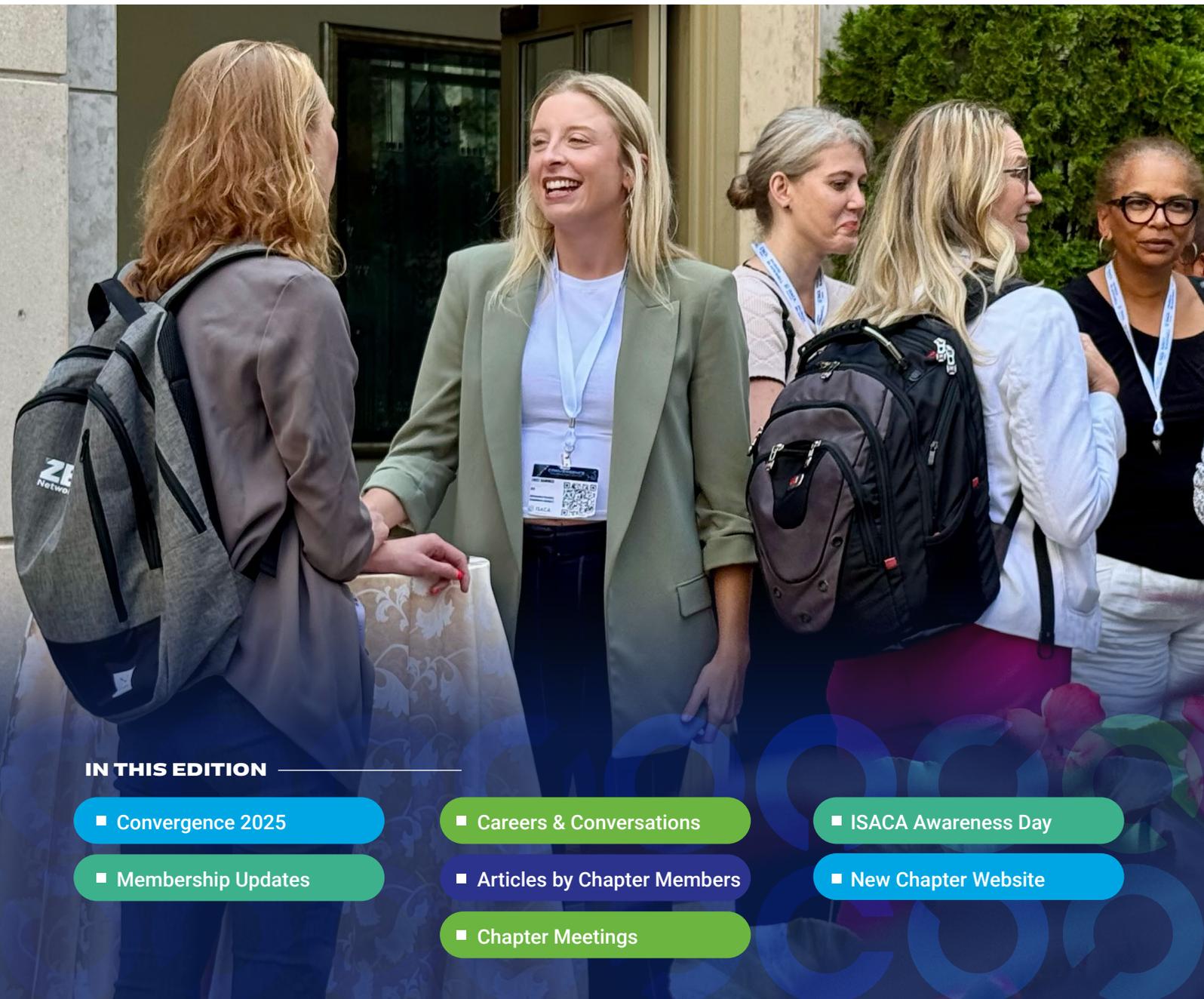


Chicago Chapter

BI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER, 2025



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WELCOME REMARKS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome back to the second edition of the ISACA Chicago Chapter newsletter!



ALLYSON ZOLLER
PRESIDENT, ISACA CHICAGO
CHAPTER



We are thrilled to recap a period filled with significant achievements, impactful collaborations, and fantastic opportunities to grow your expertise and network.

This edition is packed with highlights, including a look back at our official ISACA Awareness Day Declaration and key takeaways from our monthly Chapter meetings and the highly successful Convergence Conference. We will share details from our exciting international collaboration, the ISACA Chicago & London Chapter Meeting, and feature SheLeadsTech support at GirlCon Chicago 2025.

In addition, you will find updates on our ISACA Mentorship Program, insights from our Careers and Conversations series, and a look at the success of our Certifications & Review Classes

including the new AAISM Certification. Don't miss our SheLeadsTech Interview, a summary of our ISACA Community Day blog, and a first look at our Chapter's New Website!

Thank you for being a vital part of the ISACA Chicago community. Please visit our website regularly for a comprehensive list of upcoming events and opportunities—we look forward to seeing you soon! If you haven't already, please take a moment to review and renew your annual membership with the Chapter to ensure continued access to all benefits and events.

Membership SnapShot 2025



ISACA Chicago Chapter: Who We Are – A Snapshot of Our Membership

As of September 28, 2025, the ISACA Chicago Chapter proudly represents a dynamic community of 2,772 members – professionals, students, and lifelong learners who share a commitment to advancing technology governance, risk, and assurance across our region.

Growing and Diverse

Our community continues to grow!
59% of our members identify as male, 29% as female, and about 14% chose not to identify, with another 0.9% preferring not to answer.
These numbers remind us that diversity and inclusion remain at the heart of our mission – and we will keep working to ensure that every member feels welcome, seen, and supported.

Levels of Membership

Our members span every recognition level within ISACA:
814 Members, 611 Silver, 521 Platinum, 424 Gold, and 402 Bronze.
This balanced mix shows how engaged our community is at every stage of their ISACA journey – from new professionals earning their first certifications to seasoned leaders mentoring others.

