



*University of
Kentucky*

**2025 UKWF
Annual
Conference**

Leading with Intention

Finding Purpose in What
You Do and Who You Are

 Wildcat Forum

December 9, 2025

**December 9, 2025 | 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
University of Kentucky Gatton Student Center
160 Ave of Champions, Lexington, KY 40508**

Our Mission

Since the beginning, the UKWF has existed to create an equitable community at the University. As the workplace continues to evolve, our commitment remains the same: creating space to discuss relevant issues and using collective problem-solving and educational opportunities to empower and champion.



Our Board

2024 - 2025 Executive Committee

Heather McAtee (Chair)
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2025 - 2026 Term

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2025 - 2027 Term

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Amanda Biddle
Jennafer Hackworth
Stacy Gills
Casey Roley
Janice Geurin-Leslie
Alyssa Knox
Sabrina Darnell
Bailey Vandiver

Conference Agenda

9:00 - 9:30 a.m. — Check In and Light Breakfast

9:30 - 10:20 a.m. — Opening Session and Keynote

10:20 - 10:35 a.m. — Transition Break

10:35 - 11:20 a.m. — Breakout Session 1

11:20 - 11:35 a.m. — Transition Break

11:35 a.m. - 12:20 p.m. — Breakout Session 2

12:20 - 12:35 p.m. — Transition Break

12:30 - 1:35 p.m. — Lunch and Keynote

1:35 - 1:50 p.m. — Transition Break

1:50 - 2:35 p.m. — Breakout Session 3

2:35 - 2:50 p.m. — Transition Break

2:50 - 3:35 p.m. — Breakout Session 4

3:35 -4:00 p.m. — Closing Session

The opening and closing sessions are located in the Grand Ballroom. Breakout sessions are located in the following rooms: 231, 268, 330AB, 330C, 330E, 331

Our Keynote Speakers

Devine Carama

Devine is a 2022 Emmy Award-winning hip-hop artist, author, and educator whose viral video on emotional intelligence led to features on Good Morning America and the Jennifer Hudson Show. Through his nonprofit Believing in Forever Inc., he continues to mentor and uplift the community. He is also the Director of ONE Lexington.



Davonna Saier

Davonna is the founder of Davonna Inclusive, where she champions positivity, inclusiveness, and strategic growth through coaching, public speaking, and leadership development. A Certified Professional Life Coach, she blends heart and expertise to help individuals and organizations thrive. With a background in healthcare leadership, communications, and PR, Davonna brings a unique perspective to every room she enters.

Opening Session

9:00 - 10:20 a.m. | Grand Ballroom

Opening Remarks

- Ryessia Russell, UKWF Conference Chair

Morning Keynote Speaker

- Devine Carama (Director of ONE Lexington, Founder and Director of Believing in Forever Inc., Emmy Award-winning hip hop artist)
- Keynote Title: Leadership & Legacy: How Being One of One, Can Inspire Many
- Introduced by Emily Smith

Chair Remarks

- Heather McAtee, UKWF Board Chair

Breakout Session One

10:35 a.m. to 11:20 a.m.



Leading with Intention Through the 5 Voices Framework

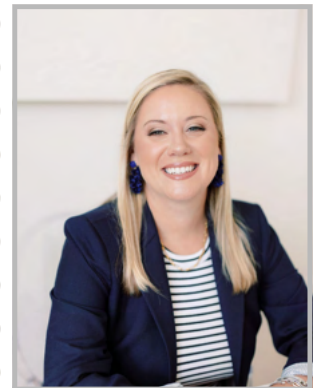
Joseph Hacker, M.Ed., Room: GSC 231

This interactive workshop invites participants to explore 5 Voices: How to Communicate Effectively with Everyone You Lead by Jeremie Kubicek and Steve Cockram as a practical framework for intentional leadership. The session begins with a 15-minute self-assessment using the free 5 Voices tool from GiANT University. Participants will gain strategies for recognizing and valuing the voices of others, bridging communication gaps, and applying this awareness to lead change with greater clarity and purpose. By the end of the workshop, attendees will walk away with a deeper sense of their own foundational voice, what it brings at its best/worst, and practical tools to cultivate environments where every voice is heard.

