



# THE EMPOWERED AND UNIQUE YOU



## IN THIS ISSUE:

### A MESSAGE FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

### WOCC HISTORY

### MISSION

### HOW TO GET INVOLVED

### SPOTLIGHT

### WOCC FALL 2025 LUNCHEON

### MEMBERS ON THE MOVE...

### WHAT WE ARE READING AND LISTENING TO MENTAL HEALTH CORNER

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**A MESSAGE FROM OUR CO-CHAIRS!****Dr. Shai James Boyd, Henry Ford College**

Dr. Stephanie Lee may be stepping down as Co-Chair, but she remains an essential part of WOCC. We thank her for her tremendous leadership, her powerful vision, and her tireless advocacy for women across Michigan. We are also excited to welcome Dr. Shawna Patterson-Stephens as our incoming Co-Chair. On January 1, she will step into this role and continue building on the foundation that makes WOCC strong.

Over the past few months, I have been sitting with a single question: Who is WOCC? As I searched for the answer, I realized it was much easier to begin by naming who we are not.

I journaled my reflections—raw, honest, and true—and shared them during my luncheon remarks. Wanting to honor those words and give them form, I turned to ChatGPT to help shape them into a poem. This is the result...

***Who is WOCC?***

WE ARE NOT a social club. We are a network of support— women who hold each other up when the world tries to wear us down. WE ARE NOT complainers. We are the problem solvers, the ones who walk into chaos and leave behind clarity, strategy, and solutions. WE ARE NOT victims of the spaces we navigate. Every challenge thrown our way— we turn it, flip it, rise above it, transforming adversity into triumph. WE ARE NOT a group of angry women. WE ARE WOMEN WHO KNOW OUR WORTH, and in our own voices, our own power, our own style, we stand up and speak out against marginalization, against bullying, against disrespect and belittlement. And despite what the world may whisper, assume, or misunderstand — WE ARE NOT, and will never be, DEI hires!

WE ARE QUALIFIED.

WE ARE CAPABLE.

WE ARE UNDENIABLE.

WE ARE WOMEN WHO BELONG

BECAUSE WE EARNED EVERY STEP,  
EVERY SEAT, EVERY SPACE WE OCCUPY.

WE ARE WOCC!

**Dr. Shai James Boyd** (organized by ChatGPT)

## FAREWELL FROM DR. STEPHANIE LEE



**Dr. Stephanie J. Lee, Oakland University**

Now that we have closed out another semester, this moment is bittersweet for me. After eight incredible years, my role as Co-Chair of the Women of Color Collaborative (WOCC) is coming to an end. Leading this outstanding group of women has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my professional journey.

WOCC has grown into a powerful network of colleagues who support one another and help advance both personally and professionally in higher education. Throughout my tenure, I have strived to lead with conviction, passion, and a commitment to elevating the group and its mission.

As we celebrate 14 years of progress, we honor the trailblazers who started this movement and the many women who have joined along the way. Together, we have created pathways for success and leadership in higher education. I am confident that the new leaders will continue to take WOCC to even greater heights.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to the changemakers who recognized the need for this work—especially Dr. Lynette Findley, who convened a group of visionary women at Eastern Michigan University in 2011. Joined by Gloria Thomas (University of Michigan), Betty Dennis (Western Michigan University), and Sandra Gonzalez (EMU), this trailblazing team laid the foundation for a movement that has transformed opportunities for women of color in higher education. To them, and to all of you who have answered my calls, emails, and texts over the years—thank you. Job well done.

Although I am stepping down as Co-Chair, I am not leaving the committee. I look forward to continuing to support WOCC and witnessing its continued growth and impact.

Finally, a special thank you to Dr. Boyd for everything you have done to make this last year GREAT. Sending you pink and green hugs with tons of red and white roses! You accepted the challenge and understood the assignment—thank you again.

***Dr. Stephanie J. Lee***

## **WOCC History**

Far too many women of color in higher education face negative experiences, such as isolation, marginalization, bullying, disrespect, belittlement, and feeling undervalued. This is especially true in predominantly white colleges and universities, in contrast to white women making great strides in reaching the top ranks in higher education leadership across the country. Unfortunately, the outcome is still bleak for women of color.

To address these long-standing issues, Dr. Lynette Findley organized a meeting of like-minded women on the campus of Eastern Michigan University (EMU) in 2011 to begin breaking down barriers for women of color and helping them advance professionally. This group of trailblazers included Gloria Thomas from the University of Michigan, Betty Dennis from Western Michigan University, and Sandra Gonzalez from Eastern Michigan University.

Together, they identified collective needs, established goals, and created programs to address the unique challenges women of color faced. After much dialogue and foundational planning, the Women of Color Collaborative (WOCC) was formed and successfully approved for operation under the MI-ACE Women's Network.

