

DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

Leadership in Public Administration and Social Agencies & Closing the Gap CONFERENCE

John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Conference proceedings 2025

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC MANAGEMENT, JJAY

Sponsored by International Journal of Faculty And Leadership Development (

Leadership in Public Administration and Social Agencies & Closing the Gap: Bridging Gaps in Public Service

Thursday, April 10, 2025

Moot Room 6.68 NB

John Jay College, 524 West 59th Street, New York, NY 10019

Conference: 5:30 PM – 8:30 PM

Friday, April 11th, 2025 (Virtual)

Conference: 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM

Virtual Sessions will be broadcasted at

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and

www.facebook.com/dowlingIA

THANKS TO

Department of Public Management at John Jay College

Chair: Dr. Jason Rivera

Conference Collaborators:

Mindy Bockstein, JJAY

Racquelle Patterson, JJAY

Kelley Sugrue, DIA

Meghan Wing, DIA

Refugio Ramos, JJAY

CONFERENCE CHAIR

Dr. Elsa-Sofia Morote, Professor, Public Management, John Jay College

CONFERENCE MODERATORS

Dr. Michelle Gantt

Dr. Nalini Singh

Dr. Hamid Ikram

Our Sponsors

Our annual conference aims to provide insights and explore the processes, actions, challenges, and outcomes faced by underrepresented leaders. Our goal is to establish a global network of leaders who can navigate these challenges, opening opportunities and providing access to others, while initiating changes within our workforce that foster a sense of acceptance among leaders.

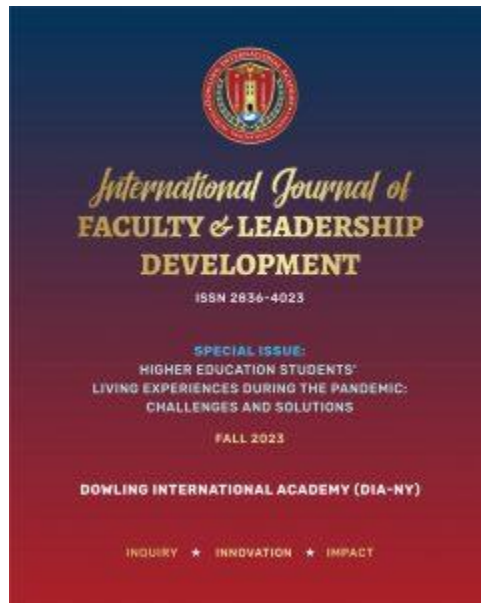
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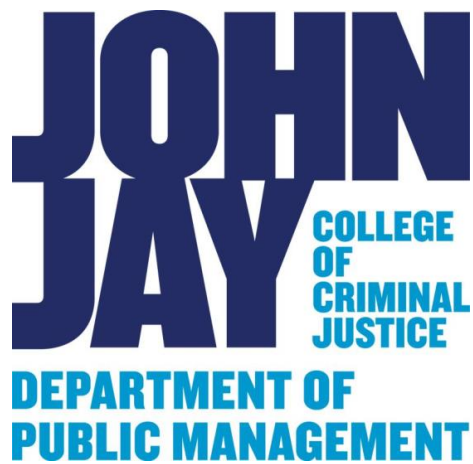
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You can enjoy our interviews with our alumni and professors:

<https://www.youtube.com/@JohnJayPublicManagement>

Conference Goals

The goals of the annual conference call for "Underrepresented Leaders in Public Organizations" renamed this year as "Leadership in Public Administrators and Social agencies Leaders – Closing the Gap" with the theme of Closing the Gap are to:

- Foster a supportive and inclusive environment for underrepresented leaders in public education organizations.
- Provide a platform for sharing experiences, insights, and best practices among underrepresented leaders to promote professional development and advancement.
- Explore strategies and solutions to address challenges faced by underrepresented leaders in education, including issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Highlight the importance of diverse leadership in driving innovation, fostering collaboration, and achieving organizational excellence in educational institutions.
- Facilitate networking opportunities for underrepresented leaders to build connections, alliances, and partnerships for collective impact and advocacy.
- Promote awareness and understanding of the unique perspectives, contributions, and needs of underrepresented leaders in public education organizations.
- Inspire and empower underrepresented leaders to take on leadership roles, pursue career advancement opportunities, and make meaningful contributions to the field of education.
- Encourage ongoing dialogue, collaboration, and action to create more equitable and inclusive environments for underrepresented leaders and stakeholders in education.

Overall, the conference aims to empower, support, and elevate underrepresented leaders in public organizations, with a specific focus on advancing education-related initiatives and promoting positive change within the sector.

Leadership in Public Organization and Social Agencies

Bridging Gaps in Public Services

Agenda

DAY 1

April 10, 2025

Day 1 – In-Person

📍 APRIL 10, 2025 | 5:30 PM – 8:35 PM

📍 LOCATION: **Moot Room 6.68 NB**

John Jay College, 524 West 59th Street, New York, NY 10019

5:30 PM – 5:45 PM

REGISTRATION AND NETWORKING

5:45 PM – 5:50 PM

WELCOME REMARKS

- Dr. Elsa-Sofia Morote, Conference Chair

5:50 PM – 6:15 PM

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

- Jacqueline M. Ebanks, Interim President & CEO, Nonprofit New York

SESSION I

🕒 6:15 PM – 7:20 PM

Moderator: Dr. Michelle Gantt, President, Dowling International Academy

- Chelsea Hinds-Charles, with Dr. Shenaille Beckley-Danso & Hirvelt Megie

FROM NYC EDUCATED TO EDUCATORS—SHAPING THE FUTURE OF LEADERSHIP

- Ruby Aguirre-Fuentes, M.A.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATING AND NURTURING PATHWAYS FOR DIVERSE INDIVIDUALS TO ASSUME LEADERSHIP ROLES

- Genevieve Kessler

EMPOWERING UNDERREPRESENTED LEADERSHIP: BRIDGING THE GAPS IN PUBLIC SERVICE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
MODELED ON THE PRIVATE SECTOR

- Krystal Charles

HOMELESS IN NY – POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Dr. Jason Mazeski

LEVERAGING YOUR VOICE: EMPOWERMENT THROUGH PUBLIC SPEAKING & EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

7:20 PM – 7:25 PM

BREAK

SESSION II

 7:25 PM – 8:25 PM

Moderator: Dr. Nalini Singh, Co-founder, Dowling International Academy

- Denise Thompson

COLLEGE ATHLETICS DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI)

- John Prince

THE WHY – MOTIVATING YOUNG BLACK AND BROWN BOYS TO PURSUE EDUCATION FOR SUCCESS

- Michael Tajalle

IMPORTANCE OF REPRESENTATION IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

- Jennifer Cabrera

BRIDGING LEADERSHIP, WORKFORCE & DIGITAL INNOVATION

- Tameek Floyd

RESILIENCE THROUGH INCARCERATION

8:25 PM – 8:35 PM

CLOSING REMARKS

DAY 2

April 11, 2025

Day 2 – Virtual



APRIL 11, 2025 | 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM



VIRTUAL PLATFORM: PRESENTERS WILL USE STREAM YARD (MODERATOR IS ON CONTACT).

