their health and safety on the line every day for the sake of others. What could be more meaningful than helping them keep themselves safe while they save others?”

—Michelle Sauer





“Engaging young professionals in a program like this is hugely valuable because it creates a tangible connection between their individual contributions and the work of the organization as a whole to advance our safety mission. This shared experience shows them the possibilities of where their STEM career can take them.

Zoe Susice

Senior Director of Research Amplification
Fire Safety Research Institute
UL Research Institutes

(interns, L-R): Jordan Pearson, Doug Mansen





Madi Michael

Instructional Design Specialist,
Fire Safety Research Institute
UL Research Institutes

Madi Michael serves as an instructional design specialist with the Fire Safety Research Institute. In her role, she works closely with fire safety scientists and engineers to translate research findings into educational content that informs industry best practice, safety procedures, and behavior change for the fire service. She creates learning experiences that bridge the gap between research and practice, and she enjoys learning from fire service members about the ways they continue to build on that research in their areas. Michael started at UL Research Institutes as an intern.



Doug Mansen

Associate Multimedia Designer,
Fire Safety Research Institute
UL Research Institutes

Doug Mansen is an associate multimedia designer with the Fire Safety Research Institute, where he records and edits video and audio. He holds a degree in electronic media and film with a concentration in audio, and he feels that the internship has offered him a perfect fit for gaining experience in his field. Mansen feels the most meaningful part of the work he does is learning how FSRI has made a significant difference in the lives of firefighters and fire safety personnel. Mansen started at UL Research Institutes as an intern.

The Next Generation of Safety Scientists Begins with Educators

Building the future of safety science is the goal of the Office of Research Experiences & Education at ULRI. A key step in educating future safety scientists is engaging teachers in safety science research and providing resources they can use to educate their students.

As a leader in the field of safety science, ULRI supports excellent teaching by providing access to cutting-edge information, expert explanation of content, and deep understanding of safety science to help them feel empowered to leverage real safety science phenomena in their unique classrooms.

The ULRI OREE fellowship seeks to address a disconnect between what's taught in the science classroom and how it translates to future careers and scientific literacy. Teachers are given perspective on how discoveries in safety science are made at ULRI and then challenged to translate the knowledge and skills into relevant and

meaningful experiences for students. The 2023 teacher fellows are developing lessons utilizing Xplorlabs resources and ULRI research.

Through this unique, yearlong fellowship opportunity, OREE supports six public school teachers from various classroom settings across the nation to utilize safety science research in their classrooms in innovative ways. The teacher fellows were invited to participate in the 2023 ULRI Annual Research Symposium, where they attended sessions, met ULRI researchers, and gained a deeper understanding of safety science innovations. Kara Reeder, a 2023 ULRI fellow, described her symposium experience in three words: connected, inspired, and appreciated.

At the end of the fellowship, educators will share their learnings and experiences with other educators in their professional communities and circles, serving as mentors for the mission of building the future of safety science.





(ULRI fellows and others, L-R): Megan O’Keeffe, Ethan Schubert, Charley Sabatier, Kara Reeder, Kelly Keena

“Xplorlabs was the catalyst to ignite a transformational partnership between UL, Cobb County Fire Service, and Cobb Schools. The opportunity for students to apply what they’ve been learning in an authentic real-world scenario is what our schools need. Xplorlabs helps our teachers deepen their content knowledge of science concepts and pedagogy.

Dr. Sally Creel

STEM & Innovation Supervisor
Cobb County School District
Marietta, GA

2023 ULRI Xplorlabs Fellows

- **Kara Reeder**, *Cherokee County Schools*
- **Charley Sabatier**, *Oxford High School*
- **Ethan Schubert**, *Brainerd High School*

Kara Reeder

ULRI Teaching Fellow

Cherokee County Schools, Woodstock, GA

Translating safety science research from UL Research Institutes to meaningful, innovative curriculum for middle school students is a task Kara Reeder was made for.

With 25 years' experience in education, Reeder is passionate about engaging middle school students with authentic, relevant STEM content. She's currently a teacher fellow with the ULRI Teacher Fellowship, where she's able to deliver impactful safety science lessons and collaborate with other educators.

In her role as an educator, Reeder engages students in real-world problem-solving and develops students' skills in critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity. Students in her class also have the opportunity to explore STEM careers and investigate future career pathways. That exposure to possible careers is something she wished she'd had growing up.

"I'm really proud of the impact my students are making through powerful community partnerships and problem-solving," she said. "I'm hoping the twenty-first-century skills they're practicing will make a brighter future for all."

The fellowship offers her the chance for connection with educators, ULRI researchers, and professionals at UL to develop innovative safety science lessons for middle school students. Reeder gets to translate the cutting-edge research into meaningful learning opportunities in the classroom. A recent project that came out of her translation of ULRI discoveries about lithium-ion battery-related dangers involved turning students into advocates for battery safety. Students in her classroom created social media posts to educate their peers and community about the risk of thermal runaway and empowered them with actionable steps to protect themselves and their community.