On November 11, 2011 (11-11-11), the first WOCC Luncheon was held at the Eagle Crest Conference Center at EMU with 65 women in attendance. The group established the following mission for WOCC: "WOCC will provide a forum and means of support for women of color employed in faculty, staff, administrative, and leadership roles at Michigan's colleges and universities." The goal of WOCC is to promote career advancement, enhance success for women of color in higher education across the state, and strengthen the overall MI-ACE Women's Network.

Today, WOCC is a nationally recognized program. Over the years, WOCC has evolved and expanded its reach within the Network and plays a significant role during the MI-ACE Annual Conference. The first day of the conference is focused on professional development and career sessions related to issues faced by women of color.

Fourteen years later, the WOCC Luncheon continues to bring together women of color across Michigan to network, share experiences, and celebrate professional accomplishments. Each November, a different MI-ACE member institution hosts the Luncheon at their institution or location of their choice.

## **Mission of the Women of Color Collaborative WOCC- MI-ACE**

The mission of the Women of Color Collaborative (WOCC) under the MI-ACE Women's Network is centered on empowerment, advancement, and support for women of color in higher education across Michigan.

WOCC's work aligns with the larger MI-ACE Women's Network goals, with a specific focus on addressing the unique challenges that women of color face in academia. The collaborative:

- Promotes career development and leadership opportunities
- Provides a supportive community for women of color in faculty, staff, and administrative roles
- Encourages mentorship, collaboration, and networking
- Advocates for diversity, equity, and inclusion within higher education institutions
- Amplifies the voices, experiences, and leadership of women of color

## **HOW WOCC FULFILLS ITS MISSION**

Hosting an annual fall luncheon focused on networking, empowerment, and visibility

Leading programming at the MI-ACE Annual Conference (including a full day of content tailored to women of color)

Creating intentional spaces for dialogue, mentorship, and community-building

Partnering with institutions to address systemic barriers and elevate women of color into leadership roles

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

### ***Become a MI-ACE Member***

Consider joining as an individual member for \$50 per year, which grants you access to WOCC events, mentoring opportunities, and professional development resources. For more information, visit [miacenetwork.org](http://miacenetwork.org). **If you work at a college or university, your institution may already be a member of MI-ACE or could join.**

### **Attend the WOCC Luncheon / MI-ACE Conference.**

Register for the Women of Color Collaborative Luncheon, one of the most prominent events hosted by WOCC. Additionally, consider attending the annual MI-ACE conference, particularly the day focused on WOCC initiatives. Scholarships may be available to assist with conference expenses through your institutions.

### **Network Through Your Institution**

Reach out to your campus's MI-ACE Institutional Representatives. Each member institution designates representatives to facilitate the MI-ACE chapter. Inquire whether your university has a local MI-ACE chapter or a women's network that you can join, as this can serve as a direct pathway to programming related to WOCC.

### **Participate in WOCC Leadership / Committees**

Volunteer for the planning committee of the luncheon, where members assist in event design, speaker selection, and networking facilitation. Engage in mentorship activities, as WOCC places a strong emphasis on mentoring and professional development. Consider contributing to ongoing communications, such as participating in a working group for WOCC, to remain actively engaged throughout the year.

**Stay updated by joining the WOCC Steering Committee** that meet via Zoom the 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of each month at 8:30 a.m.~ <https://zoom.us/j/91300916010?pwd=VyiujFNaloWb5olW9bjf3KlrUYIjxc.1>

### ***WHY IT'S VALUABLE TO GET INVOLVED***

#### *Support & Community*

*Network of Women of Color in Higher Education across Michigan*

#### *Professional Growth*

*Support in Leadership Development, navigating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion topics, and addressing unique career challenges.*

## SPOTLIGHT

*In this edition, we're thrilled to shine the spotlight on two of our very own Newsletter Committee members: **Dr. Tiana Bosley and Mrs. Tyler Clements**. Their stories are truly inspiring—Dr. Bosley reflects on her impactful career in higher education, while Mrs. Clements shares the joy of her recent nuptials that took place on September 28, 2025.*

My path through higher education was far from traditional. I began at Wayne State University on a Wade McCree Scholarship, but life quickly shifted. I worked full-time, married young, and completed my Bachelor's degree in Mathematics nine years after I started. Two years later, I became a mother, and soon after, a single mother navigating full-time work in a university math department.

When my interim role as tutoring center coordinator was made inaccessible because I lacked a master's degree, it was a turning point. Five years later, determined to advance, I earned my Master of Arts in Applied Mathematics. When the coordinator position opened again, I applied—this time successfully. After a year in the role, I set my sights even higher and pursued a Ph.D. in Educational Evaluation and Research, drawn to the practical application of Mathematics.

During those eight years, I experienced profound highs and lows: losing my father and a beloved mentor, getting engaged, and welcoming my son at 41—all while working full time.

