

Tri-State
Consortium of
Opportunity
Programs


...Connections for Student Success


2025 Tri-State Consortium Opportunity Programs Conference

Leadership by Design: Advancing Opportunity
Programs through Transformative Practice



Sunday, April 6, 2025 -
Wednesday, April 9, 2025

 www.tri-stateconsortium.com

 Hilton Albany - Albany, NY

April 2025

Dear Colleagues:

Welcome to the 2025 Biennial Tri-State Consortium of Opportunity Programs in Higher Education Conference!!

We come together in the spirit of passion, vision and understanding of what our support means not only to our students, but to the economic stability of the country.

I know of no other group of education professionals with our commitment, tenacity, and creativity to meet the needs of our students. Collectively, we positively impact our institutions, families, and communities.

This year will be a challenge. However, we are natural survivors and designers of our fate. We understand how to build for the greater good, and we are persistent in reaching our goals. We are the future.

I am hopeful for how we can help each other. I rely on our desire to thrive, even when pushed to the wall. We are determined and poised for continued impact. We remain strong in our vision for student success.

Let's use this conference as an opportunity to refresh, and rally. Smile, extend a hand, give a pat on the back, and know we have each other's backs.

Let's congratulate each other, defend what we have accomplished thus far knowing that we are not done yet!!

I remain awed by you! You make my heart smile.

Warmest regards,

Phyllis A H Breland, M.Ed.

President, Tri-State Consortium of

Opportunity Programs in Higher Education

Dear Colleagues,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the 2025 Biennial Tri-State Consortium of Opportunity Programs in Higher Education Conference!

The Tri-State Conference brings together spirited and innovative leaders from New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania to discuss, learn, connect, and grow in our work to support upward mobility through opportunity programs. Our work empowers socioeconomic growth in underrepresented communities across these states, empowering dreams to become reality and realities to become economic communities of hope and change.

Opportunity programs are the lifeblood of every community, creating a transformative ecosystem of change that impacts individuals, families, and communities in urban and rural areas. The conference theme, “Advancing Opportunity Programs through Transformative Practice”, is a testament to the transformative potential of your role in this process. It offers registrants workshops to inspire and motivate creativity, thereby empowering you to improve opportunity programs and student engagement.

We are thrilled to have you participate in this conference, as your experiences and insights are invaluable to us. We eagerly anticipate your contribution, participation, collaboration, connection, and laughter. Together, we will develop creative strategies to advance opportunity through transformative practices. Our collective voice will inspire greatness in our work and create opportunities for our students to be the best versions of themselves.

Let’s spend time at the conference connecting so that at the end of the conference, we will be transformed with new vitality and love for our work to build stronger communities of learners ready to change the world. The knowledge and inspiration we gain at the conference will make a significant difference in the lives of our student scholars, fueling our passion and commitment to our work.

We are truly grateful that you chose the Tri-State Conference as one of your development events in 2025. Your presence and participation are a testament to your dedication to our shared mission. We honor you and look forward to spending time with you.

Regards,

Ronnie R. Hector

Ronnie R. Hector, Sr.

Second Vice President and Conference Chair

Tri-State Consortium of Opportunity Programs in Higher E

Agenda At-A-Glance

Sunday, April 6th

8:30AM - 4:00PM

Registration Open

7:00PM - 9:00PM

Opening Session, Keynote Speaker, and Dinner[†]
Speaker: Danielle R. Holley, Mount Holyoke's 20th President

9:00PM - 11:00PM

Networking Session*

Monday, April 7th

Location Notes

Sessions with [†] will be in the Grand Ballroom
Sessions with * will be in the Hudson Ballroom

8:30AM - 4:00PM

Registration Open

9:00AM - 5:00PM

Commuter Lounge Open*

9:00AM - 10:00AM

Welcome & Plenary Speaker[†]
Speaker: Kevin Wright, CEO & Managing Partner of Aeriis Insights Group, Inc.

10:15AM - 11:15AM

Concurrent Workshops (see page 6 for workshop info & locations)

11:30AM - 12:30PM

Concurrent Workshops (see page 6 for workshop info & locations)

1:00PM - 2:15PM

Lunch w/ Speaker[†]
Speaker: Sharon Jordan Holley, Storyteller

2:30PM - 3:30PM

Concurrent Workshops (see page 7 for workshop info & locations)

4:00PM - 5:30PM

State Meetings (NJ/NY/PA) Respective Locations
Chambers/Kelsey's/State AB

6:00PM - 9:00PM

Dinner (On Your Own)

9:00PM - 11:00PM

Mentor/Mentee Networking Session*

Agenda At-A-Glance cont'd



Tuesday, April 8th

- 8:30AM - 4:00PM Registration Open
- 9:00AM - 5:00PM Commuter Lounge Open*
- 9:00AM - 10:00AM Welcome & Morning Plenary Speaker[†]
Speaker: Felecia Webb, Chief Strategy Officer, Philanthropy and Partnerships at Partnership on AI
- 10:15AM - 11:30AM Tri-State Consortium Updates[†]
- 11:45AM - 12:45PM Concurrent Workshops (see page 7 for workshop info & locations)
- 1:00PM - 2:15PM Lunch[†]
- 2:30PM - 3:30PM Concurrent Workshops (see page 7 for workshop info & locations)
- 3:45PM - 4:45PM OSHE Updates (For NJ Programs Only) (Room: Kelsey)
- 6:30PM - 9:00PM Awards Banquet[†]
- 9:00PM - 11:00PM Networking Session*

Wednesday, April 9th

- 9:30AM - 10:30AM Leadership Institute Presentations (Room: Kelsey)
- 10:30AM - 12:00PM Townhall Meeting[†]
Speaker: Dr. Cynthia Nayeli Carvajal, CUNY Director for Undocumented and Immigrant Student Programs

Location Notes

Sessions with [†] will be in the Grand Ballroom
Sessions with * will be in the Hudson Ballroom

Event Agenda

Leadership by Design: Advancing Opportunity Programs through Transformative Practice

Saturday, April 05, 2025

How to Use Whova Event App (for attendees)

12:00 AM – 11:30 AM | Location: Lobby

Sample session four.