A Surge of New Talent

More than 500 members joined in the past year, showing that interest in ISACA Chicago is stronger than ever. While new members bring fresh energy, our chapter also benefits from long-time members – some with over 30 years of continuous involvement. Together, they create a community that blends new perspectives with deep experience.

Who Makes Up ISACA Chicago

Most of our members are seasoned professionals – 2,376 strong – representing leadership and practitioner roles across IT audit, cybersecurity, and risk. We also have 119 students and 50 recent graduates, an encouraging sign for the future of our profession. And we are honored to count 10 retired and 3 lifetime members who continue to stay connected and contribute to our success.

What We Do

Our members work in many parts of the digital-trust ecosystem:

- Compliance, Risk, and Privacy Leaders – 370 members
- Security Professionals – 318 members
- IT/IS Compliance and Control Staff – 298 members
- IT Directors – 244 members
- IT Auditors – 234 members
- IT Audit Directors/Managers/Consultants – 233 members

Together, these professionals bring unmatched expertise to our chapter, making ISACA Chicago a hub for peer learning, mentoring, and thought leadership.

Looking Ahead

Our chapter's story is one of growth, engagement, and connection. We will continue to build programs that:

- Strengthen member engagement and retention,
- Expand mentorship opportunities between senior leaders and new members,
- Promote diversity and inclusion across all professional levels, and
- Celebrate the many ways our members lead in their fields.

Every member contributes to this thriving community – and we are excited for what comes next.

Thank you for being part of ISACA Chicago!

Compiled by
Michael Podemski



WHEREAS, the Information Systems Audit and Control Association (ISACA) is a leading professional organization dedicated to the advancement of information systems audit, control, security, and governance and the professionals who work in those fields; and,

WHEREAS, ISACA has been instrumental in developing and promoting best practices for information security and risk management, contributing significantly to the protection of critical infrastructure and sensitive data in Illinois and across the globe; and,

...resources, training, and networking opportunities to expand informational technology (IT) ... professionals and to help IT professionals in Illinois thrive

ISACA AWARENESS DAY DECLARATION

Illinois Governor JB Pritzker has officially proclaimed July 30, 2025, as ISACA Awareness Day in the state that ISACA Global proudly calls home.

This recognition is a tribute to the outstanding dedication of ISACA's members and volunteers who have championed technological innovation and helped build a more secure and trustworthy digital world.

In the era of increasing cyber threats, ISACA has remained a global leader in shaping and promoting best practices in information security, risk management, and IT governance. From safeguarding critical infrastructure to protecting sensitive data, ISACA's impact is felt not only in Illinois but around the world.

The proclamation honors ISACA as a premier professional organization committed to advancing the fields of information systems audit, control, security, and governance. Going forward, July 30 will be commemorated annually as a day to celebrate the vital contributions of ISACA and its global community of professionals.

A RESOUNDING SUCCESS: THE 2025 CONVERGENCE CONFERENCE DELIVERS FUTURE-FOCUSED GOVERNANCE INSIGHTS



We are thrilled to report on the overwhelming success of the ISACA Chicago Convergence Conference, held in August 2025. Focused on the crucial theme, “Risk and Reward Governance for the Future of Technology,” the event provided two (2) full days of intensive learning, strategic discussions, and unparalleled networking, solidifying its place as a cornerstone event for security and governance professionals.

World-Class Speakers and Cutting-Edge Content

Our goal was to bring the industry’s most critical and forward-looking content to our attendees, and our esteemed speakers delivered powerfully. We were honored to host experts, many of whom traveled from around the globe to share their knowledge:

- **Keynote Resilience:** Tim Brown (CISO, SolarWinds) opened the conference with a captivating keynote, sharing his rich, firsthand

experience and invaluable lessons from a major data breach, which immediately engaged the audience and set a high standard for candid discussion.

- **The AI Frontier:** Attendees were both entertained and informed by Bruno Soares (President, Lisbon ISACA Chapter) on tackling AI-driven fraud, and by David Stone (Director, Google Cloud Office of the CISO), who provided a balanced view of AI threats versus its capabilities in proactive defense. Sessions on AI risks and

compliance and quantum computing also prepared attendees for the technologies shaping tomorrow.

- **A Strategic Focus:** Vital sessions on adopting a data-first approach to cyber risk management (Mark Nafe, Mastercard Cybersecurity) and the importance of fraud risk management (DJ Rossini, Grant Thornton) equipped practitioners with actionable strategies for immediate implementation.

Elevating Leadership and Tackling Industry Hurdles

A major focus of the conference was on the evolution of leadership and governance. Ira Winkler (CISO, CYE) presented on “The Art and Science of Being a CISO” advocating for the critical need to integrate data science into the CISO function, urging leaders to move beyond “gut instincts” to drive effective, data-backed security programs. Our high-impact panel discussions served as crucial focal points:

- **3rd Party Risk Management:** This panel provided timely and practical guidance on managing complex vendor ecosystems.
- **CISO Panel Discussion:** Our highly anticipated CISO panel offered candid dialogue on the current state of the industry. Discussions revealed persistent, major challenges, including the ongoing struggle to implement effective diversity in hiring

and the widespread, yet often unaddressed, issue of CISO burnout and stress in leadership.

Engagement, Atmosphere, and Connections

The success of a conference lies not just in the content, but in the connections made. The energetic atmosphere was palpable throughout both days. The busy coffee station became a hub for enthusiastic conversations, idea-sharing, and new connections.

We concluded the event with a celebratory and productive rooftop networking event on the Peninsula terrace, providing a perfect backdrop to cement the connections and learning forged over the two days.

A huge thank you to our generous sponsors: Mastercard Cybersecurity, Process Unity, Morgan Franklin Consulting, Schellman, Anecdotes, TalentFish, RSM, Husch Blackwell and Immersive. And a big thank you to every speaker and attendee, your energy, expertise, and dedication made this conference an exceptional learning experience and a resounding success. We look forward to seeing you all again next year!

Compiled by Maurine Leroy
Marketing Coordinator
ISACA Chicago Chapter



CAREERS & CONVERSATIONS: SECOND HALF OF 2025

Our monthly Careers & Conversations sessions create a dynamic space where professionals connect, learn, and grow together through guided discussions on essential workplace skills. From mastering the art of storytelling and navigating office dynamics to building resilience and leveraging AI tools, each session tackles real-world challenges that shape successful careers. These interactive networking events combine meaningful conversations with practical skill-building, covering key areas from stress management and positive thinking to social media strategy and mentoring the next generation.

Date	Topic	Attendees
July 8, 2025	Managing Stress and Avoiding Burnout	89
August 7, 2025	Supporting Students for Careers	84
October 7, 2025	Building Resilience	92
November 4, 2025	Pay it Forward	86

Key Takeaways

Managing Stress and Avoiding Burnout - Participants explored practical strategies for recognizing early warning signs of burnout and implementing sustainable work-life boundaries. Key discussions centered on the importance of micro-breaks throughout the workday, setting realistic expectations with stakeholders, and building a personal stress management toolkit that includes both proactive and reactive techniques.

Supporting Students for Careers - This session focused on effective mentoring approaches and how experienced professionals can guide the next generation through today's evolving job market. Attendees shared insights on resume reviews, interview preparation, networking strategies for students, and the importance of helping young professionals develop both technical and soft skills that employers value.

Building Resilience - Participants discovered how to develop mental and emotional resilience in the face of professional challenges and setbacks. The conversation covered reframing failure as a learning opportunity, cultivating a growth mindset, maintaining perspective during difficult times, and building support networks that provide strength during career transitions.

Whether you are looking to expand your professional network, sharpen your soft skills, or stay ahead of industry trends, Careers & Conversations offers a supportive environment where every interaction becomes an opportunity for growth and connection. With participants joining from across the globe—including Singapore, Vancouver, Ireland, Quebec, Florida, Melbourne, and Rwanda—these sessions bring together diverse perspectives and experiences that enrich every conversation.

Special thanks to Anamika Roy, Rakhee Vaidya, and Juilee Shinde for volunteering their time and expertise to make these enriching sessions possible.

Compiled by [Anamika Roy, Treasurer, ISACA Chicago Chapter](#)

SHELEADSTECH WITH EXPERTISE - LEADERSHIP MATTERS

by **Ramona Ratiu**. Interviewed by **Vonetta Wade**, PMP, CPC, CISA, CSM, SAFe Agilist

For over 50 years, the ISACA Chicago Chapter has been a catalyst for innovation and professional growth, serving a thriving community of 2,600 digital trust professionals across the Chicagoland area. Guided by the voices of our members, we design impactful programs and experiences that empower individuals at every stage of their career - fostering learning, connection, and leadership in an ever-evolving digital world.

This remarkable scale and diversity demand visionary leadership. Our chapter board is committed to navigating the future with agility and insight, ensuring ISACA Chicago remains relevant, inclusive, and forward-thinking.

In that spirit, I turned to one of the most respected and well-known leaders of the ISACA Chicago Chapter, Ramona Ratiu, who propelled the chapter to new heights through a bold, member-centric strategic transformation. Her leadership not only elevated our community's influence but also embedded a culture of innovation and purpose that continues to guide us today.



Vonetta W: *Before we begin, I want to sincerely thank you for the opportunity to interview you. You've been on my radar since we began these interviews, and your influence has been deeply impactful not just on my own professional journey, but on the growth of so many other women. By opening doors and empowering us to step through them, you've helped us move beyond our comfort zones and grow into the women we are meant to become. I truly value your leadership and the support you've given along the way.*

Ramona R: Thank you, Vonetta. You are so kind, and I truly appreciate it.

Vonetta W: *You're recognized as a woman with a strong sense of commitment—a true go-getter and a bold, purpose-driven leader within the*

ISACA community. People admire your steadfast dedication to the profession, your creativity in generating fresh ideas, and your unique talent for inspiring volunteers—not just to contribute, but to genuinely enjoy being part of the journey.

Ramona R: *I'm deeply grateful for this incredible journey—one that has shaped both my personal and professional growth in ways I never could have imagined. People often ask me why I volunteer so many hours with ISACA. So, here's my secret: When you volunteer with your heart, you gain far more than you give. Among ISACA volunteers, we like to say the part of the brain that signs up to serve is actually heart shaped. [smiling]*

You've heard me say this before: some of the most powerful leadership skills are built not in the boardroom, but in volunteer-driven organizations—where your influence comes not from authority, but from purpose. Leading volunteers means inspiring innovation, nurturing growth, and building a shared win, together. That's exactly what I experienced with the ISACA Chicago Chapter. I'm incredibly proud of what we built during my time as Chapter President—and even prouder that the work continues with strength and heart.

I stepped into the role in July 2019 eight months pregnant with my second child when then-president Pam Nigro called and said, "I have good news and not-so-good news. I'm joining the ISACA Global Board... and you're stepping in as President." I paused. Silent. Then she added, "You can do it." And I knew she was right. I had big shoes to fill, but I also knew I was ready.

2020 arrived with challenges none of us expected, and yet, we flourished. Together, we launched the #CollectiveResilience program to support our members during the pandemic. We didn't just hold events. We met people where they were. We shared knowledge, ran virtual certification bootcamps, created family resources for working parents, opened doors to global museums, and built guides for small business grants and support funds.

That's what Collective Resilience looks like: coming together in empathy, collaboration, and mutual respect for what each of us was carrying behind the screen. The results spoke for themselves. The chapter earned the Innovation Award, then went on to win Best Chapter and Outstanding Chapter Leader. But what mattered most was that we stayed grounded in our mission to serve our members, always. Whenever a volunteer asks me, "Do you think this initiative will work?"—my answer is simple: "Drive it back to the members. That's where the answer lives."

