

**Berkshire Leadership Program
Creative Economy Session – Speaker Bios**

Helena Fruscio Altsman – Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Helena Fruscio Altsman is the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Innovation Entrepreneurship and Technology for the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This is a long way of saying, she works on behalf of the state to ensure innovators, inventors, and creative individuals are thriving in every corner of the state.

Helena's entire career has been dedicated to the cultivation and growth of economic ecosystems that support innovation and creativity as key engines of job growth and prosperity. She has been a policy advisor to governors of both parties, building off of her experience of leading an organization to implement this work on the community level.

Today, her portfolio of work includes manufacturing, cyber security, IoT, robotics, innovation ecosystems, collaborative workspaces and innovations centers and the creative economy; all components of a healthy innovation ecosystem in the state.

A graduate of the Harvard Kennedy School of Government with a Masters Degree in Public Administration and an undergraduate degree from Rochester Institute of Technology, Helena has a track record of developing, advising and implementing programs that truly impact innovation communities.

Michelle Daly - MCLA

Michelle Daly is a practicing artist with a 20-year exhibition history and the program manager at MCLA's Berkshire Cultural Resource Center. She brings a passion for contextualizing information, curating meaningful engagements and providing opportunities for artistic and professional development to students at MCLA and the greater Northern Berkshire community. <http://www.michelle-daly.com> or http://mcla.edu/About_MCLA/area/bcrc

Julia Dixon – Session Moderator, BLP Steering Committee Member

Julia Dixon is an artist, arts administrator, community convener, and creative economy consultant. She is working as a freelance project manager as well as manager of the gallery at the Eclipse Mill Artist Lofts in North Adams, Massachusetts, where she lives. Her previous full time positions include Managing Director of Berkshire Creative and Creative Economy Specialist at 1Berkshire. She is the founder and owner of BerkshireFlirt LLC, founder and host of "Creative City" on WMNB-LP 107.1FM, appointed member and chair of the North Adams Public Arts Commission, and volunteers as a business advisor and student mentor. She received her BFA from Purchase College in 2005 and MFA from Vermont College of Fine Arts in 2014.

Margaret Keller – Community Access to the Arts (CATA)

Since 2014, Margaret Keller has been Executive Director of Community Access to the Arts (CATA), a nonprofit organization that nurtures and celebrates the creativity of 650 people with disabilities across Berkshire County. Last year, CATA became the first organization in the county to receive NEPR's Art & Humanities Award. Margaret's career in nonprofits began after she completed her doctoral coursework at the University of Chicago and was lured away from the ivory tower by a passion for bringing the arts and humanities to wider audiences. As Associate Director of the Chicago Humanities Festival, Margaret led program development for a city-wide celebration of art and ideas. For her work expanding the festival's audience, she was chosen by the *Chicago Tribune* as one of the city's most influential people in the arts in 2001. She has been a grantwriter, founded an alumni magazine covering humanities research at the University of Chicago, managed foundation relations at Bard College at Simon's Rock, and served on advisory boards for the Chicago History Museum, the Center for Public Intellectuals, and the Lenox Educational Enrichment Foundation at Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation. She lives in Lenox with her husband and four children.

Diane Pearlman – Berkshire Film and Media Collaborative

Diane is an independent film producer who currently serves as the Executive Director of the Berkshire Film and Media Collaborative, a non-profit dedicated to creating education, workforce and production opportunities in the film and media industry as an economic initiative for the western Massachusetts. She is the producer of the short film, *A Tree A Rock A Cloud*, based on the story by Carson McCullers. The film was adapted and directed by award-winning actor, Karen Allen and just won Best International Short at the Manchester (England) Film Festival and will be part of the Short Film Corner at the Cannes Film Festival next month.

In the 1990's, Diane was Executive Producer and General Manager of Mass.Illusion, a visual effects movie studio located in Lenox, Massachusetts and Alameda, California. MI created effects for *The Matrix* (Academy Award 2000, Best Visual Effects), *What Dreams May Come* (Academy Award 1999, Best Visual Effects), *Starship Troopers*, *Evita*, *Eraser*, *Die Hard with a Vengeance*, *Judge Dredd*, and others.

Diane holds a degree from Vassar College and attended Princeton University and NYU Film School. She is currently Chairman of the Board of Berkshire Pulse, a performing arts center in Housatonic, MA. She is an active member of New York Women in Film and Television, The Massachusetts Production Coalition, New England Women in Film and The Visual Effects Society. Diane lives in Great Barrington, MA with her husband and two sons.

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