



# Sanda Balaban Named New Executive Director of Project Pericles

June 2024

NEW YORK—The Board of Directors of Project Pericles is delighted to announce the election of Sanda Balaban as its new Executive Director following a national search.

An alumna of Swarthmore College and the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Balaban brings more than 20 years of experience in education and nonprofit leadership to Project Pericles. She will begin her new position in mid-July, succeeding Jan Risë Liss who has led the organization since 2005.

Balaban is currently the Co-Founder and Director of YVote/Next Generation Politics, an organization that engages young people through issue-driven and peer-led civic learning and leadership programs. She founded the organization in 2017 as a response to the societal challenges highlighted by the tumultuous 2016 election cycle. In collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, leading activists, and with young people at the center, Balaban created the organization's five signature programs, established a strong media presence, and secured \$2 million in funding over the years. YVote/Next Generation Politics is a highly effective and well-regarded youth civic organization, serving more than 1,500 secondary school students to date in developing civic identity, agency, and efficacy.



“Sanda's strategic and entrepreneurial vision, substantial leadership experience, knowledge of civic education, and experience in advocacy for democratic participation will strengthen the programs on our college and university member campuses, enhance Project Pericles as a driver of excellence, and contribute to greater civic engagement throughout the country,” said Richard Ekman, Project Pericles Board Chair.

Search Committee Chair Eugene Tobin added: “Sanda’s commitment to liberal education, social justice, and passion for encouraging and motivating young people to view democracy and its institutions as vehicles for positive change represent an inspirational model that will resonate powerfully across American higher education.”

Earlier in her career, Sanda served as the Executive Director of the New York State Governor's Committee on Scholastic Achievement mentoring program, Director of Strategic Learning Initiatives for Facing History and Ourselves, and held several leadership roles at the New York City Department of Education. She has also worked in philanthropy at the Ford Foundation and Goldman Sachs

Foundation, and for nonprofits including the Boston Private Industry Council and The Teachers Network. Her current board memberships include Generation Vote, the Human Schools Project, the Hope Reichbach Memorial Fund, and the Chalkbeat National Reader Advisory Board.

Jan Risë Liss, Founding Executive Director of Project Pericles who will be stepping down in July, highlighted her confidence for the future: “Under Sanda Balaban’s leadership, the organization will continue its commitment to empower students through signature programs which equip our campuses to drive meaningful change at the local and national levels. Project Pericles is at a high point organizationally and the timing is right for generational change. Sanda’s leadership presents a prime opportunity to create an even brighter future in service of our member institutions, civic engagement, democracy, and higher education more broadly.”

“I am honored to join Project Pericles and build upon its legacy,” says Balaban. “Leading Project Pericles offers a powerful platform through which to continue creating programs to foster civic agency and to deepen the ways in which colleges and universities prepare students for effective civic participation. Influencing the growth of students during this important developmental window of early adulthood is the key to American democracy’s vitality in the future.”

Balaban emphasizes the importance of Project Pericles’ work: “If we are to counter some of the alienating headwinds that divide us and instead cultivate ways of being and doing that unite us, we must invest in young people and create meaningful ways for them to engage in constructive civil discourse and civic action. I look forward to working in partnership with presidents, provosts, and Periclean program directors to create a springboard for lifelong civic participation and social responsibility.”

**About Project Pericles:** Project Pericles is a consortium of colleges and universities that promotes civic engagement within higher education. Building on the innovative vision of Eugene M. Lang, Project Pericles works at the forefront of civic engagement and social responsibility in areas including faculty and course development, curricular coherence, community engagement, and research into best practices. Its programs empower college students by giving them the tools they need to address society's grand challenges including: climate change, economic justice, education access, immigration, mass incarceration, public health, race and inequality, and voter engagement. In addition to working with 29 Periclean campuses, Project Pericles works with faculty at more than 50 colleges and universities.

Project Pericles has received support from a wide range of individuals and organizations including The Eugene M. Lang Foundation, The Arthur Vining Davis Foundations, the Mellon Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, The Students Learn Students Vote Coalition, The Teagle Foundation, and Up to Us/Net Impact.

**Contact:** For inquiries, contact Arielle del Rosario at [arielle.delrosario@projectpericles.org](mailto:arielle.delrosario@projectpericles.org) and (908) 510-6287.



