

Bridging the Gap

LEVERAGING INTERSECTIONAL LEADERSHIP
TO FOSTER INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE IN STEM

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In an evolving professional landscape, the need for inclusive excellence in STEM is more critical than ever. This presentation will explore the intersectional leadership strategies that executive leaders can employ to foster a more inclusive and equitable environment in spite of today's political challenges.

AGENDA

- Our Mission
- We answer: How & Why Your Job is Difficult
- We develop programmatic strategies for longitudinal success.
- Policy and Social Justice: How Do You Stay Informed In Challenging Climates
- Inclusive Pedagogies & Curricular Motivation
- Fight fire with fire: Community Centered Solutions



Introduction:

Today, we'll cover several key areas to help you navigate challenges within your programming.

First, let's identify who's in the room:

By a show of hands, who are program directors? Faculty? Staff? Administrators? Professional society members?

What We'll Cover:

A Brief History:

We'll touch on the historical context that contributes to the challenges within your programs.

Keys to Programmatic Success:

Learn actionable strategies for building sustainable and impactful programs.

Staying Informed:

Discover resources to keep up with current trends and policies.

Inclusive Pedagogy:

Explore ways to integrate inclusivity into your programming and teaching efforts.

Call to Action:

When you return home, use this knowledge to strengthen your networks and build a strategic plan.

In today's climate, especially under a red administration focused on empowering states, it's critical to engage your surrounding community.

Connect with faith-based organizations, industry partners, community colleges, and other local networks.

Collaboration and support within these communities are essential for your program's success.

OUR MISSION

Today, we'll explore intersectional leadership strategies that empower executive leaders to cultivate inclusive and equitable environments. By the end of this session, you'll gain insights into the history of American K-12 education, effective mentoring and recruitment strategies, intersectional approaches to curriculum development, and tools to stay informed in a rapidly evolving landscape.

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MEET THE TEAM



Beth Anne Johnson

Executive Coach

Beth Anne has dedicated nearly 15 years to working with clients to transform their visions into reality. With a sharp focus on big-picture thinking and a gift for fostering collaborative connections, she has redefined how clients approach creativity in their daily lives, professional experiences, and student success in the workforce. Creativity is the key force to best equity based practices.



Ershela Sims, Ph.D.

WEPAN CEO

With a proven track record in innovative education leadership across K-12 and higher education, Ershela is now channeling her expertise to researching the everyday experiences of those within the equity spectrum. As an industry leader, she is committed to driving growth and fostering innovation in a sector ripe for disruption. Ershela understands that intersectional collaboration is essential for achieving success.



Serita Acker

Programmatic Expert

As a seasoned business advisor and educator, Serita has successfully guided numerous Women in Engineering (WIE) and Minority Engineering Programs (MEP) to thrive in today's competitive landscape. With a deep understanding of the unique challenges these programs face, she is dedicated to offering the support and guidance necessary to transform entrepreneurial visions into reality.



Brooke Coley, Ph.D

Pedagogy Expert

Brooke C. Coley, Ph.D. is the Founding Executive Director of the Center for Research Advancing Racial Equity, Justice, and Sociotechnical Innovation Centered in Engineering (RARE JUSTICE) and an Assistant Professor of Engineering at Arizona State University. She holds a Ph.D. in Bioengineering from the University of Pittsburgh and a B.S. in Chemical Engineering from UMBC as a Meyerhoff Scholar.

BACKGROUND

The components of K12 public education history, we want you to know:

- Historical Foundations of Public Education:
- School to Prison Pipeline
- Gender Disparities in Discipline & Education
- Sexism in Curriculum & Pedagogy
- Forced school for Indigenous Peoples
- Gender disparities in

The solution: **Intersectionality** in Education



Like all elements of research, let's start with elements of background necessary to understand how higher education came to be where it is today. Do you ever ask yourself how this job can get any harder? How did this fire come to be?

□ Historical Foundations of Public Education:

John Taylor Gatto's *Weapons of Mass Instruction* critiques the origins of the American public education system, highlighting its roots in the Prussian model designed to create obedient, non-questioning factory workers.

□ School-to-Prison Pipeline:

The disproportionate impact on Black and brown students, particularly boys, where systemic biases in discipline and educational practices lead to higher rates of suspensions, expulsions, and eventual incarceration.