Vonetta W: What distinguishes a high-performing nonprofit board in a digital-first world?

Ramona R: *High-performing boards combine strategic clarity, financial literacy, and volunteer empathy. They understand the "profit-for-purpose" model and shift from operational tasks to outcome-driven oversight. In a digital world, this means aligning with agile roadmaps, tech-enabled member experiences, and real-time risk visibility, all while preserving core values.*

Vonetta W: How can boards future-

proof talent pipelines while staying mission-aligned?

Ramona R: *ISACA's influence can't stop at certifications. It must extend into classrooms, community labs, and early education. The global board can champion strategic partnerships that build AI and cybersecurity literacy among youth and underserved communities. Meanwhile, local boards like ISACA Chicago can lead the charge on the ground through school outreach, mentoring diverse tech talent, and bridging the gap between community need and digital trust opportunity. The future board must ask: Are we shaping a profession, or simply preserving one?*

Vonetta W: *Let's shift the spotlight to your incredible work empowering women. You are the visionary behind SheLeadsTech with Expertise—not just the architect of its pillars and structure, but the force that breathed life into it. You built it from the ground up, rallied a passionate team of volunteers, and nurtured it into an award-winning initiative recognized on a global stage.*

Your impact doesn't stop there. You've helped shape the direction and redefine the vision of numerous women-centered programs across the world bringing clarity, energy, and results. You've mentored women at all stages of their careers, offering more than advice... offering belief.

So, if you could share one powerful message with all the women you've walked beside, what would it be?

Ramona R: *You can have it all, but not all at the same time. Embrace that truth. Give yourself permission to prioritize what matters most to you right now. That priority may shift in six months, and*

when it does, allow yourself the space to reassess.

The real key to success is clarity—knowing what you want at this moment and aligning your energy accordingly. Be bold enough to name it, real enough to own it, and courageous enough to pursue it without apology. Don't settle for convenience. Don't stay small. Push boundaries. Own your evolution. Keep moving forward.

Vonetta W: What characteristics do you most admire in other women?

Ramona R: *I admire women who push boundaries—those who challenge the status quo, speak up when it's inconvenient, and carve space where none existed before.*

I admire women who show up every day with grit and determination, balancing ten roles without asking for applause. And I admire women who are unafraid to be vulnerable—who lead with empathy, share their struggles openly, and remind us that strength and softness can exist in the same breath.

Vonetta W: What qualities do you most admire—and least appreciate—in a leader?

Ramona R: *I deeply admire strong people skills in a leader. I believe I have a natural intuition for reading people. I can often sense when someone isn't genuine, and I adjust my engagement accordingly. But more importantly, I've learned to see potential in others.*

One of the most valuable lessons I've gained through my journey with ISACA is how to truly listen—how to recognize individuals' strengths and talents and build around them. Understanding their

limitations is just as powerful, because that's where growth happens, when we challenge and support people, with respect and awareness. I've also learned to embrace cultural and generational differences, seeing them not as barriers but as opportunities for connection and learning.

What I find most frustrating in a leader is when hierarchy overrides humanity, when leaders insist on rigid chains of command and refuse to engage directly with people. Leadership isn't about titles or reporting lines; it's about presence, accessibility, and trust. And when that's missing, I must ask: Is that really leadership at all?

Vonetta W: How has motherhood shaped your drive and resilience as a leader?

Ramona R: Motherhood changed everything. It didn't slow me down. It gave my ambition deeper meaning. Becoming a mother sparked a quiet yet powerful drive in me: to lead by example for my children. I want them to grow up knowing they have a mom who pursues her goals with passion, loves what she does, and stays resilient when faced with challenges.

There are moments when the journey feels unfair—when I see others move ahead with ease while I've had to fight for every step. In those moments, the weight can feel overwhelming. But I pause, breathe, and remind myself who's watching.

Then I get back up and push forward. Because resilience isn't just something I want to model. It's something I've earned. And I want my children to know that strength isn't about doing it all; it's about doing what matters, even when it's hard.

Vonetta W: What brings you joy?

Ramona R: One thing that brings me pure happiness is watching my kids be playful and giggling, being silly with each other, and laughing innocently at the most unexpected, simple things. Their joy is unfiltered and real. It reminds me that the world doesn't need perfection. It needs presence.

Another deep source of joy is witnessing transformation in the lives of my students. When I get that email saying they've landed an internship or achieved a goal they once doubted was possible, it makes me literally jump with excitement. There's an indescribable pride in knowing I helped guide someone toward their potential.

I think the world needs more authentic, honest, and vulnerable connections. When we let go of polish and perfection, we make space for sincere collaboration and relationships built on trust. And that, ultimately, is what brings me the greatest joy.



Visit the SLT page

Membership Corner



It's Renewal Season!

As we close out another impactful year, don't forget to renew your ISACA and ISACA Chicago Chapter membership by December 31!
Renew today at MyISACA

If you hold an ISACA certification, now's the time to renew your certification and report your Continuing Professional Education (CPE) credits by December 31 to maintain your credentials in good standing.

Why Stay Connected with ISACA Chicago?

Savings, Access, and Knowledge

Your membership is more than a credential, it's a community. Continue your journey with us to enjoy:

- Professional growth through chapter meetings, workshops, and conferences
- Networking opportunities with local industry peers and leaders
- Leadership development through volunteer roles and committee participation
- Exclusive access to ISACA's global resources, research, and certification pathways

Let's grow together – renew your membership and stay part of the #ISACAChicago network! [Explore Member Benefits](#) ›

Mentorship Matters

The ISACA Chicago Mentorship Program continues to connect members with meaningful opportunities for growth, leadership, and community engagement.

