



WONDER WHEMN

EMBRACE YOUR CROWN
LEAD WITH PURPOSE



WHEMN CONFERENCE 2025

February 27-28, 2025

Oxford, Mississippi

Hosted by the University of Mississippi



WHEMN MISSION

The mission of the Women in Higher Education – Mississippi Network (WHEMN) is to identify, develop, advance, and support women in higher education in Mississippi. The goals of the organization are to: (1) Promote and support women’s leadership in higher education, particularly in Mississippi. (2) Facilitate networking of women leaders in higher education with each other and with organizations and networks that have shared goals. (3) Develop collaborative partnerships with other institutions, organizations, associations, foundations, and businesses to help achieve the mission of WHEMN. (4) Enhance the visibility of women administrators on Mississippi campuses. (5) Assist in career development of professional women and women students in higher education, with particular emphasis on minority women. (6) Identify potential women leaders and provide mentoring. (7) Recognize achievement of women administrators through appropriate awards.

PRESIDENTS’ ADVISORY COUNCIL

Dr. Mary S. Graham

President, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College

Dr. Barbara C. McMillin

President, Blue Mountain College

Nora R. Miller

President, Mississippi University For Women

WHEMN CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Hilarie Bain, Marketing and Communications

Ashley Baker, Special Events

Virginia Chavis, Office of the Provost

Emily Ferris, Co-Chair, Division of Outreach

Jenn Fos, Student Affairs

Jessica Hughes, Human Resources

Jessica Lynch, Alumni Affairs

Shawnboda Mead, Co-Chair, Access, Opportunity & Community Engagement

Adrienne McDill, Enrollment Management

Charlotte Parks, Development

Rebecca Phillips, Co-Chair, Special Events

Shannon Richardson, William Magee Center

Jennifer Saxon, Athletics

Jennifer Simmons, Office of the Provost

Lisa Stone, Co-Chair, Marketing and Communications

GREETINGS

FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

Hotty Toddy from the University of Mississippi! We're thrilled you have joined us in Oxford for the 2025 WHEMN Conference. Year after year, this event provides amazing professional development and networking opportunities and adds to the decades-long proven track record of WHEMN (pronounced "women") to identify, develop, advance and support women across all areas of higher education.

It is humbling to reflect on the ongoing and growing impact of WHEMN which began with an inaugural conference more than two decades ago with 57 participants. Fast forward to this year's conference, and we are astounded by the enthusiastic response of the 500 registrants from higher education institutions across Mississippi. An important feature of the organization and annual conference is that the event and resources of WHEMN are available and beneficial to all higher education professionals.

The 2025 conference theme, "Wonder WHEMN: Embrace Your Crown, Lead with Purpose" celebrates the many crowns we wear as leaders, mentors, educators, administrators, advocates, champions, and so much more. The theme also reflects the deep sense of purpose of the vital roles we all play in advancing opportunities through higher education for the betterment of our students, our state, and our future.

This year's conference includes a range of dynamic speakers, engaging sessions, and panel discussions. It also features a new structure with two separate tracks to more directly meet the needs of the wide range of our attendees. There is sure to be something for everyone with one track on "Empowered Leadership in Higher Education" and one track on "Innovative Change-Makers." At the end of the conference, it is our hope that you discover a meaningful professional development experience and engage in encouraging, uplifting networking opportunities.

We'd like to share a special shout out to the more than 50 dedicated staff from across the Ole Miss campus who volunteered to serve as WHEMN Ambassadors. They are playing a key role in making sure everyone experiences the full hospitality of our university and can get the support and answers they need during the conference.

It is truly remarkable to see the widespread support and enthusiasm for this organization, the conference, and the deep connections that are forged each year. We're so glad you joined us for the 2025 WHEMN Conference!

Best,

2025 WHEMN Conference Planning Committee

SCHEDULE

NOTE: Track One and Track Two occur in different locations

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2025

The Gertrude C. Ford Center for the Performing Arts

8:00 a.m. Registration and Breakfast Refreshments

9:00 a.m. Welcome

9:15 a.m. Keynote Address

Dr. LeMia Jenkins

10:00 a.m. Break

Networking Break, Door Prizes and Announcements

10:15 a.m. Morning Motivation

Erin and Ben Napier

11:00 a.m. Break

Networking Break, Door Prizes and Announcements

TRACK ONE

Empowered Leadership in Higher Education (*Inn at Ole Miss*)

11:30 a.m. Networking Luncheon

Leading with Purpose Table Discussion

12:45 p.m. Panel Session

Navigating Workplace Politics with Confidence

1:45 p.m. Workshop

Using Data and Analytics to Drive Decision-Making

2:45 p.m. Break

Networking Break, Door Prizes, Snacks and Announcements

3:15 p.m. Panel Session

Leadership, Mentorship, and Sponsorship

4:15 p.m. Break

Door Prizes and Announcements

TRACK TWO

Innovative Change-Makers (*Student Union Ballroom*)