Leadership Institute: Planning Committee Check-in

11:00 AM – 11:45 AM | Location: Kelsey

Leadership Institute: Participant Check-in (Lunch on your own)

12:00 PM – 12:45 PM | Location: Kelsey

Leadership Institute: Welcome and Explanation of Theme

1:00 PM – 1:30 PM | Location: Kelsey

Leadership Institute: Opening Activity-Guided Meditation

1:15 PM – 1:30 PM | Location: Kelsey

Leadership Institute: Ice Breaker Activity/Team Building Task

1:30 PM – 2:00 PM | Location: Kelsey

Leadership Institute: Workshop 1

2:00 PM – 3:20 PM | Location: Kelsey

Leadership Institute: Workshop 2

3:20 PM – 4:30 PM | Location: Kelsey

Leadership Institute: Group Project

4:30 PM – 5:00 PM | Location: Kelsey

Leadership Institute: Closing

5:00 PM – 5:30 PM | Location: Kelsey

Break/Hotel Check-In

5:30 PM – 6:30 PM | Location: Hotel Lobby

Leadership Institute: Dinner

6:30 PM – 8:00 PM | Location: Kelsey

For registered Leadership Institute participants only.

Leadership Institute Networking (LI Participants Only)

9:00 PM – 11:00 PM

Sunday, April 06, 2025

Leadership Institute: Light Breakfast

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM | Location: Kelsey

For registered Leadership Institute participants only.

Leadership Institute: Welcome

10:00 AM – 10:30 AM | Location: Kelsey

Leadership Institute: Opening Activity-Guided Meditation/Ice Breaker/Team Building

10:30 AM – 11:30 AM | Location: Kelsey

Regular Conference Registration

11:00 AM – 5:00 PM | Location: Banquet Level

Leadership Institute: Workshop 1

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM | Location: Kelsey

Leadership Institute: Working Lunch

12:30 PM – 1:30 PM | Location: Kelsey

For registered Leadership Institute participants only

Leadership Institute: Workshop 2

1:45 PM – 2:45 PM | Location: Kelsey

Leadership Institute: Leadership Panel

2:45 PM – 4:15 PM | Location: Kelsey

Leadership Institute: Final Closing and Announcements

4:15 PM – 4:30 PM | Location: Kelsey

Executive Committee Working Meeting

4:30 PM – 5:45 PM | Location: Albany

Opening Session, Keynote Speaker, and Dinner

7:00 PM – 9:00 PM | Location: Grand Ballroom

Opening Session

7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Keynote Speaker

7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Speaker



Danielle Holley

President | Mount Holyoke

Monday, April 07, 2025

Registration

8:30 AM – 4:00 PM | Location: Banquet Level

Commuter Lounge Open

9:00 AM – 5:00 PM | Location: Hudson Ballroom

Welcome & Morning Plenary Speaker

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM | Location: Grand Ballroom

Welcome

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

Morning Plenary Speaker

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

Speaker



Concurrent Workshops

10:15 AM – 11:15 AM

Engaging And Sustaining Students In Higher Education Post Covid-19: A Multifaceted Approach

10:15 AM – 11:15 AM

Presenters: Dr. Wendy Johnny, *John Jay College of Criminal Justice -CUNY*; Dyncie Valdez, *Hostos Community College - College Discovery*

Abstract: There is much to be said about the challenges that students in higher education opportunity programs are confronted post COVID 19. Because students are still navigating and adjusting to the new realities of learning and the evolving expectations, students' engagement is at an all-time low. Our presentation will examine the process and work we are doing to engage and support our students by incorporating several strategies. For example, Gaming, flipping classroom, feedback loop, formative feedback, while fostering, health and wellness. By implementing these strategies, we can better support students and create a more engaging and inclusive learning environment.

Innovative Pathways To Equity: Transformative Practices For Supporting Diverse Learners In Opportunity Programs

10:15 AM – 11:15 AM

Presenters: Mr. Trevor Ramkissoon & Beth Diggs, *Partners in Education and Lifelong Excellence*

Abstract: This session explores innovative initiatives transforming opportunity programs to better serve diverse student populations. Highlighting practices such as Kingian nonviolence training, interdisciplinary education, and technology-driven mentoring, presenters will showcase strategies to engage a new generation of learners, support nontraditional and returning students, and leverage social media for outreach and advising. Through real-world examples, including mentoring software and creative writing programs, attendees will gain actionable insights into designing forward-thinking initiatives that improve equity and access. Join us to discover how opportunity programs are leading the way in fostering success for underrepresented and underserved students in higher education.

Your True Color: Exploring Leadership Styles

10:15 AM – 11:15 AM

Presenters: Dean Suja Patel, *Rutgers University - Newark*

Abstract: The workshop allows each participant to discover his/her True Colors and teaches them the basic theories behind their color spectrum. They will complete this workshop with enough understanding to enable them to immediately apply it in their surroundings. It will introduce participants to a new way of understanding themselves and others. They learn to communicate more effectively and work with others more harmoniously and productively.

Building A Winning Culture

10:15 AM – 11:15 AM

Presenters: Mr. Ray Taylor, *Salem Community College*

Abstract: Developing a Winning Culture requires building & developing talent who focus on being Assets and not a Liability. Winning Culture NEVER allows 'I' to infiltrate the mission of 'We'. They know this is extremely detrimental to their long or short term goals of advancement. Winning Cultures never look at any task being beneath them because they check their ego at the door. They do whatever it takes to fight off the spirit of pride. Winning Cultures are extremely results driven and they will do whatever it takes to get the job done EVEN if its not in their job description. Winning Cultures wants to see everyone share in the celebration of victory because they understand this helps to boost morale and builds retention. People don't care how much we know until they know how much we care. Winning Cultures foster the guinea pig model. They harness opportunities for learning or acquiring new skill sets. Winning Cultures give credit & recognized accomplishments even if they have a ton of star power. They understand Team work makes the Dream work!

