

Influential Women Spotlights Laura Morgan: Chief Academic Advisor For STEM At Southern Illinois University Carbondale

CARBONDALE, IL, UNITED STATES, September 3, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Combining Mentorship, Innovation, and Student Advocacy to Help Students Navigate Their Journeys From First Connection to Graduation

Carbondale, Illinois — Laura Morgan is a dedicated academic advising leader whose career has been defined by a commitment to student success, meaningful mentorship, and continuous improvement. As Chief Academic Advisor for the College of Engineering, Computing, Technology, and Mathematics at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, she brings more than a decade of experience in academic advising and a leadership philosophy grounded in action, collaboration, and empathy.



Laura has served in academic advising since 2011 and has held the position of chief advisor since 2019. In her current role, she oversees a small advising team while remaining actively student-facing, supporting a diverse population that includes international students, veterans, honors students, and student-athletes. Her work extends across the student experience, allowing her to guide students from their first connection with advising through graduation.

Rather than leading exclusively from behind a desk, Laura believes in leading by doing. She routinely pilots new programs, redesigns workflows, and introduces innovative processes intended to improve clarity, consistency, and efficiency within advising. Her approach is centered on identifying potential gaps before they become barriers and developing practical solutions that make academic processes easier for both students and advisors to navigate.

With a foundation in teaching and a Master of Science in Curriculum and Instruction, Laura brings a student-centered and solution-oriented perspective to her leadership. She emphasizes mentorship, professional development, and practical skill-building for her staff, recognizing that effective student support begins with ensuring advisors themselves have the tools, knowledge, and confidence necessary to succeed.

Her influence is rooted in action and collaboration. Laura shares best practices across campus, looks for opportunities to improve systems, and creates processes that empower advisors to provide consistent and meaningful support. For her, innovation is not simply about introducing new technology or creating something different; it is about determining what students and staff need and finding better ways to deliver it.

Laura attributes her success to a strong foundation of mentorship and unwavering personal support. Early in her career, she was fortunate to have an exceptional mentor, Jenise Wilson, who served as her supervisor for eight years and played a pivotal role in Laura's development as an academic advisor and leader.

Jenise created space for Laura to experiment with new ideas, trusted her to pilot initiatives, and encouraged her to share her perspective openly. That environment helped Laura build confidence and find her voice as a professional. More importantly, Jenise modeled what positive, people-centered leadership looks like. The lessons Laura learned from that relationship continue to influence how she leads, develops staff, and mentors others today.

Equally important has been the love and support of Laura's husband, Justin, whose belief in her never wavered. He delayed his own education so they could prioritize Laura's, working alongside her to ensure she could complete both her undergraduate and graduate degrees. That sacrifice laid the groundwork for Laura's career in academic advising and leadership.

Together, these experiences taught Laura the value of mentorship, partnership, and paying opportunity forward. Those principles remain central to the way she supports her staff and students, creating an environment where people are encouraged to grow, contribute ideas, and recognize their own potential.

Some of the best career advice Laura has received is the reminder that success does not have to be an all-or-nothing choice between work and home. Being a career mom is deeply rewarding, but it requires intentional boundaries and an understanding that family must remain the priority—even during demanding seasons.

Laura was encouraged to permit herself to be fully present wherever she is, whether that means leading at work or showing up at home, without guilt. She was also advised to stop waiting until she felt "ready" and instead trust her instincts, speak up, and take risks—particularly in spaces where women may be hesitant to claim their voice.

That guidance continues to shape how Laura leads today: with empathy, flexibility, and the belief that strong leadership is built by honoring both professional ambition and personal values.

For young women entering academic advising and related fields, Laura encourages them to be intentional about their growth and trust themselves sooner than they think they should. She recommends actively seeking leadership training early in their careers and taking advantage of opportunities that develop confidence, communication skills, and strategic thinking.

She also emphasizes the importance of surrounding oneself with mentors who not only provide support but also challenge individuals to step outside their comfort zones, test new ideas, and use their voices. Laura encourages young professionals to remain persistent and solution-oriented, focusing less on barriers and more on what is possible. Meaningful change, she believes, often starts small.

Above all, Laura encourages young women to align their passion with a clear sense of purpose. When work is grounded in values and impact, it becomes easier to navigate challenges, advocate for oneself, and build a career that is both fulfilling and sustainable.

Laura is also candid about the challenges facing academic advising. Beyond staffing shortages and workload strain, she believes one of the biggest challenges is how newer generations of students seek help—or choose not to seek it. With instant answers, automation, and artificial intelligence readily available, students can easily retreat into digital spaces and attempt to solve complex problems independently.

While technology can be a powerful tool, Laura believes it cannot replace the value of meaningful human conversation. What initially appears to be an academic concern may actually be connected to deeper personal challenges, including food insecurity, financial stress, mental health concerns, or relationship pressures. Advisors are uniquely positioned to uncover these underlying factors and connect students with appropriate resources, sometimes answering questions students did not even realize they needed to ask.

Another significant challenge is the disconnect that can exist between leadership vision and day-to-day realities. Well-intentioned ideas may look strong on paper but fall short during implementation when daily workflows, staff capacity, or institutional context are not adequately considered.

Laura sees this gap as one of the field's greatest opportunities. When staff are well trained, well supported, and meaningfully included in decision-making, they become more engaged, confident, and effective in helping students succeed. Investing in people—not just systems—can create sustainable improvement, stronger morale, and a more responsive student support environment.

Integrity, empathy, accountability, and balance are the values most important to Laura in both

her professional and personal life. Integrity and accountability ground the way she leads and builds trust, while empathy reminds her that behind every academic or professional challenge is a person with a story.

Balance, she acknowledges, is the most difficult value to maintain. Because she cares deeply about her work, it can be easy to become fully absorbed in it. She continues to learn that being present for her family and protecting that time is equally important. Holding that tension has shaped her into a more thoughtful leader and a more grounded person, reinforcing her belief that meaningful work is strongest when paired with a full and supported life.

Outside of her professional responsibilities, Laura remains deeply engaged in her family, community, and personal interests. She enjoys hiking, camping, and visiting national parks to explore national parks in every U.S. state. She is also a dedicated baseball mom to her two children, embracing the opportunity to support them both on and off the field.

Laura also enjoys solving Sudoku puzzles and continually expanding her professional skills through leadership and transformational development courses. As a long-standing member of NACADA and other advising associations, she remains connected to the broader academic advising community and committed to learning from others in the profession.

Through her work at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Laura Morgan continues to demonstrate that effective academic advising is about much more than course schedules and degree requirements. It is about listening, recognizing the person behind the student, removing barriers, developing people, and creating systems that make success more attainable. Her career reflects a commitment to innovation without losing sight of human connection—and to leadership that makes room for both professional excellence and a meaningful life.

Learn More about Laura Morgan:

Through her Influential Women profile: <https://influentialwomen.com/connect/laura-morgan>

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