VIEWERS WILL SEE IT LIVE FROM [www.facebook.com/dowlingIA-](https://www.facebook.com/dowlingIA/)

VIEWERS WILL BE ABLE TO POST THEIR QUESTIONS LIVE

DAY 2 – VIRTUAL

6:00 PM – 6:15 PM

WELCOME REMARKS

- Dr. Jason Rivera, Chair, Public Management Department

SESSION III



6:15 PM – 7:15 PM

Moderator: Dr. Hamid Ikram, Co-founder, Dowling International Academy

- **6:15 PM – 6:30 PM** – Leah Forney

REIMAGINING LEADERSHIP: BRIDGING THE DIVIDE BETWEEN PUBLIC SERVICE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE ADVOCACY

- **6:30 PM – 6:45 PM** – Dr. Michelle Gantt, P. Caringi, M. Sweatt, S. Qiao & K. Sugrue

FUTURE LEADERS REFLECT ON THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIPS IN CORRECTIONAL ENVIRONMENTS

- **6:45 PM – 7:00 PM** – Sheying Chen

LEADING SOCIAL AGENCIES THROUGH “SOCIETY WORK”: THE CHINESE APPROACH TO PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND SOCIAL WORK IN THE POST-ECONOMIC STATE ERA

- **7:00 PM – 7:15 PM** – Dr. Matthew Rhoads & Dr. Richard Bernato

PROCESS AND FUTURE-BASED DECISION-MAKING USING GENERATIVE AI

7:15 PM – 7:30 PM

CLOSING REMARKS

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Jacqueline M. Ebanks, M.S. (Jacqui) **joined Nonprofit New York in November 2024 as Interim President and CEO.** An innovative manager and policymaker with extensive experience in the public, private, philanthropic, and nonprofit sectors, Jacqui has worked for over three decades to promote economic and social justice for women, girls, and marginalized communities. Jacqui has served as the Executive Director of the New York City Commission on Gender Equity, where she led the city's efforts to dismantle barriers to gender equity within its workforce and across all sectors.

Prior to joining city government, Jacqui was the Executive Director of Women Creating Change where she guided the civic-engagement organization into its second century of activism; served as the Vice President of Programs at the New York Women's Foundation; worked at Citigroup as their Vice President and Director of U.S. Partnerships and Program Development for the

Global Community Relations Division and their Regional Community Relations Director for the

Northeast and Puerto Rico, and was the Vice President for Community

Investment at the United

Way of New York City.

Jacqui holds a B. A. in Government from Anderson University, Indiana, and an M.S. in Policy

Analysis and Public Management from Stony Brook University.

Conference Chair

Elsa-Sofia Morote, Ed.D., Ph.D., Public Policy Professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and co-founder of Dowling International Academy (DIA-NY), a non-profit dedicated to advancing leaders and scholars towards Inquiry, Innovation, and Impact for societal well-being. With dual doctoral degrees and senior postdoctoral experience at MIT, she boasts over 30 years of experience in higher education, holding leadership roles spanning from pre-college to doctoral levels. As Founder Director of the International & Diversity Institute at Dowling College, Dean at Farmingdale State College, and Dean of Graduate Studies at John Jay College, Morote drove enrollment, secured nearly \$3.7 million in funding, and enhanced diversity. With over 50 publications and having mentored 200 dissertations, she has received more than 20 honors for her mentoring, research, and advocacy.

Moderators:

Michelle Gantt, Ed.D., President of Dowling International Academy (DIA), is also CEO and founder of Good Morning Parents, focusing on parenting and leadership. With 23 years in the federal prison system, she rose from a correctional officer to a national supervisor, specializing in parenting, education, and leadership, particularly regarding parental incarceration effects. Gantt earned national recognition for pioneering policies and programs, enhancing staff and inmate development. Co-author of "Raising Scholars from Infancy to Adulthood," she serves on the NY Zero to Three Network board. Leveraging her authorship, educational, auditing, and supervisory roles, she aids leaders in fostering cultural growth. Dedicated to amplifying opportunities for underrepresented educators and leaders, Gantt champions education and professionalism.

Nalini Singh, Ed.D., Retired Principal from the NYC Department of Education. With over 30 years of experience in the school system, Dr. Singh has an extensive knowledge in leadership, pedagogy, diversity, equity, SEL and many other initiatives. Dr. Singh's goal is to continue in the field of education, to educate and empower. In her quest, Dr. Singh is an adjunct professor and consultant, continuing to make a positive impact in the field of education. Dr. Singh graduated from St. John's University with a degree in Doctor of Education, Administrative and Instructional Leadership, focusing on Emotional Intelligence. Dr. Singh believes that students' achievement is ultimately affected by the emotional intelligence of the principal; the leader's disposition affects culture and teachers' self-efficacy, which directly impacts student achievement. Ultimately, understanding that education is the great equalizer in our world today.

Hamid Ikram, Ed.D., Adjunct Professor at John Jay College, and Co-Founder of Dowling International Academy (DIA), brings over a decade of higher education experience in New York and abroad. As Managing Editor of the International Journal of Faculty and Leadership Development, he's deeply engaged in scholarly pursuits. With a doctorate from Dowling College, he led international student affairs and was a US Exchange Scholar, reflecting his global outlook. Recognized with the 2018 Digital Inclusion Award for promoting technology access, Ikram champions diversity, drawing from his own immigrant and first-generation college experience. Committed to inclusivity, he fosters diversity in academia, aligning with broader efforts for an inclusive educational environment.

DAY 1 - SESSION I – APRIL 10 – IN PERSON

6:15 pm – 7:20 pm

Session I – Moderator: Dr. Michelle Gantt, President of Dowling International Academy (DIA)

- Chelsea Hinds-Charles with Co-presenters Dr. Shenaille Beckley-Danso, and Hirvelt Megie
 - Topic: From NYC Educated to Educators—Shaping the Future of Leadership
- Ruby Aguirre-Fuentes, M.A.
 - Topic: The Importance of Creating and Nurturing Pathways for Diverse Individuals to Assume Leadership Roles
- Genevieve Kessler
 - Topic: Empowering Underrepresented Leadership: Bridging the Gaps in Public Service Policy Recommendations Modeled on the Private Sector
- Krystal Charles
 - Topic: Homeless in NY – Policy recommendations
- Dr. Jason Mazeski
 - Topic: Leveraging Your Voice: Empowerment Through Public Speaking & Effective Communication

Chelsea Hinds-Charles, CEO, Founder, and Engineer

CO-PRESENTERS DR. SHENAILLE BECKLEY-DANSO, A LEADERSHIP COACH, AND HIRVELT MEGIE, M.ED., AN EDUCATOR AND COMMUNITY LEADER

From NYC Educated to Educators—Shaping the Future of Leadership

How do we advance underrepresented leadership in education? This fireside chat brings together former New York City public school students who have stepped into influential educational leadership roles, shaping policies, programs, and opportunities for future generations.