Featured Workshop: Is Your Leadership Built to Last or Built to Fade?: Unpacking the Truth of Where You Are Vs Where You Want to Be

10:15 AM – 11:15 AM

Presenters: KD Wilson

Abstract: In this thought-provoking session, we will explore the core principles that define enduring leadership. Leaders must reflect on whether their leadership styles are designed for short-term solutions or long-term transformation. This workshop will delve into K.D. Wilson's groundbreaking 7 Indestructible Leadership Principles. This comes straight from his book "Shield Over Spear", focusing on strategies for creating leadership that addresses immediate challenges while laying the foundation for lasting impact. Participants will gain insights on how to cultivate leadership that not only endures but also inspires future generations to excel. By the end of the session, attendees will leave with actionable tools to foster leadership that withstands the test of time.

Speaker



Kd Wilson

Founder | ConsultWithKD, LLC

Empowering Women In Opportunity Programs Through New Initiatives

10:15 AM – 11:15 AM

Presenters: Dr. Alice Shepard, *The City College of New York*

Abstract: This presentation will focus on the women's empowerment support group launched in the CCNY SEEK department in 2017 by SEEK counselor and psychologist Alice Shepard. The group has gone through many iterations, including moving to being entirely online during the COVID-19 pandemic. Alice is now in the process of transitioning the support group into a funded and structured program. This presentation will discuss some highs, lows, and internal stumbling blocks experienced along the way. The goal of the presentation is to encourage others to garner support and develop programmatic initiatives.

Purposeful Wraparound Services: Empowering Holistic Student Success

10:15 AM – 11:15 AM

Presenter: Mr. Alton Campbell, *Capital District Educational Opportunity Center*

Abstract: This presentation explores the critical role of wraparound services in fostering student success, particularly in educational environments serving diverse and underserved populations. Wraparound services provide a holistic approach by addressing not only academic needs but also the social, emotional, and practical challenges that impact student outcomes. By integrating support systems such as counseling, career services, tutoring, and community partnerships, institutions can create a robust safety net that empowers students to overcome barriers and achieve their goals. Attendees will gain insights into best practices, successful implementation strategies, and measurable impacts, leaving equipped to enhance student success through comprehensive, coordinated support systems.

Concurrent Workshops

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Recognizing And Addressing Advisor Burnout In Self And In Community

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Presenter(s): Ms. Stephanie Cowling-Rich, *Cornell University*

Abstract: This interactive session will discuss how burnout may manifest and how to address it for a professional advisor audience. For the purpose of this session, we will look at burnout as defined as "emotional exhaustion, sense of accomplishment, and depersonalization." Within this presentation, we will share signs of burnout, discuss strategies to address advisor burnout in self and in community, and share best practices to mitigate burnout.

Leading With Purpose: Transformative And Servant Leadership In The EOF Journey

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Presenter(s): Mr. Julian Gomez, *County College of Morris*

Abstract: This presentation highlights how transformative and servant leadership principles shape the EOF program at County College of Morris, guiding students from recruitment through graduation and beyond. With a focus on community-building, social justice, and leadership development, the program integrates practices such as student engagement through cultural events, mentoring, and personalized support. By utilizing data-driven strategies and consistent communication, we ensure each student receives the necessary attention to succeed. Participants will gain actionable insights into creating an inclusive and empowering environment that enables EOF students to thrive academically, socially, and as future leaders in their communities.

The Impossible Is Possible

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Presenter(s): Dr. Reginald Wright Jr., *Reggie Wright Enterprise*

Abstract: EOF students succeed with the support of a collaborative "village"—dedicated personnel contributing diverse skills and encouragement. Dr. Wright, a proud EOF alum, delivers a dynamic keynote to inspire and empower attendees. Participants will explore recruitment and retention strategies, resilience-building practices, and methods to foster self-care and self-esteem. Highlighting the W.R.I.G.H.T Method, Dr. Wright demonstrates how partnership development and innovative support make the impossible possible. By adopting the "village" mindset, EOF professionals can overcome challenges and lead students to academic and personal success.

Planning The Pivot: Using A Strategic Planning Model To Reassess, Redesign, & Refocus Your Opportunity Program Services

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Presenter(s): Dr. Zabrina Songui, *Rutgers University - Newark*

Abstract: Meeting the changing needs of underserved students requires opportunity programs to reassess their services to develop a new "pivot" or path forward. However, that path may be overwrought with barriers such as funding, bureaucracy, or campus culture. This interactive session will cover how the EOF Program at Rutgers University – Newark uses an annual strategic planning model to break down barriers and motivate team members towards collective goals. Attendants will leave this session with a template to develop their own strategic plan alongside fellow thought partners.

"It's Time To Unpack My Stuff & Discover That Self-Care Is NOT A Waste Of Time!"

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Presenter(s): Dr. Robin Eubanks, *Rutgers University - School of Health Professions*

Abstract: Emotional wellness and self-care include the process of creating a lifestyle of balance and healthy relational boundaries which is discovered to be a continual process of growth. The concept of change in cognitive and emotional behaviors will be discussed as related to self-care. Self-improvement and self-care always begin with self-awareness and the ability to embrace the decision that some things may need to change. In this workshop there will be a brief self-assessment of strengths and challenges. We will define and identify the usage of emotional masks that have replaced our true self. We will identify steps toward self-care in the unique definition of self-worth and its application. Finally, we will learn to celebrate small victories toward self-care and that we are worth the investment.

Best Practices For Student Retention And Success In Higher Education.

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Presenter(s): Mr. Kenneth N. Robinson, *SUNY Erie*

Abstract: My presentation on "Best Practices for Student Success and Retention in Higher Education" will highlight factors that have enabled me to build a successful record as a higher education professional with over 20 years of experience, at community colleges, and four-year universities. Thus, I will present real-world data, based on real-world outcomes. Such successes have included effective marketing, recruitment, and enrollment practices that increased yields for all student populations served, from various regions throughout New York State, including those from low-income backgrounds, who are first-generation college students. Additionally, I have had success within student support services. I will point to best practices for reducing attrition rates for at-risk students from racial and ethnically diverse populations who are underrepresented in higher education. My presentation will outline strategies to increase the retention, persistence, and graduation rates for such students from vulnerable populations.

