Speaker Bios:

KU Small Business Center <https://business.ku.edu/research-and-faculty/centers/ku-sbdc>

Kristina Edwards is the Director of the KU Small Business Development Center. A Kansas native, Edwards received undergraduate degree in art history from the University of Kansas. She then returned to Kansas City and found a job working as a financial aid advisor in 2014. Edwards has experience helping individuals sift through complicated information to find insights and drive informed decisions. In addition to her role as an advisor, she also managed a team of student workers for the department. After a few years in the workforce, she returned to KU for her MBA and graduated in 2017. During her time in the MBA program, she served as a student consultant for a number of local businesses. Edwards loves everything marketing and served a stint at an advertising agency. She is very excited to help small businesses grow and work with local entrepreneurs.  
  
Christian Hopkins, from Narragansett and Mi’kmaw (Mi’kmaq) Tribal Nations, is a business advisor for the KU Small Business Development Center. He attended Haskell Indian Nations University for his undergraduate degree in business administration and returned to Lawrence to attend the University of Kansas where he received a Master’s in Business Administration and Master of Science in Business Analytics. Hopkins comes from an entrepreneurial background inspired by his grandfather; he is excited to work within surrounding communities, building relationships with existing entrepreneurs, and to encourage more entrepreneurs to pursue their passions.   
  
Carrie Poe, business advisor for the KU Small Business Development Center, graduated from the KU School of Journalism with an emphasis in business communications in 2000. She completed her MBA through Baker University in 2003. Her father retired from the Army in Kansas. Her family, including her spouse and extended family, has served and some currently serve in several of the military branches. Poe has worked in several fields including office administration, nonprofit work, healthcare and marketing. Most of her work experience has been in locally owned small businesses, which gave her the opportunity to expand her knowledge in several aspects of business management.    
  
Phil Watlington, Program Director — Finance and Accounting and Spires Trading Team Coach, teaches undergraduate and graduate courses at the University of Saint Mary. Watlington is pursuing a Doctor of Business Administration degree through California Southern University. He retired from the General Electric Company as a Division Financial Director. His current interests include financial models for entrepreneurial businesses, data analytics, sustainability accounting/reporting, personal finance/wealth planning, and specialized securities trading. Nonfiction books published on Globalization and Diversity include “The World is at Your Door” and, “The Rise of Powerful, Influential, and Caring Women.” <https://www.stmary.edu/mba>

Jamilah Ward is an Outreach and Marketing Specialist at the U.S. Small Business Administration. She promotes the resources and services that SBA has while connecting and generating new partnerships. Prior to joining SBA, she has a 10-year Economic Development background working for a local Economic Development Corporation (EDC) where her primary focus was business retention, attraction and expansion with a specialized industry sector and working with minorities in entrepreneurship. Ward also served as a liaison between City departments, businesses and the development community. She provided financial resources and informational assistance, workforce resources, customized research services and more to ensure the City’s strategic economic development and quality job choice for our residents. She worked closely with commercial developers, business owners, real estate brokers and site selectors to navigate the legislative process related to development and incentives. <https://www.sba.gov/>

Lisa Weakley is the President of Grow Leavenworth County. Serving as a volunteer for many years, Weakley is active with the Leavenworth County Historical Society, the Vintage Homes Society, Leavenworth Animal Welfare Society, and the League of Women Voters. She brings extensive experience to the Board as a public servant, small business owner and working in the banking industry. For twelve years, Weakley enjoyed serving the Leavenworth community as City Commissioner with three terms as Mayor. She and her husband operated Weakley’s Antiques, a second-generation family business of selling antique Victorian furniture in the Leavenworth community for 50 years. Lisa Weakley has more than 20 years of experience in the banking industry in a various positions from branch management to commercial and residential lending. <https://www.leavenworthks.org/ed/page/grow-leavenworth-county-development-corporation-non-profit-e-community-loan-provider>

April Rogers is the Employment Readiness Program Specialist and Army Volunteer Corps Coordinator for Army Community Service on Fort Leavenworth. Rogers is a former military spouse of 20 years who moved 11 times with the Army. She began her career in the employment-related field with the Career Skills Program and later with the Transition Assistance Program. <https://www.armymwr.com/programs-and-services/personal-assistance/employment-readiness-program>

Country Club Bank:  
My name is Heather Padelli and I have been with Country Club Bank for over a decade. As a passionate small business specialist, I bring both expertise and a genuine desire to make a positive impact. Beyond helping businesses like yours succeed, I actively volunteer for various organizations in our community.

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