Epic Failures: How Mistakes Can Be Harnessed for More Business

Kaelyn Query, MBA, Room: GSC 268

In this session, Kaelyn Query, author of "So Worth It," leads attendees through the trials of business start-ups — the good, the bad, and the ugly — detailing her journey of leveraging some epic failures in business to create a successful (and seriously profitable) business. Attendees will leave this session with actionable steps they can immediately implement to move the needle forward — whether they want to own their own business or not.



Breakout Session One

10:35 a.m. to 11:20 a.m.

Leading from the Inside Out

Amy Stout, M.A., Room: GSC 331

When we lead ourselves well, we lead others well. Understanding and managing yourself is the foundation for great leadership, but most people find that leading themselves is challenging, regardless of their position or title. Effective leadership is a journey that begins with you. By mastering personal leadership qualities, individuals can create a positive and influential impact on those around them, fostering a culture of collaboration, trust, and shared success. Join Amy Carrington Stout, Kentucky League of Cities' member education manager, for a session focused on how self-leadership translates to relational and organizational leadership.



Lead Without Limits: Tackling Perfectionism, Imposter Syndrome and Burnout

Katie Neal, ACC, Room: GSC 330E

As kids, we're told "practice makes perfect" and taught to color inside the lines, ace every test, build the flawless résumé, and keep it all together with a smile. But in leadership, those lessons often morph into perfectionism, imposter syndrome, and burnout — the hidden barriers that quietly drain our confidence and stifle our growth. In this session, Katie Neal shines a light on these challenges and reframes them as opportunities for growth. Through stories, insights, and practical tools, participants will learn how to recognize the trap of perfectionism and release the pressure to be flawless, quiet their inner critic and own their seat at the table, and build habits that prevent burnout and fuel resilience. Freedom comes not from doing it all perfectly, but from leading with authenticity, clarity, and courage. This session equips participants to shift from self-doubt to self-trust, and from exhaustion to alignment so they can lead without limits, no matter the challenges ahead.

Breakout Session One

10:35 a.m. to 11:20 a.m.



What Taylor Swift Taught Me About Life, Love and Leadership

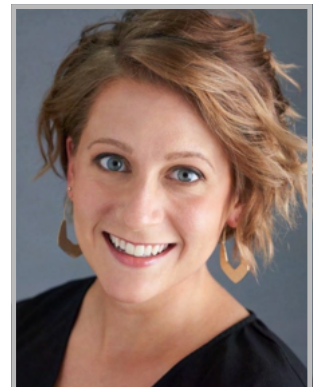
Heidi Metzger, M.S., Room: GSC 330AB

Heidi Metzger has been a Swiftie for over three years now and has been following her trajectory like almost everyone else, but has been reflecting lately on what impact Swift has had on her life as well as those she knows. While she's not everyone's cup of tea, her unique style of leadership – quiet, but powerful – is something Heidi hopes to emulate in her everyday life. Swift carries herself with confidence; she has loved and lost and loved again, never giving up the dream of finding happiness. She treats her employees with dignity and honor, is a quiet philanthropist, and does it all in her own way. She is truly a leader – not just an authority. She loves and respects herself. And she cares about the people who have helped her get to where she is. This is a presentation of one singer's music and poetry, and how it has helped the speaker find the music of her life.

Fostering Psychological Safety (Part 1)

Emily Smith, Room: GSC 330C

In today's interconnected workplace, every interaction – whether spoken, written, virtual or in-person – shapes an organization's culture and directly impacts psychological safety. This training explores the dynamics of communication in modern organizations, equipping participants with the skills to foster trust across all collaboration channels. Participants will learn how to recognize the role of meetings, messages and conversations in shaping workplace culture; apply best practices for all-encompassing communication across email, chat and verbal discussions; create psychologically safe environments that encourage sharing multiple perspectives, optimize collaboration in hybrid and virtual settings to enhance engagement; and build trust and transparency through mindful and effective communication strategies.



THIS IS A TWO-PART SESSION.

Breakout Session Two

11:35 a.m. to 12:20 p.m.



Defying Gravity: Overcoming Imposter Syndrome and Owning Your Greatness

Alicia N. Abney, Ed.D., Room: GSC 268

Imposter syndrome is a persistent challenge for many women in professional roles, or just in general! Great leaders, particularly first-generation and underrepresented individuals, find themselves questioning their qualifications despite clear evidence of their competence. This session will challenge participants to reframe self-doubt, dismantle perfectionism, and embrace their expertise with confidence. Using research-based insights, real-world strategies, and an interactive discussion, attendees will walk away with tools to own their greatness, advocate for themselves, and support peers facing similar struggles.