The Comeback Summer: The Story Of Redesigning EOP Success At SUNY Morrisville

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Presenter(s): Mrs. Kayle Light-Curtin, Monica McGuire Cartas, & Ashlee Duncan, *SUNY Morrisville*

Abstract: When significant staff turnover and program turmoil challenged the EOP Summer Academy at SUNY Morrisville, we saw an opportunity to rebuild—not just the program, but the community. By redesigning the Academy to emphasize academic support, social integration, and peer mentorship (plus a lot of fun), we created a dynamic, student-centered experience. The results? A thriving sense of community, a 9.4% increase in retention over two years, and rising GPAs across the board. This session will highlight how strategic redesign can drive student success, transform program outcomes, and prove that even small changes can have big, measurable impacts.

The Ph.D. And You!

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Presenter(s): Dr. Alice Shepard & Mara Washburn, *The City College of New York*

Abstract: This workshop will focus on completing a doctorate while working full-time in an academic support setting. The Ph.D. is a degree that increases one's depth of knowledge and career potential. Yet, many do not pursue it due to the time involved and other tangible and perceived barriers. This session will provide participants with essential strategies for balancing a doctoral program, work, and personal life. The workshop will be informal, fun, and experiential. The participants will be encouraged to share their personal stories.

Lunch/Featured Speaker

1:00 PM – 2:15 PM | Location: Grand Ballroom

Introduction

1:00 PM – 2:15 PM

Featured Speaker: Sharon Jordan Holley

1:00 PM – 2:15 PM

Speaker



Sharon Holley

Storyteller/Retired Librarian | Buffalo, NY

Concurrent Workshops

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

EOF Is The Cheat Code

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Presenter(s): Dr. Reginald Wright Jr., *Reggie Wright Enterprise*

Abstract: "EOF is the Cheat Code" is an engaging workshop that showcases how the EOF program serves as a powerful tool for student success. Dr. Wright, a dynamic storyteller and former EOF scholar, leads the workshop and draws from his dissertation to explore five factors that produce high-achieving students. Professionals will learn how these factors support mental health, resiliency, individual growth, self-care, and self-esteem to help scholars overcome adversity. By focusing on personal growth and leadership, it will improve student retention, build self-confidence, and increase graduation rates. This will enhance resiliency, empowering students to thrive academically and achieve long-term success.

Bridging The Gap: The First-Gen Student Center At Ramapo College

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Presenter(s): Ms. Gabriella Ammiano, Dr. Nicole Videla & Uma Mahalingam, *Ramapo College of New Jersey*

Abstract: Ramapo College launched a First-Generation Student Center to create a supportive campus environment for students who are first in their families to graduate with a 4 year degree in the US. The Center builds off the success of Ramapo's established EOF program. This presentation will explore the key strategies used in establishing the Center, covering its history and stakeholder engagement since 2018, current initiatives centered on student programming and feedback, and the overarching vision for the Center's future. Additionally, the session will discuss the importance of institutional commitment, cross-campus collaboration, and a campus culture that celebrates first-generation student success.

Building Recruitment And Retention Plans For First-Generation Students

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Presenter(s): Mr. Joseph Connell & Anthony Dovi, *Ramapo College of New Jersey*

Abstract: Ramapo College will share the holistic and collaborative strategies implemented to scale and tailor first-generation student recruitment and retention. Over the last four years, Ramapo has doubled the number of first-generation students and increased their retention rate to match the overall excellent College rate of 87%. Using a Strategic Enrollment Management approach, Admissions, Financial Aid, Student Success (including EOF and the First-Generation Student Center) and Advancement have collaborated to reallocate funds, shift financial aid strategy, increase student support and receive external funding to build a culture of first-generation success.

Building Academic Resilience: Practical Strategies For Coaching In Opportunity Programs

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Presenter(s): Dr. Gayatri Nehrusingh-Pajerowski, Ms. Angelly Cabada, & Ms. Allyson Smith, *Passaic County Community College*

Abstract: This presentation explores the transformative role of academic coaching in advancing opportunity programs by enhancing metacognitive mastery and promoting self-regulated learning. By applying theoretical frameworks such as Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, Triadic Reciprocal Determinism, and Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, the session demonstrates how coaching fosters self-awareness, learning autonomy, and academic success. Participants will learn practical strategies for integrating academic coaching into advising, mentoring, and tutoring, with an emphasis on improving student access, persistence, and retention. Real-world examples and research outcomes will showcase the effectiveness of academic coaching in supporting students in opportunity programs.

Nurturing Curiosity - Piloting An Emerging Researchers Program For CSTEP Students

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Presenter(s): Dr. Adriane Bilous, *Manhattan University*

Abstract: The Emerging Researchers Program is a multi-year pilot program designed to cultivate the career aspirations of future scientists and researchers. We had 10 first- and second-year students, and we will triple that number next year. The first year, "Decoding STEM Research", introduced students to research methods and built their critical thinking skills through a Journal Club led by senior students on similar career journeys. Our central goal was to foster critical thinking, enhance research literacy, and promote interdisciplinary discussions among STEM students through exposure to diverse research. This workshop will discuss how to foster researcher identities to improve career outcomes.

Where Are Your Students Playing? The Gamification Of Counseling And How To Recognize Your Students' Needs Through The Lens Of Online Gaming

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Presenter(s): Dr. Chris Humphreys, *Fairleigh Dickinson University - Metropolitan Campus*

Abstract: This presentation explores the intersection of online gaming and student well-being, highlighting how gamification influences counseling practices in higher education. By examining where students spend their time in virtual spaces, it provides insights into their social, emotional, and cognitive needs. Attendees will learn to recognize key behaviors and challenges faced by students in online gaming environments and how these experiences impact academic performance and mental health. The session emphasizes practical strategies for leveraging gamification to foster engagement, build trust, and create effective counseling interventions tailored to the unique dynamics of gaming communities.