2025 Program Highlights

- Hands-on Networking + **Chronus** Mentorship Platform Overview, showcasing how easy it is to get started and connect with mentors or mentees, during the June Chapter Meeting.
- Speed Networking Session, giving 70 chapter members across audit, risk, cybersecurity, and IT the chance to connect and exchange insights during the October Chapter Meeting.
 - As an ISACA member, don't forget that you have on-demand access to ISACA's Mentorship Platform (<https://mentorship.isaca.org/>)—an excellent resource for building connections and exploring networking opportunities within the chapter.
- Active Mentorship Profiles (October 2025)
 - 42 Mentors & 35 Mentees

Join the #FilterbyChi Movement

We're calling on all members to register and update their profiles on the Chronus platform to tap into our mentorship program. By using the "Filter by Location / Chapter" feature, you can easily connect with fellow Chicago-based mentors.

- Build your local network and grow your professional connections — one conversation at a time.
- Join the **Chronus** (the ISACA Mentorship Platform) and #FilterbyChi

Looking Ahead to 2026

We're expanding mentorship engagement with new events and formats designed to inspire and connect members:

- Quarterly Mentorship Events: including in-person opportunities
- Mentorship "Ask Me Anything" (AMA) Sessions: open forums for sharing career tips and leadership lessons

Compiled by
Kyle Joerger,
Membership Director
ISACA Chicago Chapter



Call for Mentors & Volunteers

Interested in giving back or growing your leadership experience? We're seeking:

- Mentors to guide the next generation of professionals
- Volunteers to join the Mentorship Committee in 2026

Committee and coordinator roles include opportunities to develop skills in:

- Social Media & Communications
- Operations & Program Analysis
- Project Management
- Event Planning & Implementation

Seventy chapter members attended a vibrant networking event during October's in-person chapter meeting. As an ISACA member, don't forget that you have on-demand access to ISACA's Mentorship Platform (<https://mentorship.isaca.org/>)—an excellent resource for building connections and exploring networking opportunities within the chapter.

Email us at mentorship@chicago.isacachapter.org to express interest or learn more.







[June Chapter Meeting | June 26, 2025 | In-Person Event]

The first session, led by Dr. Sudesh Kannan, offered ISACA professionals a practical roadmap to earning certifications with minimal daily time investment. Attendees explored how to align certification goals with career aspirations, tailor study strategies to their learning styles, and access top resources. The session emphasized efficient techniques for staying motivated, managing test anxiety, and maximizing study impact, all within a realistic, no-excuses framework. In the second session, “Mentorship in Action,” Laura Schlue (Zeman) introduced Chronus, setting the stage for a dynamic panel discussion moderated by Matthew Hill. Panelists Michael Podemski, DeAndre Hopkins, and Jamillah Shakoor shared candid insights on building meaningful mentor-mentee relationships, highlighting the power of authentic connection and professional growth through mentorship.

[July Chapter Meeting | July 17, 2025 | Virtual Event]

In the first session, “Controlling Cloud Chaos Through Audit Discipline,” guest speaker David Lee, CPA, guided attendees through the FinOps Foundation framework to help IT auditors assess and mature their organizations’ financial operations in the cloud. Focusing on the Inform, Optimize, and Operate phases, the session

emphasized evaluating capabilities like cost allocation, usage optimization, and stakeholder collaboration. Lee, a seasoned IT and Cyber Auditor with over two decades of experience, shared strategies for identifying maturity gaps and delivering recommendations that drive value beyond compliance. The second session, “Practical Steps to Modern Data Protection,” featured Chris Rose, a veteran security engineer and architect with deep experience across industries. Rose presented a forward-looking approach to data protection, emphasizing its critical role in enabling AI readiness. Drawing from his diverse background from Wall Street to Pharma and Retail. He outlined actionable steps for governing and securing data in ways that support innovation, blending insights from InfoSec, data science, and cloud architecture.

[September Joint Chapter Meeting | September 4, 2025 | Virtual Event]

The joint ISACA Chicago and London Chapter meeting in September centered on the theme “Resilience in the Age of AI,” featuring a dynamic roundtable discussion that explored whether AI poses a threat or an opportunity for cybersecurity. The session emphasized the importance of proactive resilience testing such as penetration testing, red teaming, and tabletop exercises

to validate defenses and uncover vulnerabilities before adversaries do. Attendees gained insights into how these simulations strengthen incident response, build organizational confidence, and embed resilience into everyday operations.

The event showcased four distinguished speakers: Ramona Ratiu, a global leader in cyber resilience and ethical AI advocacy; Iskandar “Alex” Islamov, a seasoned expert in regulatory compliance and enterprise risk management; Robert Duncan, a globally experienced CISO with deep roots in financial and manufacturing sectors; and Matthew Whale, a strategic security leader driving AI-informed governance at FNZ. Together, they offered a rich blend of perspectives on building robust, future-ready security programs that align with evolving digital threats and regulatory landscapes.

[October Chapter Meeting | October 9, 2025 | In-Person Event]

The ISACA Chicago Chapter’s Career Insights Session brought together a powerhouse panel of cybersecurity and recruiting professionals to help attendees navigate today’s competitive job market. Moderated by Valerie Nielsen, the discussion featured George Wang, Allie Martins, and Sarah Frank, who shared actionable strategies for building strong recruiter relationships, identifying in-demand certifications, and tapping into hidden job opportunities. The session also addressed common misconceptions about the hiring process and offered tailored advice during a live Q&A, empowering participants to align their career goals with industry expectations.

Following the panel, the event transitioned into a high-energy Speed Networking session designed to foster meaningful connections within the cybersecurity and governance community. Attendees engaged in five rounds of six-minute conversations, exchanging insights, exploring new career paths, and expanding their professional networks. The format encouraged dynamic interaction and strengthened engagement

among ISACA members, making it a valuable opportunity for both seasoned professionals and emerging talent.

[November Chapter Meeting | November 20, 2025 | Virtual Event]

The first session, Elevating Security and Risk Functions with CMM: Journey from Cyber Liability to Top 10 Most Secure FI in the US, focused on how the Capability Maturity Model (CMM) can transform financial institutions from reactive and vulnerable to strategically secure and resilient. The presentation highlighted the structured five-level framework of CMM, showing how organizations can evolve toward optimized, continuously improving operations. Guest speaker Michael Wichmann, Senior Vice President at Wintrust Financial, shared his expertise in applying CMM to strengthen security and risk functions, illustrating how his leadership helped Wintrust achieve recognition by Forbes as one of the top 10 most cybersecure banks in 2024.

