

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.



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EXPERIENCED LEADER PATHWAY SESSIONS

SESSION ITINERARY

10:00 AM:
Session One

Bridging the Gap:
*Leading Across Generations with
Insight and Impact*

10:45 AM:
Session Two

Leading with Heart:
Emotional Intelligence for Resilience

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

*Bridging the Gap:
Leading Across Generations with Insight and Impact*

Managing a multigenerational team can be both rewarding and complex.

In this thought-provoking session for seasoned leaders, we'll explore how generational differences shape workplace expectations, communication styles, and motivation.

Walk away with fresh insights and practical strategies to lead with empathy, foster collaboration, and unlock the full potential of every generation on your team.

HOST



**Petrina Hill-
Cheatom**

Petrina Hill-Cheatom, MEd, serves as Deputy Chief Academic Officer and Vice President for Educational Affairs at Roswell Park. With over 30 years of experience in education, she previously held leadership roles at SUNY Erie Community College, including Director of Admissions and Dean of Students II. At Roswell Park, she helps lead core educational initiatives, including internal training, community education, and workforce development. Hill-Cheatom earned her master's degree from the University at Buffalo and her bachelor's degree from Canisius College.

SESSION ONE

*Bridging the Gap:
Leading Across Generations with Insight and Impact*

MODERATOR



Esther Annan

Esther Annan is the Special Assistant to the President for Philanthropy at Villa Maria College, where she leads fundraising strategy and donor engagement to support the College's mission. With over 20 years of experience in health and human services, philanthropy, and community engagement, she most recently served as Program Officer at The John R. Oishei Foundation. A licensed master social worker with an MSW from SUNY Buffalo, Annan is a recognized leader in equity and systems change. She is committed to building meaningful relationships and creating lasting impact for Villa Maria's students and the broader Western New York community.

PANELIST



Gretchen Fierle

Gretchen Fierle is a seasoned healthcare executive with over 17 years in executive leadership roles. She served as Senior Vice President of Marketing and Communications at HealthNow New York and held key positions at Independent Health and the Jacobs Institute. Known for leading award-winning strategic marketing and community initiatives, she now focuses on leadership development for emerging and executive leaders. Gretchen also supports regional nonprofits in building strong communications strategies. She is the author of *Fish Rot from the Head Down*, Volumes I and II, and a proud Buffalo native and Bard College graduate, passionate about her hometown's potential.

SESSION ONE

*Bridging the Gap:
Leading Across Generations with Insight and Impact*

PANELIST



Lindsey Zajac

Lindsey A. Zajac is the Owner and CEO of Ascendant, a talent solutions firm dedicated to elevating careers, empowering leaders, and enriching lives. With nearly 20 years of HR and leadership development experience—including roles at PepsiCo, Eaton, and Saab Sensis—Lindsey focuses on executive coaching, talent management, and strategic planning. She holds advanced certifications in Women’s Leadership and Executive Leadership from Cornell. A Forbes Coaches Council member, she is an authorized Everything DiSC partner and former principal at Ahern, Murphy & Associates. Lindsey lives in Williamsville with her family and serves on several community boards, including BNSME and Journey’s End.

PANELIST



Talia Johnson
Huff

Talia Johnson-Huff is President & CEO of MWBE Constructors, Inc., a firm celebrating 15 years of success in construction management, business coaching, and public outreach. With 20+ years of experience, she also serves as Project and Facilities Manager for the Erie County IDA. Talia founded The RARE Place, Inc., a nonprofit focused on workforce development, and holds leadership roles with East Buffalo Development Corp., BOMA Buffalo, and the Black Women’s Council of Buffalo. An award-winning entrepreneur, speaker, and author of *Black in Business*, she empowers others to build resilient, profitable businesses through practical strategies and passionate advocacy.

SESSION ONE

*Bridging the Gap:
Leading Across Generations with Insight and Impact*

PANELIST



Kristen Fox

Kristen Fox leads TalentRise's Coaching and Leadership Development Practice, bringing nearly 20 years of HR experience across industries including finance, healthcare, and tech. Since 2019, she has served as a Talent Consultant and Leadership Coach, creating the Fast Start Coaching program to support new executives in their first 90 days. Kristen partners with CEOs and leadership teams, focusing on mental agility, leadership transformation, and authentic connection. She holds an MBA from DePaul University, a BA from Bradley University, and multiple coaching certifications, including PCC and CPCC. Kristen lives in North Carolina and formerly served as President of ICF's Charlotte Chapter.

SESSION TWO

Leading with Heart: Emotional Intelligence for Resilience

At the highest levels of leadership, it's not just about strategy—it's about staying steady when the pressure's on.

In this reflective and energizing session, we'll explore how emotional intelligence fuels resilience, strengthens leadership presence, and helps you lead with clarity, empathy, and impact—even in the toughest moments.

MODERATOR



Sujata Yamachili

Sujata Yalamanchili is a partner at Hodgson Russ LLP with deep experience in leadership and mentorship, both within the firm and the broader community. She has served on the firm's board of directors, chaired its Committee for Attorney Recruitment, Development, and Diversity, and led its Real Estate and Finance Practice Area. Sujata is a recipient of the ATHENA Leadership Award and has been recognized with honors including Buffalo Business First's Power 200 and Power 125 Women lists, and the Erie County Minority Bar Association Award. She currently serves on the boards of the AKG Art Museum and UB's School of Management.

SESSION TWO

Leading with Heart: Emotional Intelligence for Resilience

SPEAKER



Christina Lesh

Christina L. Lesh brings 20 years of leadership experience and a deep commitment to empowering leaders and enhancing team effectiveness. As a certified executive coach through SUNY Buffalo's Center for Leadership and Organizational Effectiveness, she now serves as a Vistage Chair, guiding a peer advisory group of Presidents and CEOs in Buffalo and Niagara Falls. Previously, she was a Regional Director for a national nonprofit and a School Principal, leading teams focused on continuous improvement and student success. Christina believes transformational, sustainable leadership balances empathy with action, driving meaningful change at every level of an organization.

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:
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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.