BARBARA BLAKE GONZALEZ, Ed.D., CRA
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HIGHER EDUCATION EXECUTIVE | ECONOMIST | SCHOLAR-PRACTITIONER

Experiential & Cooperative Education | Workforce & Economic Development | Institutional Transformation | Sponsored Research & Grants | Faculty & Academic Engagement

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

Higher education executive, economist, scholar-practitioner, and educator with more than 20 years of experience leading institutional change at the intersection of academics, workforce development, economic development, and student success. As Executive Director and Chief Internship Officer at Old Dominion University, leads Virginia's only freestanding higher education internship and cooperative education office serving students across academic disciplines, building university-wide systems that connect faculty, curriculum, students, and employers.

Proven record of moving complex initiatives from concept to institutional practice through faculty collaboration, cross-campus leadership, research, data, and external partnerships. Leads more than 15 professional faculty and staff, serves as Budget Unit Director for 10 state, development, and sponsored-program budget lines, and serves as Principal Investigator on more than $8.7 million in federal, foundation, state, corporate, and nonprofit sponsored initiatives since 2023.

An economist and Senior Research Fellow, brings a sustained scholarly focus on labor-force participation, barriers to employment, migration, human capital, workforce and demographic change, and regional economic development. Combines academic and research experience with extensive partnerships across corporate, nonprofit, government, military, workforce, and economic-development sectors to create pathways that connect higher education with the communities and economies universities serve.

EDUCATION & CREDENTIALS

Certified Research Administrator® (CRA), Research Administrators Certification Council | 2019 | Renewal: December 2026

Doctorate in Higher Education Administration
The George Washington University, Washington, DC

Master's Degree, International Studies
University of Leeds, Leeds, United Kingdom

Bachelor's Degree, International Business
High Point University, High Point, North Carolina

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Old Dominion University – Norfolk, VA
Chief Internship Officer & Executive Director
Monarch Internship & Co-Op Office and Monarch Humanities Internship Academy
2023–Present
Senior Research Fellow
2015 – Present
Provide executive leadership for Virginia's only freestanding higher education internship and cooperative education office serving students across academic disciplines. Lead ODU's institution-wide strategy for internships, cooperative education, work-based learning, and career-connected education, working across Academic Affairs and the colleges with deans, department chairs, faculty, the Registrar, Graduate School, international student services, employers, and external partners.

• Built and scaled ODU's centralized infrastructure for work-based learning, including an institutional definition of WBL, university-wide policies and processes, transcript-recognition mechanisms, advising and employer-engagement systems, and institutional data and assessment. Established the university's longitudinal undergraduate credit-bearing WBL dataset, documenting growth from 4,151 participants in AY 2023–2024 to 4,817 in AY 2025–2026, approximately 16% growth while undergraduate enrollment remained relatively stable.

• Lead faculty and academic collaboration across colleges to expand experiential learning while preserving disciplinary standards, faculty curricular authority, and academic integrity. Convene the Internship Administrative Council and work with faculty and administrators on student progression, cooperative education, prior learning, graduate experiential learning, institutional data, and curricular innovation.

• Oversee more than 15 professional faculty and staff responsible for student engagement, employer development, program administration, research and assessment, sponsored initiatives, and university-wide projects. Serve as Budget Unit Director for 10 state, development, and sponsored-program budget lines, directing fiscal planning, expenditures, compliance, and accountability with a 100% successful audit record and full utilization of allocated resources.

• Provide leadership across faculty and staff recruitment and organizational development, having chaired more than six searches and served on numerous hiring committees, including senior leadership searches conducted with national executive search firms.

Work with Human Resources throughout the recruitment lifecycle, from position development through candidate selection and extension of offers.
• Serve as Principal Investigator on more than $8.7 million in federal, foundation, state, corporate, and nonprofit sponsored initiatives since 2023. Lead projects from concept and proposal development through implementation, fiscal stewardship, partner engagement, compliance, assessment, and institutionalization, translating external investment into sustainable programs and systems supporting experiential education, workforce development, apprenticeships, applied learning, and student access.
• Build and sustain partnerships with corporations, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, military organizations, workforce and economic-development entities, donors, alumni, and community partners. Collaborate with University Development and Alumni Relations on corporate and philanthropic engagement, including development-supported internship initiatives with organizations such as Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters and Dollar Tree. Lead expansion of cooperative education and university-employer models connecting academic programs with workforce needs in advanced manufacturing, engineering, technology, business, maritime industries, defense, government, and other sectors.