The second session, Mitigating AI Risks in Financial Services: Strategies for Secure and Responsible Adoption, examined the growing role of artificial intelligence in the industry and the risks it introduces, particularly around sensitive data exposure. The discussion emphasized protective measures such as encryption, hashing, tokenization, and data obfuscation, while acknowledging the trade-offs these controls pose for efficiency and analytics. Guest speaker Neeraj Kakrania, Principal Cybersecurity Analyst at Discover Financial Services, drew on his 21 years of experience to provide practical strategies for balancing innovation with responsible risk management. His insights underscored the importance of robust security frameworks to ensure safe and sustainable AI adoption in financial services.

EMPOWERING PROFESSIONALS AND SHAPING TOMORROW'S LEADERS



The Education Committee is passionate about fostering an environment of continuous learning and professional development for our members and the broader community. We strive to provide a diverse range of services and initiatives. Through seminars, workshops, certification review courses, academic outreach, and scholarships program, we aim to equip our members and the broader community with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate and thrive in the dynamic IT landscape.

Certification Course Reviews

The ISACA Chicago Chapter has continued to support the professional growth of our community by offering comprehensive review courses for a variety of globally recognized certifications and certificates:

- Certified Information Systems Auditor (CISA)
- Certified Information Security Manager (CISM)
- Certified in Risk and Information Systems Control (CRISC)
- IT Risk Fundamentals (ITRF)

We are also excited to announce the introduction of two new review courses: Cybersecurity Audit and Advanced in AI Security Management (AAISM). These additions are designed to address the evolving landscape of IT risk and security, including the prevalent impact of artificial intelligence (AI). This will help ensure that our members remain at the forefront of industry developments.

We would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to **Ashraf Jassat** for his outstanding leadership, dedication, and coordination in making these educational opportunities

possible.

Scholarships

Continuing our commitment to expanding access to education, we are truly delighted to maintain our broadened Scholarship eligibility criteria, which include community college students. By welcoming applicants from community colleges, we aim to foster greater inclusivity and provide more pathways for aspiring professionals to pursue careers in IT audit, risk, governance, and cybersecurity.

Beyond financial assistance, scholarship recipients will benefit from exclusive professional development opportunities. Each awardee will receive the ISACA Career Building Bundle, which includes a complimentary one-year ISACA student membership, access to an ISACA course, mentoring, and additional resources designed to help them launch and accelerate their careers.

Academic Outreach

Our committee has been actively strengthening relationships with educational institutions by maintaining an ongoing partnership with DePaul University and pursuing new collaborations with other colleges and universities. Through these efforts, we aim to foster meaningful connections that support knowledge exchange and professional growth for students.

We also take pride in engaging with the next generation of technology leaders



at major outreach events. Our team proudly represented ISACA at the GirlCon conference, where we empowered young women to explore careers in technology and cybersecurity, and at Homewood-Flossmoor Community High School, where we inspired high school students to consider future pathways in IT audit, governance, and cybersecurity.

We extend heartfelt gratitude to **Naganat Guru, Lyndsey Jones, and Ramona Ratiu** for their dedication and commitment to our mission of cultivating and supporting young students.

Together, through our collective efforts and commitment to education, we are not only empowering today's professionals but also shaping the next generation of leaders who will drive positive changes across the IT risk and cybersecurity landscape.

Jennifer Pang

Digital Education Director
ISACA Chicago Chapter

GIRLCON CHICAGO 2025

ISACA Chicago Chapter and SheLeadsTech ISACA Chicago Chapter were proud and excited to sponsor the GirlCon Chicago 2025 Conference! GirlCon is an international tech conference (for students, by students), aiming to empower the next generation of leaders. The annual event features breakout, professional development, and keynote sessions from numerous companies and backgrounds, giving attendees the opportunity to learn and make connections.

Participating in GirlCon Chicago 2025 forms part of our strategic mandate to increase the representation of women in technology leadership roles and the tech workforce. This was a wonderful opportunity to meet the next generation in a positive and empowering environment. And talk to them about the services and support that ISACA Chicago offers in their academic and professional journeys.



ARTICLE: THE CONTROL MATRIX: REBOOTED



Anamika Roy, CA, MBA, CIA, CISA, CISM | Director – IT Audit & Data Analytics

Do you ever have the feeling that your entire IT audit team is trapped in a loop, testing the same controls year after year, only to have real-world failures occur despite “effective” controls? Well, it’s time to take the red pill and see just how deep the control rabbit hole goes.

The Illusion of Control

Generally, IT audits are a predictable script – identify risks, test controls and document the results. But just like the simulated reality in “The Matrix,” this approach creates only the illusion of security while totally missing the deeper truth.

The uncomfortable reality? Testing individual controls in isolation doesn’t reveal whether your IT environment is truly well-controlled.

The Five Powers of COSO

When applied holistically to IT controls, the five Committee of Sponsoring Organizations (COSO) components can transform or shift your approach from

routine compliance to true governance:

1. Control Environment: Digital Trust & Leadership

This isn’t just about having the right policies on paper – it’s about building digital trust through leadership that consistently demonstrates security commitment. Organizations with flawless documentation but toxic cultures where admins regularly bypass controls to “get things done” exemplify this disconnect.

2. Risk Assessment: Dynamic Reality

Risk assessment isn’t an annual PowerPoint exercise – it’s a living process that should be able to respond to emerging threats in real-time and influence how controls are designed and resources are allocated.