□ Forced Schooling and Indigenous Peoples:

The legacy of forced schooling, such as the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, which aimed to erase Indigenous cultures and identities through assimilation into the dominant white society.

□ □ Gender Disparities in Discipline and Education:

Girls, especially Black and brown girls, face unique challenges within the school system. They are often subject to punitive measures for behavior perceived as defiant, which can be tied to racial and gender stereotypes. This contributes to the school-to-prison pipeline, not only for boys but also for girls who may be overlooked in broader discussions about this issue.

□ Sexism in Curriculum and Pedagogy:

The curriculum and teaching methods in public schools often reinforce traditional gender roles and may marginalize the contributions and experiences of women, particularly women of color. Addressing these biases is essential for creating an equitable education system.

The impact? These historical practices and systemic inequities have created a foundation of oppression that continues to influence the challenges and disparities faced in higher education today.

The solution? Intersectionality in Education - Understanding how race, gender, and class intersect in the experiences of female students is crucial for addressing equity in education. Initiatives that focus solely on race or gender without considering their intersection may miss key elements of the systemic inequities faced by girls and women in education.

WHAT DO YOU NEED?

In groups of 2 or 3, share...

What brought you to this room today?

What barriers to inclusivity exist in your institution?

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Alrighty, one key part of fostering inclusivity is building a community of practice—a shared space where everyone actively engages and grows together.

We want you to start flexing these muscles right now. So, for this activity, pair up with someone new to you—not your friend or someone you’ve already worked with.

Get into small groups of 2 or 3 and take a moment to answer these questions together:

What do you need?

What brought you to this room?

What barriers to inclusivity exist in your institution?

The goal here is to start practicing collaboration and connection in a way that fosters inclusivity and builds relationships.

INNOVATIVE RECRUITMENT & RETENTION



Strategic Outreach

How are you building community?
What's your strategic plan?

Consider...

- Faith based organizations
- Non-profit programming
- Local schools

Innovative Recruitment

Recruitment begins with your outreach. A **strategic plan** builds in that outreach for structured intentional recruitment.

How do you build relationships?
How do you implement follow up strategies and connection?

Create Teams of Mentors

Prioritize mentor curriculum according to your needs.

- What information does a student need to thrive at your institution?
- How do they access that information?

Intentional Retention

You retain through effective cultivation of..

- Mentorship
- Academic support
- Community building
- Professional development

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Innovative Recruitment and Retention Programs

Overview:

Importance of diverse representation in STEM at all educational levels.

Examples of successful recruitment and retention strategies.

Key Points:

Targeted outreach programs for K-12, undergraduates, and graduate students.

Scholarships, mentorships, and support networks.

Notes...

PEER WISE has implemented a comprehensive recruitment strategy aimed at attracting the best talent in the state, focusing on underrepresented students in STEM fields. This strategy leverages strong partnerships with faith-based organizations, administrators at the Boys & Girls Club, and local schools, fostering a supportive network that amplifies their outreach efforts.

Key Components of the Recruitment Strategy:

1. Faith-Based Partnerships:

PEER WISE collaborates with faith-based organizations to reach diverse communities, particularly those with significant African American and Latinx populations. These partnerships allow PEER WISE to engage directly with families, providing information about educational opportunities in STEM fields and the support available through their programs.

2. Boys & Girls Club Collaboration:

Building relationships with administrators at the Boys & Girls Club is a cornerstone of PEER WISE's recruitment strategy. These partnerships facilitate targeted outreach to students who may not have access to STEM resources in their schools, offering them hands-on experiences and mentorship that spark interest in STEM careers. Remember, your students and their

parents/guardians are some of your best tools for spreading the word.

3. School-Based Outreach:

PEER WISE maintains strong connections with local schools, working closely with administrators and educators to identify talented students from underrepresented groups. By presenting at school events, conducting workshops, and providing resources to educators, PEER WISE ensures that students are aware of the opportunities available to them.

4. Targeted Outreach Programs:

PEER WISE runs five dedicated outreach programs aimed at middle and high school students, designed to inspire and prepare them for future success in STEM. These programs include:

Through these strategic initiatives, PEER WISE is effectively recruiting and nurturing the next generation of diverse STEM leaders, ensuring that talent from all backgrounds has the opportunity to thrive.

Recruitment:

Recruitment begins with your outreach. A strategic plan builds into that outreach for structured, intentional recruitment. How do you build relationships? How do you implement follow-up strategies and connections?

