

# BHC HERSTORY: WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT LUNCHEON

Thursday, April 21, 2022



# WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

**11-11:15 a.m.**

Jana Koch, Director of Student Life & Engagement

Wendy Bock, Chair of the Counseling Department

# KEYNOTE SPEAKER

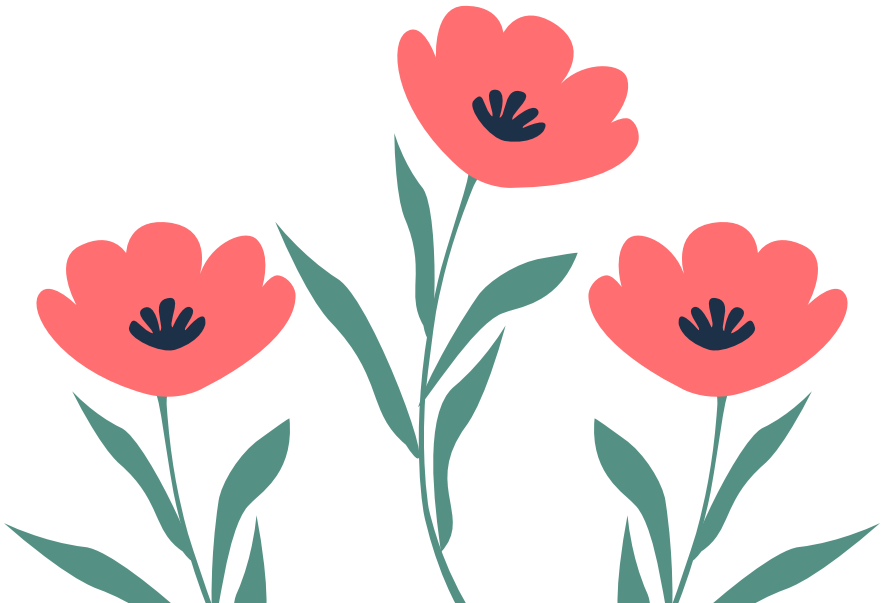
**11:15-11:30 a.m.**

Dr. Xixuan Collins, Professor Emerita

# AWARDS PRESENTATION

**11:30-11:45 a.m.**

Thank you for joining us to recognize these individuals for their outstanding dedication to improving student lives through education! Please join us for a Women's Empowerment Panel immediately following the luncheon.



# AWARD WINNERS

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## **Dr. Emily Lehman**

I was born and raised in Dubuque, Iowa, studied biology at the University of Northern Iowa and earned a Ph.D. in genetics from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. My teaching career began at John Carroll University and the University of Northern Iowa. I joined the Natural Sciences and Engineering Department at Black Hawk College in 2006. I am fortunate to teach a variety of biology courses to our diverse and interesting students. I have also been involved in the BHC Honors Program for the last few years which I very much enjoy. I am married to my husband Tim, and we have three teenage children.

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## **Ewelina Bergert**

Ewelina Bergert is an assistant professor of business in the Business, Computer and Engineering Technology department at Black Hawk College. She is dedicated to helping students learn and gain skills needed for today's business environment. She is passionate about lifelong learning and servant leadership. She is married and has two school-age boys. She was born in Poland and lived there until she was 17 years old. She came to the United States as an exchange student and through the generosity of others continued her college education in the States. She values education which was instilled in her by her parents and shares that passion for learning with her students.





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## Dr. Irene Leites

Irene Apanovitch–Leites (she/her/hers) is the director of choral activities at Black Hawk College, where she conducts the Chamber Singers, Concert Choir, Community Chorale, teaches coursework in non-Western music, music appreciation, and music theory. An active conductor, Dr. Leites serves as a clinician with school, church and community ensembles in both Canada and the United States. She has taught vocal music in a variety of settings, from early childhood, elementary and middle school choirs, to semi-professional and amateur adult community choirs.

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## Jenni Wessel-Fields

Hi, my name is Jenni Wessel-Fields. I am a professor of reading at Black Hawk College in Moline. I have taught a number of reading, writing, communications and ESL courses over the past 15 years at BHC. I earned my bachelor's degree from Illinois State in Normal in elementary education with an emphasis in language arts and social studies. I even spent the first few years of my career teaching both first and second grade. Once I received my master's degree in reading from Western Illinois University (Quad Cities Campus) in Moline, I became a reading specialist for 6th, 7th and 8th grade students. In 2006, I accepted a position as a full-time reading instructor at Black Hawk College. It has truly been my dream job, and the place I was meant to be!

My research interests include: student-centered learning in the college classroom, increasing intrinsic motivation and engagement in college student populations, and developing interactive learning opportunities online and in the classroom. When I'm not teaching or taking classes, I enjoy adventures with my 10-year-old son such as kayaking, hiking and fishing. He has definitely made me appreciate nature more and the outdoors. I also enjoy reading, online shopping, napping, and binge-watching Netflix.





