

# Pathways to Poseidon

Engineering executives share their steps to success

BY ELAINE BRABANT, BOEING WRITER

There was a time when Kendra Powers, Marvi Matos Rodriguez and Dannielle Haraldson didn't see engineering as a career path for themselves. Today, they hold the most senior engineering positions for the P-8 Poseidon aircraft program.

Discover how these three Boeing leaders took different journeys but ultimately arrived on the same team. They are certain, as they work with other P-8 teammates to produce new aircraft, that diverse and inclusive teams drive technical excellence and innovation.

## TECHNICAL TEAMMATES

Motivated and inspired by their own mentors to pursue engineering careers, Kendra Powers, left, and Marvi Matos Rodriguez now lead hundreds of Boeing engineers who are designing, developing and producing the P-8 Poseidon aircraft.

PHOTO: MARIAN LOCKHART/BOEING

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**KENDRA POWERS,  
P-8 ENGINEERING DIRECTOR  
AND CHIEF ENGINEER**

## Kendra Powers, P-8 engineering director and chief engineer

Powers may not have become an engineer without encouragement — both intended and unintended. When she was in high school and considering majors, her father pointed out that with her science and math skills, she might consider engineering. “I wasn’t even sure what that was,” Powers said.

She talked it over with a friend, whose reaction of distaste and the declaration that “engineering is hard” led to Powers’ resolve. “I remember feeling like ‘I’ll show you,’” said Powers, who graduated from Montana State University with a degree in chemical engineering.

Named P-8 chief engineer in 2022, Powers leads the engineers involved in designing, developing and producing the P-8 maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft.

When Powers joined Boeing 25 years ago, as an engineer for commercial airplanes, there was only one other woman on her team and none in her chain of command. Now that she is on an engineering team with women represented at every level, she notices a different dynamic.

“I don’t feel like I have to show up differently, like ‘Am I being authoritarian enough,’” Powers said. “I focus on collaboration.”

The key to collaboration, she emphasized, is playing offense. “No matter what your role is in supporting P-8, across this program there’s an attitude that we lean in and help each other,” Powers said. “We communicate candidly and share information. We are open to new ideas and will pursue them.”

Others see how Powers leads and take note. “Kendra is my role model,” Haraldson said. “She is calm in every situation and asks lots of great questions. I watch how she handles herself and have so much respect for her.”

### FINISH LINE

Boeing has over 200 P-8 aircraft on contract with nine customers, including Australia, Canada, Germany, India, New Zealand, Norway, the Republic of Korea, the United Kingdom and the United States.

PHOTO: BOEING



### CONVERSATION CENTERPIECE

Matos Rodriguez and Powers are dedicated to collaboration and communication across the P-8 program.

PHOTO: MARIAN LOCKHART/BOEING

“No one had ever asked me what would make you happy. I didn’t even think to ask that of myself. To me, the question showed leadership and genuine humanity.”

**MARVI MATOS RODRIGUEZ,  
ENGINEERING DIRECTOR**

## Marvi Matos Rodriguez, engineering director

Matos Rodriguez has made several defining moves in her career, including moving from the island of Puerto Rico to the continental United States and transitioning from academia to aerospace. These life decisions helped lead her to Boeing, where she manages about 730 people responsible for systems engineering, integration and test of multiple military aircraft programs, including the P-8.

Growing up, Matos Rodriguez wasn’t familiar with the fields within engineering. When her mother installed a central computer system in her clinical laboratory, the engineer in charge introduced her to coding and software development. That was a revelation for Matos Rodriguez. At the age of 11, she saw that she could channel her love for math via applied problem-solving and engineering solutions, which would enable her to make a real-world impact.

After majoring in chemical engineering in Puerto Rico, Matos Rodriguez relocated to Pittsburgh, earning a master’s degree in colloids, polymers, and surfaces and a doctorate in chemical engineering at Carnegie Mellon University.

She later served as a postdoctoral fellow at the National Institute of Standards and Technology, and she lectured at the University of Washington in chemical engineering. Her passion to work in research and development to solve real problems and her curiosity led her to rediscover the field of aerospace. “I wanted to work on products that really matter and serve others, as many people as possible,” Matos Rodriguez said.

She joined the Boeing team in 2010, then left to work for another company in 2017. When she expressed interest in returning to Boeing in 2020, an executive asked her what she wanted to do, what would make her happy. Matos Rodriguez was shocked.

“No one had ever asked me what would make you happy,” she said. “I didn’t even think to ask that of myself. To me, the question showed leadership and genuine humanity.”

Matos Rodriguez recognizes mentoring as one of the most impactful influences in her career. When people reach out to her for support and coaching, she pays it forward by meeting with students, engineers and managers. “It’s inspiring when someone spends time to guide you,” she said.

Additionally, Matos Rodriguez serves on the National Science Board, which provides oversight to the National Science Foundation and advises the president and Congress on matters of science and engineering policy.

### **Dannielle Haraldson, P-8 deputy chief engineer**

Haraldson was ready to quit. After a few months in college, she told an acquaintance, “I don’t think engineering is for me. I’m going to switch majors.”

The acquaintance, who worked for Boeing, responded: “You absolutely will not. You are meant to be an engineer.”

“He knew math was my thing,” said Haraldson, who has worked within Boeing engineering for 27 years. “It was the kick in the butt I needed.”

In her current role, Haraldson is deputy to Powers and shares responsibility for the technical integrity of P-8 aircraft. In other words, they ensure the aircraft meets the required engineering specifications and performs optimally. To Haraldson, technical acumen is only one aspect of being an engineering leader.

“What we used to call soft skills are actually fundamental skills,” Haraldson said. “Relationships and servant leadership matter. My team comes first. I want them to know they are trusted and that if they need help, I’ll follow through.”

A teammate who has worked closely with Haraldson noted the impact that makes.

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**DANNIELLE HARALDSON,  
P-8 DEPUTY CHIEF ENGINEER**



#### **PEOPLE PERSON**

For Dannielle Haraldson, her teams come first. As she serves P-8 engineers and engineering students, she believes straight talk and transparency drive better outcomes.

PHOTO: KYMBERLY VANDLAC/BOEING

“I am able to focus on the technical aspects of my work and let go of that constant battle to prove myself.”

**NINA CERRUTI,  
P-8 FLEET SUPPORT ENGINEER**

“With Dannielle, there’s the feeling of being supported without question,” said Nina Cerruti, P-8 fleet support engineer. “Under her leadership, I am able to focus on the technical aspects of my work and let go of that constant battle to prove myself.”

In addition to being a leader in aerospace, Haraldson is a leader in the classroom. She teaches an engineering course at her alma mater, Gonzaga University. One class just happened to have all women, a ratio Haraldson could not have fathomed when she was a student.

Still, Haraldson emphasized, diversity and inclusion are about more than numbers.

“Being able to talk openly about the challenges women face and address them collectively is something I’ve seen change for the better,” she said, noting that Boeing encourages teammates to raise concerns and solve problems.

That transparency, Haraldson believes, leads to benefits for everyone on the team and enhances the outcomes they create for customers.



### ON PATROL

With surveillance and reconnaissance, search and rescue, and long-range anti-submarine capabilities, the P-8 is deployed around the world.

PHOTO: BOEING

## The journey ahead

Powers, Matos Rodriguez, Haraldson and the hundreds of Boeing teammates who support the Poseidon are working together to deliver new aircraft to first-time P-8 customers Canada and Germany. **IQ**



**BOOST YOUR IQ**  
Watch the Boeing team assemble a P-8 Poseidon.