Approved by the Board of Trustees

May 22, 2025

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Board Meeting

May 22, 2025

APPOINT FELLOWS TO THE CENTER FOR ADVANCED STUDY, URBANA

**Action:** Appoint Fellows to the Center for Advanced Study

**Funding:** State appropriated funds; private gift funds from the Beckman Endowment

Each year, the Center for Advanced Study awards appointments as fellows in the Center for Advanced Study, providing one semester of release time for creative work. Fellows are selected in an annual competition from the untenured faculty of all departments and colleges to carry out self-initiated programs of scholarly research or professional activity.

The chancellor, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and vice president, University of Illinois System, recommends Nicholas Jackson, Tess McNulty, Cristian Proistosescu, Pollyanna Rhee, Makoto Harris Takao, and Stefan Vogler as fellows for the 2025-2026 academic year. Brief descriptions of their projects follow.

Nicholas Jackson, assistant professor, chemistry

Molecular Engineering of Sustainable Polymers with Physics-Based Modeling and AI

Professor Jackson will use physics-based modeling and artificial intelligence to molecularly engineer sustainable and recyclable polymer chemistries that can replace commodity polymers.

Tess McNulty[[1]](#footnote-1), assistant professor, English

Content Culture: Genres of Virality in the Twenty-First Century

Content Culture provides the first cultural history of some of viral media’s most pervasive but understudied forms from the genre that she calls the “uplifting anecdote” (a short true story about everyday heroism) to “gonzo self-help” (a description of a self-care experiment). By tracing these genres’ long cultural prehistories and addressing their new socio-technical conditions, the project shows how they reconfigure questions concerning truth and identity.

Cristian Proistosescu1, assistant professor, climate, meteorology, and atmospheric sciences and earth sciences and environmental change

Putting an Oscilloscope to the Climate System: Modelling Pacific Decadal Variability Using Control Theory

Numerical climate models, our best tools for predicting climate change, have suffered from some big biases that we currently cannot explain or fix. The project proposes a framework for interrogating and improving these climate models using tools adapted from electrical and control engineering.

Pollyanna Rhee1, assistant professor, landscape architecture

*Quality of Life: A History of a Modern Aspiration*

Quality of Life: A History of a Modern Aspiration presents an urban, environmental, and intellectual history of this resonant phrase and its global applications across the second half of the 20th century. This book project puts into relief how a variety of individuals and institutions wielded quality of life concerns to define the characteristics that marked modern notions of affluence and flourishing and use them to shape cities and neighborhoods around the world.

Makoto Harris Takao, assistant professor, musicology

*The Clef and the Cross: Music and Kirishitan Transculturation in Sixteenth-Century Japan*

From sung narrative traditions to devotional dance forms, this book uncovers the hidden histories of the Kirishitan (Japanese Christians) who made sense of Catholicism through largely Buddhist frameworks in the 16th century. Reading European missionary accounts against the grain and through the prism of early-modern Japanese textual and visual materials, as well as contemporary ethnography, it presents an image of Kirishitan devotional acts as transcultural formations of sound, music, and movement.

Stefan Vogler1, assistant professor, sociology

*Policing the Rainbow: LGBTQ People’s Experiences With and Attitudes Toward Law Enforcement*

Policing the Rainbow is a pathbreaking study of LGBTQ people’s experiences with and attitudes toward the police that draws on the most comprehensive data collected on this topic to date, including a nationally representative survey of and in-depth interviews with LGBTQ people. The book produced from this project will document the extent of police mistreatment against LGBTQ people but will also reveal how LGBTQ-police interactions unfold, how LGBTQ people make sense of their experiences, and what consequences these interactions have for LGBTQ lives and the institution of policing writ large.

The Board action recommended in this item complies in all material respects with applicable State and federal laws, University of Illinois *Statutes*, *The General Rules Concerning University Organization and Procedure*, and Board of Trustees policies and directives.

The president of the University of Illinois System recommends approval.

1. These faculty members have been recommended for appointment as Beckman Fellows in the Center for Advanced Study, named for the donor of a gift that permits additional recognition for outstanding younger faculty who have already made distinctive scholarly contributions to their respective fields. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)