11:30 a.m. Networking Luncheon

Leading with Purpose Table Discussion

12:45 p.m. Panel Session

Strategies for Career Advancement in Higher Education

1:45 p.m. Workshop

Mastering Productivity: Time Management and Administrative Tools for Success

SCHEDULE

2:45 p.m. **Break**
Networking Break, Door Prizes, Snacks and Announcements

3:15 p.m. **Workshop**
Leveraging AI and Technology for Education and Transformation

4:15 p.m. **Break**
Door Prizes and Announcements

SEPARATE TRACKS CONCLUDE

4:30-6:30 p.m. **Free Time**
Travel to hotel to get ready for the game and/or discover the sights and sounds of Oxford

7:00 p.m. **Pre-game Reception**
All American Club, SJB Pavilion

8:00 p.m. **Women's Basketball Game**
Ole Miss vs. South Carolina, SJB Pavilion

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2025

The Sandy and John Black Pavilion at Ole Miss, Pavilion Club

7:30 a.m. **Registration and Breakfast**

8:15 a.m. **Welcome**

8:30 a.m. **Workshop**
Smart Brevity: Communicating with Impact

9:15 a.m. **Keynote Address**
Dr. Patrice Buckner Jackson (Dr. PBJ)

10:15 a.m. **Break**
Networking Break, Door Prizes and Announcements

10:30 a.m. **Panel Session**
Finding Harmony: Is Achieving Work-Life Balance Possible?

11:30 a.m. **Closing**
Remarks by Provost Noel Wilkin and Awards Presentation

Noon **Adjourn**
Grab-and-Go Lunches Available

SPEAKERS

KEYNOTES

Dr. LeMia Jenkins

strategic public affairs and communications executive

Feb. 27, 9:15 a.m. — Opening Keynote Address

Dr. LeMia Jenkins is a strategic public affairs and communications executive who serves as President of Brownkey Consulting Group which works with companies across the globe specializing in public affairs, strategic communications, marketing, business development, and strategy. Previously, Jenkins served as the first-ever Chief Public Affairs & Sustainability Officer and Chief Communications Officer at Pinterest.

Prior to Pinterest, Jenkins was the Director of Global Communications and Media Relations for Walmart and the Director of External Affairs for Caesars Entertainment. Earlier in her career, she served as Communications Director for the Hillary for America campaign and as the first Director of Federal Relations for Jackson State University, following her work as a senior communications and policy strategist for several Members of Congress.

As an influential expert and leader, Jenkins has received a number of awards and recognitions across the industry for her work. In 2021, PR Week recognized her as one of the industry's "In-House Elites" and one of the year's "Women to Watch" honorees. She was also a featured speaker at Fortune's Most Powerful Women Summit and named one of Essence's 8 Black Women to Watch in Corporate America.

Jenkins holds a Bachelor of Arts in Public Relations from Tougaloo College and earned a Master of Public Health (Marketing and Health Communications) from The George Washington University. She has studied Healthcare at the Hebrew University in Israel and has a Doctorate in Education from the University of Mississippi.



Erin and Ben Napier

stars of HGTV's Home Town and owners of Laurel Mercantile Co.

Feb. 27, 10:15 a.m. — Morning Motivation

Erin and Ben Napier are the hosts of HGTV's Home Town, Home Town Takeover, and Home Town Kickstart. They are also successful business owners, authors, and active members of their community in their hometown of Laurel, Mississippi.

Erin is an artist, designer, entrepreneur, and New York Times bestselling author. She graduated from the University of Mississippi and started her career in corporate graphic design before founding her own international stationery company, Lucky Luxe. She is also a founding co-owner of Laurel Mercantile Co. and Scotsman Co.

Ben is a woodworker, author, entrepreneur, founder of Scotsman Co., and co-owner of Laurel Mercantile Co. He is a past president of Laurel's Main Street America chapter dedicated to promoting the rebirth of their historic downtown district.

In 2023, Erin and Ben founded the non-profit Osprey—a family initiative for parents choosing to delay social media and smart device use in childhood. Their passion is for small-town revitalization, American craftsmanship, and fostering low-tech childhoods for communities across the globe.



SPEAKERS

Dr. Patrice Buckner Jackson,

author and Founder and Executive Trainer, EduCare Training and Consulting, LLC

Feb. 28, 9:15 a.m. – Closing Keynote Address

Dr. Patrice Buckner Jackson, known in her community as Dr. PBJ, gives educators the strategies for accomplishing purposeful work without burnout. Dr. PBJ is an educator of almost 25 years and an Executive Coach for more than 10 years. She holds a doctoral degree in Education Administration, served in executive leadership at colleges and universities, and facilitated leadership training as a faculty member for the Center for Creative Leadership. Dr. Jackson worked in higher education at many levels, from student assistant to President's Cabinet and is the recipient of several professional awards and accolades.

Dr. Jackson founded EduCare Training and Consulting, LLC through a purpose of pouring into those who pour out so much. Much of her work is specifically focused on equipping and refreshing educators. Compassionate work can carry a high price tag: your mind, body, spirit and relationships may be in distress as you serve the needs of others. Dr. Jackson leads her community to serve well without paying an ultimate price.