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## Lisa Hansen

Lisa Hansen has a master's degree in business administration from Western Illinois University and a bachelor's degree in sociology from Illinois State University. She began her career in 1999 as a social worker at the Rock Island County Health Department and later co-owned an independent cinema until 2006. She then started as an adjunct business instructor at Kaplan University in Davenport, IA. She worked her way up the ladder, as full-time instructor, department chair, associate academic dean then academic dean/executive director. She became the director of TRIO Student Support Services and Tutoring with Black Hawk College in 2018 which blends her joy in helping students with her administrative know-how. She is passionate about education; especially the dynamic role technology continues to play.

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## Melissa Medendorp

My name is Melissa Medendorp and I have been working in the education field for 24 years now. I started at Ashford University where I also completed my bachelor's degree in psychology and my master's degree. I worked at Ashford for 16 years as an international student advisor. I then worked in the registration office at Clinton Community College for five years. My journey has taken me here to Black Hawk College where I am going on three years of employment and loving it. I live in Fulton, IL, which is about an hour north so I get plenty of time to wind down on my drive. I live with my husband Dan and have one daughter who is now 23 years old. I have two awesome horses who I spend most of my spare time with and I love to walk, read, and kickbox.





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## **Torria Norman**

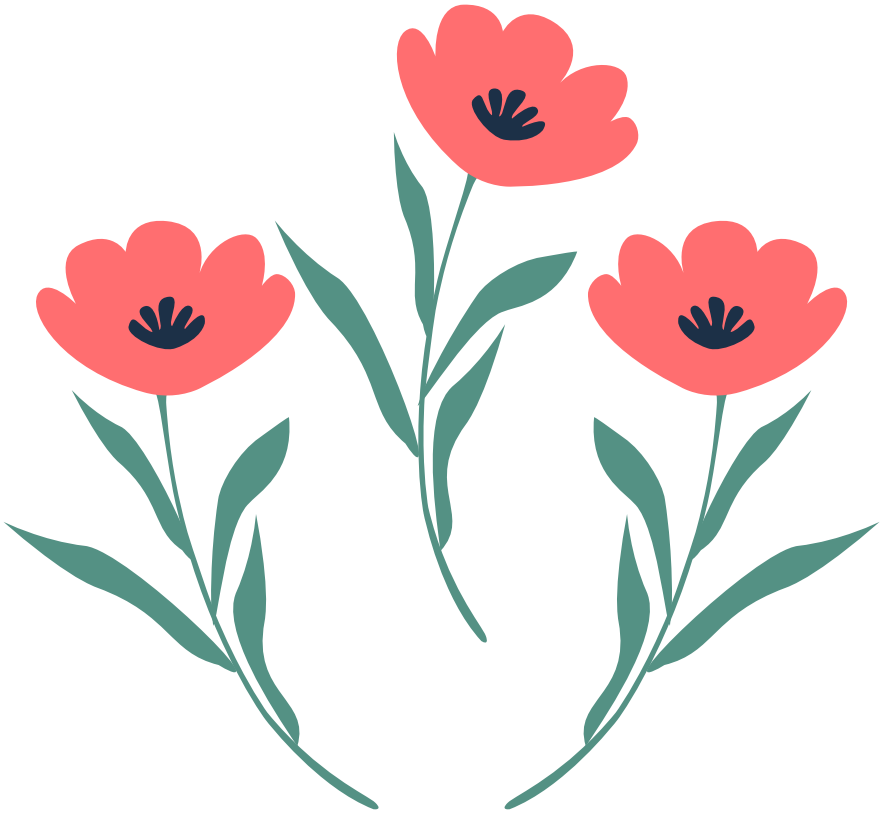
Torria Norman is a native of Decatur, IL. She earned an AA degree at Richland Community College in 1992, a BA from WIU in 1995, and a MA from Bradley University in 1998. She began teaching English at Black Hawk in 1996. She teaches composition and literature. Currently, she serves as the department chair. Torria is also active in her church, Second Baptist Church, Rock Island, IL. She enjoys directing the choir. In her spare time, she enjoys shopping, traveling and spending time with her mom.

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## **Zaiga Thorson**

I was born and raised in Michigan with three brothers. My parents were refugees from Latvia, so my heritage played a big part in my upbringing. I worked as a graphic designer in Chicago for a few years after graduate school and moved to Rock Island when my husband John landed a job for the city. We have two wonderful grown sons, Alex (who recently got married to the equally wonderful Jana) and Eric and a crazy, funny rescue dog named Luna. I am retiring this summer after teaching art and design for nearly 23 years at BHC. It has been a wonderful ride, but I'm looking forward to focusing on my artwork and traveling with my husband.







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