Catherine Breen

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Senior operating executive with 25+ years building and running mission-driven institutions across higher education, biomedical research, and global health. Trusted advisor to institute directors, university leadership, and boards, known for turning strategy into execution, aligning diverse stakeholders, and standing up new ventures inside complex organizations. Track record of launching and scaling initiatives at Harvard, the Broad Institute, and Ariadne Labs, brokering partnerships with industry and philanthropic funders, and stepping in as interim leader during critical transitions. Deep international experience, including operations in Russia, Ukraine, and sub-Saharan Africa.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Kyiv School of Economics (Kyiv, Ukraine) **Sep 2026 - present**
Independent Consultant

- Advising Kyiv School of Economics leadership on institutional strategy and infrastructure as the university manages rapid growth.
- Consulting on organizational structure and governance, formalizing a central research administration office for a growing portfolio of international and philanthropic awards, policy development, financial strategy and systems, research operations, and US fundraising prospects. On-site engagement in Kyiv in fall 2026.

BROAD INSTITUTE of MIT and Harvard (Cambridge, MA) **Jun 2024 - Sep 2026**
Chief of Staff & Executive Director, Strategic Initiatives

- Served as principal strategic advisor to Institute Director, driving cross-functional alignment and execution of the Institute's highest priorities, including chairing advisory council for $100M Project Sentinel and overseeing partnership formation for the multi-institution Center for Therapeutic Genetics.
- Defined and operationalized annual institutional objectives (OKRs) for the Executive Leadership Team (ELT); led agenda setting and decision-making processes for weekly ELT meetings to ensure accountability.
- Managed Board of Directors engagement, including governance strategy, agenda development, and onboarding of new leadership. Led creation of candidate pipeline for Board seats and tailored onboarding materials for incoming Board Chair to ensure smooth and informed leadership transition.
- Expanded institutional leadership capacity at the Board's directive by elevating junior faculty into strategic roles and architecting a new Vice President position. Formalized the structure for program directors and drove organizational alignment around new leadership expectations.
- Served as Interim Chief People Officer for 10 months during a critical leadership transition, reducing headcount by 20%.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY (Cambridge, MA) **Feb 2020 - May 2024**
Managing Director, Advances in Learning

- Took over Harvard's central online learning office weeks before pandemic's stay-at-home orders were introduced. Led strategic rebranding of Harvard's digital learning initiatives and created "HarvardOnline" to unify global course offerings.
- Recruited and led a high-performing marketing team, driving a 2.5x increase in revenue.
- Developed innovative content strategies and cultivated partnerships across Harvard's schools and with external companies, including a collaboration on short-form content with WME Group.
- Oversaw build-out of new office and studio space with upgraded technology to accommodate new digital formats.

ARIADNE LABS (Boston, MA) **Nov 2015 - Feb 2020**
Chief Operating Officer

- Managed business operations and provided strategic direction for center for healthcare innovation as member of executive team under Ariadne's founder, Dr. Atul Gawande.
- Directed organizational growth and fundraising, increasing external funding by 22% and securing major partnerships, including a flagship industry collaboration with Johnson & Johnson.

- Scaled the team significantly while preserving mission and culture for employees who straddled two home institutions: Brigham & Women's Hospital and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.
- Designed and implemented a financial oversight system to unify general ledgers of two parent institutions, ensuring compliance and risk mitigation.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY (Cambridge, MA) **Apr 1999 - Oct 2015**

Senior Director, Office for Sponsored Programs, Office of the VP for Finance (2009-2015)

- Oversaw portfolio of more than $820M in external research funding, managing both pre- and post-award operations for university.
- Created first-ever university-wide training and certification program for research administrators to foster professional development and eliminate duplicative efforts.
- Developed and implemented an automated invoicing system for university, resulting in reduced errors, expedited billing, and streamlined workflow.
- Implemented leadership changes at Harvard's largest school in wake of financial crisis, replacing three senior leaders and filling in as interim head of information technology.

Chief of Staff, Office of the Executive Vice President (2008-2009)

- Helped Harvard's inaugural EVP to coordinate business processes, develop administrative capacity across the university, and manage university-wide planning activities and strategy in the areas of finance, IT, real estate, and interdisciplinary initiatives.
- Established university-wide efficiency committees to identify revenue ideas and savings opportunities in wake of the financial crisis.

Director, International Business Operations, Office of the Controller (& other positions at Harvard 2005-2008)

- Provided controls, structure, and oversight to Harvard's international operations by introducing operational policies, practices, and reporting for all Harvard's international programs and offices.
- Served as university point person for support, information, and advice on matters related to administrative and financial operations of research projects, educational collaborations, program offices, and other endeavors in foreign countries.
- Developed International Programs Planning guide for management of overseas offices.

Director of Administration & Finance, Harvard PEPFAR Program, Harvard School of Public Health (2002-2005)

- Managed day-to-day administrative and financial operations of $200M+ federal grant established to provide antiretroviral treatment and care to AIDS patients in Nigeria, Tanzania, and Botswana.
- Ensured compliance through regular monitoring and quarterly site visits to Africa over three years and facilitated successful audits in Boston and Africa. Wrote first administrative manual for program use.
- Created and provided in-country training to finance staff in partner countries; provided management oversight of and support to in-country finance directors.

EARLIER CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

- **Project Director | Burson-Marsteller** — *Moscow, Russia* (1997 – 1998) Directed a 20-person team and managed daily operations for a $7.5M World Bank public education initiative focused on legal reform. Earned a national award for the production of a ten-part television public service announcement campaign.
- **Project Manager | The World Bank / IFC** — *Moscow, Russia & Washington, DC* (1993 – 1997) Managed operations and strategic planning for a $28M land reform project spanning 11 Russian regions with a 245-person team. Earned a promotion following the successful privatization of over 100,000 hectares of agricultural land.

EDUCATION

Georgetown University, Washington, DC
Master of Science (MSFS), Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service; thesis honors.

Colby College, Waterville, ME
Bachelor of Arts (BA), Government/Russian double major. Graduated with honors.

BOARD & ADVISORY ROLES

Advisory Council Member (Russia and Eurasia),
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Washington, DC — Nov 2026 - present

Board Member and Treasurer, **3L Place** Somerville, MA — Oct 2023 - present

Board of Trustees, **Boris Nemtsov Foundation for Freedom** Bonn, Germany — Aug 2017 - present

Advisory Board Member, **Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Harvard University,** Cambridge, MA — Jun 2018 - Jun 2024

Member of the Board, **Harvard Global Research and Support Services, Inc.** Cambridge, MA — Jun 2012 - Nov 2015

LANGUAGES: Russian; Spanish