NC ACE Women’s Network
Fall 2021 Newsletter - October

Message from the State Chair

Happy autumn to you all from the NC ACE Women’s Network! Throughout the summer and start of this academic year we have been continuing to strengthen connections between women in higher education across North Carolina. Below I share some of what we’ve accomplished so far.

Our most significant milestone was the successful hosting of our inaugural conference, with the theme “Women Blazing Trails,” attended by over 250 people. The conference was headlined by Dr. Tonya Smith-Jackson, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs at North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University, who shared the powerful keynote address, “Gender Privilege and Pretense: The Higher Ed Politics of Blazing the Trail.” The day-long conference also offered sessions organized around four themes: senior level professional development, work-life integration, career mapping, and mentoring. Presenters from community colleges, four-year private and public institutions, as well as search firms, shared insights on a range of topics such as planning one’s career with a purpose, demystifying the executive search process, finding and maintaining mentoring relationships, strategies for reframing struggle as a triumph in work and home life, and best practices for intersectionality-informed mentoring. Dr. Sherrice V. Allen’s leadership was invaluable in bringing our conference to fruition, as was the help of our entire Executive Board, many of whom served as moderators for sessions. Member institutions have access to the videos of the conference sessions on the NC ACE Women’s Network website. Ask your Institutional Representative for the member login information!

We are currently in the midst of our membership drive and have 16 institutional members to date: Appalachian State University, Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College, Catawba College, Elon University, Elizabeth City State University, Fayetteville State University, Livingstone College, Mars Hill University, North Carolina State University, Piedmont Community College, Saint Augustine’s University, Salem College, UNC Chapel Hill, UNC Charlotte, UNC Greensboro, UNC Pembroke, Wake Forest University, Western Carolina
University, and William Peace University. Thanks to all these institutions for recognizing the value of our Network to their employees!

This year our Conference & Programming Committee, led by Dr. Erica Still, has organized a series of talks revolving around the theme of reimagining wellbeing. The series kicked off on October 7th with a session focused on reimagining rest, led by Ms. Whitley Grant, licensed clinical mental health counselor. Ms. Grant encouraged us to reflect on, and share, our own self-care practices and she provided resources for supporting self-care such as apps for meditation and a book focused on setting boundaries.

Our next event will take place on November 4th from 4-5 p.m. Dr. Malika Roman Isler will share about embracing wellbeing as a critical leadership skill and working to create institutional frameworks that support wellbeing practices. Dr. Isler is Assistant Vice President of Inclusive Practice, and previously served as the inaugural Director of Wellbeing at Wake Forest University, leading the development, institutionalization, and collective impact of Thrive, Wake's comprehensive approach to wellbeing. Dr. Isler has extensive experience creating behavior change interventions and developing strategic plans that guide culture change. She holds a Ph.D. in Public Health (Health Behavior and Health Education) from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. To register for the Nov 4th event please use this link.

I would be remiss if I did not thank Dr. Gloria Thomas who was at the helm of our state network from 2018-2021 and partnered in many helpful ways with me and others on the NC ACE Executive Board. Gloria’s term as State Chair ended in June of this year but she remains on our Executive Board to lend her guidance and encouragement. Gloria has also begun a new position in her career trajectory, serving as president of the esteemed HERS Network, a nationwide leadership development and research organization supporting women leaders. Congratulations, Gloria!

We’re looking forward to seeing you and your colleagues at our November 4th event!

Amy A. Overman, PhD
State Chair
NC ACE Women’s Network

**NC ACE Institutional Membership**

Now more than ever, the identification and support of a diverse group of leaders is critical to the future of higher education in our country and across the state of North Carolina. The NC ACE Network is open to all North Carolina's public and private, two-year and four-year institutions. Institutional membership (renewable annually) enables aspiring leaders from among the faculty and administrative staff to benefit from all the Network resources, programs, and activities.

Please join us in welcoming the following institutional members to the North Carolina ACE Women's Network for the 2021-22 year:
Welcome to a New North Carolina Woman Leader

Last July, Sharon L. Gaber, Ph.D., officially began her work as the first woman Chancellor of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, only the 5th Chancellor of the institution. Her tenure as the first woman chancellor follows in the footsteps of the founder and leader of the institution, Bonnie Cone, who led the institution from 1946-1966. Dr. Gaber has continued the institution’s work, through this difficult last year and a half, to support exemplary undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs, expand community engagement initiatives, and move the campus toward greater research and creative activity.

Dr. Gaber was born and raised in Southern California and did her Bachelor’s work at Occidental College in Economics and Urban Studies. She then received a Master’s degree in Urban
Planning from the University of Southern California. Her educational pathway led her across the country to Cornell University where she received her Ph.D. in City and Regional Planning.

She has been a faculty member and administrator in several public institutions from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Auburn, and the University of Arkansas. She came to UNC Charlotte after having served for 5 years as President at the University of Toledo.

Dr. Gaber was named by Education Dive one of five higher education leaders to watch in 2018 and beyond. While at the University of Toledo she not only increased enrollment but did so while improving graduation and retention rates and was able to improve the connections of the University of Toledo to the city and larger metro area. In addition, shortly after arriving at UT she initiated the development of their first Strategic Diversity plan and oversaw the creation and installation of the first Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion.

Of special note to our constituents, Dr. Gaber was named a YWCA Northwest Ohio Milestone award recipient for women’s leadership in 2020. Since her arrival at UNC Charlotte has become a member of the Charlotte Executive Leadership Council, Women Executives, and the International Women's Forum – Carolinas. Chancellor Gaber was also named to Business North Carolina's 2021 Power List as one of North Carolina’s influential leaders.

