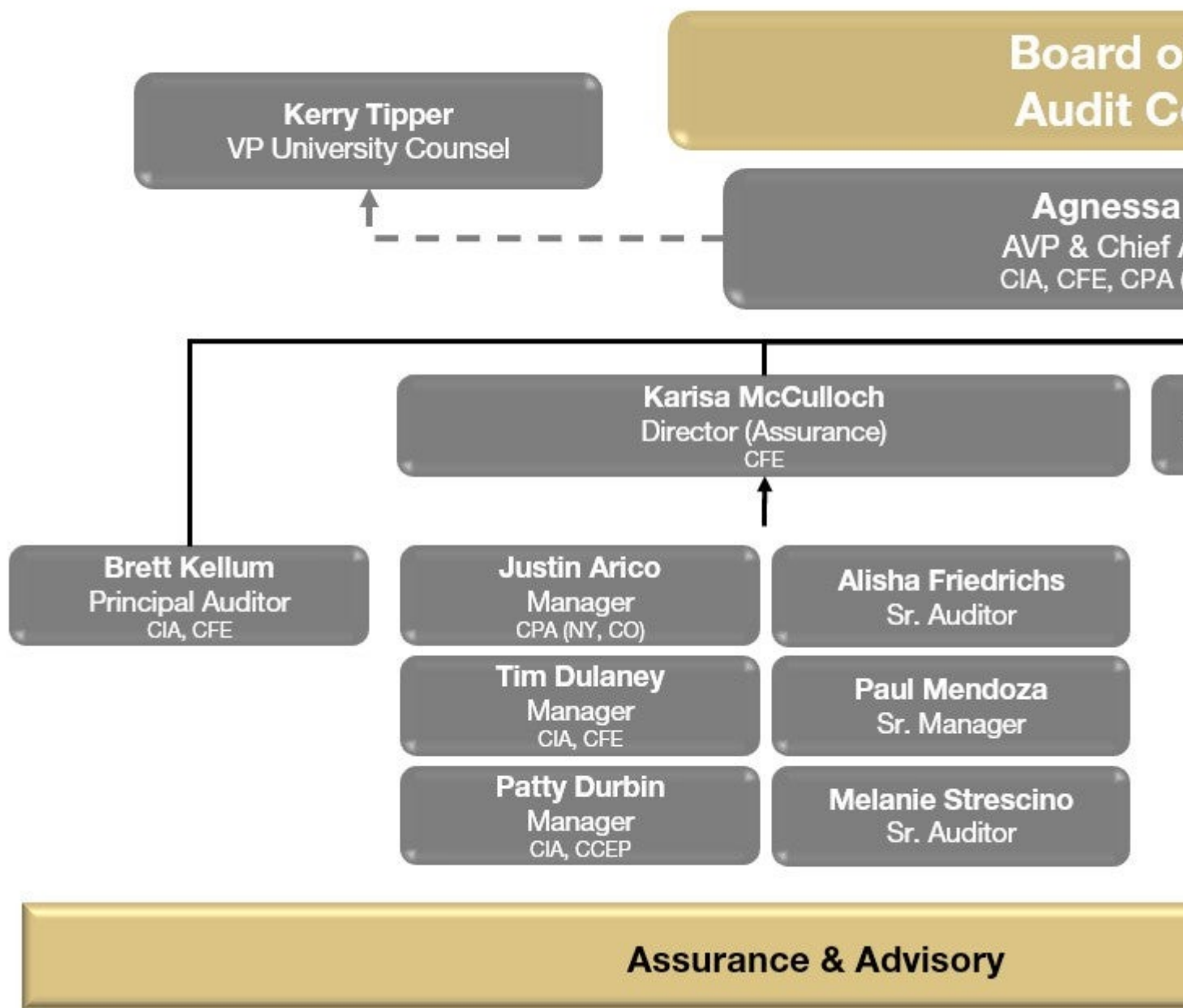


Our Team ^[1]