3. Control Activities: Beyond Manual Checklists

This is where traditional audits camp out, but digitally mature organizations are able to:

- Prioritize preventive automated controls over detective manual ones
- Verify that the Information Produced by the Entity (IPE) has integrity throughout its lifecycle
- Focus on outcomes instead of procedural compliance

4. Information & Communication: The Control Nervous System

Even the most sophisticated controls fail when:

- Alerts go to unmonitored inboxes
- Technical vulnerabilities aren’t translated into business risks
- System users don’t understand the

“why” behind security requirements

5. Monitoring Activities: Continuous Vigilance

Digitally mature organizations implement:

- Real-time monitoring of key control indicators
- Trend analysis of control performance over time
- Feedback loops for continuous improvement

IPE: The Control Within the Control Information Processing Equipment (IPE) represents the reports and data feeding your controls. When IPE is compromised, even perfectly executed controls become ineffective. Applying COSO to IPE governance:

- **Control Environment:** Do report owners genuinely feel responsible for data quality, or do they view themselves merely as data conduits? Fostering a culture where data stewards take ownership of accuracy, completeness and timeliness rather than simply pushing information downstream is foundational.
- **Risk Assessment:** Are key reports identified where inaccuracies invalidate controls? This involves mapping data flows, understanding dependencies and conducting impact assessments. What happens if your financial close reports miss transactions? Or compliance monitoring captures incomplete populations? Risk assessment should also consider the cascading effects when flawed IPE feeds multiple downstream processes.
- **Control Activities:** Are there robust controls over report generation logic? The goal is to ensure that whatever goes into reports accurately reflects

the underlying business reality. This includes version control for report specifications, testing protocols when logic changes, reconciliation between source systems and reports and validation of key data elements.

- **Information & Communication:** Do users understand data limitations? This means clear documentation about data sources, known gaps, cut-off times and assumptions built into calculations. When users understand these parameters, they can avoid misinterpreting information.
- **Monitoring:** Is IPE accuracy regularly verified? This might include comparing report outputs to source systems, tracking data quality metrics over time, investigating user-reported discrepancies and conducting periodic reviews of critical reports.

A quarterly user access review example perfectly illustrates these principles in action. A client had established what appeared to be a robust control activity—regular reviews performed consistently over years. However, their underlying IPE captured only 60% of system accounts, creating a massive blind spot. The control environment lacked sufficient questioning of data completeness. Risk assessment failed to identify this critical gap. Control activities focused on the review process itself rather than validating the underlying data. Users weren't informed about the report's limitations. And monitoring activities never caught the fundamental flaw in the data population. This scenario demonstrates why IPE governance can't be an afterthought.

The Ironic Plot Twist

There's something darkly comical about

organizational control contradictions:

- Spending millions on security tools we override when deadlines loom, creating approval shortcuts and emergency exceptions that become permanent workarounds.
- Enforcing complex password policies while writing them on sticky notes tucked under keyboards, transforming our most sensitive authentication into the least secure practice imaginable.
- Conducting elaborate DR tests with military precision but failing to restore critical files when needed because backup procedures were never properly validated or key systems were excluded from the scope.
- Implementing million-dollar governance, risk and compliance platforms while continuing to make critical decisions based on incomplete spreadsheets shared via email.

These contradictions exist because we focus on control activities – the visible, measurable components—while neglecting the foundational elements that make controls actually work.

The Control Transformation: Your Mission

Your path to control enlightenment:

1. Map existing controls to all five COSO components.
2. Assess your IT control environment through cultural investigation.
3. Make your risk assessment dynamic and influential.
4. Automate control activities where possible.

5. Follow critical information flows to identify weak points.
6. Build continuous monitoring capabilities.

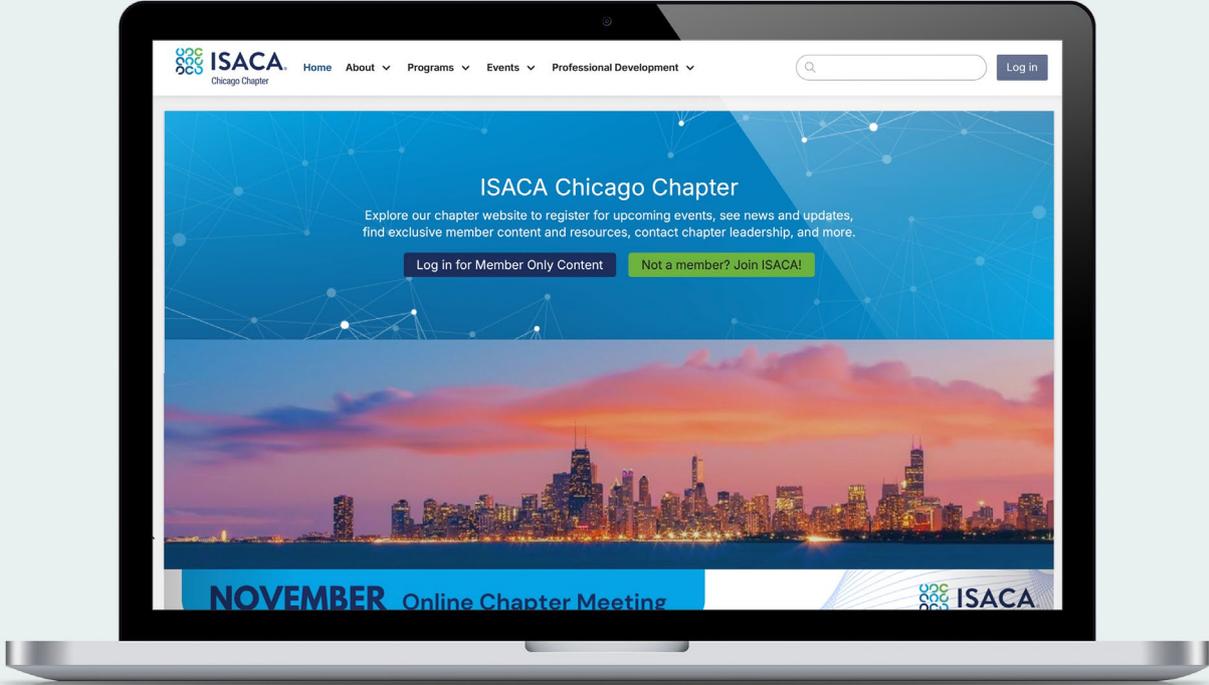
This holistic approach delivers reduced audit fatigue from embedded controls, optimized resource allocation based on true risk, improved security posture by addressing cultural undermining, enhanced stakeholder trust through transparent governance, better business alignment by connecting controls to objectives and fewer surprise failures through early detection.