Through personal narratives and critical reflections, our panelists will explore their journeys from students to leaders, shedding light on the challenges and triumphs of navigating educational systems that often lack diverse representation at the top. They will share how their experiences as students informed their leadership philosophies, the pivotal resources and mentors that guided them, and the strategies they have employed to foster inclusive and equitable learning environments.

Looking ahead, these leaders will discuss their vision for the future of educational leadership—both the realities they face and the transformative possibilities they strive toward. How can we break down systemic barriers to create sustainable pipelines for underrepresented educators? What advice do they have for those aspiring to lead?

Chelsea Hinds-Charles Bio

Chelsea Hinds-Charles, MEng, MBA is an engineer, entrepreneur, and advocate for career resilience and equitable access to technology and engineering industries. She is an advocate for career resilience and equitable access to technology and engineering industries. With bachelor's degrees in industrial engineering and economics and a master's in systems engineering, she has navigated dynamic roles at Southwest Airlines, Walt Disney World, and X (formerly Twitter). Inspired by her own career pivots, she founded the Pathways Program, a career readiness and workforce development initiative, as well as Astrevio, a technology and engineering consulting firm. Passionate about empowering underrepresented leaders and inclusive innovation, she advocates for the role of educational leadership in shaping accessible, purpose-driven career pathways for future scholars.

IMPORTANCE OF CREATING AND NURTURING PATHWAYS FOR DIVERSE INDIVIDUALS TO ASSUME LEADERSHIP ROLES

As a passionate advocate for equitable representation and inclusive leadership, I am deeply committed to advancing the voices of underrepresented individuals in public service. The theme of this year's leadership conference resonates with my mission to create spaces for individuals from marginalized communities, like me, to pave the way and make a meaningful impact. As someone who has spent the last fifteen years working closely with survivors of trauma, I have had the privilege of learning invaluable lessons about leadership, resilience, and the power of inclusive systems. My goal is to continue building up the next generation by sharing the insights I have gained throughout my career, particularly in the context of survivors working in helping professions. My talk will focus on the importance of creating and nurturing pathways for diverse individuals to assume leadership roles, primarily within agencies that serve marginalized communities. I will discuss the critical need for leadership that is both empathetic and informed by the lived experiences of not only those we serve, but us as well. Through practical strategies and real-world examples, I aim to highlight how underrepresented leaders can bring unique perspectives and innovative solutions to real-world problems, bridging gaps and creating positive, lasting change.

Ruby Aguirre-Fuentes *BIO*

Ruby has worked as a clinician and advocate for the past fifteen years, supporting underrepresented communities within the public sector, with a particular focus on developing leadership pathways for individuals from marginalized backgrounds. Working with survivors of trauma in the public sector has profoundly shaped her understanding of leadership and the crucial role that empathy, resilience, and advocacy play in driving meaningful change. Engaging with individuals who have faced unimaginable hardships has provided her with firsthand experience in navigating complex systems and advocating for policies and services that are responsive to the needs of vulnerable populations. This experience has not only refined her leadership abilities but has also fueled her passion for creating inclusive spaces where all voices, especially those of underrepresented groups, are heard and valued. She holds a bachelor's and master's degree in forensic psychology from John Jay College. In May 2025, she will have earned a master's degree in forensic Mental Health Counseling and an advanced certificate in Victimology from the New York State Department of Education. One of her favorite quotes that helps bring perspective during difficult times is: "Hardships often prepare ordinary people for an extraordinary destiny." ~ C. S. Lewis.

EMPOWERING UNDERREPRESENTED LEADERSHIP: BRIDGING THE GAPS IN PUBLIC SERVICE, POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS MODELED ON THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Underrepresented communities face unique challenges accessing workforce pathways. State governments can play a key role in addressing this issue. Challenges faced by immigrants, in particular, include a state's lack of infrastructure to assess international credentials, immigration status requirements, language barriers, and other issues. As the baby boomer generation ages, workforce shortages faced across this country present a unique moment for policymaking that can facilitate upward mobility for underrepresented communities in the private and public sectors. Implementing this model, immigrant advocates are collaborating with bipartisan state legislators to develop and implement policies that assess and remove barriers for new Americans, aiming to address the workforce crisis.

GENEVIEVE KESSLER BIO

Genevieve has been with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) since 2017 and currently serves as the Director of U.S. Advocacy. Genevieve has led the successful advance and passage of legislation that supports the integration of newly arrived individuals across 17 states. Prior to joining the IRC, Genevieve worked for two Members of Congress: John Hall, NY-19, from 2006-2011, and Sean Patrick Maloney, NY-18, (2013-2016). With creative leadership in resolving key issues impacting district constituents, Genevieve built strong relationships with state and local legislators. Genevieve earned an MPA from John Jay College of Criminal Justice- CUNY in 2015.

HOMELESS IN NY SOLUTIONS

According to the Coalition for the Homeless (2023), homelessness in New York City has significantly increased, resulting in what is now widely referred to as a Homelessness Crisis. Mayor Eric Adams has been tasked with addressing and mitigating this growing issue. Current data from the Coalition reports that 90,578 individuals are experiencing homelessness and residing in shelters. This includes 21,330 families, 32,689 children, 34,786 adults within families, 23,103 single adults—of whom 17,674 are men and 5,427 are women (*Coalition for the Homeless, 2023*).

As a policy analyst appointed to advise on strategies to confront this crisis, one must consider successful models from other states and municipalities. What evidence-based policies can be adapted and implemented in New York City to reduce homelessness and improve outcomes for affected populations?

Krystal P Charles'bio

I am a proud alumna of John Jay College, where I earned my bachelor's degree in International Criminal Justice in 2008. Following graduation, I embarked on a 12-year career with the New York City Department of Correction, serving in the ranks of Officer, Captain, and ultimately Assistant Deputy Warden from 2011 to 2023.

In 2020, I furthered my professional development by obtaining a Correction Management Certificate from John Jay. Most recently, I completed the Master of Public Administration program with a concentration in Management and Operations during the 2023–2024 academic year. I am currently exploring new career opportunities where I can apply my education and extensive leadership experience.