Leveraging Technology For Seamless Recruitment And Enrollment At Westchester EOC

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Presenter(s): Dr. Ana Veras & Wilda Luciano, *SUNY Westchester Educational Opportunity Center*

Abstract: Streamlining the enrollment journey for applicants is crucial to the success of Westchester EOC, where efficient processes and personal connections guide applicants from recruitment through orientation. This workshop will present our approach to using scheduling tools like Acuity Scheduling to manage and enhance each step of the enrollment pipeline. By tracking every interaction—from initial outreach and admissions testing to enrollment interviews, document submissions, and orientation scheduling—we ensure a responsive and supportive applicant experience. We will also discuss the integration of case management and individualized counseling, enabling us to stay connected and address applicants' needs effectively. Participants will learn practical techniques for leveraging technology to boost engagement, improve follow-up, and create a seamless path to enrollment that prioritizes each applicant's success.

Navigating the Apathy Apocalypse Synopsis: Addressing the Apathy Crisis- Strategic Interventions for Student Re-engagement

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Presenter(s): Keith Nunez, *SUNY University at Albany*

Abstract: Understanding the student's mind through the impact of AI, social media and global pressures. This session is geared to raise your awareness of the student mind of today, and assist you in the limiting your burnout by adjusting your perspective.

State Meetings (NJ/NY/PA)

4:00 PM – 5:30 PM

New Jersey
4:00 PM – 5:30 PM

New York
4:00 PM – 5:30 PM

Pennsylvania
4:00 PM – 5:30 PM

Dinner (on your own)

6:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Mentor/Mentee Mixer

9:00 PM – 10:00 PM | Location: Kelsey

NEXTGen will be hosting a Mentor/Mentee networking event. Looking to connect with seasoned staff or help other navigate personal and professional challenges, attend this event!

Networking Session

9:00 PM – 11:00 PM | Location: Hudson Ballroom

Tuesday, April 08, 2025

Registration

8:30 AM – 4:00 PM | Location: Banquet Level

Commuter Lounge Open


9:00 AM – 5:00 PM | Location: Hudson Ballroom

Welcome & Morning Plenary Speaker

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM | Location: Grand Ballroom

Welcome
9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

Morning Plenary Speaker
9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

Speaker
 **Felecia Webb**
Chief Strategy Officer | Philanthropy and Partnerships at Partnership on AI (PAI)

Tri-State Consortium Updates

10:15 AM – 11:30 AM | Location: Grand Ballroom

Concurrent Workshops

11:45 AM – 12:45 PM

M.A.N.H.O.O.D.
11:45 AM – 12:45 PM

Presenter(s): Mr. Jeff Golbourne, *Jeff Goulbourne Enterprises*

Abstract: Adolescent males face challenges like lack of structure and peer pressure, requiring mentorship and support to overcome. Jeff Goulbourne’s 7-step program, “M.A.N.H.O.O.D.,” empowers young men to grow into thriving individuals of high character. This presentation explores seven core traits essential for personal development, academic success, and leadership. Each lesson guides young scholars on their journey to integrity, strength, and purpose. By embracing these principles, participants gain the tools to navigate life’s challenges, build meaningful lives, and make a positive impact. This framework serves as a powerful roadmap to becoming men of high character and lasting influence.

Perfection To Imperfection

11:45 AM – 12:45 PM

Presenter(s): Mr. Donovan Griffin, *DG Inspires*

Abstract: Many students dream of graduating high school and college, but they often feel overwhelmed, leading to self-doubt. Donovan Griffin, a compelling storyteller, connects with students by sharing his experiences with anxiety and depression as a first-generation college student. His empathetic approach inspires students to persist and thrive. Donovan emphasizes Carol Dweck's growth mindset theory, encouraging students to commit to their academic journey and goals. He also addresses imposter syndrome, where students doubt their abilities. To address this, Donovan equips students with practical tools, including NACE competencies. Donovan empowers students to overcome challenges, improve student retention, and increase graduation rates.

Empowering Connections: Reimagining Advising For Student Success And Equity

11:45 AM – 12:45 PM

Presenter(s): Dr. James Whitney III, Adelina Marini, & Al-Lateef Farmer, *Mercer County Community College*

Abstract: Reimagining Advising to Retain and Empower explores Mercer County Community College's transformative approach to academic advising, leveraging the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) framework to create a holistic, equity-driven support model for all students. This workshop highlights strategies to integrate proactive advising, career and transfer services, and cultural initiatives into a cohesive, inclusive model that empowers first-generation students, students of color, and underrepresented populations. Participants will gain actionable insights on implementing strengths-based cohort advising, fostering belonging, and using data intentionally to drive retention and student success. This session offers a blueprint for reimagining advising as a catalyst for equity and empowerment.

Supporting College Students Estranged From Parents: An Ecological Validation Framework

11:45 AM – 12:45 PM

Presenter(s): Ms. Tatia Haywood, *Montclair State University*; Dr. Jarrell Johnson, *University of Utah*

Abstract: Familial support is essential to college students' success. However, family relationships can be complicated leading to estrangement in families. This presentation examines how the Ecological Validation Model of Student Success can be used to support college students estranged from their parents. We consider institutional barriers, social support networks, and validation experiences to explore how colleges can create affirming environments for this marginalized population. Recommendations include establishing dedicated support initiatives, training campus stakeholders on estrangement issues, and advocating to implement flexible policies around financial aid and housing. This approach promotes individual resilience and systemic change.

Unveiling AI Pedagogical Literacy: Lessons From Community College Faculty To Enhance Teaching And Learning In Higher Education

11:45 AM – 12:45 PM

Presenter(s): Dr. Enrique Noguera, *Passaic County Community College*

Abstract: This presentation reveals findings from a groundbreaking qualitative study examining how community college faculty are informally adopting ChatGPT in their teaching practices. Through analysis using the Technology Acceptance Model, the research introduces the novel AI Pedagogical Literacy framework with implications across higher education. These insights provide faculty, executive administrators, and opportunity program team members with evidence-based approaches for enhancing learning in and outside of the classroom through AI tools, advancing educational equity and student success across diverse educational settings.

