

Speakers and Facilitators

Wesley Hamilton

As the Executive Director of Disabled But Not Really (DBNR), his professional journey traces its roots to personal adversity. Having been a victim of gunshot wounds that resulted in a spinal cord injury, he embarked on a life-altering path, navigating both his physical disability and emotional depression. But, as a single father to his precious daughter, Nevaeh, I found the motivation and resilience to transform from a victim to a victor. Harnessing the power of fitness and nutrition, he became empowered and began to flourish personally and professionally. As a father and potential role model, he drew motivation and, in turn, pursued adaptive athletics, spreading a message of positivity and resilience. In 2015 he founded the Disabled but Not Really. The passion he brings to DBNR is palpable, evident in its continuous growth and the impact it makes. DBNR actively participates in community events, advocating the significance of mental and physical health in surmounting life's challenges. Moreover, they have amplified their scholarship program to empower disabled individuals to improve their fitness and nutrition, enhancing their overall well-being. The goal at DBNR is to raise awareness and inspire change, hope, and resilience in every life they touch.



Dr. Jasmine Lewis

Dr. Jasmine C. Lewis is the Executive Director of TRIO Programs at Harris-Stowe State University and a passionate entrepreneur. She is the founder of The Popcorn Professor, a gourmet popcorn business that not only offers upscale snacking options but also emphasizes the importance of persistence in all areas of life. Jasmine is also the owner of Jazztastic Faces, a premier face painting and entertainment company that brings joy and creativity to events across the region.

Jasmine's entrepreneurial journey is deeply rooted in her own life experiences as a first-generation, veteran, and parenting student. Facing numerous challenges, including dropping out of school multiple times, she persevered and eventually earned her doctorate before the age of 30. This drive to overcome obstacles fuels her commitment to student belonging and empowerment. Through her businesses, Jasmine not only serves her community with unique and high-quality services but also aims to inspire others to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams, persist through challenges, and see entrepreneurship as a viable path to success and personal fulfillment.



Christina Parle (*McNair Alum*)

Christina Parle (she/they) is an equity, inclusion, and diversity (EID) educator and consultant with her company, Social Responsibility Speaks, and currently serves as the Associate Dean of Students at Avila University. Christina's career experience is in student development, accountability, and fraternal organizations. Christina has served on the Association for Student Conduct Administration's (ASCA) Board of Directors for six (6) years and is presently the Past President. Much of her work is rooted in unlearning, conflict resolution, and effective communication. Christina's particular interest is in language and its impacts. Christina has specific experience in building effective systems, policies, and procedures, curriculum writing, and leadership education.

Christina is a Kansas City, Missouri native. Prior to her work at Avila University, Christina served as the Director of Chapter Services and Conduct at Zeta Beta Tau (ZBT) Fraternity. She also previously served as the Assistant Director of Student Conduct and Community Standards at the University of Kansas (KU) where she was the Student Housing liaison and then transitioned to a focus on student organization misconduct. Before KU, she served as a Fraternity and Sorority Advisor at Western Carolina University where she advised the Panhellenic, Interfraternity, and National Pan-Hellenic Councils. Christina earned her bachelor's in criminal justice and political science at the University of Central Missouri and attended Penn State where she earned her master's in higher education with an emphasis in student affairs. While at Penn State, she completed a graduate assistantship in student conduct and served as the primary advisor for the National Pan-Hellenic Council and the Multicultural Greek Council for a semester.



Sara Eckinger

Sara Eckinger is a dedicated advocate and leader in the realm of student-athlete development, currently serving as the Director of Student-Athlete Experience and Development (SAED) at the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). In her role, Sara champions the voices of NAIA student-athletes, ensuring their needs are met through various programs and resources aimed at fostering character development, physical and mental well-being, drug education and testing, and leadership growth.



Before diving into the world of collegiate athletics, Sara dedicated 16 years to combating power-based violence and substance abuse within local non-profit organizations across the Kansas City metropolitan area. Her passion for empowering individuals during their most vulnerable moments and her commitment to advocacy have been the driving forces behind her career.

Sara's educational journey includes earning a Bachelor of Science in Justice Studies from Fort Hays State University, followed by a Master of Science in Psychology from Avila University.

Dr. Ferial Pearson

Dr. Pearson earned her teaching degree from Gustavus Adolphus College, and both her Master's Degree and Ed.D from UNO. She taught English and Reading at Omaha South High School and was a talent advisor for the Avenue Scholars Foundation at Ralston High School. She has been teaching full time at UNO since 2013. She has earned three national and several local awards for her work in education and social justice, including the Kennedy Center's Stephen Sondheim Inspirational Teacher award. She is the founder of the Secret Kindness Agents Project, which is the subject of two published books, her dissertation, and a TEDx Talk. The project is in over 500 K-16 schools worldwide and has been highlighted by Hallmark, Lady Gaga's Born This Way Foundation, Parents Magazine, Medium, Midwest Living, and SPLC'S Learning for Justice Magazine.



Inclusive Communities

Inclusive Communities is a human relations organization confronting prejudice, bigotry and discrimination through educational programs that raise awareness, foster leadership and encourage advocacy for a just and inclusive society.



Paradigm Shift

Paradigm Shift offers many programs, services, and activities specifically geared toward empowering your students to be the leaders of tomorrow. Our specialized experiential learning technique ensures your students dynamically participate in our material, ensuring they not only remember what they learn but are also prepared to apply it to their life.