LEVERAGING YOUR VOICE: EMPOWERMENT THROUGH PUBLIC SPEAKING & EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Public speaking is a valuable and influential skill in providing underrepresented leaders with agency of voice and the quintessential invisibility cure. Since the 1960s, research has shown that the #1 fear of most professionals is speaking in front of a crowd (The Bruskin Report, 1973; Sterling et al., 1998; Pelias, 1989; Dwyer, 2012). This fear, known as glossophobia, impacts the upward mobility of professionals, especially those from historically marginalized groups (May & McDermott, 2017). Embracing the power and art of public speaking has the potential to propel employees into the leadership stratosphere. This presentation will provide an overview of the power of public speaking, including how to overcome speaking anxiety, best practices in language and non-verbal communication, and how this valuable professional skill can be leveraged by underrepresented leaders in the public service environment.

Jason Mazeski Bio

Dr. Jason Mazeski is in his 18th year with the NYPD. He has over a decade of experience in training and communication. In his current role, Jason provides workshops, coaching, and consulting in public speaking and communication to professionals in public service. Dr. Mazeski is an Adjunct Associate Professor at CUNY Citytech, where he teaches public speaking & effective communication. Dr. Mazeski has spoken at multiple professional and academic conferences, including as a keynote speaker at the 2023 World Police Summit in Dubai. He holds an Ed.D. in Adult Education & Leadership from Teachers College, Columbia University.

7:20 pm – 8:20 pm **Session II- Moderator: Dr. Nalini Singh – Co-founder of DIA**

- Denise Thompson
 - Topic: Transform Your Mind, Improve Your Service
- John Prince
 - Topic: The Why – Motivating Young Black and Brown Boys to Pursue Education for Success
- Michael Tajalle
 - Topic: Importance of Representation in Educational Settings
- Jennifer Cabrera
 - Topic: Bridging Leadership, Workforce & Digital Innovation
- Tameek Floyd, CEO
 - Topic: Resilience Through Incarceration

8:25 pm – 8:30 pm Closing Remarks

TRANSFORM YOUR MIND, IMPROVE YOUR SERVICE

As a presenter with over a decade of experience in college athletics diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), this session will explore strategies for fostering inclusive environments in public service sectors. Focusing on leadership in education, social agencies, and nonprofits, this presentation will bridge the gaps in DEI by sharing actionable insights from athletics. Attendees will learn how to implement inclusive practices, create diverse teams, and promote equitable opportunities. By integrating DEI principles into leadership frameworks, participants will leave with the tools necessary to cultivate inclusive, thriving environments in their respective organizations and communities.

DENISE THOMPSON BIO

Ms. Thompson is a top professional in communications and marketing with an external approach to DEIB and Title IX. Her experience stretches nationally, with stints at the University of Memphis, Texas State University, Manhattan University, and the Big Sky Conference. She was most recently named 2024 Crain's New York Notable Black Leader. I have been a college athletics administrator for over 18 years, leveraging my background to elevate and educate coaches, staff, and students on the importance of DEIB. Featured in several magazines and awarded the 2021 Presidents' Award by College Sports Communicators as Chair of the Racial & Social Justice Working Group. Education: Masters in Sport Management and a bachelor's in communications.

THE WHY – MOTIVATING YOUNG BLACK AND BROWN BOYS TO PURSUE EDUCATION FOR SUCCESS

Empowering young Black and Brown boys through education is crucial for fostering leadership and closing opportunity gaps in public service. This presentation, The Why, explores the role of mentorship, real-world connections to success, and recreational activities in motivating young Black and Brown boys to pursue education as a pathway to achievement. Through interactive discussions, personal stories, and engaging exercises, participants will gain strategies to inspire and support these young men in their academic and professional journeys. By equipping educators, mentors, and community leaders with practical tools, this session aims to bridge systemic gaps and cultivate a new generation of leaders committed to public service and social change. Join us in shaping a future where education catalyzes empowerment and success.

John Prince's Bio

John Prince is a dedicated educator, community leader, and youth advocate with over 15 years of experience in education, nonprofit leadership, and community development. Raised in Queens, New York, John's journey is one of resilience and transformation. After facing challenges early in life, he committed to creating opportunities for young people to break cycles of poverty and adversity.

In 2012, he founded Breaking the Cycle NYC, a leadership program for boys aged 12-17, dedicated to fostering academic success, leadership, and community engagement. His passion for youth development is further reflected in his work as a Community School Director, Director of Culture and Family Engagement at a charter school and in leadership roles with organizations such as Global Kids, LEAP NYC, and Tomorrow's Leaders NYC. His expertise spans staff leadership, program development, and curriculum design, all with a deep-rooted commitment to equity and justice.

John's influence extends beyond education; he is a sought-after motivational speaker and community activist, known for his work with organizations like Youth At Risk, Until Freedom, and 500 Men Making a Difference. His advocacy for justice and equality has made an impact in New York and across the nation.

Academically, John holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from CUNY School of Professional Studies and a master's in public administration from John Jay College of Criminal Justice. His commitment to lifelong learning fuels his mission to build thriving communities.

A devoted New York Knicks and Jets fan, John enjoys traveling and cooking in his leisure time. With his ambition and unwavering dedication, he continues to be a driving force for positive change.

IMPORTANCE OF REPRESENTATION IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

The Future reflected through the mirror of the Present. Representation in educational settings and leadership will change the future for minorities, regardless of how they may identify. Here is a riddle I tell my students every year:

“A father and his son are in a car accident. The father dies. The son is rushed to the ER. The attending surgeon looks at the boy and says, ‘I cannot operate on this boy. He’s my son!’ How can this be?”

I have heard all manner of answers: it is the stepfather, Godfather, he was adopted, he has two dads, it was his priest, and even more fantastical answers. The logical answer is sitting there in front of you; it is the **mother**. The idea that a woman can be a doctor eludes the average person. A study I read stated that 82% of Americans were unable to provide the correct answer. To the average American, Surgeon = Man and Nurse = Woman. Education has a similar bias.

If I asked most students to close their eyes and picture a teacher, the answer would be a white female, which is very accurate. Statistically, approximately 80% of teachers identify as White, and 77% identify as female. It is why I never considered being a teacher, because people like me were not teachers. I did not have a teacher of color until I came to John Jay as a freshman. Only 4% of NYCDOE teachers are Black Males. I identify as Black and Pacific Islander. Without seeing ourselves reflected in the classroom or, even more importantly, in the Administration, we will have a hard time changing the perception of what a teacher is, which makes changing the reality even more challenging.