Listening Beyond Words: Building Bridges Through Intentional Communication

11:45 AM – 12:45 PM

Presenter(s): Mrs. Christine Millien, *Ramapo College of New Jersey*

Abstract:

In the rapidly evolving landscape of higher education, effective communication serves as the foundation for trust, understanding, and meaningful connections with students. By honing the skill of attentive listening and cultivating an inviting atmosphere, professionals will discover techniques to build trust while bridging generational and cultural divides. Uncover how subtle gestures, attentive listening, and shared experiences can transform conversations into valuable growth opportunities. Understand the underlying reasons behind student behaviors, practice grace in communication, and establish healthy boundaries while remaining receptive. By fostering a secure and supportive environment, educators can create spaces where students thrive academically, personally, and professionally.

Working To Live, Not Living To Work: How To Create Work/Life Balance In Higher Ed

11:45 AM – 12:45 PM

Presenter(s): Ms. Alyssa Joyce, *Rowan College at Burlington County*

Abstract: This workshop is about all things balance, boundaries, and breaks! You can expect to engage in discussions about creating boundaries with students, colleagues, and bosses, how to manage your time for yourself and your time for your work, and how to highlight who you are... because you are more than just your work! Learn about how to make the viral concept of a dopamine menu work for your lifestyle and create your own dopamine menu to use in your everyday life. I cannot wait to share space with you.

Featured Workshops: The Procrastination Cure: Crushing Excuses and Executing With Excellence

11:45 AM – 12:45 PM

Presenter(s): KD Wilson

Abstract: Procrastination isn't just a bad habit—it's a roadblock standing between you and your goals. In this engaging and practical session, we'll uncover the hidden reasons why you delay, avoid, and hold yourself back, even when success is within reach. More importantly, we'll provide you with actionable strategies to reset your mindset, take control of your time, and build momentum toward your goals. Whether you're stuck in cycles of hesitation or looking for tools to push past perfectionism, this session will empower you to break free and take decisive action. It's time to stop waiting and start winning.

Speaker



Kd Wilson

Founder | ConsultWithKD, LLC

Lunch

1:00 PM – 2:15 PM | Location: Grand Ballroom

Concurrent Workshops

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Transformative Academic Advising: Insights From A Phenomenological Study Of Community College Support Programs

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Presenter(s): Dr. Jose Lowe, *Hudson County Community College*

Abstract: This workshop explores transformative academic advising practices derived from a phenomenological study of advisors in the New Jersey Educational Opportunity Fund and TRIO-SSS programs. Participants will learn to implement holistic, student-centered advising approaches informed by Tinto's Departure Theory, Schlossberg's Transition Theory, and the American Counseling Association Social Justice Advocacy Framework. The session addresses best practices, lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, and professional development and supervision strategies. Through interactive activities and real-world scenarios, attendees will gain actionable tools to enhance opportunity program student access, persistence, and success.

Social Work Internships Within Opportunity Programs: A Justice-Based And Contemplative Practice Approach

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Presenter(s): Dr. Erica King-Toler, *John Jay College of Criminal Justice -CUNY*; Delmar Dualeah, *John Jay College of Criminal Justice -CUNY*; Mayra Perez, *John Jay College of Criminal Justice -CUNY*; Dr. Octavia F. Williams, *Columbia School of Social Work*; Dr. Melissa Bessaha, *Columbia School of Social Work*; Dr. Cheryl L. Franks, *John Jay College of Criminal Justice -CUNY*

Abstract: In 2010, SEEK, collaborating with NYC-based Schools of Social Work, developed a social work intern program, with interns serving SEEK students utilizing different practice modalities. Throughout the years, the educator team (i.e., interns, supervisors, educational coordinator) created a justice-based and contemplative-practice approach (JBCPA) to the internship, impacting the entire department.

Transforming Faculty Engagement: Incorporating Faculty Into The Pre-Summer Program Experience

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Presenter(s): Mrs. Katrina Liera, *Montclair State University*

Abstract: Faculty involvement in an opportunity program's pre-college summer program is critical in providing a structured and supportive learning environment that helps incoming scholars gain confidence, develop necessary academic skills, and successfully transition into college life. This presentation will highlight the involvement of faculty at Montclair State University' Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF)'s summer academy experience and the success it has had in facilitating meaningful connections between incoming first-year students and faculty. We will discuss strategies about how to effectively integrate faculty in summer programming and encourage attendees to critically think about the ways to enhance collaboration at their respective institutions.

Knock Knock Let Me In: Getting The Guarded Student To Open Up

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Presenter(s): Mr. Dominic Bowman, *Rider University*

Abstract: This workshop aims to explore effective strategies for educators to connect with and support guarded students in academic settings. Many students build emotional walls that hinder their engagement and hinder their academic progress. In this interactive session, we will discuss the underlying causes of guardedness, share practical insights into recognizing signs of emotional barriers, and provide actionable techniques to foster trust and open communication. Participants will leave with a toolkit of approaches to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

The Switch: Navigating Healthcare/Stem Pre-College Bridge Program Essentials

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Presenter(s): Ms. Melissa Vargas, *Rutgers University - Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy*

Abstract: This session will explore the core components of a model pre-college summer bridge program designed for incoming Pharmacy students at the Rutgers University – Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy. The presenter will highlight how this model intertwines rigorous academic preparation, professional development, and social-emotional development to create a comprehensive student support experience designed to assist students in their transition to college and prepare them to be culturally competent leaders in the healthcare field. Participants will be provided a space to reflect, brainstorm, and share ideas and best practices. The goal is to encourage collaboration and resource-sharing on a broader scale among various campuses.

Leadership Is Grounded In Service

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Presenter(s): Mr. Ronnie Hector, *SUNY Bronx Educational Opportunity Center*

Abstract: It is possible to serve and still lead because serving is the foundational principle of leadership. Sometimes, we are so focused on leading that we neglect to serve. However, we should understand that serving elevates you to a position of counsel that reflects your understanding and commitment to leadership. As you serve as counsel, you allow your wisdom and knowledge to balance your understanding. True leaders are balanced in their approach to leadership.