The Group Chat: Leading with Clarity and Purpose

**Kendriana Price, Ed.D., and
Jasmine Prince, M.Ed.,
Room: GSC 330AB**



Leadership takes many forms. Whether you are guiding a team, mentoring peers, organizing in your community, or shaping change in your own way, one thing remains constant: Conversations are always happening, and you will not always be part of every one. The ability to lead effectively often depends on how well you communicate. This session is designed for leaders at different stages and across different journeys. We will explore how to strengthen communication by being intentional, reflective, and strategic. Participants will learn how to build trust, stay connected, and lead with influence even when they are not physically present. Through real-world scenarios and interactive dialogue, we will examine how leaders can navigate complex dynamics, foster inclusion, and maintain clarity in environments shaped by continuous conversation. Whether you are just stepping into a leadership role or have years of experience, this session offers practical tools and fresh perspectives to help you lead with confidence and purpose. Participants will leave with strategies they can apply immediately in their own leadership journey.

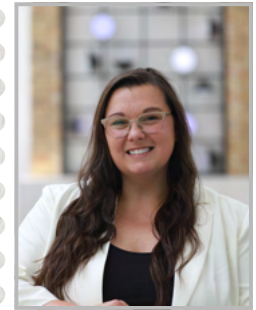
Breakout Session Two

11:35 a.m. to 12:20 p.m.

Make Your Own Seat at the Table: Women Leading with Intention

Megan Martin, MPA, and Michaela Johnson
Room: GSC 330E

Women leaders are often told to wait for opportunities or adapt, but real growth happens when we create our own path. In this interactive workshop, we will share our experience carving out leadership roles at HDR and how intention, advocacy, and authenticity shaped that journey. Together, we'll explore how women can find and own their unique leadership strengths, carve out their place in the workforce, and design careers that align with both personal values and organizational impact. Participants will engage in hands-on discussions about finding their leadership style and breaking down barriers. This session is designed to empower women to stop waiting for a seat at the table and instead build one of their own. Attendees will leave with a collective toolkit of strategies, a personalized leadership framework, and a renewed commitment to leading authentically.



The Four P's of Mentorship: How the People We Place in Our Presence Shape Who We Become

Howard Johnson, M.S., Room: GSC 331

Mentorship plays a pivotal role in shaping student success, personal growth, and professional achievement. This session explores how the principles of People, Presence, Purpose, and Product influence the mentoring relationship and, ultimately, student outcomes. This session will examine the intentional ways mentors and mentees can build meaningful connections within higher education settings. Attendees will gain practical strategies for applying the Four P's to their own mentoring practices. Participants will leave with a deeper understanding of how mentorship, when rooted in intentionality, can transform lives and communities by ensuring that the people we place in our presence shape us into stronger, more purposeful individuals.

Breakout Session Two

11:35 a.m. to 12:20 p.m.



Do It Scared: Fearless Communication for Purposeful Leadership

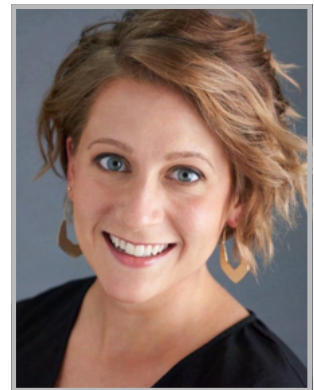
Norberto Troncoso, Room: GSC 231

Fear often silences leaders before they ever find their voice. This session challenges that narrative by showing how fear, when faced directly, can become fuel for authentic and impactful leadership. This speech delivers a high-energy, story-driven presentation that combines performance techniques with leadership insights. Attendees will learn how to reset before high-stakes moments, speak with presence and authenticity, and anchor their leadership in a personal sense of purpose. Through his P.O.W.E.R. framework and "Do It Scared" approach, Norberto provides tools leaders can apply to their communication, whether addressing teams, communities, or entire organizations. Participants will leave not just inspired but equipped with a renewed sense of clarity, confidence, and intention to lead in ways that amplify both their values and their vision.

Fostering Psychological Safety (Part 2)

Emily Smith, Room: GSC 330C

In today's interconnected workplace, every interaction — whether spoken, written, virtual or in-person — shapes an organization's culture and directly impacts psychological safety. This training explores the dynamics of communication in modern organizations, equipping participants with the skills to foster trust across all collaboration channels. Participants will learn how to recognize the role of meetings, messages and conversations in shaping workplace culture; apply best practices for all-encompassing communication across email, chat and verbal discussions; create psychologically safe environments that encourage sharing multiple perspectives, optimize collaboration in hybrid and virtual settings to enhance engagement; and build trust and transparency through mindful and effective communication strategies.