Michael Tajalle Bio

Mr. Tajalle has been teaching since 2008 in various capacities. He began his teaching career at ESBOCES on Long Island as a substitute teacher working with special needs students in Gen ED and CTE courses. He then transitioned to a Private School for Children who had violated parole but were diverted from jail in 2010. In 2012, Mr. Tajalle was brought into the NYCDOE through the iTeach Select Recruits Program, where he teaches History, Economics, Government, Criminal Justice and Esports. He was also the school dean and has been the UFT Chapter Leader for the last 5 years. Education: CUNY John Jay College of Criminal Justice: MACJ in Criminal Law and Procedure (2015), BA in CRJ: Law and Due Process (2003). CUNY Queens College: Post Baccalaureate Studies SEYS 7-12 Social Studies (2008).

BRIDGING LEADERSHIP, WORKFORCE & DIGITAL INNOVATION

Since 2007, I have navigated the intersection of leadership in public agencies, workforce development, leadership transformation, and government administration, spanning these areas. Highlighted key strategies for navigating transitions, fostering inclusive employment pathways, and optimizing agency effectiveness:

- The role of public sector leadership in workforce development and economic mobility
- The power of public-private partnerships in advancing workforce equity
- Lessons in policy implementation and systemic workforce reform

Managing a Transition with over 10,000 Employees

In early 2024, I was appointed Interim Human Resources Director for Suffolk County Government during a critical 12-year political administration transition. My role was to ensure seamless workforce management across 28 agencies and sustain HR operations while advising on long-term strategic planning.

Strategic Actions Taken:

- Conducted HR and other initiative workforce talent analysis to align skills with needs.
- Developed a 5-7-year strategic HR roadmap, ensuring policy stability to be further implemented.
- Developed HR recommendations for executive leadership and county administrators.

Outcome & Impact:

- Preserved service continuity for employees amid political shifts.
- Strengthened long-term workforce planning, recruitment, and talent retention.
- Established best practices for HR modernization for Suffolk County.

Jennifer Cabrera Bio

A mission-driven thought leader with over 15 years of experience and a unique perspective of government, public, and private sector services, specializing in leading, managing, and implementing initiatives across the New York metropolitan region and other US states. Known for stepping in to create a vision through unique transitions, digital transformation, and adeptly uniting diverse stakeholders to drive employee and community innovation and impact. Regularly engaged at the executive level to lead capacity building, policy analysis, and support redesigning departments, organizations, and agencies. Thrive in dynamic, fast-paced environments where strategic planning, effective communication, and a growth mindset are essential to driving transformative change. Renowned for revitalizing teams and cultivating a positive culture that fosters collaboration, alignment, and impactful partnerships to empower and inspire others to accomplish outcomes. Jennifer earned her Bachelor of Arts in Criminology in 2014 and her Master of Public Policy and Administration, with a specialization in law and public management, and was inducted into Pi Alpha Honor Society, the global honor society for public affairs and administration, at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in 2017. Lastly but not least, Jennifer is a Co-Founder with Brendan Stanton of, New York Digital, a practice ready to assess your company's workforce, education and/or digital concerns and provide curated solutions.

RESILIENCE THROUGH INCARCERATION

Tameek Floyd's story is one of resilience, redemption, and transformation. He found a purpose in basketball, excelling in the sport despite the challenges surrounding him. After earning a scholarship to Dowling College, his dreams took a devastating turn when conflicts with his coach led to losing his scholarship. Less than a year later, he was arrested for burglary and sentenced to a decade in prison.

Rather than allowing incarceration to define him, Tameek used the experience to grow. He earned a BA and became a mentor to younger incarcerated individuals, determined to turn his life around. With unwavering support from childhood friend and NBA veteran Taj Gibson, he emerged from prison ready to make an impact. He became the Director of the Taj Gibson Foundation, leading initiatives such as community basketball court renovations, peace walks, and toy giveaways.

Tameek's entrepreneurial spirit flourished as he launched Three K3ys Inc., a sports and entertainment management company with a mentorship program for NYC public schools. He also earned a real estate license and co-founded GFB Development, focused on creating affordable housing and uplifting communities.

His vision is to redefine urban development by ensuring community input remains at the core.

Tameek's journey proves that setbacks do not define a person—resilience and purpose do. His story is an inspiration to those facing adversity, demonstrating that transformation is always possible, no matter the challenges.

I always knew that once I was released, I would focus on rewriting my script and changing my narrative. I'm proud that before my mother took her last breath, she was able to see my transformation and some of my goals come to fruition.

Tameek Floyd Bio

Tameek Floyd was born and raised in Ft. Greene, Brooklyn, grew up in NYCHA's development as the eldest of five in a single-parent household. A dedicated basketball player from age 11, he used the sport to stay out of trouble. In high school, after missing out on a basketball scholarship, his grades suffered. However, he rebounded, excelling on the varsity team and earning a scholarship to Dowling College. His journey took a drastic turn in junior year when conflicts with his coach led to losing his scholarship, followed by his arrest for burglary and a decade-long prison sentence. While incarcerated, he earned a BA and mentored younger incarcerated individuals. Upon release, he became Director of the Taj Gibson Foundation, spearheaded community initiatives, and co-founded Three K3ys Inc., a real estate development. His mission is to uplift communities through affordable housing and inclusive development.

DAY 2

Bridging Gaps in Public Services

April 11, 2025

6:00 pm – 7:30 pm

6:00 pm – 6:10 pm

Welcome Remarks

- Dr. Jason Rivera, Chair Public Management

6:10 pm – 6:15 pm

Hamid Ikram

- DIA Journal

Session 3:

Moderator: Dr. Hamid Ikram

6:15 pm - 6:30 pm Leah Forney

- Topic: Reimagining Leadership: Bridging the Divide Between Public Service and Sexual Violence Advocacy

6:30 pm - 6:45 pm Dr. Michelle Gantt

- Topic: Future Leaders Reflect on the Importance of Relationships in Correctional Environments

6:45 pm - 7:00 pm Sheying Chen

- Topic: Leading Social Agencies through “Society Work”: The Chinese Approach to Public Administration and Social Work in the Post-Economic State Era

7:00 pm -7:15 pm Matthew Rhoads Ed.D. & Richard Bernato Ed.D.

- Topic: Process and Future-Based Decision-Making Using Generative AI

7:15 pm - 7:30 pm Closing Remarks

REIMAGINING LEADERSHIP: BRIDGING THE DIVIDE BETWEEN PUBLIC SERVICE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE ADVOCACY

Leadership within public service has traditionally overlooked the unique perspectives and needs of sexual violence advocates and the communities they serve, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds. This session explores how culturally informed, trauma-sensitive leadership can bridge the systemic gaps that hinder collaboration and progress between public service institutions and sexual violence advocacy efforts.

