

May 30, 2025  
9:00 A.M.-1:15 P.M.  
University at Buffalo-Alumni Arena

## MORNING ITINERARY

8:15 AM:

Registration Opens

9:00 AM:

Summit Begins

9:07 AM:

Opening Session with Barbara Annis  
**Better Together:** *Understanding the  
Science of Gender Dynamics for  
Workplace Success*

9:40 AM:

P.O.W.E.R Seal Awards

SPEAKER



Barbara Annis

Join Barbara Annis, CEO of Gender Intelligence™, as she opens the Summit with powerful insights on how understanding gender differences drives better communication, decision-making, and team performance. Discover research-based strategies to build inclusive, high-performing teams through balanced representation and leadership.



May 30, 2025  
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# ASPIRING LEADER PATHWAY SESSIONS

Main Court- Alumni Arena

## SESSION ITINERARY

**10:00 AM:**  
Session One

**Unmasking Imposter Syndrome:**  
*Lead with Confidence, Not Self-Doubt*

**10:45 AM:**  
Session Two

**Tripping Points to Turning Points:**  
*Real Talk on Growth, Confidence & Change*

**12:10 PM:**  
Session Three

**See It to Be It:**  
*Wisdom from the SHE-Suite*

**12:45 PM:**  
Networking

**The Leadership Link-Up:**  
*Where Networking Gets Real*

# SESSION ONE

*Unmasking Imposter Syndrome:  
Lead with Confidence, Not Self-Doubt*

**Do you ever feel like you're faking it while everyone else has it figured out?**

*You're not alone* — and you absolutely belong in the room. In this empowering session, we'll **unpack the roots of imposter syndrome**, explore why it disproportionately affects women and emerging professionals, and share **real strategies to shift from self-doubt to self-assurance**.

Walk away with tools to reframe your inner dialogue, embrace your accomplishments, and lead with confidence — exactly as you are.

HOST



**Natalie Fischer**

Natalie Fischer is the Director of Investor Relations at National Fuel Gas Company, where she leads financial communications and investor outreach. A licensed CPA, she previously held roles at PwC and Columbus McKinnon, where she was Director of FP&A. Natalie holds a B.S. in Accounting and Accounting Information Systems from Canisius College. She serves as Treasurer and Executive Committee member of the WNY Women's Foundation and is a former Leadership Buffalo participant. Passionate about community and connection, Natalie is active in FemaleFuel and enjoys travel, dining with loved ones, and attending performances at Shea's and the BPO.

# SESSION ONE

## *Unmasking Imposter Syndrome: Lead with Confidence, Not Self-Doubt*

MODERATOR



**Soda Kuczkowski**

**Soda Kuczkowski** is a Certified Sleep Coach and Sleep Health Educator with over 19 years of experience. She holds degrees from the University at Buffalo and Niagara University, and completed entrepreneurship programs at UB and Cornell. Soda is the Founder and CEO of START WITH SLEEP, LLC, advancing sleep health through education and advocacy. She also owns The Doze, a retail and resource center offering sleep coaching and curated products. A Latina entrepreneur, Soda is passionate about inclusivity and empowering women of color. She hosts The Doze Podcast and is dedicated to helping communities prioritize sleep for well-being and success.

SPEAKER



**Meg Scherer**

Dr. Megan Scherer is Senior Vice President of Workforce Management within Independent Risk Management at Citi, where she leads Risk Strategic Skills. She oversees the restructuring of Citi's Risk job architecture and drives the implementation of regulatory commitments to ensure 240,000 global employees are equipped with critical risk management skills. Megan earned her doctorate in Organizational Development from Northeastern University, with research focused on women's ascent to C-level roles in Fortune 500 companies. Outside of work, she enjoys traveling to follow the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team and restoring her 120-year-old Buffalo home with her husband and two children.

# SESSION TWO

*Tripping Points to Turning Points:  
Real Talk on Growth, Confidence & Change*

**Leadership isn't just about skills—it's about how you show up when things get real.**

In this honest and insightful panel, experienced leaders share the early-career stumbles they turned into stepping stones. From navigating tough conversations to managing change and building confidence.