"From learning about innovative research being conducted by ULRI to attending national events and, most importantly, to being treated as an equal and valuable contributor to ULRI's safety science initiatives, this is unlike any other professional development opportunity I've experienced in my teaching career," she said.

Reeder gets to take her learnings back to the classroom where she's continuing to develop authentic STEM content and take inspiration from what she's gained during the fellowship.

"As an educator, I'd like to be remembered for the opportunities I provided to my students and the project-based approach that makes learning meaningful, authentic, and fun."



“As an educator, I'd like to be remembered for the opportunities I provided to my students and the project-based approach that makes learning meaningful, authentic, and fun.

—Kara Reeder

Ethan Schubert

ULRI Teaching Fellow

Hamilton County School District, Chattanooga, TN

Ethan Schubert is a science teacher and career academy lead teacher for the Future Ready Institute of Law, First Responders, and forensic science at Brainerd High School in Chattanooga, Tennessee. His students are interested in public service careers and, through his curriculum, get to experience work-based learning. He's also a teaching fellow with the UL Research Institutes' (ULRI) teaching fellowship program, where he modifies content created by ULRI through Xplorlabs to support 9-12 science teachers in implementing project-based learning.

The fellowship program supports Schubert's teaching using emerging phenomena in safety science that are informed by the research and outcomes of ULRI. And, he's given the opportunity to give back to ULRI by providing valuable feedback on the Xplorlabs resources after implementing them in his classroom.

"The fellowship is allowing me to explore my 'why' and follow that path in partnership with ULRI," he said. "This has allowed me to grow professionally and has led to an increase in my confidence in the classroom."

Schubert also was invited to experience the 2023 ULRI Annual Research Symposium, where he was inspired by the presenting researchers.

"I was surprised and inspired by the minute difference in the vocabulary used by researchers and the vocabulary my students are being exposed to," he said. "This helps drive me to ensure my students are armed with the knowledge to be able to read and understand real science as it becomes available to the public so they can become more informed individuals."

Schubert hopes that the future of education holds change, breaking down the silos that have been in place for generations.

"This would begin to open up possibilities for society that would change the trajectory of entire subgroups of our population," he said. "I hope that we begin to recognize that education, the way it has been prescribed in the past, is an ineffective way to develop today's workforce."



“The fellowship is allowing me to explore my ‘why,’ and follow that path in partnership with ULRI. This has allowed me to grow professionally and has led to an increase in my confidence in the classroom.

—*Ethan Schubert*

UL Research Institutes' Sustainability Fellowship in Partnership with Arizona State University

Sustainability education is a key factor in solving the climate crisis. Today's students will carry knowledge and skills from their classrooms into their communities and beyond. Educators like those involved in a new sustainability fellowship at ULRI are working to make sustainability conversations a standard part of their curriculum.

OREE is helping support and inspire educators through the UL Research Institutes and Arizona State University (ASU) Sustainability Fellowship with ASU's Sustainability Teachers' Academies. The fellowship mobilizes the expertise of researchers and practitioners at the College of Global Futures, Mary Lou Fulton Teacher's College, and the Greater Phoenix Regional Center of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development (RCE). Through this unique partnership with multiple initiatives at ASU, OREE seeks to fulfill the mission of building a sustainable world through safety science education. The fellows in this program use their diverse backgrounds in sustainability and education combined with ULRI's safety science research to create sustainability education resources that are related to issues in their communities.

ASU is one of 11 such Regional Centers of Expertise (RCEs) on Education for Sustainable Development in the nation, acknowledged by the United Nations University and UNESCO. Their goal is to support all community members through meaningful, place-based learning experiences to contribute to sustainability in the region, prioritizing historically marginalized youth.

The fellowship engages a cohort of classroom educators, nonformal community educators, and students in creating dynamic resources and professional development opportunities. The fellowship seeks to promote safety science education in classroom settings, including career technical programs and exploratory classes, as well as in museums, libraries, and out-of-school programs. The fellows work together with education experts from OREE and ASU who have a global perspective on national academic standards, trends in science education, and skills in translating advanced concepts into materials appropriate for students. This powerful partnership brings teachers, nonformal educators, and world-renowned safety scientists together for one goal—a safe and sustainable future.



