

FOUR WOMEN ANSWER THREE QUESTIONS ABOUT THEIR IDA ROLES

Plans for IDA's new facility in Potomac Yard, known as the technology corridor of Alexandria, Virginia, had been proceeding as planned after construction began in August 2019. Then, the COVID-19 pandemic hit. While much of IDA's staff were dealing with conference calls, Zoom meetings, travel restrictions and other disruptions to their projects, those responsible for ensuring construction went on as intended persevered. The ambitious construction schedule called for IDA to fully occupy the new facility in December 2021. Despite numerous hurdles, everything came together on time for that to happen.

Three months later, IDA's new facility seems to be measuring up to its promise. The building's two towers house IDA corporate staff as well as the Systems and Analyses Center, the oldest and largest federally funded research and development center IDA manages. With the [ribbon-cutting ceremony](#) behind us, we want to recognize some of the people behind the scenes who are helping to shape the environment essential to meeting IDA's national security research and analysis [objectives](#). These women not only execute their corporate responsibilities well, they also contribute to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion, or DE&I, through representation, communication and mentorship.





Michelle Celich, who leads the information systems security team, and Assistant Chief Security Officer Sharon Cavitt work with each other and their respective teams to meet IDA's expanded security needs at Potomac Yard.

The beating heart of security

Sharon Cavitt, who joined IDA in 2018, is the assistant chief security officer. As Security's second in command as well as team lead for personnel security, Sharon works closely with others to deliver personnel, programs and systems security across the enterprise. With over 370,000 square feet of space, IDA's Potomac Yard facility is not only larger than before, but the building's amenities make meeting security requirements complicated. Navigating these issues means the entire security team is constantly on their toes.

Q&A

What is the most rewarding aspect of your work at IDA?

I enjoy the collaboration among staff and leadership that happens here. It's rewarding to be recognized for having provided "great service" and having staff and leadership acknowledge my team for that.

What is a typical day like for you?

Busy! Always on the move!

My team interacts with all of the research supporting staff to meet their security needs, whether that be clearance processing, classified visit requests, security briefings, in-processing of new hires, supporting conferences/meetings or

providing overall personnel security support, to name just a few.

Considering all that has transpired in the last few years, what, if anything, has changed for you in your position at IDA?

My focus has been on mentorship and supporting my team, providing them the tools to work in any type of environment, whether that be on-site or remote. I have had a very fulfilling career in security, over 30 years. My goal is to find growth paths for those security professionals that are just getting started in their careers.

Keeping the workplace social at a time of physical distance

Margery W. Waithaka is a senior programmer/analyst involved in system development and implementation within IDA's information technology directorate. While her inherently low-profile position might mean her contributions are lesser known outside of IT, Margery has made a name for herself by stepping up to lead IDA's Social Crew and to participate in IDA's burgeoning DE&I program. Margery joined IDA in 2014 as a programmer/analyst and advanced to senior programmer/analyst in five short years. A motorsport enthusiast, Margery is often seen riding her motorcycle to work on warm, sunny days, and among other things, she enjoys learning and speaking new languages.



Senior Programmer/Analyst Margery Waithaka is a prominent participant in social events planning and DE&I developments.

Q&A

What is the most rewarding aspect of your work at IDA?

The most rewarding aspect of my work at IDA are the friends I've made along the way. IDA is a wonderful place made so by the people that work here.

What is a typical day like for you?

My average day is full of collaboration. I'm involved in many projects that require cross-departmental resources and insights. I provide everyday support of crucial business systems for employee evaluation management, project planning and activity tracking. I may also be called upon to provide the design, development or resource allocation guidance for new projects and initiatives.

Considering all that has transpired in the last few years, what, if anything, has changed for you in your position at IDA?

Since the pandemic, I have taken on a more involved presence in the success of our team members, especially those earlier in their careers. Together with other mentors in system development and implementation, our diverse experiences have led to greater cohesion and collaboration.

On the forefront of social media

Nina K. Chambers joined IDA as a communications specialist in 2017. Nina had her work cut out for her, namely, bringing IDA into the age of social media. She has proved herself to be particularly well-suited to the task. In addition to building IDA's social media presence, Nina is the company's point of contact for public relations, alumni outreach and engagement analytics. In the last year, she's taken on increasing responsibility for managing the corporate communications directorate's progress on DE&I campaigns. Within the directorate, she monitors workflow for a host of communications to make sure they are delivered efficiently and on time.



Communications Specialist Nina Chambers is on a two-pronged mission: increase social media engagement and promote DE&I messaging.

Q&A

What is the most rewarding aspect of your work at IDA?

I'd say the most rewarding aspect of my work at IDA is the opportunity to work on a project from start to finish, collaborating with staff across the organization and learning something new along the way. I believe that learning is a lifelong process and that there is value in increasing your knowledge and identifying best practices that will guide your future work and lead to success.

What is a typical day like for you?

A typical day includes working on various internal and external communication projects, media and social monitoring, analyzing metrics and collaborating with my team. I'm often working on developing social media content, communicating with a team member about a project, monitoring our directorate's inbox and responding to situations as they may arise throughout the day.

Considering all that has transpired in the last few years, what, if anything, has changed for you in your position at IDA?

In the last few years, I have had increased opportunities to work on a broader range of projects. One area of focus that I've been involved with since June 2021 is coordinating the communication efforts for the organization's DE&I recognition and education efforts, ensuring that the

projects are completed on time, communicating with different groups, making sure that those involved have what they need to be successful and working closely with staff to authentically convey their work, backgrounds and perspectives.

Accounting for time

Michelle L. Styles Davis is the cash accountant for IDA's finance and administration directorate. Since joining IDA in 2013, Michelle has been promoted four times. Having started as an accounting generalist, she next became a financial analyst, a budget analyst, then a staff accountant before taking on her current position. Since 2017, Michelle's primary responsibility has been payroll. During Michelle's time at IDA, she earned a bachelor's degree in accounting from George Mason University, a master's degree in accounting from the DeVry University and a CPA license through the Virginia Board of Accountancy.

Q&A

What is the most rewarding aspect of your work at IDA?

The most rewarding aspect of my work at IDA is the relationships I've built over the years. I have interactions with staff throughout the organization which has allowed me to meet remarkable, brilliant people.



Cash Accountant Michelle Styles Davis with Corporate Controller Jacqueline Z. Powell.

What is a typical day like for you?

My typical day is full of multitasking. I am involved in many core functions that support IDA's financial reporting and I work directly with staff who have finance-related questions and concerns.

Considering all that has transpired in the last few years, what, if anything, has changed for you in your position at IDA?

Since the pandemic, I've focused on implementing new methods for operational activities because our department was previously paper based. This has given me an opportunity to spend more time on process improvements and efficiencies that support IDA's Business Modernization Initiative.