You'll gain practical advice and reassurance that the path to leadership is rarely perfect—but always full of growth.

MODERATOR



**Kirsti Hunt**

Kirsti Hunt is a seasoned human resources executive with deep expertise in strategic HR leadership, talent management, and organizational development. She currently serves as Senior Vice President of Human Resources at NOCO Energy Corp., where she leads enterprise-wide HR strategy. Kirsti has held executive HR roles at Modern Disposal Services, LPCiminelli, and United Way of Buffalo & Erie County. Her career began in recruitment and international hiring at Winter Park Resort. She holds a BS in Human Resources Management from Empire State University and multiple certifications, including SHRM-CP and PHR. Kirsti is also a certified Creative Problem Solving Facilitator.



# SESSION TWO

*Tripping Points to Turning Points:  
Real Talk on Growth, Confidence & Change*

PANELIST



**Kelly Picone**

For over 20 years, Kelly has helped individuals thrive at work by creating environments where people bring their best selves every day. Through her leadership roles and now as founder of Ceallaigh Leadership Consulting, she guides clients through challenges like change, disengagement, poor performance, and team conflict. Her experience spans construction, healthcare, hospitality, and media. Kelly's superpower is active listening—offering clients a safe, objective space for honest dialogue and growth. She specializes in executive coaching, team building, assessments, and culture strategy. Based in Buffalo, NY, Kelly enjoys cooking, traveling, and recording music with her family and Bernedoodle.

PANELIST



**Dr. Tara Jabbaar-  
Gyumbrah**

Dr. Tara is an award-winning author, servant leader, and change-maker with over 20 years of experience in higher education. As the CEO of TMJ Consulting, she leads a national firm that crafts tailored strategies and innovative solutions for higher education, corporations, and nonprofits. With a steadfast commitment to student success, Dr. Tara empowers organizations to prepare future leaders for the workforce. Passionate about education, she thrives on teaching and equipping emerging leaders with the essential tools they need to navigate their unique paths to success.

# SESSION TWO

*Tripping Points to Turning Points:  
Real Talk on Growth, Confidence & Change*

## PANELISTS



**Deja Middlebrook**

Deja L. Middlebrook, JD, LMSW, is a three-time graduate of the University at Buffalo and a Licensed Social Worker dedicated to destigmatizing mental health in communities of color. She co-owns Walking Through Solutions LLC, offering inclusive therapy with her mother. Deja focuses on breaking generational cycles, trauma, and relationship healing. She has served the City of Buffalo as Inclusionary Compliance Officer and currently supports equity efforts at Roswell Park. A proud Buffalo native and Say Yes Scholar, she actively volunteers in youth mentorship, community education, and mediation. Her leadership and advocacy have earned numerous awards for social justice and impact.

## PANELIST



**Ginine Capozzi**

Ginine Capozzi is the founder and president of KnowledgeForce Consulting LLC, where she leads the design of impactful, business-aligned learning solutions. With over 20 years of experience, she blends adult learning, change management, and business strategy to deliver Training Reimagined®—programs that drive real-world results. Ginine has worked with 125+ organizations, including Fortune 500 companies, and is a certified coach and gamification expert. She holds degrees from RIT and Buffalo State College. A frequent speaker and panelist, her work has been featured by Buffalo Business First, WIVB, and UB's Center for Entrepreneurship, highlighting her leadership in talent development and innovation.

# SESSION THREE

*See It to Be It:  
Wisdom from the SHE-Suite*

## **Representation isn't just powerful—it's transformational.**

In this inspiring panel, accomplished women leaders share their journeys to the top, the lessons they've learned, and the realities they've faced along the way.

Whether you're just starting out or redefining what leadership looks like at your level, this session offers real talk, relatable stories, and the motivation to lead boldly—on your own terms.