THIS IS A TWO-PART SESSION.

Lunch Session

12:30 - 1:35 p.m. | Grand Ballroom

Lunch Keynote Speaker

- Davonna Saier (Founder of Davonna Inclusive, Speaker, Motivator, Professional Life Coach)
- Keynote Title: Owning the Hard, Leading from the Heart: How Embracing the Truth of Your Story Unlocks the Purpose You Were Meant for
- Introduced by Emily Smith

Breakout Session Three

1:50 p.m. to 2:35 p.m.



*Bloom Where You Are Planted, or
Find a New Garden?*

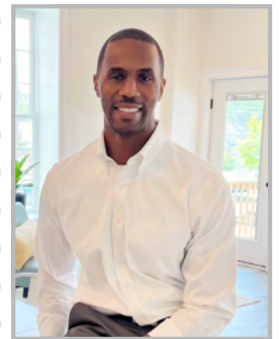
Heidi Metzger, Room: GSC 330AB

Whether you are feeling restless, stuck and dissatisfied with your work, or just thinking about a new challenge or career change, we all worry about the unknown. Should you try to cultivate meaning, purpose, and renewed enthusiasm for your current work? Or should you start looking for your next garden? We'll explore ways to rediscover the smell of the roses and pull the weeds that block our thinking and view. We'll navigate the discussions about digging in versus pulling out the roots and transplanting ourselves to a new place. We'll discuss aligning our values and intentions to make our work more meaningful.

*The Leadership Gap: Preparing Your
Bench Before the Crisis Hits*

**Dale Morgan and Shirrod Le'Det, EMBA
Room: GSC 330E**

A candid look at leadership continuity, succession planning, and how to grow the bench before the need becomes urgent. This session is rooted in the Now-to-Next Blueprint and the GAPPS model, offering practical insight on building leadership that lasts.



Breakout Session Three

1:50 p.m. to 2:35 p.m.



Learning from Kentucky's Past and Present Leaders

Bailey Vandiver, MFA, Room: GSC 231

Kentuckians have been leading with intention for the entirety of the Commonwealth's history. We can learn much from Kentucky leaders like Alice Allison Dunnigan, a Russellville, Kentucky, native who was the first Black woman journalist to be credentialed to the White House Press Corps; Silas House, 2023-2025 Kentucky Poet Laureate; and many more. In this session, we will learn about past and present leaders, including their origins, the obstacles they overcame, and the heights they reached. By studying the example of our fellow Kentuckians, we can find heroes to inspire us, develop our own leadership practices, and become leaders in our workplaces and communities.

The Lost Art of Letter Writing

Lexi Fellows, M.S., Room: GSC 268

In a world of instant messages and digital communication, the power of a thoughtfully crafted letter has been lost. This workshop aims to reclaim that power, exploring letter writing as a profound tool for building authentic and genuine relationships. This workshop will have two (brief) hands-on activities that aim to strengthen your leadership, cultivate gratitude, and forge human connections.



Breakout Session Three

1:50 p.m. to 2:35 p.m.

Leading with Intention: Developing UK Leaders

Kristen H. Perry, Ph.D., Kenneth Jones, Ph.D., Bill Verble, M.S.Ed., ACC, SHRM-SCP, Becky Dysart, Ph.D., SPHR

Room: GSC 331



Leadership is not a single moment. It is a journey shaped by intentional growth, continuous learning, and meaningful support. In this panel session, attendees will explore how the University of Kentucky cultivates leadership through four signature programs: WELD, the Emerging Leader Academy, the Essential Leader Program, and the Experienced Leader Academy. This session brings together a group of experienced leaders who will share practical insights from their work in leadership development, academic administration, human resources, and coaching. The panelists will explain how these initiatives support growth for faculty and staff at every stage of their careers. Attendees will gain a clear understanding of how these programs strengthen individuals and contribute to a more effective and engaged university community.

Breakout Session Four

2:50 p.m. to 3:35 p.m.

