

RESEARCH

*New Chief Operating Officer
Ladina Jenal.*

Introducing the new Chief Operating Officer

Ladina Jenal – who are you?

I'm the new COO of the UBS International Center of Economics in Society. That means, I direct how the Center runs: from publications and events to scholarships and evaluations. And I am part of the Center's management team, together with Ernst Fehr and Joachim Voth.

Why did you apply for this job?

When I first heard about the Center, I was impressed by the names connected to it – did you see who's on the Advisory Board? Or on the Foundation Council? Not to mention the speakers list at the events, or the publication list of researchers? It made me curious, so I started looking into the research fields and got excited. I met with representatives of the Center (ok, “met” as in they “interviewed” me for the job) and I was inspired by their intellect, their sharp minds, and, at the same time, how down-to-earth and accessible they were. Afterwards, I took a deep dive into what the Center aims to do and discovered that their ambitions and values are ones that have always been close to my heart. And luckily, the Foundation Council thought I was the right fit – so, here I am!

Now that you've been at the Center for three months, how is it?

I'm probably still in the honeymoon phase and getting to know the ropes. But I absolutely love this job. It's a privilege to work with the people here, and to be given entrepreneurial freedom and trust. The wide range of responsibilities, from strategic plans to tactical execution, make my day-to-day job rich and varied. And it's satisfying to be able to make things happen and shape the future.

You've been in the private sector for quite a while – what did you learn there that is now relevant for your new role?

What I learned at Nestlé was: pragmatism. At university: the path is the goal. At UBS: it's about working together, or, in UBS speak, collaboration. And actually, the “job” where I learned more than in any other, was when I became a mother. This was, and continues to be, a tough boot camp for all kinds of skills like communication, motivation,



commitment, flexibility, thinking on your feet, etc. And it showed me how important it is to inspire confidence in these little beings and instill in them a “you-can-do-this” attitude that will guide them in their future.

What are your plans for the Center?

First, it's to continue what my predecessor Roman Studer built up: the events, publications and connecting the UBS Center with the business, politics and society in general. Then, it's about “doing more”: increase the involvement of our researchers and our scholarship holders – the launch of the policy briefs will be one way to do that; and foster a clear understanding of what diversity means and promote it at all levels – the Advisory Board, professors and lecturers, event guests, twitter followers and students. And what I would like to launch is an initiative around making economics attractive for the young generation. There are so many exciting aspects in economics that would help them explore and understand the world. So, why shouldn't economics be as cool as their “fandom”, sports club, computer games, or the latest on Spotify?

“In the end, if we want to have a great pipeline of passionate researchers, we need to start at the beginning.”