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|--|--|--------------|---------------------|
| Agnessa Vartanova | Associate Vice President | Agnessa.Vartanova@cu.edu ^[2] | 303.837.2205 | bio |
| Justin Arico | Audit Manager | Justin.Arico@cu.edu ^[3] | 303.837.2211 | bio |
| Minna Briscoe | IT Audit Manager | Minna.Briscoe@cu.edu ^[4] | 303.837.2206 | bio |
| Mari Dennis | CU EthicsLine Coordinator & Fiscal Misconduct Investigator | Maricela.Dennis@cu.edu ^[5] | 303.837.2147 | bio |
| Tim Dulaney | Audit Manager | Tim.Dulaney@cu.edu ^[6] | 303.837.2198 | bio |
| Patty Durbin | Audit Manager | Patty.Durbin@cu.edu ^[7] | 303.837.2197 | bio |
| Alisha Friedrichs | Senior Auditor | Alisha.Friedrichs@cu.edu ^[8] | 303.860.2164 | bio |
| Brett Kellum | Principal Auditor | Brett.Kellum@cu.edu ^[9] | 303.837.2196 | bio |
| Sean Mandel | Principal Investigator | Sean.Mandel@cu.edu ^[10] | 303.837.2148 | bio |
| Karisa McCulloch | Audit Director | Karisa.McCulloch@cu.edu ^[11] | 303.837.2193 | bio |
| Paul Mendoza | Senior Manager | Paul.Mendoza@cu.edu ^[12] | 303.837.2124 | bio |
| Ginger Minges | Executive Assistant | Ginger.Minges@cu.edu ^[13] | 303.837.2195 | bio |
| Aby Schaller | Senior IT Auditor | Aby.Schaller@cu.edu ^[14] | 303.837.2143 | bio |
| Sylwia Shah | Senior IT Auditor | Sylwia.Shah@cu.edu ^[15] | 303.837.2145 | bio |
| Steve Smith | Director of Investigations | Steven.Smith@cu.edu ^[16] | 303.837.2192 | bio |
| Melanie Strescino | Senior Auditor | Melanie.Strescino@cu.edu ^[17] | 303.837.2162 | bio |
| Brian Turner | Audit Director | Brian.Turner@cu.edu ^[18] | 303.837.2128 | bio |



Mailing Address and Main Office Location:

University of Colorado
Internal Audit Department
032UCA (for intercampus mail only)
1800 Grant St., Suite 670
Denver, Colorado 80203-1148

Phone: 303-837-2195

Email: internal.audit@cu.edu ^[19]

Staff Detail

Agnessa Vartanova

Associate Vice President of Internal Audit & Chief Audit Executive

Agnessa.Vartanova@cu.edu ^[2]

303.837.2205



I have been serving as the associate vice president and chief audit executive at the University of Colorado (CU) since February 2021. Prior to joining CU, I held leadership roles in global internal audit functions at Ball Corporation and DaVita, Inc., Colorado-based Fortune 500 companies.

I have a bachelor and master of science degrees in accounting from University of Wyoming, and a professional graduate certificate in corporate sustainability and innovation from Harvard

University Extension School. I am also a Certified Public Accountant in Colorado, and hold professional certifications in internal auditing, information systems auditing, fraud examination, and risk management assurance.

In my practice, I strive to elevate the role of internal audit by consistently delivering pragmatic and meaningful insight to stakeholders. I am an active member in the Association of College and University Auditors (ACUA), currently serving as the Best Practices Committee Chair. ACUA is an important part of audit knowledge and methodologies exchange, and I enjoy opportunities to present at conferences and learn from my peers.

In my free time, I love to travel, read, and hike, especially the Colorado Fourteeners.

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Justin Arico

Audit Manager

Justin.Arico@cu.edu ^[3]

303.837.2211



I joined the Internal Audit team in October 2019. Before joining the team, I worked in the media industry at Showtime Networks, Inc. and in public accounting at RSM.

I earned my Master's in Professional Accounting at Syracuse University, and currently hold my Certified Public Accountant license in Colorado and New York.

In my free time, I enjoy running, hiking, golfing, and spending time with family, friends, and my very spoiled pup.

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Minna Briscoe

IT Audit Manager

Minna.Briscoe@cu.edu ^[4]

303.837.2206



Since 2018, I've been a part of CU's Internal Audit department. With 18 years of experience, I've conducted finance, compliance, performance, and information systems audits, along with data analytics and fraud investigations across diverse industries. In the past 12 years, my focus has been on IT audits.

I'm a Certified Information Systems Auditor. My academic accomplishments include a Bachelor's degree in International Business Management and studies in international law, languages, and political science at various universities.

I love spending time with my family, exploring new destinations, and engaging in outdoor activities in my free time.

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Mari Dennis

CU EthicsLine Coordinator & Fiscal Misconduct Investigator

Maricela.Dennis@cu.edu ^[5]

303.837.2147



[Return to Top](#)

Tim Dulaney

Audit Manager

Tim.Dulaney@cu.edu ^[6]

303.837.2198

[Return To Top](#)

Patty Durbin

Audit Manager

Patty.Durbin@cu.edu ^[7]

303.837.2197



I joined the Internal Audit team in November 2011. Before joining the team, I worked in Internal Audit at the University of Washington and several other higher education institutions in years past.

I earned my master's in business administration at the University of Colorado Denver and currently hold designations as a Certified Internal Auditor, a Certified Compliance and Ethics Professional, and a Certified Public Accountant (licensed in Washington State).

In my free time, I enjoy exploring various fiber arts and mixed media activities, working with animals, and spending time with family and friends.

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Alisha Friedrichs

Audit Senior

Alisha.Friedrichs@cu.edu ^[8]

303.837.2197



I joined the Internal Audit team in January 2024. Prior to joining the team, I worked as an auditor for a media industry and national bank.

I earned my bachelor's degree in Exercise Kinesiology and Physiology.

In my free time, I enjoy anything outdoors, traveling, reading, going to the gym, and spending time with my family, friends and my two rambunctious rottweilers.

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Brett Kellum

Principal Auditor

Brett.Kellum@cu.edu ^[9]

303.837.2196

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of understanding the cultural context of the research. It highlights the need for researchers to be sensitive to the values and beliefs of the communities they are studying. This is particularly important in the field of education, where cultural differences can significantly impact learning outcomes. The paper then moves on to discuss the challenges of conducting research in culturally diverse settings. It notes that researchers often face difficulties in establishing rapport with participants and in interpreting their responses. To address these challenges, the paper suggests several strategies, including the use of local informants and the development of culturally appropriate research instruments. The final part of the paper discusses the importance of ethical considerations in cross-cultural research. It emphasizes the need for researchers to obtain informed consent from participants and to ensure that their research does not cause harm to the communities they are studying.

I joined the University of Colorado Department of Internal Audit (IA) in July 2013 after spending ten years in Grand Junction on Colorado's Western Slope. After several years working as a data analyst, I like to say I stumbled into Internal Audit but have found it to be a perfect match for my passions.

Being born and raised in Boulder, I'm a CU Buff at heart, even though I earned my undergraduate degree in Political Science and Mathematics from the University of Northern Colorado and a Master of Science in Statistics from Colorado State University.

As a certified internal auditor (CIA) and certified fraud examiner (CFE), it is my goal to serve the university, my fellow employees, our students, and the entire CU community through inquiring, listening, analyzing, encouraging, and partnering with my stakeholders in solving problems and finding solutions.

When not serving CU, you can find me enjoying time with my wife and kids or performing as a member of Colorado Repertory Singers (come see us and say "Hi!").

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Sean Mandel

Principal Investigator

Sean.Mandel@cu.edu ^[10]

303.837.2148



I earned my Bachelor of Arts from St. Mary's College in 1991. I dedicated 30 years to the Colorado Springs Police Department, rising to the rank of Division Commander. During my tenure, I graduated from the FBI National Academy and completed the Executive Leadership.

In 2022, I joined the Internal Audit's Investigation Department, bringing my extensive experience in leadership and investigations to the role.

Outside of work, I enjoy golfing, exercising, and spending time with my family.

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Karisa McCulloch

Audit Director

Karisa.McCulloch@cu.edu ^[11]

303.837.2193

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Paul Mendoza

Senior Audit Manager

Paul.Mendoza@cu.edu ^[12]

303.837.2124



I was hired as the Senior Audit Manager at the University of Colorado in 2024. Before this role, I held several leadership positions, bringing over 21 years of financial leadership experience, including 16 years in higher education. I have provided strategic leadership and driven process improvements across various areas. My expertise spans Financial Reporting, Financial Accounting, Managerial Accounting, Budget Management, Human Resources, Risk Management and Compliance, and Financial Planning and Analysis.