Bridging The Gap: Collaborative Case Management For Student Success At Westchester EOC

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Presenter(s): Mr. Mathew Tirell & Dr. Cynthia Nwizu, *SUNY Westchester Educational Opportunity Center*

Abstract: At Westchester EOC, collaboration between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs is essential in empowering students to overcome barriers and achieve their academic goals. This workshop highlights our integrated case management model, which bridges departmental efforts to monitor and support students' academic progress and personal development. Participants will gain insight into our multi-faceted approach to tracking attendance, monitoring grades, and implementing early interventions for students showing signs of risk. Through real-life examples and practical tools, we will showcase how dedicated communication channels and structured follow-ups enable us to provide continuous support from enrollment to graduation. Attendees will leave equipped with strategies for creating a cohesive support network that encourages accountability, fosters resilience, and ultimately strengthens student success.

Featured Workshop: Beyond Access: Building Sustainable Mental Health and Leadership Programs for Student Success

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Presenter(s): Christina Broderick-Royes

Abstract: Ensuring student success extends beyond academic access—it requires intentional support systems that address mental health, leadership development, and long-term well-being. This session will provide a strategic framework for designing and implementing impactful mental health and leadership programs within opportunity programs. Drawing from extensive experience working directly with TRIO, EOF/EOP and other student support initiatives, this workshop will equip attendees with actionable strategies to build sustainable programming that fosters resilience, emotional intelligence, and professional growth among students. Attendees will explore best practices for integrating mental health and leadership development into existing student support structures, engaging key stakeholders, and overcoming institutional barriers. Through real-world case studies and interactive discussions, participants will leave with a clear roadmap for strengthening student success initiatives that promote holistic well-being and leadership readiness.

Speaker



Christina Broderick-Royes

Founder | Intention Elevation

OSHE Updates (For NJ Programs Only)

3:45 PM – 4:45 PM | Location: Kelsey

Awards Banquet

6:30 PM – 9:00 PM | Location: Grand Ballroom

WELCOME REMARKS AND PRAYER: Ronnie R. Hector, Conference Chair

BREAK FOR DINNER

CEREMONY

- **Opening Remarks:** *Phyllis Breland, President*
- **Master of Ceremonies:** *Brett Pulliam, Treasurer*
- **Introduction of Committees:** *Ronnie R. Hector, Conference Chair*
 - *Registration: Renee Grant, Chair*
 - *Jenice Sabb-Dumas, Hasani Carter, Stephanie Shanklin, Alexis Delgado*
 - *Program: Renee Grant, Chair*

- Hopeton Allen, Debra Joseph-McEwen
- *Proposals: Katelyn Good, Chair*
 - Tracie Meyers, Alton Campbell, David Johnson, Peter Collazo, Sabrina Magliulo
- *Pre-Conference Review: Phyllis Breland, Chair*
 - Suja Patel, L'Oréal Ellington
- *Moderator: Sabrina Magliulo, Chair*
 - Briana Alford, Isaac Belgrave, Shornna Berkeley, Abigail Bryant, Priscilla Burke, Rita Celariste, Irma Cruz, Brenda Davis, Ashlee Duncan, Betty Duverger, Loreal Ellington, Christopher Gladden, Jennifer Golden, Julian Gomez, Derrick Gunter, Amber Henley, Dorathea (Dee) Jackson, Katrina Liera, Pamela McCall, Tracie Meyers, Buvaeswari Narayanan, Tabitha Riley, Tanadjza Robinson-McCray, William Short, Zabrina Songui, Flora Stowe, Ana Veras, Katelyn Good
- *Hospitality: Brittany Granville, Chair*
 - Tracie Meyers, Dominique Wheeler, Ryan Roche, Irma Cruz
- *Awards: Dominique Wheeler, Chair*
 - Katelyn Good, Briana Alford, Brittany Granville, Michelle Lopez
- *VIP: Jenice Sabb-Dumas, Chair*
 - Jenice Sabb-Dumas, Hasani Carter
- *AV: Michael Whiting, Chair*
 - Malik Howard, Miguel Rodriguez, Catherine Sackey
- *App: Hema Patel, Chair*
- *Setup/Breakdown: David Johnson, Chair*
 - Hasani Carter, Hamzah Ghani, Peter Collazo, Irma Cruz

**Conference Committee Group Photo*

IN MEMORIAM RECOGNITION

AWARDS

Dr. James H. Whitney III: Distinguished Alumni Award

- *Presented by: Renee Grant*
- *Recommended by: Dr. Hasani Carter*

Maritza Davila: Distinguished Alumni Award

- *Presented/Recommended by: Dr. Hasani Carter*

Dr. Keisha V. Thomas: Distinguished Alumni Award

- *Presented by: Katelyn Good*
- *Recommended by: Betty Duverger*

Senator Lea Webb: Distinguished Alumni Award

- *Presented by: Sabrina Magliulo*
- *Recommended by: Cheryl Hamilton*

Representative Jordan A. Harris: Distinguished Alumni Award (Video)

- *Presented by: Ronnie Hector*
- *Recommended by: Karen Riley*

Michelle Lopez: Outstanding Counselor Award

- *Presented by: Michael Whiting*
- *Recommended by: Ronnie Hector*

Sasha Pantzialas: NextGen Award

- *Presented by: Brett Pulliam*
- *Recommended by: Betty Duverger*

Briana Alford: NextGen Award

- *Presented by: Brett Pulliam*
- *Recommended by: Cheryl Hamilton*

Taur Orange: Outstanding Director Award

- *Presented by: Robert James*
- *Recommended by: Cheryl Hamilton*

AWARDEES *(not in attendance)*

Dr. Alberta Tamika Quick: Distinguished Alumni Award

- *Presented by: Dr. Jenice Sabb-Dumas*
- *Recommended by: Dr. Hasani Carter*

Angela Barker, Esq.: Distinguished Alumni Award

- *Presented by: Phyllis Breland*
- *Recommended by: Betty Duverger*

Fatou Thiao: Distinguished Alumni Award

- *Presented by: Brittany Granville*
- *Recommended by: Lisa Jackson*

Al-Lateef Farmer: NextGen Award

- *Presented by: David Johnson*
- *Recommended by: OSHE EOF*

GROUP PICTURE WITH AWARDEES

CLOSING REMARKS: *Ronnie r. Hector, Conference Chair*

Networking Session

9:00 PM – 11:00 PM | Location: Hudson Ballroom

NEXTGen Meeting

9:00 PM – 10:00 PM | Location: Kelsey

Wednesday, April 09, 2025

Leadership Institute Presentations

9:30 AM – 10:30 AM | Location: Kelsey

Town Hall Meeting-All Sectors

10:30 AM – 12:00 PM | Location: Grand Ballroom

Presenter: Cynthia Carvajal



University Center for Academic
and Workforce Development

April 5, 2025

Dear Tri-State Consortium of Opportunity Program Members and Conference Attendees,

It is with distinct pleasure and gratitude that I welcome you to Tri-State's 2025 conference – *Leadership by Design: Advancing Opportunity Programs through Transformative Practice*. As the title suggests, our work will explore, assess and reshape the core of what it means to lead in our space. This focal area presents us with a chance to grow as professionals and learn from the best in our field, all while building relationships and engaging in fellowship that will last for years to come.