Dr. PBJ is the creator and host of the Disrupting Burnout podcast as well as the author of the Amazon best-seller, *Disrupting Burnout: The professional woman's LIFELINE to finding purpose.*



PANELS & WORKSHOPS

FEB. 27, 12:45 P.M., TRACK 1: PANEL DISCUSSION: NAVIGATING WORKPLACE POLITICS WITH CONFIDENCE

Andrea Jekabsons, *Deputy Chief Human Resources Officer, The University of Mississippi – Moderator*

Andrea serves as UM's Deputy Chief Human Resources Officer, Encompass Co-Chair, and Project Director for the University's Workday HCM implementation. She is passionate about employee engagement, connection, and commitment, as these impact the organizations success as well as student attraction and student retention. Prior to joining Ole Miss in 2006, Andrea worked in a variety of industries, including healthcare, wireless, and technology. She is a worksite wellness advocate and recreation enthusiast that enjoys long walks with her dog, exercise programs, camping, and traveling. A California native and a Humboldt State University graduate, Andrea relocated to Oxford in 2005 with her husband who is a UM faculty member and their two children.



Dr. Loretta Jackson-Williams, *Vice Dean for Medical Education, School of Medicine, University of Mississippi Medical Center*

Dr. Loretta Jackson-Williams currently serves as the Vice Dean for Medical Education at the University of Mississippi School of Medicine. She grew up in Indianola, MS where she attended the public schools. In 1987 she completed her undergraduate studies at Tougaloo College with a degree in chemistry.

In 1994, she completed her studies at Boston University School of Medicine in Boston, Massachusetts with a doctorate in biochemistry and a medical degree.



SPEAKERS

From Boston, she moved to California to complete residency in Emergency Medicine at Highland Hospital in the Alameda County Medical Center of Oakland, CA. After completing a year at Highland Hospital as an attending physician, she and her young family returned to their home state of Mississippi.

Currently, she is responsible for the daily operations of the School of Medicine while providing leadership and representation for the school as needed by the dean. She is committed to delivering an exceptional educational program to produce competent, capable and compassionate physicians for the state of Mississippi and beyond.

Dr. April Stampley, *Vice President for External Affairs, Academic Affairs, Rust College*

Dr. April A. Stampley, Vice President for External Affairs, Rust College, has 15 years of experience in higher education. Prior to Rust College, Dr. Stampley served as Coordinator of Academic Initiatives and K-12 Partnerships and Instructor in the Division of Academic Affairs at Alcorn State University. As the Coordinator of Academic Initiatives and K-12 Partnerships, Dr. Stampley provided leadership and coordination for Dual Enrollment/Dual Credit, Community College Transfer Articulation, C2C Program, management of outreach/engagement programs and provided support of all educational partnerships.

As an Instructor, Dr. Stampley is experienced in teaching undergraduate courses, which included freshman seminar courses-University Life and Survival Skills. During Dr. Stampley's instruction in these courses, she prepared freshmen and sophomore students for college life inside the classroom and beyond.

Dr. Stampley earned a bachelor's degree from Alcorn State University, a master's degree from Belhaven University -Leadership, and a doctorate degree from the University of Southern Mississippi -Higher Education Administration. Dr. Stampley's academic specialty is in the interface of higher education administration, accreditation, external affairs, leadership development, institutional research, educational policy, and strategic planning.

Dr. Stampley holds membership in various professional and civic engagement organizations, and she is extremely active in numerous Chamber organizations in North, MS.



Laura Hill, *Associate General Counsel, The University of Mississippi*

Laura Hill serves as the University of Mississippi's Associate General Counsel. In this role, Hill focuses her attention on providing legal support to the University's research mission, as well as its privacy, IT security, and compliance areas.

Prior to joining the University of Mississippi in 2019, Hill spent 10 years as Associate General Counsel for the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson, MS. In that role, her practice included providing regulatory and compliance guidance in healthcare, research, academic affairs, and business law matters.

Hill is a graduate of Mississippi College School of Law. She holds a Bachelors of Arts in International Political Science with minors in French and History. She and her husband, Blair, and stepdaughter Chloe reside in Tupelo where they enjoy loving on their four dogs, hosting dinner parties with friends, and traveling as often as possible.



SPEAKERS

Dr. Leia Agnew Hill, *Vice President of Institutional Advancement and Executive Director of the MCC Foundation, Meridian Community College*

Dr. Leia Agnew Hill is the Vice President for Institutional Advancement at Meridian Community College, where she also serves as the Executive Director of the MCC Foundation. With over 25 years of experience in fundraising, marketing, and branding, she holds a B.A. in Communication from Mississippi University for Women, a graduate certificate in Social Media Marketing from the University of Florida, an M.A. in Educational Leadership from the University of Mississippi, and an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from the University of Southern Mississippi. Dr. Hill has led several award-winning initiatives in corporate branding and social media marketing.

Her leadership journey includes participation in a variety of prestigious programs, such as Leadership Lauderdale, the State Executive Development Institute, the Mississippi Community College Leadership Academy, the Mississippi Alliance of Nonprofits and Philanthropy Executive Leadership Program, the Mississippi Community College Policy Fellowship Program, and the National Council for Marketing and Public Relations (NCMPR) Leadership Institute. She has served on boards for the United Way of East Mississippi and the Boys and Girls Club of East Mississippi and currently contributes to the boards of the Women's Alliance of Meridian, the Executive Council for NCMPR, Great Southern National Bank, and the Lauderdale County Tourism Commission.

In recognition of her exceptional contributions, Dr. Hill has been honored as one of Mississippi's 50 Leading Businesswomen by the Mississippi Business Journal, NCMPR's Communicator of the Year (D2), and received the Women in Higher Education Mississippi Network Leadership Award in 2024. Additionally, she has been awarded both the William F. Scaggs Highest Flying Eagle Award and the John A. Johnson Outstanding Staff Member Award from Meridian Community College.



FEB. 27, 12:45 P.M., TRACK 2 — PANEL DISCUSSION: STRATEGIES FOR CAREER ADVANCEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Dr. Tonyalle Rush, *Vice President For Student And Enrollment Management, Northwest Community College — Moderator*

Dr. Tonyalle Rush is the Associate Vice President for Student Services and Enrollment Management at Northwest Mississippi Community College. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies with emphases in Biology, Counselor Education, and Computer Technology and a Master of Science in Counselor Education with an emphasis in Student Affairs in Higher Education from Mississippi State University. She completed her Graduate Certificate in Psychology from Western New Mexico University. She earned a Doctor of Education in Higher Education from The University of Mississippi.

Dr. Rush is currently the Immediate Past President of the Mississippi Community College Student Affairs Association, the Mississippi State Director for the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), and a member of the Southern Association for College Student Affairs (SACSA). She is a 2017 Mississippi Community College Leadership Academy (MCCLA) graduate. She is a 2023 graduate of Leadership DeSoto. She is currently in the Community College Policy Fellows Program (CPFP).

Her mission in life is primarily focused on helping students achieve their maximum potential. She loves to volunteer, read, travel, and enjoy life in her spare time!



SPEAKERS

Dr. Natalie W. Gaughf, *Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, University of Mississippi Medical Center*

Dr. Natalie W. Gaughf is the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC), where she supports the academic mission across UMMC's health profession schools. Since joining UMMC in 2002, she has held numerous faculty and leadership roles, including positions in the Schools of Dentistry, Medicine, and Population Health.

A licensed psychologist, Dr. Gaughf earned her PhD in counseling psychology from the University of Southern Mississippi, with advanced training through a clinical psychology residency and health psychology postdoctoral fellowship. She has been recognized for her contributions to the field of psychology through education and advocacy. Currently, she oversees the development of the UMMC Honors College and the UMMC Museum of Medical History. Her work embodies a deep commitment to advancing academic integrity and innovation in higher education.



Dr. Christy Riddle, *Chief Marketing Officer, Delta State University*

Dr. Christy Riddle serves as the Executive Director of Delta State University Student Success Center. In this role, she provides leadership to five divisions: Academic Advising Services, Academic Support Services, First Year Seminar, International Student Services, and Okra Scholars, a First in the World project supported by a major grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education. Dr. Riddle has 19 years of experience in higher education and earned a Ph.D. in Human Capital Development from the University of Southern Mississippi.



Tanya Kelly-Kirk, *Associate Vice President for Physical Plant Director & Special Projects, Rust College*

Tanya Kelly Kirk holds a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from Rust, a Master's in Higher Education from Southern New Hampshire University, and is currently pursuing an EdD from University of Southern Mississippi showcasing her continuous commitment to professional development in academia.

As the Associate Vice President Physical Plant and Special Projects at Rust College, she coordinates campus maintenance and renovation programs, supervises staff, and manages fiscal budgets to ensure the college's facilities are in optimal condition for student engagement and special projects as assigned by the President. Kelly-Kirk has served in various leadership roles at Rust College, including Associate Dean of Students for Housing and Judicial Affairs, where she focused on student life, leadership development, and risk management while fostering a safe and inclusive campus environment.

An active member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, she has held several key positions, including Graduate Advisor, Membership Chairman, and Steering Committee member for the 90th Southeastern Regional Conference.



SPEAKERS

Bethany Mills, *Executive Director of the Career Center, Mississippi State University*

Bethany Mills, Executive Director of the MSU Career Center, is a proud alumna of Mississippi State University and a Mississippi native. She completed a bachelor's degree in secondary education/chemistry in 2006 and a master's in counselor education/community counseling in 2009.

After 12 years of working at the University of Georgia's Career Center, Bethany joined the MSU Career Center team in December 2021 to help make a difference in students' career success after college. In the last three years, she has grown the Career Center team from 16 staff members to 19 staff members and restructured the office. She has also helped to increase employer engagement to hire our students through career fairs and events and built partnerships across campus to address new opportunities for students to achieve career success.



Jess Turuc, *Director of Fraternity and Sorority Life, The University of Mississippi*

Jess Turuc has worked as a fraternity and sorority professional on four college campuses over the last 15 years and currently serves as the Director of Fraternity and Sorority Life at the University of Mississippi. In this role, she oversees a community of just over 10,000 fraternity and sorority members.

She earned a Bachelor of Arts from Michigan Technological University and a Master's degree in Higher Education Administration from Georgia Southern University. Turuc serves as the co-chair of the NASPA FSL KC and chair of the FSL specialty for the Higher Education Consortium Certification program. She enjoys serving in volunteer roles to elevate the fraternity and sorority experience across the nation, collecting Delta SkyMiles, watching reality television as well as Golden Girl re-runs and cheering on various sports teams, especially the Rebels!



FEB. 27, 1:45 P.M., TRACK 1 — WORKSHOP: USING DATA AND ANALYTICS TO DRIVE DECISION-MAKING

Dr. Almesha Campbell, *Vice President for Research and Economic Development, Jackson State University — Moderator*

Almesha L. Campbell, Ph.D., RTTP, is the Vice President for Research and Economic Development at Jackson State University, where she oversees Grants and Contracts, Sponsored Programs, Research Compliance, Technology Transfer, Federal Relations, and JSU Global.

She has secured over \$12 million in federal grants, serving as PI or Co-PI for programs like the NSF Mid-South I-Corps Hub and the NIH REACH Hub. Dr. Campbell co-led the development of the JSU Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship and created the JSU Innovation Fellows Program, integrating cutting-edge technologies like virtual reality into STEM education. Dr. Campbell holds degrees from the University of Central Florida and Jackson State University.



SPEAKERS

Susan Seal, *Dean of the College of Professional and Continuing Studies, Mississippi State University*

Dr. Seal is the inaugural Dean of the College of Professional and Continuing Studies at Mississippi State University. She was previously the Executive Director for Mississippi State Online which is now housed within the College. She has over 28 years of experience in various leadership roles including VP and General Manager of a private industry organization and Director of Outreach for an international non-profit organization as well as many roles within higher education.

Dr. Seal is currently the Co-Chair of the Council of Chief Online Learning Officers for the national professional organization, UPCEA, and the Chair of its Southern Region. Additionally, she is president-elect of the Starkville Rotary Club, one of the largest in the state.



Dr. Mary Graham, *President, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College*

Dr. Mary S. Graham became president of Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College in 2010. A Mississippi native, she holds a Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration and both her master's and bachelor's Degrees from The University of Southern Mississippi. Under her leadership, MGCCC has received numerous accolades, including being named a Top 100 associate degree Producer by Community College Week, a STEM Jobs Approved School, a Military Friendly School, a Military Friendly Spouse School, a Fit Friendly Workplace, an ACT College and Career Readiness Exemplar, an American Culinary Federation accredited culinary school as well as a Top Ranked Nursing School by RegisteredNursing.org.

Graham served on the board of directors of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). She is a member of the Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) Presidential Advisory Board. Graham served on The Commission to Redesign the Mississippi State Flag. Graham also serves on the following: member of the Mississippi Power Association Board of Directors, and on the Mississippi Humanities Board of Directors.



FEB. 27, 1:45 P.M., TRACK 2 – WORKSHOP, MASTERING PRODUCTIVITY: TIME MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE TOOLS FOR SUCCESS

Dr. Mary Jane Collins, *Nurse Anesthesia Assistant Program Coordinator, University of Southern Mississippi – Facilitator*

Mary Jane Collins is the Co-Director of the School of Leadership and Advanced Nursing Practice, Nurse Anesthesia Program Coordinator, and Associate Professor at The University of Southern Mississippi. She earned her Doctor of Health Administration from the University of Mississippi Medical Center, completing a post-doctoral fellowship in Health Policy. Dr. Collins holds leadership positions on several state and national boards, committees, and professional organizations, currently serving as a Fellow of the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists. Her research interests include educational innovation, pharmacology, health policy, and quality initiatives. A native of Iuka, Mississippi, Dr. Collins practices clinical nurse anesthesia in Meridian, where she lives with her husband, Al, and three daughters.



SPEAKERS

FEB. 27, 3:15 P.M., TRACK 1 – PANEL DISCUSSION, LEADERSHIP, MENTORSHIP, AND SPONSORSHIP: EMPOWERING WOMEN IN HIGHER ED

Natalia Norwood, *ADA Specialist/EORC Investigator, The University of Mississippi – Moderator*

Natalia Norwood is a legal professional specializing in ADA compliance. As an ADA Specialist and EORC Investigator at the University of Mississippi, she ensures adherence to federal regulations across the institution.

Natalia is also an Adjunct Professor for Criminal Justice and Legal Studies, where she helps students develop practical legal skills. She has led impactful mentorship programs for university employees as well as initiatives for youth in Oxford, Mississippi. Natalia is the first staff member of the Sarah Isom Center to be awarded a fellowship and research grant, supporting her ongoing study of the impact of the ADA on employment outcomes for women with disabilities in Mississippi.



Dr. Tina Martin, *Dean of the School of Nursing, The University of Mississippi*

Dr. Tina Martin has served the School of Nursing in various roles since joining UMMC's faculty ranks in 1999. Prior to being named Dean of the School of Nursing in March 2024, she served as interim dean. She also has had other administrative positions including associate dean for administration since 2022-2023, assistant dean for accreditation and evaluation from 2016 to 2022 and interim assistant dean for undergraduate programs from 2020 to 2021. From 2009 to 2016, she was the director of UMMC's Accelerated BSN program. She has also held academic appointments in the School of Health Related Professions and the School of Medicine.