Developing Your Personal Brand and Embracing Authenticity

Sydney DeLong, Room: GSC 231

In this session, Sydney DeLong invites participants to reflect on how their values, experiences, and goals shape the way they show up in both professional and personal spaces. Through insights drawn from her work in community engagement and relationship management, Sydney shares strategies for defining your unique brand, communicating it with confidence, and cultivating trust through genuine connection. Participants will leave this session with practical tools to clarify their personal brand, align it with their professional aspirations, and embrace authenticity as a strength in leadership, collaboration, and career growth.



Green Dot Bystander Intervention Workshop

**Fadiya Lowe, M.S., CHES, CTTS,
Room: GSC 330E**

How do everyday choices add up to safer, stronger communities? The Green Dot Bystander Workshop introduces a proven framework for preventing power-based personal violence through small, intentional actions anyone can take. Participants will learn the "3Ds" of bystander intervention (Direct, Delegate, Distract) and explore how aligning values with action creates environments where everyone can thrive. This session connects directly to the conference theme by showing how intentional leadership fosters belonging, supports resilience, and creates meaningful community impact beyond the workplace. Attendees will leave with practical tools to intervene safely, strategies to strengthen their own leadership voice, and a deeper understanding of how to model purpose-driven action in both professional and personal contexts. Whether you are leading a team, mentoring students, or engaging in community work, this workshop will challenge and empower you to recognize your influence and leverage it for positive change.

Breakout Session Four

2:50 p.m. to 3:35 p.m.



Leading with Intention: Everyday Resilience in Cats, Kids, and Community

Elizabeth Andrade, M.A., Room: GSC 330AB

Leadership is not just about holding a position of authority—it's about living with intention, responding to challenges, and positively influencing others. Elizabeth Andrade's journey as an adoptee and childhood abuse survivor has been shaped by resilience, healing, and the choice to lead authentically. With the support of her community, she found the courage to cut ties with unhealthy relationships and pursue higher education, opening the door to deeper purpose through service and engagement. Her experiences have shown that resilience and authenticity are not just survival skills—they are leadership strengths. Everyday roles such as parenting, caregiving, fostering, and volunteering have taught her patience, empathy, and the importance of aligning actions with values. This session explores how to find intention in daily life, transform adversity into purpose, and lead by example to create a ripple effect of positivity.

The Purpose Check-In: Realigning with Who You Are Called to Be

Krissalyn Love, Ed.D., Room: GSC 331

Description: In this session, you will do a self-assessment to see what truly drives you personally and professionally. Through a guided purpose-audit, you will examine the ways that you are forging forward or straying away from where you believe you're meant to be.



Breakout Session Four

2:50 p.m. to 3:35 p.m.

Improving Your Professional and Personal Writing

**Bailey Vandiver, MFA, Lexi Fellows, M.S.,
Room: GSC 268**

Writing is an essential skill for nearly every profession; it's also a habit that can greatly enrich your personal life. In this session, we will share writing tips, based on our experience as communications professionals, that will help you improve everything from emails to social media posts to annual reports. We will also discuss tips for your writing outside of work that can aid your personal well-being, deepen your communication in relationships, or simply connect you with a new and enjoyable hobby. During the session, we'll share journaling prompts to get you started.



**THANKS FOR
ATTENDING THE
2025 UKWF ANNUAL
CONFERENCE!
CHECK YOUR EMAIL
FOR A CONFERENCE
SURVEY, AND WE'LL
SEE YOU IN
DECEMBER 2026
FOR OUR NEXT
CONFERENCE!**



Closing Session

3:35 - 4:00 p.m.

Closing Remarks

- Heather McAtee, UKWF Board Chair
- Ryessia Russell, UKWF Conference Chair and Chair-Elect
- Alyssa Knox, UKWF Incoming Conference Chair

Door Prize Giveaway

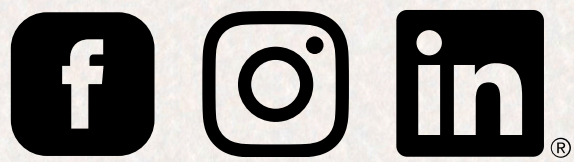
Conference Dismissal

Thank you to our supporters!

A Special Thanks to...

2025 UKWF Special Events & Conference Committee
Ryessia Russell, Howard Johnson, Alyssa Knox, Rhoni Moffitt, Emily Smith, Bailey Vandiver

2025 UKWF Communications Committee
Lexi Fellows, Elizabeth Andrade, Emily Collier, Jennafer Hackworth, Embry Howell



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