SPONSORED GRANTS & STRATEGIC INITIATIVES
Principal Investigator on more than $8.7 million in federal, foundation, state, corporate, and nonprofit sponsored initiatives since 2023. Lead active initiatives spanning experiential education, workforce development, apprenticeships, student access, institutional transformation, employer engagement, and regional talent development, with responsibility for project development, implementation, fiscal stewardship, partner engagement, compliance, assessment, and outcomes.

Principal Investigator | Mellon Foundation Humanities Internship Initiative | $5,000,000 | 2023–2028
Lead implementation of a major university initiative expanding access to paid humanities internships and addressing financial barriers to experiential learning for students entering fields in which professional internships have traditionally been unpaid.

Principal Investigator | U.S. Department of Education SIP, Experience Guaranteed | $2,100,000 | 2025–2030
Lead development and implementation of an institution-wide experiential-learning initiative creating on-campus internship clinics and other scalable models that expand access to structured professional experiences. Work across academic programs, faculty, administration, and external partners to translate grant-funded pilots into sustainable institutional practice.

Principal Investigator | Regional Apprenticeship Hub Grant | $583,000 | 2025–2028

Lead Old Dominion University's $583,000 subaward under the Hampton Roads Workforce Council's $6 million U.S. Department of Labor ABA II grant, a regional apprenticeship initiative conducted in partnership with the German American Chamber of Commerce. Direct ODU's higher education role in apprenticeship development, employer engagement, education-to-employment pathways, and regional workforce development.

Principal Investigator | Internship Capacity Grant, SCHEV | $250,000 | 2026–2028
Principal Investigator | Internship Support Grant, SCHEV | $200,000 | 2026–2028
Principal Investigator | V-TOP ILP Grant | $150,000 | 2025–2027
Additional Funded Initiatives as Principal Investigator
Internship Capacity Grant, SCHEV | $150,000 | 2024–2025
Student Internship Grant, SCHEV | $100,000 | 2024
Data Collection Grant, SCHEV | $100,000
NSF Novel Careers in Maritime Training | $50,000 | 2025
Dollar Tree Internship Grant | $10,000
CHKD Internship Grant | $10,000
Town N Gown / Human Services Internship Support Grant | $2,000 | 2025

SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW | APPLIED ECONOMIC & WORKFORCE RESEARCH
Dragas Center for Economic Analysis and Policy
Old Dominion University
Co-Principal Investigator
Economic Impact of the Wallops Island Aerospace Cluster and Virginia Space | 2026–Present

Serve as Co-Principal Investigator with primary responsibility for the workforce and labor-market components of a comprehensive economic-impact study of the Wallops Island aerospace cluster and Virginia Space. Examine barriers to workforce participation and employment and assess how Virginia Space, higher education, employers, and regional partners can strengthen education-to-employment pathways, expand access to aerospace and related careers for Eastern Shore residents, and support regional economic development.

Conduct qualitative research with aerospace employers, Virginia Space leadership, state government officials, workforce stakeholders, and regional partners to identify workforce needs, talent-development opportunities, and strategies for connecting industry growth with the local labor force. This work extends a longstanding research agenda focused on labor-force participation, human capital, workforce development, and regional economic competitiveness.

Chief Administrative Officer, Dragas Center for Economic Analysis and Policy, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Strome College of Business
2015 – 2023

• Served as the senior administrative and fiscal leader of ODU's economic research center while contributing directly to its research, teaching, and public-service mission. Taught economics in the Strome College of Business while conducting applied economic and workforce research and directing the Center's finance, human resources, purchasing, information technology, risk, contracts, research administration, and organizational operations. Worked closely with faculty economists, university leadership, businesses, government agencies, economic-development organizations, and community partners.

• Managed more than $5 million in federal, state, foundation, and contractual funding and provided fiscal and administrative leadership across complex research and sponsored initiatives. Developed policies, processes, and financial controls supporting organizational effectiveness, audit readiness, compliance, and responsible stewardship of university and sponsored resources.

• Cultivated relationships with donors, alumni, corporate partners, foundations, and local, regional, and statewide organizations in support of university research and engagement priorities. Developed donor and sponsorship proposals and collaborated with ODU's Office of Development and Office of Alumni Relations on philanthropic and partnership initiatives, including engagement with the Dragas family in support of the Center.

• Conducted and contributed to applied economic research examining labor-force participation, migration, workforce availability, demographic change, opioid-related workforce impacts, household employment patterns, human capital, and regional economic development. Developed a sustained research focus on who participates in the labor market, who remains outside it, and the economic, demographic, health, and institutional factors influencing workforce participation.

