



Michelle T. Boone

President, Poetry Foundation

Michelle T. Boone is President of The Poetry Foundation based in Chicago, Illinois. Appointed in May 2021, she is the first woman and first African American to lead the organization. The Poetry Foundation, publisher of Poetry magazine, is an independent literary organization committed to a vigorous presence for poetry in American culture. Its programs are designed to shape a receptive climate for poetry by developing new audiences, creating new avenues for delivery, and encouraging new kinds of poetry through innovative literary prizes and programs.

Previously, Boone was the Chief Program and Civic Engagement Officer at Navy Pier, an historic landmark and top cultural destination and attraction in the Midwest. In this role, Boone designed, developed, curated and presented Navy Pier's arts and culture public programs, festivals and specials events, and was a member of the executive leadership team helping to shape organizational strategy and public engagement. Other duties included overseeing the PR/Communications division, responsible for marketing, promotion and branding, and the Pier's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion strategies and staff engagement.

In 2011, Michelle was appointed Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) by Mayor Rahm Emanuel. During her tenure, she led a team of more than 80 full-time employees to produce and present more than 2,000 public programs, large-scale festivals and special events annually; supervised the management of the historic Chicago Cultural Center; led the process for a new Chicago Cultural Plan (released in 2012); and launched the Chicago Architecture Biennial in 2015, the city's first international exhibition of contemporary architecture and design. Prior to that, Michelle was a senior program officer at the Joyce Foundation (2004–2011) managing the culture portfolio and distributing more than \$2 million annually in grants supporting artists and nonprofit arts organizations in six major Midwest cities (Chicago, Milwaukee, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Detroit, Cleveland, Indianapolis).

Her professional career includes work in television, film and the recording industries, and she served as a United States Peace Corps Volunteer in Chad, Africa (1994–96). Michelle holds a bachelor's degree in Telecommunications and a master's degree in Public Affairs (Nonprofit Management) from Indiana University, Bloomington; in 2015, the IU School of Public and Environmental Affairs honored her with its Distinguished Alumni Award. Boone is the recipient of multiple honors including being named a "Cultural Champion" by the Chicago Cultural Alliance in 2019; named "Design Leader of the Moment" by New City magazine (April 2019); and "Chicagoan of the Year" (architecture) by the Chicago Tribune in 2015. She currently serves on the boards of Americans for the Arts (vice chair); Arts Alliance Illinois (chair); The Arts Club of Chicago; Chicago Architecture Biennial; the Graham Foundation (secretary); Timeline Theater; and is on the Board of Governors for the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She is a member of The Chicago Network and serves on the Women's Board of the University of Chicago. Michelle lives on the south side of Chicago and is a volunteer for South Shore Works, a community-led collective working to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood.