

REDE LEADERSHIP & STAFF



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Mary Farwell earned her doctorate in biochemistry from the University of California, Berkeley. She serves as the assistant vice chancellor for research compliance, director of undergraduate research, and is a professor of biology. Farwell's research interests include mitochondrial regulation of cell death in cancer cells and student success in STEM.



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Cassie Keel earned her bachelor's in psychology from East Carolina University and is currently enrolled in ECU's project management graduate certificate program. She is the university program support associate for the Office of Community Engagement and Research. Keel manages the SECU Public Fellows Internship program and supports other OCER efforts.



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Sharon Paynter earned her doctorate in public administration from North Carolina State University, her master's from the University of Denver, and her MPA and bachelor's degrees from UNC-Chapel Hill. She is the assistant vice chancellor for economic and community engagement and is an associate professor of political science. Paynter's research interests include hunger, poverty and public policy.



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Matt Smith earned his master's in digital media from UNC-Chapel Hill. Smith spent seven years in the newspaper industry before joining the division as REDE's communication specialist. Smith oversees REDE's communication efforts with internal and external media outlets, while also maintaining the division's online presence.



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Kathryn Verbanac earned her doctorate in biochemistry from the University of Iowa. Verbanac serves as the assistant vice chancellor for research development and advancement, director of postdoctoral affairs, and is a professor of surgery. Her breast cancer research focuses on the tissue microenvironment and immune signatures at metastatic sites.



Keith Wheeler | wheelerch18@ecu.edu

Keith Wheeler, a retired U.S. Navy captain, earned his master's degree in national security and strategic studies from the U.S. Naval War College. Wheeler serves as the executive director of national security and industry initiatives. The Manteo native has held numerous leadership positions in the Navy, including commanding officer of U.S.S. McInerney where he led the Navy's first at-sea autonomous flight tests of the Fire Scout unmanned aerial vehicle. Wheeler also served as the chief of staff at DARPA — the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency charged with creating breakthrough technologies and capabilities for national security.