MODERATOR



**Rosanna Berardi**

Rosanna Berardi is the Managing Partner of Berardi Immigration Law, an award-winning firm she founded in 2005 after leaving a prestigious big-firm job. Starting with one client, she built a multinational business immigration practice known for exceptional client service. A former Immigration Inspector and Trial Attorney, Rosanna brings decades of experience to her work. Her firm is a certified woman-owned business and has earned numerous accolades, including “Best Places to Work” and Inc.’s Female Founders 200. A sought-after speaker and media source, Rosanna remains deeply engaged in her community and values time with her husband, son, and local nonprofits.



# SESSION THREE

*See It to Be It:  
Wisdom from the SHE-Suite*

PANELIST



**Heather Gresham**

Heather Gresham is Counsel and Vice President of People and Culture at RepresentUs, America's leading nonpartisan anti-corruption organization. With over two decades of HR leadership experience across healthcare, higher education, and transportation, she is dedicated to fostering inclusive, authentic, and thriving workplaces. A licensed attorney, Heather earned both her juris doctor and bachelor's degrees from the University at Buffalo. She also holds certifications from the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), the Human Resources Certification Institute (HRCI), Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations, and the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, Executive Education.

PANELIST



**Amie P. Feroletto**

Major Amie P. Feroletto is the first woman to serve as Troop A Commander in the 107-year history of the New York State Police. A 22-year veteran, she has held numerous roles including Trooper, Sergeant, Station Commander, Lieutenant, Captain, and service in the Professional Standards Bureau. She now leads over 400 personnel across eight Western New York counties. Major Feroletto holds a bachelor's in Business Administration and a master's in Criminal Justice. Her service in Troops A, B, D, E, H, and K reflects her adaptability and leadership. Her historic promotion marks a milestone for women in law enforcement.

# SESSION THREE

*See It to Be It:  
Wisdom from the SHE-Suite*

PANELIST



**Trini Rossi**

Trini E. Ross became the first African American woman to serve as U.S. Attorney for the Western District of New York on October 11, 2021. Unanimously confirmed, she was among the first five U.S. Attorneys appointed by President Biden. She served until February 14, 2025, and was selected for the Attorney General's Advisory Committee, where she chaired the subcommittee on Law Enforcement Coordinators, Victims, and Community Outreach. Her legal career spans roles at the DOJ, National Science Foundation, and private practice. A frequent speaker and educator, Ms. Ross has earned numerous awards for her public service and professional excellence.

PANELIST



**Kathleen Heckman**

Kathleen Heckman is Vice President for University Advancement at the University at Buffalo, New York's largest public university. With nearly 30 years of higher education experience, she leads fundraising, alumni engagement, and advancement operations. A trusted advisor and member of the president's cabinet, she co-directed UB's \$1 billion Boldly Buffalo campaign and shapes strategies to elevate UB among the nation's Top 25 public research universities. Her expertise spans campaign planning, donor relations, and alumni programming. Kathleen holds an M.B.A. and a bachelor's in international business from UB. She lives in Clarence, New York, with her husband and two children.

# SESSION THREE

*See It to Be It:  
Wisdom from the SHE-Suite*

PANELIST



**Rebecca Brady**

Rebecca grew up in New Zealand, where she spent her childhood playing sports and enjoying the outdoors. She studied Marketing and Management at Victoria University before spending ten years working across various companies in Singapore, including six years at Hewlett-Packard. She then moved to Japan, where she lived for another decade while raising her children. In 2015, Rebecca and her family relocated to Buffalo, NY. After facing challenges reentering the workforce due to a career gap, she started her own business, Top Seedz, creating healthy, seed-based snacks. Rebecca serves on the board of the Darwin Martin House and enjoys playing squash, pickleball, and golf in her free time.

PANELIST



**Lorrie Turner**

Lorrie Turner is a seasoned legal executive with over 28 years of experience in corporate law, intellectual property, and brand protection. She most recently served as Chief Legal Officer and Senior Vice President of Global Legal and Brand Protection at New Era Cap, supporting the company's global growth. Earlier, she held legal roles at Rich Products Corporation and Hodgson Russ LLP. Lorrie earned her J.D. magna cum laude from the University at Buffalo School of Law and a B.S. with distinction from Clarkson University. She is passionate about nonprofit work, including cancer research fundraising and animal rescue organizations.