Drawing on my experience as a sexual violence prevention consultant, advocate, and educator specializing in culturally informed care, this presentation will delve into strategies for advancing equity and inclusion in leadership roles. Attendees will gain insights into the intersectionality of public service and sexual violence advocacy, exploring how to dismantle barriers that disproportionately impact BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and underserved populations.

This session will provide actionable steps to foster meaningful partnerships between public service agencies and advocacy organizations. By integrating frameworks such as trauma-informed care and cultural sensitivity into leadership models, we can address systemic inequities, ensure survivor-centered approaches, and drive lasting changes in public service environments.

Attendees will leave with practical tools to implement inclusive leadership practices, engage with diverse communities, and advocate for equitable policies. This session is essential for public service leaders, policymakers, and advocates committed to creating transformative solutions that amplify the voices of underserved individuals and prioritize the empowerment of survivors.

Together, we can reimagine leadership to create a future where public service and sexual violence advocacy work in harmony to achieve justice and equity for all.

Leah Forney Bio

Leah M. Forney is the founder of SAAVE ME, a movement that empowers organizations to create safe and inclusive spaces, particularly for marginalized communities. A survivor of sexual assault, Leah has transformed her trauma into advocacy, leading national conversations with politicians, law enforcement, and attorney general offices for over a decade. She is a published author, international speaker, educator, and host of the syndicated podcast *Hey Queen, Thrive!* Her expertise has earned her features in ELLE, ABC7, The Huffington Post UK, and other notable publications. She is a trusted voice for organizations like RAINN and serves on George Mason University's advisory board on digital sexual health messaging for Black families. Leah's impact is reflected in numerous awards, including the Woman on the Rise and Phenomenal Leader awards. Through SAAVE ME and beyond, she inspires change and demonstrates that healing can lead to decisive leadership. Learn more at www.leahmforney.com.

FUTURE LEADERS REFLECT ON THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIPS IN CORRECTIONAL ENVIRONMENTS


"Future Leaders Reflect on the Importance of Relationships in Correctional Environments" highlights the critical role of relationships in correctional settings and their broader impact on community collaboration and leadership. The workshop fosters understanding among students in criminal justice, formerly incarcerated individuals, community leaders, and correctional staff. Uniting these diverse voices underscores the importance of relationships in creating a safe and productive correctional environment. This workshop addresses the gaps between leadership expectations and realities, reduces stigma, and fosters meaningful connections. Students, educators, and future leaders gain insights into relationship-building, personal growth, and the key factors for driving meaningful change in corrections.

Michelle Gantt Bio

Dr. Michelle Gantt is the CEO of Good Morning Parents (GMP), and co-author of *Raising Scholars from Infancy to Adulthood: Preparing Our Children for College and Demolishing Prison Walls*. She has 23 years of experience in the federal prison system, serving as a Correctional Officer and National Policy and Program Coordinator.

The GMP research team includes future leaders in criminal justice and psychology: Patrick Caringi, a psychology student at SUNY Potsdam; Myracle B. Sweatt, a criminal justice student at Virginia State University; Sophia Qiao, a psychology student at New York University; and Kelly Sugrue, a psychology student at Farmingdale State College.

These future leaders are committed to advocating, conducting research, and providing therapy for marginalized communities.



LEADING SOCIAL AGENCIES THROUGH "SOCIETY WORK": THE CHINESE APPROACH TO PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND SOCIAL WORK IN THE POST-ECONOMIC STATE ERA

The Chinese approach to governance and development has undergone profound transformations. This presentation examines the concept of "Society Work," a distinctive framework that combines social agency leadership with culturally rooted strategies within the context of China's evolving socio-economic priorities. A comparative-historical research framework is introduced to provide theoretical guidance, including a "general public policy" (GPP) vis-à-vis "sectoral policies" in the policy system, an "economic state" (vs. the welfare state) as a unique GPP pattern identified in the comparative study of Chinese public/social policy, and a "post-economic state" stage of development in the historical analysis of policy changes. The presenter will share firsthand experiences and observations as a pioneer in the reconstruction of professional social work in mainland China during the post-Mao "open door" and reform era. The advent of a post-economic state era, following a ten-year golden period of social work development, will be highlighted by the author as the founding Director of the Center for Social Work Study at Tsinghua University. The creation of CPC's Department of Society Work and its implications for continued professionalization are further examined through historical comparison and a reality check.

Sheying Chen Bio

Sheying Chen, Ph.D., MSW (UCLA), is Professor of Public Administration/Social & Health Policy at Pace University in NYC and founding Director for Social Work Study at Tsinghua University in China. He served as Assoc. Provost for Academic Affairs at Pace, Assoc. Vice Chancellor at Indiana University and Dean of Professional Studies at the University of Guam overseeing colleges/schools of Business & Public Administration; Education; Health Sciences, Nursing & Social Work. He held the tenure of Professor and Chair at CUNY-CSI, where he headed a large unit that housed psychology, sociology, anthropology, social work, disability studies, women's studies, aging, and several interdisciplinary initiatives. He studied at the University of Hong Kong (HKU) and was affiliated with Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou from 1984 to 1992, where he played a pioneering role in China's revitalized social work education and research.

MATTHEW RHOADS, ED.D., INNOVATOR, IT LEADER

RICHARD BERNATO, ED.D., INNOVATOR, AUTHOR

PROJECT CONVERGENCE: PROCESS AND FUTURE-BASED DECISION-MAKING USING GENERATIVE AI

This panel presentation highlights practical strategies for utilizing AI tools and future-thinking frameworks to make informed decisions in higher education. We will demonstrate how to transform real-world challenge scenarios, utilizing Large Language Models (LLMs) and in-depth research to develop meaningful simulations that help leaders envision and achieve their most preferred futures. During our interactive demo, you will see firsthand how AI can help leadership teams quickly make sense of a scenario, simulate its various possibilities with the provided data, and showcase a scaffolded framework for responding effectively to emerging issues and more preferred futures from the simulations that have occurred. Join us to learn how combining scenario planning with AI can lead to more innovative, more resilient choices for the future of education.

“Sometimes the Pawn is More Powerful than the Queen”

President Ann Blarney welcomed the Trustee members to the meeting and got right to the chase. “Our college has issues and challenges that confront all institutions of higher learning. These challenges are rooted in a combination of historical underinvestment, student demographics, systemic inequities, city/state funding volatility, and the disruptions caused by the pandemic era. While College X has made progress, these inherited and structural issues continue to shape our planning and strategic execution. We need to keep the mindset before us that is when you stop trying to get better you stop being good. Consequently, I have purposed Dr. Marty Smith to bring together a think tank of stakeholders to begin the process of introspection and direction.”

“Dr. Smith you have the floor.”