The Impact of the Pandemic on Women’s Careers

Have you experienced extreme exhaustion, burnout, or clinical depression since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic? If so, you are certainly not alone. A March 2021 article published in Nature by Virginia Gewin cites several studies that have found evidence of “pandemic burnout”, especially for women. A survey conducted by the Chronicle of Higher Education with support from Fidelity Investments found in 2020 during the height of the pandemic, there was greater reporting of fatigue and serious consideration given to a career change or retirement. Moreover, a higher proportion of women than men shared more instances of feeling stressed; an increased workload; and deterioration in balancing their work and life.

A recent report, Women in the Workplace 2021, published annually by McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.org reiterates the findings from the survey administered by the Chronicle of Higher Education. The report states,

A year and a half into the COVID-19 pandemic, women have made important gains in representation, and especially in senior leadership. But the pandemic continues to take a toll. Women are now significantly more burned out—and increasingly more so than men.
A third of the women who responded to this study reported they considered “downshifting their careers or leaving the workforce this year…” Many have indeed followed through on their considerations by leaving their corporate roles. Women in the Workplace 2021 also notes the disproportional impact of the pandemic on women of color, who are already underrepresented in corporate senior management roles. Women of color report they are more likely than white women to be disrespected and on be the receiving end of microaggressions. Although the McKinsey study points out there has been increased attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion in corporate America, and more women of all backgrounds indicate they are advocates and allies for equity and justice, women of color still lack sufficient support, advocacy, and allyship.

We continue to see a troubling gap—although more than three-quarters of White employees consider themselves allies to women of color at work, less than half take basic allyship actions, such as speaking out against bias or advocating for new opportunities for women of color. What’s more, there is a notable disconnect between the allyship actions that women of color find most meaningful and the actions that White employees prioritize.

While both publications provide some strategies for combating these unprecedented levels of stress and burnout, the reality is people are emerging from this pandemic looking for change. With the accumulative effect of the additional workload and work intruding on the home lives of those who have been fortunate enough to work from home, many in the workforce, including academics, have had their eyes opened to all of the negative aspects of their careers. In their efforts to remove themselves from the stress and burnout, many have left, or are choosing to leave their professions altogether. They are in search of greater work-life balance, joy, and career satisfaction.

While the data don’t document who is following through on leaving their professional roles, one thing is for sure: you may be more inclined to leave a professional role if you have economic security and can rely on financial support from someone else. From what I know about the economic precarity of women of color in the workforce, this is another accumulative effect—even with the disproportionate hostility that women of color encounter, they may not be as able to walk away from their roles as white women are.

So what does all this mean? Simply put, we all need increased support, advocacy, and allyship in these most unprecedented times, especially women of color, who have been historically denied opportunities and marginalized. You can find ways to be encouraging of others, promote opportunities and advancement for others, and intervene on behalf of others when you see injustice and wrongdoing. Do your part for the greater good.

**Professional and Leadership Development Opportunities You Should Know About**

If you have participated in NC ACE Women’s Network programs and events, chances are you are serious about the strategic direction of your career. If you are interested in further exploring professional and leadership opportunities external to your institution, here are a few you should know about and consider participating in:
ACE FELLOWS PROGRAM is a national program that provides customized learning experiences to enable participants to immerse themselves in the study and practice of leadership. Participants experience the culture, policies, and decision-making processes of another institution and bring those learnings back to their home campus.

This unique program condenses years of on-the-job experience and skills development into a single year. More than 80 percent of ACE Fellows have gone on to serve as chief executive officers, chief academic officers, other cabinet-level positions, and deans.

For more information about the ACE Fellows Program, go to acenet.edu or contact fellows@acenet.edu.

BRIDGES is a North Carolina-based, inclusive professional development program dedicated to supporting women at 4-year institutions in higher education who seek to gain or strengthen their academic leadership capabilities, or who demonstrate a commitment to supporting women and gender issues and equality in the academy. It is designed to help participants identify, understand, and build their leadership roles in the academy.

For more information about BRIDGES, contact Annette Madden at madden@email.unc.edu.

HERS is a national organization that supports the advancement of women from the start of their career all the way through to their transition into retirement. HERS programs are designed to serve faculty, staff, and administrators who identify as women and aspire to become bold leaders representing greater equity, inclusivity, and excellence in higher education.

The heart of HERS is the Leadership Institute; started in 1974, the HERS Leadership Institute is a program renowned for its transformative impact on mid-career women. HERS has also developed several new programs to complement the Leadership Institute. From helping young professionals begin their leadership development to giving senior level professionals the tools they need to take control of their careers; the organization’s goal is to build a robust arch of programs that buttress career-spanning journeys of learning and leadership development.

For more information about HERS, go to hersnetwork.org or contact Gloria Thomas at gthomas@hersnetwork.org.

The Center for Creative Leadership was founded in Greensboro, NC in1970, to advance the understanding, practice, and development of leadership for the benefit of society worldwide. They have specific programming for those in higher education and for women leaders.

- For more information about the women’s leadership programming go to https://www.ccl.org/leadership-challenges/womens-leadership-development/
- For the programs focused on higher education: https://www.ccl.org/industries-sectors/higher-education-leadership/

https://tinyurl.com/556bf6vb
REIMAGINED
Women Leading Through Hard Times

Join the NC ACE Women’s Network for the next conversation in this series:

Reimagining Culture: Leveraging Influence to Support Wellbeing for All

November 4, 2021 | 4 – 5 p.m. Link to zoom registration below

An opportunity to hear from Dr. Malika Roman Issler on embracing wellbeing as a critical leadership skill and working to create institutional frameworks that support wellbeing practices for all.

Register here to attend!
or use: https://tinyurl.com/556bf6vb

Questions? Contact your institutional representative | www.acewomensnetwork.org