## Project Pericles Board of Directors

Eugene M. Lang (1919-2017): *Founder and Chair Emeritus*  
 Richard Ekman: *Chair, President Emeritus and Senior Advisor, Council of Independent Colleges*  
 Lauren S. McGrail: *Vice-Chair, Executive Director, The Eugene M. Lang Foundation*  
 David A. Caputo: *Treasurer; President Emeritus, Pace University*  
 James H. Mullen Jr.: *Past Chair; President Emeritus, Allegheny College; Interim President, Hartwick College*

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Audrey Bilger<br><i>President, Reed College</i>                          | Lyle D. Roelofs<br><i>President Emeritus, Berea College</i>  |
| Connie Ledoux Book<br><i>President, Elon University</i>                  | Lourdes M. Rosado<br><i>President and General Counsel, LatinoJustice PRLDEF</i>  |
| Ronald B. Cole<br><i>President, Allegheny College</i>                    | Paul Schadewald<br><i>Former Project Pericles Program Director, Macalester College;</i>  |
| Marc C. Conner<br><i>President, Skidmore College</i>                     | Eugene M. Tobin<br><i>Senior Project Manager, Bringing Theory to Practice; Chair, National Advisory Board, Imagining America</i> |
| Helen Lang Suskin<br><i>Former Vice President, Pfizer</i>                | Jan R. Liss<br><i>Executive Director, Project Pericles</i>   |
| Jan R. Liss<br><i>Executive Director, Project Pericles</i>               | Scott L. Warren<br><i>Visiting Fellow, SNF Agora Institute at Johns Hopkins; Co-Founder, Generation Citizen</i>                  |
| Louis A. Martarano<br><i>Managing Director, L. Martarano Enterprises</i> |  |

## Presidents' Council

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Ronald B. Cole, Allegheny College            | Morehouse College, David A. Thomas,            |
| Garry W. Jenkins, Bates College              | New England College, Wayne F. Lesperance, Jr., |
| Cheryl Nixon, Berea College                  | The New School, Donna E. Shalala               |
| William Berry, Bethune-Cookman University    | Occidental College, Harry J. Elam Jr.          |
| Alison R. Byerly, Carleton College           | Pace University, Marvin Krislov                |
| Rhonda Phillips, Chatham University          | Pitzer College, Strom C. Thacker               |
| Rochelle L. Ford, Dillard University         | Reed College, Audrey Bilger                    |
| Hilary L. Link, Drew University              | Rhodes College, Jennifer M. Collins            |
| Connie Ledoux Book, Elon University          | Skidmore College, Marc C. Conner               |
| John Carmichael, The Evergreen State College | Swarthmore College, Valerie Smith              |
| Kent Devereaux, Goucher College              | Ursinus College, Robyn E. Hannigan             |
| Edward C. Wingenbach, Hampshire College      | Wagner College, Angelo G. Araimo               |
| Karen K. Petersen, Hendrix College           | Whitman College, Sarah R. Bolton               |
| Suzanne M. Rivera, Macalester College        | Widener University, Stacey M. Robertson        |
|  | The College of Wooster, Anne E. McCall         |

## National Board of Advisors

Co-Chairs: Sen. Nancy Kassebaum Baker & Hon. Kurt L. Schmoke  
 David Baltimore • John Baugh • J. Herman Blake • Roger W. Bowen • Harry C. Boyte • Sen. Bill Bradley • Paul Brest  
 Russell L. Carson • Raymond G. Chambers • Nadinne Cruz • Richard A. Detweiler • Janet Smith Dickerson  
 Thomas Ehrlich • Jonathan F. Fanton • Nicholas H. Farnham • Ellen V. Futter • Richard Guarasci • Llewellyn P. Haden, Jr.  
 Samuel L. Hayes III • Antonia Hernandez • Gov. Thomas H. Kean • Arthur E. Levine • Reuben Mark • Mary Patterson McPherson  
 Michael S. McPherson • Robert D. Putnam • Judith A. Ramaley • David M. Scobey • Allen P. Splete • Mark A. Vander Ploeg

## National Office

Jan Risë Liss, *Executive Director*  
 Arielle M. del Rosario, *Associate Director*  
 Tyler Z. Levine, *Program Operations Associate*

## IN MEMORIAM

Alison R. Bernstein • Jerome A. Chazen • Gov. Mario M. Cuomo • Christopher F. Edley, Jr • Curtis B. Gans • Amb. James C. Hormel  
 Helene L. Kaplan • Clark Kerr • Eugene M. Lang • Elizabeth McCormack • Paul Newman • Sen. Paul Simon • Sen. Harris L. Wofford

Project Pericles, Inc. | 551 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1910 | [www.projectpericles.org](http://www.projectpericles.org)