“Here are five themes that seem to be competing with each other for attention,” said Smith, the Vice President of XXXX College. “

“Before you offer them for our consideration,” interrupted the Trustee Board President, “please tell our colleagues how you chose these for us.”

“Sure,” he offered. “My staff used three major sources and one that may surprise you.

The first three were, hard quantitative historical data where we explored enrollment and graduation rates, post-graduation placements, annual expenditures like staff and maintenance etc. “

“Then we reviewed faculty and instructional hiring profiles like faculty earned degrees, research achievements and ratings by students.”

Dr. Levin, Faculty Union President interrupted. “Dr. Smith I hope that you also reviewed full time versus adjunct hiring trends and declining tenure statuses.”

Smith smiled. “Oh yes, and more. I’ll explain.”

He continued, “that brings me to the second source. As you all know, hard quantitative data has great value but is limited by the dimensions they typically profile.”

“And that is why the quantitative data can be superficially misleading,” offered Levin. Smith agreed. “For sure, as you know, that type of data typically tells the ‘what’ but not

the 'why'. And that is why we also extensively included focus groups, after," he emphasized, we drew tentative directions from the first data set. So, we used what we called a Exploratory – Explanatory methodology to get our arms around the multiple elephants in the room by indicating the issues that the quantitative analysis seemed to suggest. Now we asked for extensive small group discussions and interchange to distill the themes that seem to be operating."

"And those were?," an impatient Trustee, Noel Tusk asked, "can we cut to the chase?"

The president reacted. "All well and good, Dr. Tusk, you know that no organization is ever as simple as trend data and statistical mumbo jumbo without further introspection. Remember Mark Twain, 'Lies, damn lies, and statistics.' Please go on Dr. Smith."

"Yes, we had a good profile coming together but we also knew there are other sources that had to be put into the test tube for distillation. One, was document content analysis of board and legislative minutes that pertained to our university historically, as well currently. These were combined with newspaper and television coverage.

"And we also included another source that may surprise you. That would be social media."

"Seriously?," asked Mark Rubenstein, trustee, and well-known city philanthropist. "You scanned social media for our school's inclusion in comments and opinions?"

"We did. Granted, we acknowledge how specific items can indeed be skewed unfairly. However, their SUM, when considered together, can be indicative of real-time presence of climate and culture perceptions. This process was arduous when we sought to use social media platforms to isolate XXX College's perceptions online. Then we needed to filter these for the postings' actual intents. You might call that the 'messages behind the music.' "

Frances Fences, a trustees' member whose company is acknowledged worldwide for its technological innovations asked, "I, we, are certainly interested in how you pulled and distilled all of these data sources. Impressed too. I'd be more impressed though if you said that you used a sophisticated Artificial Intelligence engine to gather and offer broad at minimum, organizational diagnosis of what you are going to offer."

"Actually, we did, Dr. Frances," smiled Smith. After compilation we downloaded the data to XXX AI engine. We wanted to see what the AI might recognize that we may have missed in our conventional analyses."

"In the end we see five themes that need a comprehensive strategic and futures-based set that seem to be separate yes, but that all twist and turn and intertwine with each other.

They are:

- Graduation Rate Concerns,
- Faculty Expansion Decisions,
- Reducing or Eliminating Equity Gaps in Student Outcomes,
- Financial Resources Challenges, and
- Haphazard and Inefficient Implementation of Technology Infrastructure and its Integration.

1. **Graduation Rate Challenges**

Provost Dr. Silver addressed the matters associated with concerns about the college's graduation rates. He emphasized that XXX College's mission was devoted to serving the needs of non-traditional, often first-generation and economically disadvantaged students. He pointed out though that despite some intervention program efforts, graduation rates were sinking, still victim to structural challenges like high student to faculty advisor ratios that blunt intervention efforts. Societal and economic factors are also variables that were not considered in planning that included the pandemic fall out have only worsened the conditions.

2. **Faculty Expansion**

As explained by the College's Personnel Supervisor, XXX College is not a private institution and at the mercy of governmental policy whims and competition for critical resources, it has historically needed to keep a tight rein on expenditures. The CFO offered tactics that it has used to pay operating costs certainly over and above supporting new initiatives and reforms. One such tactic it has used has become full time faculty hiring freezes. This has had both academic and personnel impact where, as many other colleges have also been doing, is to hire adjuncts to take up instructional load. Another impact has been that the competition to do new hires among diverse populations, has been hampered. Having a more diverse faculty might contribute to meeting the needs of the increasing proportion of diverse students.

3. **Equity Gaps in Student Outcomes**

With this related issue, as offered by Student Admissions Officers, is a widening achievement and completion gap among diverse populations who attend xxx College. These students, in tandem with attendant economic hardships they often face, do benefit from intervention programs the college has managed to shoehorn into its programs. These however fall short in reaching the needs of many students for language barrier reasons, the economic issues as noted, and their cultural requirements as well. Efforts to continue to offer online instruction wrought, by the ravages of the pandemic are often problematic since many lack the technology and home environments to thrive.

4. **Financial Resilience**

The College's CFO officer identified the broad financial challenges that are intertwined with its broader structural reliance on state and city appropriations, which have fluctuated significantly since the Great Recession. Despite efforts to diversify revenue streams (philanthropy, research grants, and external partnerships), the college has consistently faced tight margins. Grant acquisition has historically lagged behind aspirational targets due to limited internal research infrastructure and high faculty teaching loads. A 2020-2025 strategic plan raised the external funding target significantly (\$36 million annually), but pandemic-related economic disruptions, foundation giving constraints, and limited pre-existing capacity hampered growth.

5. **Technological Integration and Infrastructure**

College XXX's technology infrastructure has faced challenges since the late 2000s due to underinvestment and legacy systems. While the pandemic accelerated digital transformation (rapid expansion of hybrid and online learning, Zoom, Blackboard), it also exposed gaps in student access (digital divide), faculty readiness, and cybersecurity capacity. Post-pandemic, the need to balance in-person, hybrid, and online learning modalities, while integrating new tools like AI and learning analytics, has strained limited IT and instructional design resources. A comprehensive technology upgrade has been difficult to implement due to fiscal limitations and competing priorities.

Smith thanked the trustees for their attention and looked to President Blarney who in turn thanked her for their hard work and called for a much-needed coffee break.

The trustees and college administrators all reached for coffee and donuts after Smith's presentation. That they felt they needed it was captured by Dr. Lawrence Ludd, resident skeptic of technological applications when they'd reconvened, "Even I might be impressed by what you've circled to Smith. If I can refine, what you captured, likely offers the complex, collective, symptoms of our university's ailments?"

Smith nodded. "Absolutely agree."

Ludd continued, "However, we can use warm blankets around cold feet, sure, but we also need to scrape down to the root causes that cause what froze the feet in the first place."