Our relationships are so strong with our students that they come back to share their stories at our PEER WISE Connections. Research shows that seeing a student look like YOU helps students build the resilience needed to get that degree. We share that to say students are your best recruitment strategy.

Mentorship:

A great mentorship program builds on that strategic plan to retain your talent in your programs. We have training that includes suicide prevention, work life balance, jargon (very important for first generation college students), how to write an email, LGBTQIA+, Black History Month, Hispanic Heritage etc. A good rule of thumb is to have...

What information does a student need to thrive at your institution?

How do they access that information?

How do you inform your mentors on: socio-economic needs, racial curiosity, gender equity, LGBTQIA+ 2 spirit information, disability and mental health? Remember that you need to do this over the course of the year. Build in your plan what's needed at the beginning of the year, cover in training, then build the remaining components throughout the year.

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME ...

- Took time off for joy?
- Checked in with your equity centers? Admin? Staff? Students?
- Pursued professional development?
- Received executive coaching?



Research indicates that individuals working in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) roles experience higher levels of burnout. Factors contributing to this include low engagement, limited budgets, and insufficient support from management.

FORBES

With impending legislative changes, this trend is likely to intensify.

In light of this, let's take a moment to reflect: How are your current self-care practices supporting you?

Remember, self-care is more than a personal practice—it's an act of living resistance. Prioritizing self-care is essential for your well-being and is deserving of this conversation.

PSYCHOLOGY TODAY

MENTORING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

What do our **programs** need?

- Mentorship programs
- Academic support
- Community integration
- Professional development
- Coaching

What do our **administrators** needs?

- Rest - use that leave folks!
- Executive coaching
- Professional development
- Community - professional societies



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Strong leaders have strong programs because they prioritize the same components.

PEER WISE at Clemson University has a strong focus on retaining underrepresented students in STEM disciplines through several key initiatives. These include:

Mentorship Programs:

PEER WISE pairs students with faculty, staff, and peer mentors who provide academic and personal guidance. These relationships help students navigate challenges and stay on track toward graduation.

Challenge for administrators in the room: We find the faculty that support us most are non tenure track faculty or tenured faculty? How are you providing opportunity for junior faculty to be a part of the solution why equally not burdening them in the grind? It's imperative our students have a relationship with our faculty partners.

Academic Support:

Offering tutoring, study groups, and workshops, PEER WISE ensures students have the resources they need to succeed in rigorous STEM courses. This support is tailored to meet the specific needs of underrepresented students.

Community Building:

Through social events, networking opportunities, and leadership development programs, PEER WISE fosters a sense of belonging and community among students. This connection helps students feel supported and valued, increasing their likelihood of staying in the program.

Professional Development:

The program provides opportunities for internships, research experiences, and professional networking. By connecting students with industry professionals and alumni, PEER WISE helps

students see the tangible benefits of staying in their STEM majors.

These efforts contribute to the high retention rates of underrepresented students in STEM fields at Clemson University, making PEER WISE a model for similar programs nationwide.

We challenge our administrators to rest. You deserve it, then upon your return, meet face to face with your programming. When Ershela and I were looking through the data and my own lived experiences confirm, our administrators are sometimes so busy they don't know what the ankles are doing. Remember the agility and success of diversity, reflection of population in our programs require us to touch base, be present and intentional ourselves. This includes our own reckonings that need to happen with executive coaching, professional development and restorative components of community. We don't want you to burn out.

□ After rest...Importance of Direct Engagement

Face-to-Face Interaction: Encourage administrators to reconnect with their programs and teams through direct, personal interaction.

Data-Driven Insights: Share findings from data analysis and personal experiences highlighting the gap between administrators and on-the-ground staff.

□ The Disconnect: "Not Knowing What the Ankles Are Doing"

Discuss how busyness can lead to a disconnect between leadership and the realities of daily operations.

Explore the impact of this disconnect on program success and diversity initiatives.

□ Intentional Presence and Agility

Reflection of Population in Programs: Stress the importance of diversity and inclusivity in program success.

Being Present and Intentional: Advocate for administrators to actively engage with their teams to maintain agility and responsiveness.

□ Professional Development and Executive Coaching

Ongoing Learning: Highlight the need for continuous professional development and executive coaching to address personal and organizational challenges.

Restorative Practices: Suggest integrating restorative practices and community-building activities to maintain a healthy work environment.