(L-R): Dr. Michelle Jordan, Dr. Andrea Weinberg, Dr. Iveta Silova, Molly Cashion

2023 ULRI ASU Fellows

- **Kim Alvin De Lara**,
Maricopa Unified School District
- **Jeannie Colton**,
Arizona State University
- **Ben Curtiss**,
Florence Unified School District
- **Michael Darle**, *Maricopa Unified School District, Desert Sunrise High School*
- **Lauren Hubert**,
Camelback High School
- **Kalman Mannis**,
Arizona Science Center
- **Bridget Rhee**, *Arizona State University*
- **Prisha Shroff**, *Hamilton High School*
- **Lara Van Lith**, *Arizona State University*



UL Research Institutes and Arizona State University Sustainability Fellowship

“Students are the future of safety science. They seek solutions to some of the world’s toughest problems around both personal safety and the safety and resilience of our shared planet. But these same students are completely unaware of the field of safety science. Through this program, we engage educators and youth in developing resources to create awareness and build skills so students can be part of the path to a more equitable, safe, and sustainable world.

Molly Cashion

Senior Program Manager
ASU College of Global Futures



(fellows and others, L-R): Top row: Dr. Iveta Silova, Jeannie Colton, Dr. Katey Shirey, Lara Van Lith, Ben (Michael) Curtiss, Kalman Mannis, Dr. Michelle Jordan, Michael Darle, Dr. Andrea Weinberg, Ethan Schubert, Charley Sabatier, Kara Reeder, Dr. Kelly Keena
Front row: Molly Cashion, Jessica Sparacino, Haven Bills, Lauren Hubert, Prisha Shroff, Bridget Rhee, Megan O’Keeffe, Dr. Ann Nielsen



Ben Curtiss

ULRI/ASU Sustainability Fellowship

Casa Grande Elementary School District, Arizona

A champion for the marginalized, the “at risk,” and those who never really fit in or who struggled in school is who Ben Curtiss hopes to be remembered as.

“What’s most meaningful about the work I’m doing is the potential to change the trajectory of a child’s life,” he said. “Maybe being that one person that shows up in a child’s life and believes in them.”

Curtiss teaches grades 4-5 in the Center for Online and Innovative Learning for the Casa Grande Elementary School District in Arizona. The center is a student-centered, project-based school that questions, challenges, and finds innovative methods to engage students in an authentic learning process.

“I work with students to co-plan and co-create projects to solve real-world problems while learning at

a high level,” he said. “I also teach students about neuroscience and the effects of trauma on the brain as well as regulation activities to help them begin to change their baseline state and build resilience.”

Through the fellowship, Curtiss gets to bridge the gap between real-world implications of safety science research conducted at ULRI and 6-12th grade scientific knowledge to support that understanding.

Curtiss works with OREE by creating content for teachers and students using ULRI research, and he crafts professional development opportunities leveraging safety science and sustainability. Today’s safety science problems that ULRI seeks to solve didn’t exist when many teachers were in school, which means the understanding of these emerging phenomena requires further research.

“I hope that my participation in the ULRI fellowship will broaden the team that I collaborate with, lead to opportunities for innovative work, and help me learn about things I didn’t know existed prior to this fellowship,” he said.

Curtiss hopes the future of education holds hope—and revolution. He sees a world where educators must focus on a regenerative mindset in sustainability education rather than just sustainable activities.

“The climate crisis we are currently in requires our activities to be regenerative and provide a net positive impact on all the systems we interact with,” he said.



“The climate crisis we are currently in requires our activities to be regenerative and provide a net positive impact on all the systems we interact with.

—Ben Curtiss

Lara Van Lith

ULRI/ASU Sustainability Fellowship | Arizona State University

Lara Van Lith has a unique background—her education and experience are in the natural and social sciences, so she brings a different and diverse perspective to the ULRI Fellowship.

Van Lith is a fellow with a focus in informal education, focusing on projects ranging from sustainability, conservation biology, research design, water and environmental policy, and environmental education. Her aim as a graduate student in the fellowship is to learn from the other educators and provide them with a platform to share their work, solutions, and concerns with sustainability education.

“I’m hoping my participation in the fellowship advances my knowledge in local education practices as well as inspires my future career in education and environmental policy,” she said. “I’ve gained insight into the world of education, learned many solutions and opportunities that exist, and also identified areas that need serious attention and greater understanding.”

Those issues, which include bringing more diverse groups to the sustainability conversation who’ve been excluded in the past, are what Van Lith will focus on during the fellowship experience and beyond as she seeks to find collaborative and inclusive solutions to sustainability issues.

Van Lith specializes in converting science research into a more digestible format to make research, innovation, and scientific concepts more accessible to all through Xplorlabs. She hopes that the future of education holds more of an emphasis on environmental education, bridging the disconnect between humans and nature.

“I want to make an impact on our ability as humans to reconnect with nature, whether through research, policy changes, education, or in our personal lives,” she said. “The disconnect often begins in primary education. Integrating nature, field research, community involvement, and sustainability solutions into the education system will provide students with the tools to make a bigger impact as they enter their careers.”



“Integrating nature, field research, community involvement, and sustainability solutions into the education system will provide students with the tools to make a bigger impact as they enter their careers.”

—Lara Van Lith