As the leader of a statewide opportunity program based in Albany, New York, this year's conference is particularly energizing for me. Both living and working within minutes of our conference space, at the seat of the Empire State's capitol building and legislative chambers, I cannot imagine a more poignant setting for the impactful work on which we embark. I hope that our city and community will speak to you as a representative of individuals and families who need us to both lead and succeed as educators and administrators.

Welcome to Albany and the Tri-State 2025 conference. Your sacrifice in traveling and working as a regional collective is appreciated, and I look forward to a fun, transformative experience together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa L. Jackson".

Ms. Lisa L. Jackson
Associate Provost and Director
University Center for Academic
and Workforce Development



Office of Special Programs
The City University of New York
555 West 57th Street
Suite 1401
New York, New York 10019

Dear Tri-State Consortium Colleagues,

I am thrilled to celebrate the 2025 Biennial Conference of the Tri-State Consortium of Opportunity Programs in Higher Education, a remarkable gathering of champions of innovation and equity in higher education. As the Interim Dean of Special Programs at the City University of New York, overseeing the SEEK and College Discovery programs, I am honored to support this pivotal event centered on the theme: **Leadership by Design: Advancing Opportunity Programs through Transformative Practice.**

The work we do as educators, advocates, and leaders in higher education opportunity programs is nothing short of transformational. Across the institutions represented, serving over 60,000 students, we collectively create pathways for academic success, professional growth, and lifelong achievement. Our mission extends beyond access—we strive to cultivate excellence, resilience, and leadership among students who might otherwise face insurmountable barriers to higher education.

This year's theme underscores the importance of intentional leadership and innovation in our field. As we share best practices, research, and experiences, let us challenge ourselves to reimagine the structures that support our students, ensuring they are not only equipped to succeed but empowered to lead. Whether through data-driven strategies, holistic support services, or community partnerships, our transformative practices must continue evolving to meet the needs of an ever-changing educational landscape.

I encourage each of you to engage deeply in the discussions, workshops, and networking opportunities that this conference offers. The collective wisdom and expertise of this community are invaluable, and together, we have the power to shape policies and practices that will define the future of opportunity programs.

On behalf of CUNY's Office of Special Programs, I extend my gratitude to the Tri-State Consortium for its unwavering commitment to equity and student success.

With warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Althea Forde'.

Althea Forde, Ed.D.
Interim, University Dean

Conference Speakers & Bios

Sunday Opening Keynote



President Holley is a noted legal scholar and thought leader in the field of higher education. Her expertise on civil rights, education, and the Supreme Court is routinely sought after by leading global media outlets including NBC, CNN, and The Boston Globe. An educator first, President Holley teaches a 300-level politics class on the Supreme Court, serves as a thesis advisor, and advises MHC's brand new law review student org. She is a co-chair of the Board for the Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and an Aspen Institute Liberty Fellow.

Monday Morning Plenary



Kevin Wright is the Managing Partner & CEO of Aeriis Insights Group Incorporated, a strategic leadership consultancy servicing clients in the areas of strategic management, leadership development and inclusion. He's held several C-suite, senior leadership and consulting roles at Aeriis and Muse Health in addition to three Fortune 100 companies, U.S. Bank, Target and Bank of America, with responsibilities spanning five countries.

Monday Lunch Speaker



Sharon Jordan Holley is a storyteller and retired librarian in Buffalo, New York, who hails from High Springs, FL. She is a founding member of Spin-A-Story Tellers of Western New York and a Co-founder of Tradition Keepers: Black Storytellers of Western New York. She is also a Life Member of the National Association of Black Storytellers, Inc. where she received the Zora Neale Hurston Award, the Association's highest award given for excellence in storytelling. She occasionally performs with Karima Amin as "We All Storytellers."

Tuesday Morning Plenary



Felecia is a social impact strategist and advocate for equity utilizing data-driven approaches as a changemaker, and has worked across diverse policy areas, including technology, social justice, arts and culture, health and human services, and workforce development. She created and implemented comprehensive public-private initiatives to improve life outcomes for underrepresented populations. Felecia is a native New Yorker and attended NYC public schools, she is an alum of the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) and received a Bachelor of Fine Arts at The New School – Parsons School of Design, and master's in public administration and policy at NYU Wagner School of Public Service.

Town Hall Speaker



Cynthia Carvajal is a scholar and practitioner at the intersection of immigration and education. Originally from Zapopan, Mexico she immigrated to East Los Angeles, CA at the age of five where she navigated K-12 education as an undocumented immigrant. Her personal and professional goals are grounded in her experience as a formerly undocumented immigrant, student, and community member for 12 years of her life.

Tuesday Afternoon Session Speaker



Christina Broderick-Royes, LSW, is a mental health and organizational change consultant, educator, and speaker dedicated to transforming the way institutions support historically marginalized communities. As the founder of Intention Elevation, she partners with educational institutions, corporations, and small businesses nationwide to create sustainable mental health-focused programs, leadership development initiatives, and strategic change management solutions.

NEXT GEN

— TRI-STATE CONSORTIUM —

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eXcellence and Transformation*



Bridge Generational Gaps
Holistically Empower the **NEXTGeneration**
Champion Adaptive Professional Development
Lift Each Other Up

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Breakdown and Clean-up

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