□ Avoiding Burnout

Sustainable Leadership: Discuss the risks of burnout and the importance of maintaining a sustainable pace.

Support Systems: Encourage building strong support systems within the organization to prevent burnout.

□ A Call to Action

Reiterate the importance of rest, engagement, and intentional leadership.

Invite administrators to commit to these practices for the benefit of their programs and personal well-being.

INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGIES & CURRICULAR INNOVATION

What does research tell us?

We need...

- Culturally relevant curriculum
- Active learning strategies
- Critical pedagogy
- Intersectional assessment practices
- Mentorship and support
- Inclusive language & communication
- Training

These approaches collectively work towards creating a STEM educational environment where all students, regardless of their intersecting identities, feel valued, supported, and empowered to succeed.



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: Inclusive Pedagogies and Curricular Innovation

These approaches collectively work towards creating a STEM educational environment where all students, regardless of their intersecting identities, feel valued, supported, and empowered to succeed.

Culturally Relevant Curriculum:

Develops curriculum materials that reflect the diverse cultural backgrounds of students, incorporating examples, case studies, and perspectives from various ethnicities, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Acknowledges and values the contributions of underrepresented groups in STEM fields.

Active Learning Strategies:

Encourages student engagement through collaborative projects, group discussions, and problem-based learning that respect different learning styles and perspectives.

Facilitates participation from all students, especially those from marginalized groups, by creating a supportive and inclusive classroom environment.

Critical Pedagogy:

Challenges traditional power dynamics in the classroom by promoting critical thinking about social justice issues, including systemic racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination.

Empowers students to question and critique the status quo in STEM fields, encouraging them to become advocates for change.

Intersectional Assessment Practices:

Implements assessment methods that recognize the diverse ways students demonstrate understanding, moving beyond standardized testing to include portfolios, presentations, and peer

evaluations.

Uses formative assessments to provide ongoing feedback, ensuring that all students, regardless of background, have the opportunity to succeed.

Mentorship and Support Networks:

Establishes mentorship programs that connect students with role models who share similar backgrounds or experiences, fostering a sense of belonging and providing guidance in navigating academic and professional challenges.

Creates support networks, such as affinity groups or peer mentoring, that offer safe spaces for students to discuss their experiences and challenges in STEM.

Inclusive Language and Communication:

Adopts inclusive language in teaching and communication, avoiding assumptions about students' backgrounds or identities, and being mindful of gender-neutral and culturally sensitive language.

Encourages open dialogue and respectful discussions about issues related to identity, privilege, and intersectionality in STEM.

Faculty Development and Training:

Provides ongoing professional development for faculty to understand and implement intersectional approaches in their teaching, including training on implicit bias, cultural competency, and inclusive teaching strategies.

Encourages faculty to reflect on their own identities and biases, and how these may impact their teaching and interactions with students.

These approaches collectively work towards creating a STEM educational environment where all students, regardless of their intersecting identities, feel valued, supported, and empowered to succeed.

HOW DO YOU STAY INFORMED?

What resources do you find useful?

What professional societies help support you?

What networks do you need at this time?



WEPAN Lib Guide to DEI

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ADDRESSING DEI CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Staff Informed

Be the expert of what is and is not going on in the...

- global community
- higher ed
- state policy

Prepare to do the work

The work will never end until all folks are free and experiencing equity. How will you make good trouble under the radar?

Build your community!

We support you in the disruption. We believe in justice. If you are a community of one, today you are now a community of more.



Chat GPT Prompt to Help
You Stay Informed

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Be the expert:

Stay informed about what's happening in the global community, in higher education, and in state policy. Being knowledgeable about these areas equips you to act with intention and impact.

Prepare to do the work:

Remember, this work is ongoing. It will not end until all people are truly free and experiencing equity. This is a lifelong commitment.

Reflect on your role:

How can you make “good trouble” under the radar? Think about the ways you can challenge the status quo and push for change, even in small but meaningful ways.

Build your community:

You are not alone in this effort. We are here to support you in the disruption, and we stand firmly with justice.

If you feel like a community of one, know that today, you are part of a larger community. Together, we can amplify our voices and our impact.

Encouragement:

Lean into this work with courage and resilience. Justice work requires solidarity, persistence, and mutual support. Let's commit to building a stronger, more inclusive community.