She was named to UMMC's Academy for Excellence in Education in 2022 and was a 2020-2021 American Association of Colleges of Nursing Elevating Leaders in Academic Nursing Fellow. She currently serves as a board member for the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE).



Dr. Kristin Richards, *Associate Professor and Program Chair for Social Work, Jackson State University*

Dr. Kristin Richards is a distinguished social work educator and leader with a focus on servant leadership, workforce development initiatives, and financial capability. She served as the BSW Chair at Jackson State University, a Contributing Faculty member in the DSW program at Walden University and has taught financial planning at Delta State University for more than a decade. Dr. Richards has published numerous articles and presented at local, state, and national conferences. She has taught thousands of students, providing them with a robust education and inspiring them to excel in their professional endeavors for the betterment of child welfare and related systems. Her commitment to student success at the doctoral level is evident in the time and effort she invests in her students' academic and professional development, guiding them through professional conference presentations and publications.



SPEAKERS

As a recipient of numerous grants, Dr. Richards currently serves as a Title IV-E Principal Investigator. In this role, she collaborates with program directors from all eight public institutions in Mississippi, aiming to improve workforce development, create an improved and increasingly stable child welfare workforce in Mississippi, and enhance outcomes in child welfare within the state. Additionally, Dr. Richards works closely with The Forgotten Adoption Option, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to overcoming barriers to facilitate non-kin adoptions from foster care.

Dr. Ethel Scurlock, *Dean of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College and Associate Professor of English and African American Studies, The University of Mississippi*

Dr. Ethel Scurlock is Dean of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College and Associate Professor of English and African American Studies at the University of Mississippi. Prior to being named Dean, Dr. Scurlock was also the Director of African American Studies and Senior Faculty Fellow of the Luckyday Residential College at the University of Mississippi.

She is a native of Memphis and earned her BA in English from the University of Tennessee and M.A. and Ph.D. from Bowling Green State University of Ohio. Dr. Scurlock's teaching and service has been recognized with many awards during her tenure at UM, including College of Liberal Arts Teacher of the Year, UM Humanities Teacher of the Year, the Elsie M. Hood Outstanding Teacher of the Year, the Black Alumni Trailblazers Award, and the Donald Cole Award for Faculty and Staff.



Coranette “Chris” Square, *Dean of eLearning and Computer Science Adjunct Instructor, East Mississippi Community College*

Coranette Square is the Dean of eLearning and a Computer Science Adjunct Instructor at East Mississippi Community College, where she has dedicated 18 years to advancing education and innovation. In addition to overseeing the Department for Teaching and Learning, she is a lifelong learner and a doctoral candidate in Business Administration with a specialization in Computer Information Technology and Project Management, expected to graduate in the summer of 2025.

Passionate about education and technology, Square is committed to leveraging cutting-edge innovations to enhance organizational efficiency and leadership development. With expertise in technology, leadership, and project management, she strives to empower organizations to adapt to the evolving demands of the digital age. A strong advocate for women in leadership, Square believes in fostering inclusive environments that inspire growth and collaboration. She also enjoys staying ahead of advancements in education, business, and technology, using this knowledge to inspire meaningful change and drive progress. Outside of work, Square enjoys traveling, reading, cooking, and spending quality time with her daughter.



SPEAKERS

Dr. Kelly Lester, *Associate Provost for Faculty Success, USM (ACE Representative)*

Kelly Ferris Lester (EdD, MFA) is Associate Provost for Faculty Success and Professor of Dance at the University of Southern Mississippi. Lester's work focuses on educational development, leadership, community building, and support of academic enterprise through the lens of student and faculty success. Lester was the founding director of USM's Center for Faculty Development and led the CFD to be recognized as a Movement Maker at the 2023 National Higher Education Teaching Conference.

Lester serves on the American Council for Education (ACE) Women's Executive Leadership Council and served the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO) as President (2020-22) and on its Board of Directors since 2011. Lester recently received an Outstanding Service Award from SUNY Brockport Alumni Association in recognition of her service to higher education and dance education.



FEB. 27, 3:15 P.M., TRACK 2 – WORKSHOP: LEVERAGING AI AND TECHNOLOGY FOR EDUCATION AND TRANSFORMATION

Erin Garrett, *Director of Strategic Communications, The University of Mississippi – Facilitator*

Erin Garrett, APR, has more than 12 years of experience in higher education marketing and communications. Currently serving as strategic communications director for the University of Mississippi's marketing and communications department, she is co-chair of the university's AI working group for marketing and communications. In previous roles, she led communications for UM's Southaven regional campus and its School of Pharmacy.

Garrett received a B.A. in journalism with a public relations emphasis in 2011 and a M.S. in integrated marketing communication in 2020. She received her Accreditation in Public Relations in 2015.