• Contributed extensively to ODU's State of the Region, State of the Commonwealth, and Economic Forecasting projects, working with faculty researchers and external stakeholders to translate empirical economic analysis into actionable information for business leaders, policymakers, workforce organizations, economic-development professionals, and communities.

• Served as a bridge among faculty researchers, university administrative systems, external sponsors, businesses, government agencies, and community organizations. Combined research, fiscal, administrative, and organizational expertise to help move complex projects from concept and funding through implementation and public dissemination.

Blake Gonzalez Associates – Texas, North Carolina and Virginia
President

Founded and led a consulting practice providing economic and policy research, organizational strategy, curriculum and training development, assessment, and management services to corporate, government, and nonprofit clients.
Conducted research for NATO Headquarters Supreme Allied Commander Transformation's Operational Analysis Branch as part of an international urbanization initiative examining population growth, economic change, energy requirements, and the future urban environment. Invited by NATO's Urbanisation Working Group to the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence to present "The Global Economy of 2035."

Tidewater Community College, Norfolk, VA
Economics Faculty, Department of Business, Social Sciences and Public Services
2004–2015

Taught economics for 11 years across traditional, online, corporate, military, and workforce-development environments at the second largest college in Virginia with 32,000 students. Courses included Principles of Macroeconomics, Principles of Microeconomics, and Survey of Economics, with an emphasis on connecting economic theory to labor markets, business decision making, public policy, resource allocation, and regional economic issues.

• Participated extensively in faculty governance, curriculum development, academic planning, and institutional service. Leadership included the President's Advisory and Planning Council, Faculty Senate, Curriculum and Instruction Committee, International Business Degree Task Force, Global and Intercultural Learning Committee, and Virginia Community College System Business Peer Group; served as Chair of the Instruction Committee.

• Collaborated with corporate and military partners to deliver education and workforce programs, including instruction associated with Cox Communications and Naval Station Norfolk. Brought professional experience in business, economic research, and workforce development into teaching, curriculum, and institutional discussions.

University of Texas El Paso, El Paso, TX
Corporate Trainer / Instructor, Extended University, Office of Professional and Public Programs (P3)

Delivered university-based professional and corporate education in both English and Spanish for employers and working adults in the El Paso region, including programs serving logistics and retail industries. Designed and delivered applied instruction responsive to employer and workforce needs, connecting continuing and professional education with regional skill-development priorities.

Developed firsthand familiarity with the economic, cultural, workforce, and cross-border environment of the Paso del Norte region and the distinctive role higher education plays in serving students, employers, and communities along the U.S.–Mexico border.

QUALITY MATTERS

Master Peer Reviewer | Peer Reviewer | Economics Subject-Matter Expert
2011–2025

Served for more than 13 years in national academic quality-assurance roles supporting online and innovative teaching and learning across hundreds of institutions in the United States and internationally. Managed comprehensive course-review processes and coached faculty peer reviewers in applying research-based quality standards and developing constructive recommendations for course improvement.

Experience encompassed learning objectives, assessment and measurement, instructional materials, learner engagement, technology, student support, accessibility, usability, academic quality, and continuous improvement.

SELECTED RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP

Research Interests

Labor-force participation and barriers to employment; workforce and demographic change; migration and human capital; regional economic development; workforce impacts of substance-use disorders; experiential learning; and the role of higher education in developing regional talent pipelines.

Selected Peer-Reviewed Publications

Koch, J. V., and Blake Gonzalez, B. (2022). “Using the LSAT as a Labor Market Thermometer.” The American Journal of Economics and Sociology.

Koch, J. V., and Blake Gonzalez, B. (2022). “Why Has the Median Real Income of Lawyers Been Declining?” Journal of Economics and Finance.

Blake Gonzalez, B., Koch, J. V., and Cebula, R. (2021). “The Drug Overdose Epidemic Seen through Different Lenses.” Health Science Journal.

Blake Gonzalez, B., Koch, J. V., and Cebula, R. (2020). “Drug-Overdose Death Rates: The Economic Misery Explanation and Its Alternatives.” Applied Economics, 53.

Blake Gonzalez, B. (2008). “Academic Libraries: Should Strategic Planning Be Renewed?” Technical Services Quarterly, 24.