I hold a BA in Business Economics and Accounting from the University of California, Santa Barbara. I enjoy running and spending time outdoors and exploring Colorado with my family.

I am dedicated to supporting the CU Internal Audit team's vision of "Insight with Impact." With

my experience, I am committed to fostering a culture of excellence and continuous improvement, driving meaningful changes at the University of Colorado.

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Ginger Minges

Executive Assistant

Ginger.Minges@cu.edu ^[13]

303.837.2195



I am the Executive Assistant for the Associate Vice President of Internal Audit and Chief Audit Executive at the University of Colorado. With 14 years of experience at CU, I play a key role in supporting the leadership of the internal audit function, ensuring smooth operations and

effective communication across the university system.

Prior to joining CU, I served as a deputy sheriff and held the rank of sergeant in the U.S. Army, bringing a disciplined and investigative approach to my work.

Outside of work, I enjoy spending time at our LakeHouse with family, making the most of summer through boating, surfing, swimming, and simply enjoying quality time together.

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Aby Schaller

Senior IT Auditor

Aby.Schaller@cu.edu ^[14]

303.837.2143



I joined the Internal Audit team in March 2025. Prior to joining the University of Colorado, I worked as a senior auditor at a Tier 1 bank and held other IT roles at other organizations throughout my career.

I have a B.Sc. in Microbiology and a Master's in Business Administration (MBA) from Cardiff University, Wales. I also hold various IT industry certifications.

In my free time, I enjoy spending time with family, photography, reading, traveling and the outdoors.

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Sylwia Shah

Senior IT Auditor

Sylwia.Shah@cu.edu ^[15]

303.837.2145



I joined the Internal Audit team as a Sr. IT Auditor in July 2023. Prior to joining the University of Colorado, I was an IT Project Manager at a FinTech startup, and a Technology Risk Consultant at RSM.

I earned my Bachelor of Science in Accounting and Information and Decision Sciences from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Outside of work, I enjoy biking, paddleboarding, and going on walks with my dog.

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Steve Smith

Director of Investigations

Steven.Smith@cu.edu ^[16]

303.837.2192



I joined the Internal Audit team in October 2019. Before joining CU, I served in both local and federal law enforcement for a combined 27 years.

I have a bachelor's degree in business administration from Regis University, and in 1996, I earned my Master of Science degree in organizational management.

In my free time, I enjoy golfing and playing ice hockey.

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Melanie Strescino

Senior Auditor

Melanie.Strescino@cu.edu ^[17]

303.837.2162



I joined the Internal Audit team in September 2025. Prior to joining Internal Audit, I worked at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs for 11 years, most recently serving as Business Services Director for the Department of Public Safety.

I hold a BA in Psychology and a Master's in Public Administration, and I am currently pursuing a Master's in Clinical Mental Health.

In my free time, I enjoy working out, reading, traveling, and spending time with family and friends.

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Brian Turner

Audit Director

Brian.Turner@cu.edu ^[18]

303.837.2128



Prior to joining the Internal Audit team in 2022, I worked for the federal government in Cyber Security.

I earned my Master of Science degree from Baylor University and hold various industry certifications.

In my free time, I enjoy swimming and golfing.

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Internal Audit

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[1] <https://www.cu.edu/internalaudit/our-team> [2] <mailto:Agnessa.Vartanova@cu.edu>
[3] <mailto:Justin.Arco@cu.edu> [4] <mailto:Minna.Briscoe@cu.edu> [5] <mailto:Maricela.Dennis@cu.edu>
[6] <mailto:Tim.Dulaney@cu.edu> [7] <mailto:Patty.Durbin@cu.edu> [8] <mailto:Alisha.Friedrichs@cu.edu>
[9] <mailto:Brett.Kellum@cu.edu> [10] <mailto:Sean.Mandel@cu.edu> [11] <mailto:Karisa.McCulloch@cu.edu>
[12] <mailto:Paul.Mendoza@cu.edu> [13] <mailto:Ginger.Minges@cu.edu> [14] <mailto:Aby.Schaller@cu.edu>
[15] <mailto:Sylwia.Shah@cu.edu> [16] <mailto:Steven.Smith@cu.edu> [17] <mailto:Melanie.Strescino@cu.edu>
[18] <mailto:Brian.Turner@cu.edu> [19] <mailto:internal.audit@cu.edu>