FEB. 28, 8:30 A.M. – WORKSHOP, SMART BREVITY: COMMUNICATING WITH IMPACT

Dr. Amanda L. Sams, *Assistant Professor of Integrated Marketing Communications, The University of Mississippi – Facilitator*

Dr. Amanda Sams Bradshaw is an assistant professor of integrated marketing communications in the School of Journalism and New Media at the University of Mississippi. Her overall research agenda focuses on the nexus of social network communication and individual decision making. Specifically, she examines how both organic interactions and paid messages on social network platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, YouTube) which are typically health related, inform individuals' decision making and identity formation –as individuals, as patients, as parents, and as caregivers.

She is the faculty advisor for the University of Mississippi Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) and the chair of IMC Connect!, an annual event hosted by



SPEAKERS

the School of Journalism and New Media, which brings together senior leaders in IMC from both research and practice. Bradshaw is an active member in the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC), the Public Relations Society of America, and the Association for Marketing & Healthcare Research (AMHCR). Dr. Bradshaw received her Ph.D. in Mass Communication from the University of Florida, where she specialized in health communication research. She obtained her M.S. in Integrated Marketing Communications from West Virginia University, and B.A. in Journalism from the University of Alabama.

FEB. 28, 10:30 A.M. — PANEL SESSION, FINDING HARMONY: IS ACHIEVING WORK-LIFE BALANCE POSSIBLE?

Dr. Patrice Buckner Jackson (Dr. PBJ), *Founder and Executive Trainer, EduCare Training and Consulting, LLC — Moderator*

Dr. Patrice Buckner Jackson, known in her community as Dr. PBJ, gives educators the strategies for accomplishing purposeful work without burnout. Dr. PBJ is an educator of almost 25 years and an Executive Coach for more than 10 years. She holds a doctoral degree in Education Administration, served in executive leadership at colleges and universities, and facilitated leadership training as a faculty member for the Center for Creative Leadership. Dr. Jackson worked in higher education at many levels, from student assistant to President's Cabinet and is the recipient of several professional awards and accolades.

Dr. Jackson founded EduCare Training and Consulting, LLC through a purpose of pouring into those who pour out so much. Much of her work is specifically focused on equipping and refreshing educators. Compassionate work can carry a high price tag: your mind, body, spirit and relationships may be in distress as you serve the needs of others. Dr. Jackson leads her community to serve well without paying an ultimate price.

Dr. PBJ is the creator and host of the Disrupting Burnout podcast as well as the author of the Amazon best-seller, *Disrupting Burnout: The professional woman's LIFELINE to finding purpose.*



Dr. Josie Bidwell, *Director, Office of Well-being, The University of Mississippi Medical Center*

Josie Bidwell serves as a Professor at The University of Mississippi Medical Center School of Medicine with a secondary appointment in the School of Population Health. She obtained her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Mississippi Medical Center in 2004 and Master of Science in Nursing from the same institution in 2006. She received her Doctor of Nursing Practice degree from UMMC SON in 2013.

She is currently practicing as a Lifestyle Medicine Clinician with the department of Preventive Medicine where she also serves as the Clinical Director for the department. She is a board-certified Diplomate of the American College of Lifestyle Medicine and the International Board of Lifestyle Medicine.

In 2022, she was inducted as a Fellow of the American College of Lifestyle Medicine. She is the first nurse to receive this designation. She is the host of Southern Remedy Health and Fit on Mississippi Public Broadcasting Think Radio. Dr. Bidwell was inducted into the UMMC Nursing Hall of Fame in May 2021. She was appointed as the Director of the Office of Well-being at UMMC in July 2024.



SPEAKERS

Dr. Rolonda Brown, *Dean of Academic Affairs, Coahoma Community College*

Dr. Rolonda R. Brown has worked in the field of education for nearly 25 years. She has served for nine years as Chief Academic Officer and Dean of Academic Affairs at Coahoma Community College where she has led successful efforts to enhance the academic experience through retention and recruitment initiatives and the elimination of barriers to student success.

Prior to joining Coahoma, Dr. Brown served as an assistant professor at the University of North GA, visiting professor at Liaocheng University (Liaocheng, China), adjunct community college instructor, and high school teacher. She has earned three degrees all from the University of Mississippi – a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism, Masters of Education in Curriculum and Instruction, and Doctorate of Philosophy in Education.

Her career as an educator has brought her great fulfillment, and she believes her work with community colleges has been the most important work of her life.



Ra'Sheda Forbes, *Vice President for Access, Opportunity, and Success, Mississippi State University*

With over 15 years of experience in higher education, Forbes serves as the first ever Vice President for Access, Opportunity and Success at Mississippi State University. Forbes has a longstanding commitment to cultivating excellence through transformational learning experiences. In her role, she continues to strive to provide individual mentorship to students seeking personal, social, and intellectual support.

Forbes' work on the Student Success Taskforce amplified the importance of creating pathways and programs for students into higher education. In her role, she oversees units that administer programs that broaden college access and support student success across the University. Forbes serves as the strategic leader of an array of programs and departments, housing key departments like the Holmes Cultural Diversity Center, Office of Inclusive Excellence, and the Office of Pre-College and Opportunity Programs all with the principles of accountability, excellence, community, and support to achieve the optimal outcomes for students who MSU touches.