"And that's not a cause as in singular Dr. Ludd, I'd expand that word to plural," said Union President Levin.

“Let me use another metaphor,” President Blarney volunteered. I’d typify this discussion as more nearly a chess match rather than a linear set of siloed tasks. When you strategize your chess moves, you need to consider the pieces *as whole* to capture the opponent’s king. In this case don’t you think that the ‘other side’s’ king is not the enemy but certainly is a Rubik’s cube of variables whose overall solution needs masterful, strategic, aligned, futures-based planning?”

“Sometimes the pawn is More powerful than the queen.”

Everyone agreed. President Blarney turned to Smith, “We have much to process out of what you and your colleagues have offered. Thank you. If nothing else, you have presented an array of issues that all demand solution since it’s clear they are interdependent. I will present a plan for use to isolate and **then** integrate the issues before us.”

“Dr. Blarney, if I may, a concern?” asked Dr. Ludd. Blarney nodded and Ludd proceeded. “I confess that I am mildly impressed by how this group has presented too and even more so that their AI usage seemed to be helpful.”

“I think we all are.” Said, Rubestein. “A caution though has to be put on the table, AI’s role in the analysis was very helpful. However, we need to emphasize that in the end it will be this Board of Trustees that will use **it** to inform **our** analysis. The decisions and ultimate planning tasks rest with us, not a conglomeration of algorithms.”

“Without a doubt, and in every step along the way Mr. Rubestein,” answered Smith. “Totally agree. In fact, we can use and demonstrate other capacities of what AI can do to assist you in your ultimate choices. Yet know, that all of these processes are at your disposal, not the other way around”

“More nearly the pawn instead of the queen,” concluded the President. “Let’s begin to consider how we coordinate this convergence.”

Matt Rhoads, Ed.D. Bio

Matthew Rhoads, Ed.D. is an expert and innovator in educational technology and instructional strategy integration within online, blended, and traditional in-person classroom settings. As a practicing technology and instructional leader, trainer, integrationist, and coach in Adult Education, K-12, and Higher Education, he develops EdTech tool instructional integrations with research-based instructional strategies to drive instruction. He is a coach and professional learning specialist for new and experienced teachers within the consortium and at a local university. Dr. Rhoads is also a doctoral dissertation chair who coaches doctoral students to conduct their research, write, and defend their dissertations. Dr. Rhoads publications focus on integrating instructional strategies with EdTech tools to amplify student learning within in-person, online, and blended learning classrooms. His latest books include, *Crush it from the Start: 25 Tips for Instructional Coaches and Leaders*, *Co-Teaching Evolved: Partnership Strategies for an Equitable and Tech Powered Classroom*, *Crush it from the Start: 50 Tips for New Teachers*, *Instruction Without Boundaries: Enhance Your Teaching Strategies with Technology Tools in Any Setting*, *Amplify Learning: A Global Collaborative Series*, and *Navigating the Toggled Term: A Guide for K-12 Classroom and School Leaders*. He also has his podcast, *Navigating Education - The Podcast*, which discusses all topics related to education, leadership, and instruction. For more information on Dr. Rhoads and his work, visit his website at www.matthewrhoads.com.

Richard Bernato, Ed.D. Bio

Currently serving as an adjunct professor specializing in educational leadership within doctoral and professional certificate programs, Richard Bernato, EdD, wears multiple hats as an education expert, author, podcaster, and blogger. With 55 years of experience in the field of education, his journey encompasses higher education, extensive research, numerous leadership positions in K–12 settings, and consultancy work alongside presentations for various school districts. Additionally, Dr. Bernato serves as the editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Leadership and Instruction*, a peer-reviewed publication under SCOPE.

“The play is the thing, the simulation’s the thing,” captures Rich Bernato’s commitment to creative, future-based, experiential strategies that empower school leaders to reinvent their leadership practices in response to the emerging futures we face. Author and co-author of six books of articles and a consultant with extensive experience in many leadership positions, editorial roles, and higher education, his career has been characterized by a focus on practical and engaging practices. His latest book, published by Solution Tree, is *Co-Creating the Future, a Simulation to Catalyze School Change*, which synthesizes his proven strategies for educators who strive to be ready for their future challenges.

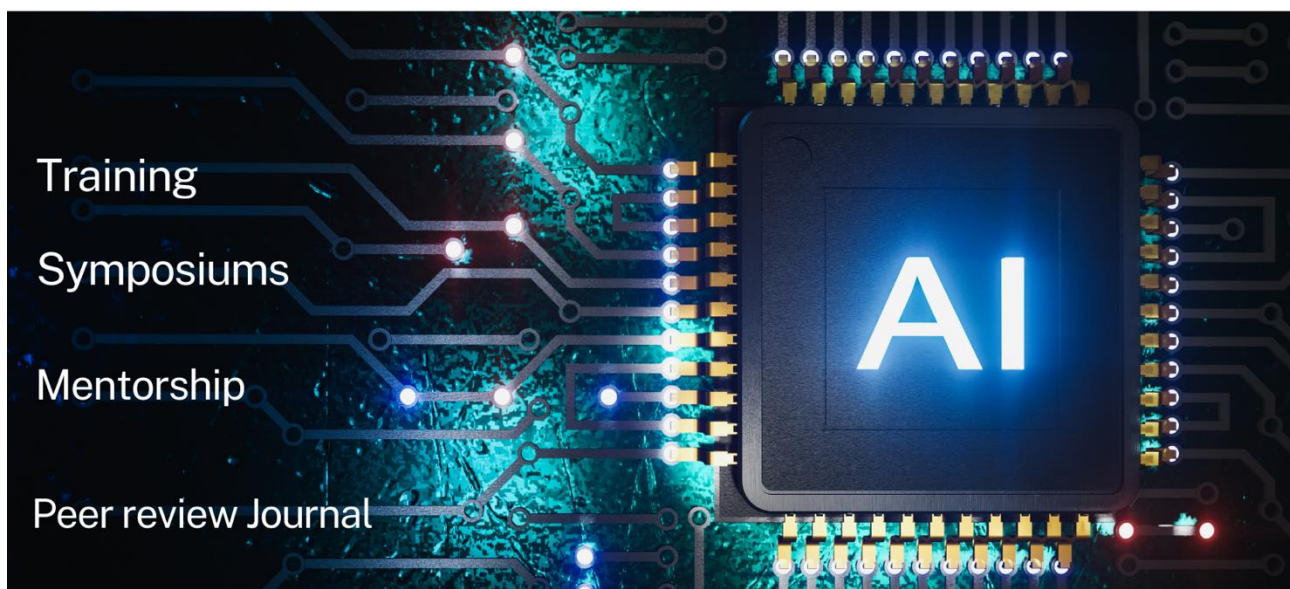
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