POLICY IMPACT & SOCIAL JUSTICE INTEGRATION

Know the following...

- Your institutional policy **yourself**
- Policy in your state
- The work doesn't stop even if "its no longer supported."

WEPAN Lib Guide and Chat GPT Prompt has the tools to support you in knowing the who, what, when, and where data points.



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Policy Impact and Social Justice Integration

Overview:

How university and corporate policies can support diversity in STEM.

Key Points:

Role of Title IX and veteran integration programs.

□ Title IX: Originally designed to prevent sex-based discrimination in educational institutions, Title IX has evolved to address broader issues of gender equity, including in STEM fields. Deans and administrators should be aware of how Title IX can be leveraged to create more equitable environments, from preventing harassment to ensuring equal opportunities in STEM education and careers.

□ Veteran Integration Programs: These programs aim to support veterans as they transition into academic and professional roles within STEM fields. By addressing the unique needs of veterans—such as providing mental health support, recognizing military training as academic credit, and ensuring access to educational resources—universities can create more inclusive spaces for all students.

What can we learn from both of these?

Importance of integrating social justice into curricula and co-curricular activities.

Is your state under attack? Leverage professional societies and student organizations.

What does this look like?

Providing space...

Charging industry partners i.e. BA learned this from the Business program (so student organizations can have funds to support student travel etc. in case funding is pulled from our own organizations)

We can help...

Action Steps for Leaders:

Policy Audits: Regularly review university and corporate policies to identify and address any gaps in equity and inclusion.

Training and Professional Development: Invest in ongoing training for faculty and staff on the intersection of policy, equity, and social justice. This training should empower them to recognize and address biases in their teaching, mentoring, and leadership.

Community Engagement: Encourage collaborations between the university and community organizations focusing on social justice. (REMEMBER slide 4!) These partnerships can provide valuable insights and opportunities for students to apply their STEM skills in ways that benefit society.

What Deans, Administrators, and Program Directors Need to Know:

Intersectionality Matters: Understand that policy impacts different groups in varied ways; thus, any approach to policy and social justice should consider the intersectionality of race, gender, socioeconomic status, and other identities.

Proactive Leadership: Don't wait for issues to arise. Actively create and enforce policies that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. What's your strategic plan?

Accountability Mechanisms: Implement systems to track these policies' effectiveness and make necessary adjustments. Feedback loops involving students, faculty, and external stakeholders are crucial for continuous improvement.

COMMUNITY CENTERED SOLUTIONS

Create **Q1**

What's your strategic plan?

Build **Q2**

Who is your community?
How will you build your vision?
How do integrate outreach, recruitment programing directly into our mentoring to recruitment?

Begin **Q3**

What's working?
What are your pain points?

Evaluate **Q4**

Adjust, evolve, go!

Engage stealth mode and adjust language accordingly, but not the work. Make good trouble.

Seek **Q1**

Seek supportive partners for collaboration and processing.

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Context of the Incoming Administration:

The incoming administration aligns with the values of the Republican Party, emphasizing "states' rights." While federal oversight is crucial for advancing civil liberties and ensuring systemic change, history shows us that impactful progress often comes from grassroots efforts within our communities.

Looking to History for Inspiration:

Throughout history, we've seen how community-driven initiatives can fill gaps left by federal policies. From civil rights movements to local advocacy, these efforts demonstrate the power of working collaboratively with our immediate networks.

Call to Action:

Now is the time to focus on building or strengthening our community partnerships. Think broadly and inclusively about who our collaborators can be:

- Faith-based organizations
- Local community organizations
- Tribal colleges and communities
- Industry partners
- Educational institutions

Why Intersectionality Matters:

Intersectional community collaboration is essential. When we embrace diverse perspectives and experiences, we create solutions that uplift and sustain everyone. This approach ensures that no

one is left behind, especially the most marginalized members of our society.

Empowering the Collective:

Together, we have the power to support each other, advocate for justice, and create meaningful change. Let's focus on cultivating these partnerships now so we can remain resilient and united in the face of future challenges.

CONCLUSION

We stepped back to assess our industry's response to this pivotal moment in history, gaining insights into the systems that led us here. As a community committed to addressing these harms, we will continue to build solutions and keep you informed on how we're making progress.

Join us in revolutionizing access to
higher education, industry, &
beyond.

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Thank you!

WE WANT TO WORK WITH YOU.

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