Dr. Kristy McRaney, *Director for the Center for Behavioral Health, The University of Southern Mississippi*

Dr. Kristy McRaney is an Assistant Clinical Professor in the School of Psychology at the University of Southern Mississippi and serves as the Director of the USM Center for Behavioral Health (CBH). A licensed psychologist, Dr. McRaney specializes in the comprehensive evaluation and treatment of mental health disorders in children. Under her leadership, the CBH plays a pivotal role in expanding access to high-quality, evidence-based behavioral health services throughout Mississippi, particularly through several federally funded initiatives. In addition to her clinical work, Dr. McRaney is actively engaged in campus-wide efforts to promote mental health, well-being, and resilience among students and faculty.



CONFERENCE EMCEE

Erica Avent is currently an assistant professor of teacher education at the University of Mississippi. Prior to this position, she was the coordinator with the LuckyDay Residential College. She has inspired and motivated Mississippi school children for 17 years, as a classroom teacher in grades 3-6 and as a school and district administrator.

A native of Forest, Mississippi, Dr. Avent served as a board member for the Mississippi Association of Educators. Additionally, she is a past mentor teacher with the Mississippi Teacher Fellowship Program. She is a National Board Certified Teacher who earned her Ed.S., M.A. and B.A from the University of Mississippi. In 2020, she received her Ed.D. in Elementary Education with an emphasis on African American teacher recruitment and retention in K-12.

She has expertise in community engagement, teacher mentorship and student success in K-12. She is a seasoned educator who has developed community initiatives and programs. Her focus has been on helping diversify the teacher pipeline. She currently resides in Oxford, Mississippi, with her husband, Shawn, and her daughters, Aubrey and Jordyn.



CLOSING REMARKS / FRIDAY, MARCH 1, 11:30 A.M.

Dr. Noel Wilkin serves as Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at the University of Mississippi. He has been a member of the UM community for nearly 30 years and concurrently serves as Professor of Pharmacy Administration and Research Professor in the Research Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences. Dr. Wilkin is a pharmacist and scientist and holds both his Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy and his Doctor of Philosophy degrees from the University of Maryland, Baltimore.

Dr. Wilkin is a recipient of substantial grant and contract support. His published research is featured in numerous peer-reviewed and professional journals. He regularly speaks nationwide on topics of leadership and innovation in pharmacy to various audiences including educators, pharmacy students, and pharmacists.



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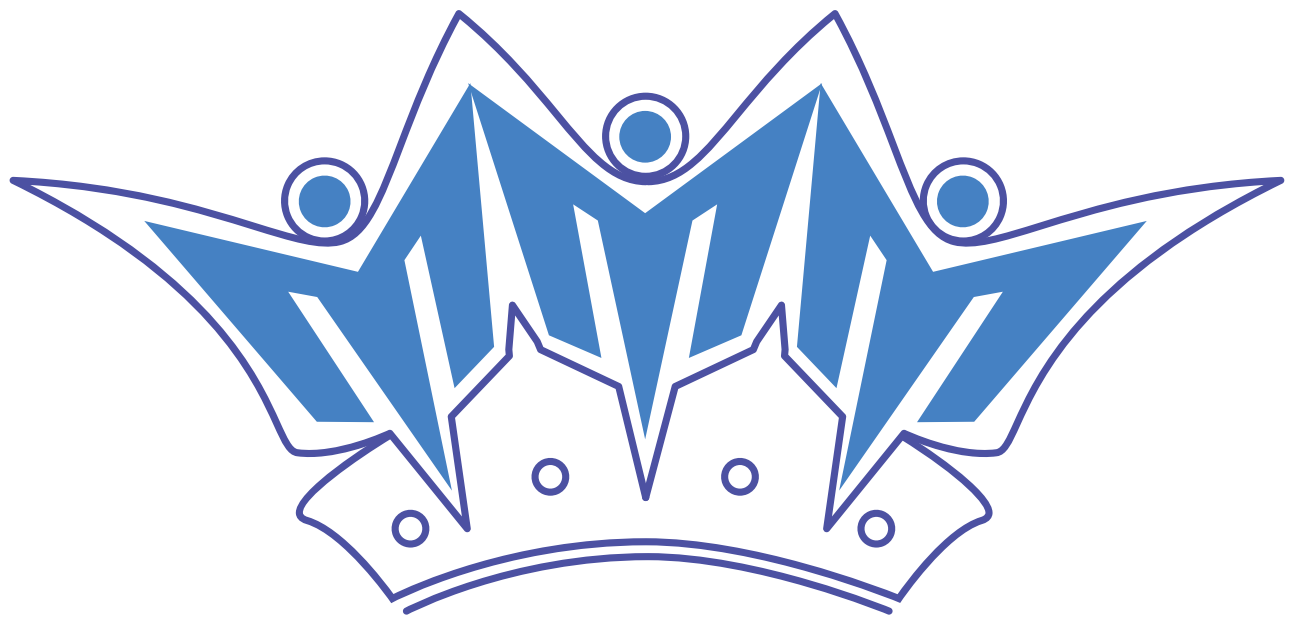
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