The traditional approach to IT controls represents a comfortable illusion—a blue pill that provides the reassuring feeling of safety while leaving organizations vulnerable to the very risks they believe they’re managing. By embracing all five COSO components as an integrated system and thoughtfully incorporating complementary frameworks, organizations can finally see the control matrix for what it really is – not a collection of disparate activities to be performed, but a comprehensive ecosystem that must function holistically to provide genuine protection.

The choice is stark: continue living in the comfortable delusion that our current control activities are sufficient or accept the more challenging reality that effective governance requires fundamental changes to how we think about, design, and implement organizational controls.

Ultimately, there is only governance—and the recognition that our most sophisticated security tools are only as strong as the human systems, cultural foundations and information flows that support them.

CHICAGO CHAPTER NEW WEBSITE LAUNCH



The ISACA Chicago Chapter is proud to introduce its newly redesigned website, created to better serve our members and community.

With improved navigation and updated features, the site provides streamlined access to events, certification resources, and chapter news. Whether you are a student, professional, or industry leader, the new platform is here to support your growth, keep you informed, and help you stay connected with our vibrant Chicago chapter.

Anurag Sharma
Web Content Coordinator
ISACA Chicago Chapter



ISACA CHICAGO CONTRIBUTES TO COMMUNITY DAY 2025



ISACA Chicago participated in the 2025 Community Day, the Global ISACA Volunteer Day. The chapter's activities were led by Ms. Sofi Rodriguez, who supported the community at Cradles to Crayons (C2C). C2C aims to end clothing insecurity by providing essential items to children in need—helping them thrive at school, participate fully in life, and simply be kids.

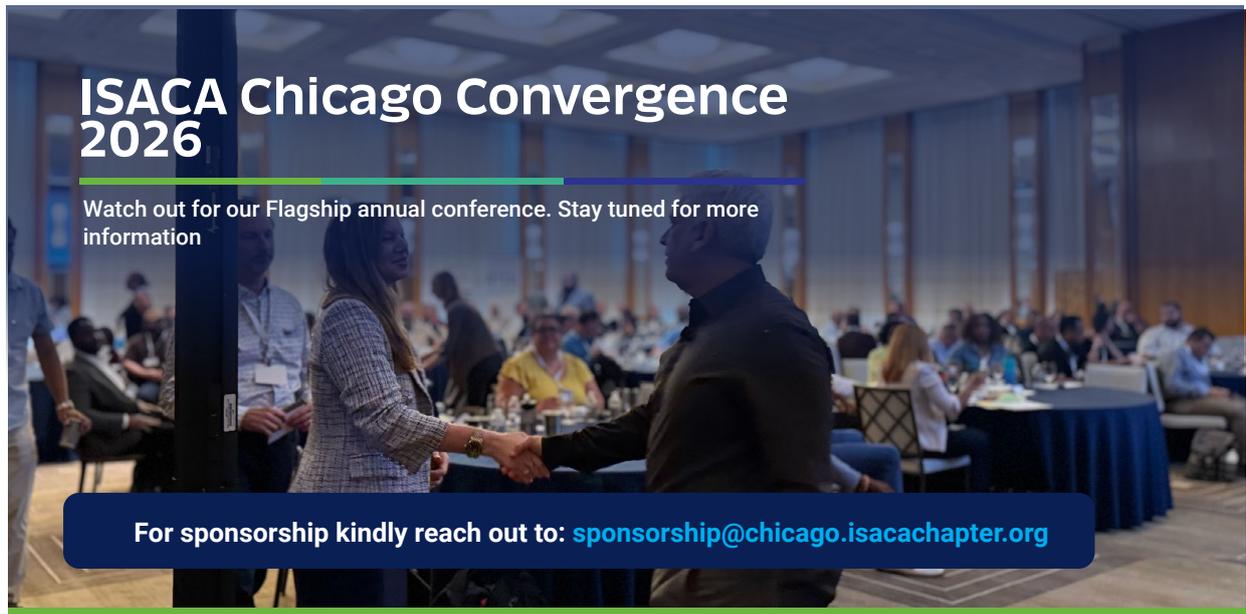
Fifteen Chicago Chapter volunteers came together to make an impact that day, sorting clothing and preparing items for distribution. With all hands on deck and just two hours of work, the team processed enough donations to support 485 children.



All in all, we were part of a much larger network of ISACA groups working to improve the state of the world through volunteerism. In total, ISACA volunteers contributed 8,161 hours across 2,462 different activities, representing 51 countries!



UPCOMING EVENTS 2026



ISACA Chicago Convergence 2026

Watch out for our Flagship annual conference. Stay tuned for more information

For sponsorship kindly reach out to: sponsorship@chicago.isacachapter.org



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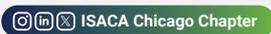


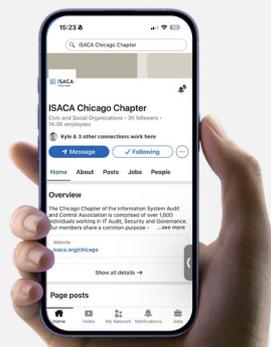
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ISACA Chicago Chapter has 3 major conferences for sponsorship for 2026 along with 4 quarterly networking events. We offer a range of different tiered packages that will help to best position your organization as an industry leader, amplify your reach with qualified IS/IT professionals in the Chicagoland area, differentiate yourself and deliver maximize ROI by connecting your organization directly with your target market. All of our sponsorship offerings are customizable to meet your goals.

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