Selected Applied Research & Publications

Blake Gonzalez, B., et al. (Forthcoming, December 2026). "State of Child Care in Virginia." 2026 State of the Commonwealth Report. Dragas Center for Economic Analysis and Policy, Old Dominion University.

Blake Gonzalez, B., et al. (2023). "Apprenticeships in Virginia." 2023 State of the Commonwealth Report. Dragas Center for Economic Analysis and Policy, Old Dominion University.

McNab, R., and Blake Gonzalez, B. (2021). "Let It Ride: Casinos, Online Betting and the Future of Gambling in Virginia." State of the Commonwealth Report, Old Dominion University.

McNab, R., and Blake Gonzalez, B. (2021). "All In: Casinos, Online Betting and the Future of Gambling in Hampton Roads." State of the Region, Old Dominion University.

Koch, J. V., and Blake Gonzalez, B. (2020). "Virginia's Opioid Epidemic Continues and COVID-19 May Be Making It Worse." State of the Commonwealth Report, Old Dominion University.

Koch, J. V., and Blake Gonzalez, B. (2019). "Opioids in Virginia." State of the Commonwealth Report, Old Dominion University.

Blake Gonzalez, B., and McNab, R. (2018). "Welcome to Your New Home: International Migration and Hampton Roads." State of the Region Report, Old Dominion University.

Blake Gonzalez, B., and Koch, J. V. (2017). "Do We Suffer from Brain Drain in Hampton Roads?" State of the Region Report, Old Dominion University.

Koch, J. V., and Blake Gonzalez, B. (2016). "The Rise of Single-Earner Households in Virginia: Why It Matters." State of the Commonwealth Report, Old Dominion University.

Koch, J. V., and Blake Gonzalez, B. (2015). "Domestic Migration: What Moves Us?" State of the Commonwealth Report, Old Dominion University.

SELECTED LEADERSHIP ROLES, APPOINTMENTS & BOARD EXPERIENCE

Board of Directors, Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER) | 2019–2025
Host Committee Chair, 2024 C2ER Annual Conference, Norfolk, Virginia; led local planning, partnership development, sponsorship, and community engagement for the national conference.
Member, Internships in Virginia Advisory Council, Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) | 2025–Present

Appointed Member, SB 1280 Workgroup, State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) | 2023–2024
Appointed by SCHEV to the statewide workgroup addressing internship opportunities across Virginia's public colleges and universities.
Appointed Member, College & Career Ready Virginia Workgroup | 2024
Selected by the Virginia Secretary of Education to contribute to statewide education, workforce preparation, and career-readiness efforts.
Executive Board, Norfolk Tourism Foundation | 2020–Present
Board of Directors & Financial Advisory Committee, Girl Scouts of the Colonial Coast
Member, Career and Technical Education Advisory Council, Norfolk Public Schools, Appointed by the Norfolk School Board.
Member, ODU Relationship Governance Team | 2024–Present
Member, Certified Research Administrator (CRA) National Exam Review Committee, Research Administrators Certification Council | 2019–2021
LEAD Virginia, Executive Leadership Program | Class of 2023
Member, Graduate Committee, Strome College of Business, Old Dominion University

TECHNICAL SKILLS

• Research Administration: Grants.gov, Research.gov, NIH eRA Commons/ASSIST, SAM.gov, InfoEd, Kuali Research, ODURF PI Portal
• Financial & Enterprise Systems: Advanced Excel, Power BI, PeopleSoft, Oracle ERP, SAP, Cognos, Banner
• Research & Economic Analysis: REMI, IMPLAN, SPSS, SAS, Stata
• Project & Collaboration Platforms: Microsoft 365, Google Workspace, MS Project

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

• Certified Economic Research Professional (CERP), Council for Community and Economic Research — *2024*
• NABE Certificate in Economic Measurement
• ODU Certificate in University Financial Management
• Certified Advanced Applied Analyst in Economic Development, LMI
• Microsoft Faculty Fellow, College of William & Mary

HONORS & PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION

CoVaBIZ Top 175 People to Know in Coastal Virginia | 2026
Virginia Top Women in Education | 2026
Washington Business Journal, People on the Move Professional Recognition | 2025
Commonwealth of Virginia Business Women in Leadership Honoree | 2025
Hampton Roads Workforce Council Workforce Innovation Award – Education | 2025
WAVY-TV Remarkable Women Nominee | 2024
J. Worth Pickering Administrator of the Year, 2023 Association of University Administrators
Women in Business Honoree, Inside Business / Virginia Media | 2022
Faculty Administrator of the Year, Strome College of Business | 2018