Despite earning my doctorate, transitioning into teaching was difficult, and I remained in administration until the COVID-19 pandemic reminded me that life is too short to stay unfulfilled. When I interviewed at Olivet College, I immediately felt supported and valued. Their offer affirmed what years of hard work had built.

At Olivet, I've found a department that nurtures my passion for teaching. I strive to connect with each student as an individual and create a space where they can thrive. To women of color on similar paths: embrace who you are, keep learning, and take every opportunity. Our stories matter—and we belong here.

Dr. Tiana Bosley  
Assistant Professor of Statistics  
The University of Olivet



When Tyler was interviewed about her recent nuptials, she offered thoughtful insights—brief, yet powerfully expressed.

Destination of Honeymoon- "We traveled to Maui, Hawaii for our honeymoon!"

Do you think being married will change how you presently do things?

"Marriage naturally brings change, but I believe it will mostly enhance the way I already do things."

What advice would you give someone currently engaged or considering marriage? "I'd say remember that marriage is built on a series of choices, not just feelings. Choosing love, patience, and joy every day sets the tone for a lifetime together."

## WOMEN OF COLOR COLLABORATIVE LUNCHEON



### WOMEN OF COLOR COLLABORATIVE LUNCHEON

### *UnchartED: Redefining Success*

HOSTED BY SCHOOLCRAFT COLLEGE

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2025

11:30 A.M. – 1:30 P.M.



## WOMEN OF COLOR COLLABORATIVE LUNCHEON

### *UnchartED: Redefining Success — A Powerful Afternoon of Reflection, Connection, and Momentum by Kristin Benton*

On November 14, the Women of Color Collaborative gathered for a dynamic luncheon centered on a timely and resonant theme: UnchartED: Redefining Success. The room buzzed with energy as women from across higher education came together to explore what it truly means to succeed on our own terms—beyond expectations, beyond comparison, and beyond the paths we were told to follow.

Guiding the conversation was our moderator, Carolyn Clifford, a 22-time Emmy Award-winning journalist who anchors the 4, 6, and 11 p.m. newscasts for WXYZ Detroit. With her characteristic presence and depth, Carolyn guided the panel through a candid and thought-provoking discussion on navigating evolving career journeys, challenging limiting narratives, and embracing the courage required to lead in uncharted spaces. Her presence elevated the dialogue and helped frame the idea that “uncharted” paths often lead to the most meaningful definitions of success.

The afternoon also included moments of pure joy—most memorably when the group joined together to dance to “Boots on the Ground,” creating a lively and celebratory atmosphere that captured the spirit of community at the heart of the WOCC. And throughout the event, attendees took advantage of time to network and build connections with colleagues across the higher education landscape, strengthening the collaborative bonds that make this community so powerful.

As the luncheon concluded, the message was clear: redefining success is not a singular moment but a continuous journey. Together, we are building a community where women of color can feel supported, empowered, and encouraged to pursue goals that align with their values and lived experiences.

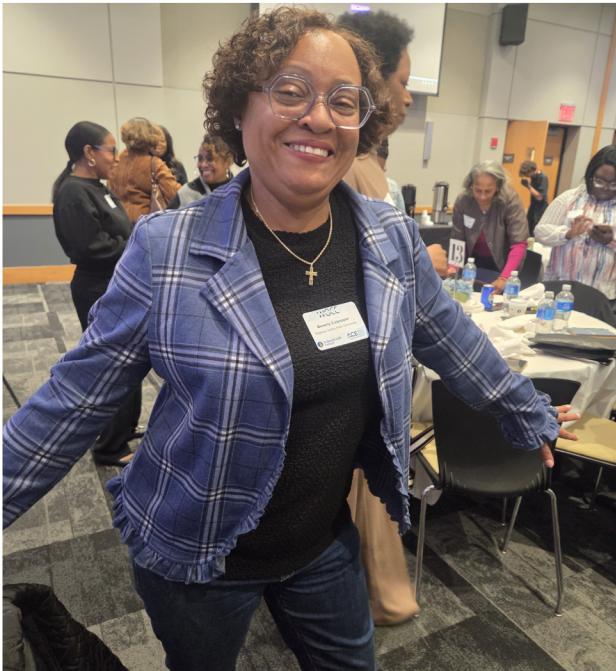
The Women of Color Collaborative thanks everyone who attended, shared their stories, danced, laughed, and helped make this year’s luncheon both transformative and unforgettable. We look forward to continuing these conversations—and creating more opportunities to connect, celebrate, and grow.



## WOMEN OF COLOR COLLABORATIVE LUNCHEON

### ATTENDEE REFLECTIONS:

**Beverly Culpepper**



**Juanita Tookes**



“This was my first time attending and I’m SOLD. I’ll definitely be back next year!”  
**-Beverly Culpepper, Saginaw Valley State University**

“I attended this conference for the first time last year and I hadn’t heard of this organization. I’ve been to a lot of conferences, and this was the first one where there was space created for vulnerability and where it was ok to be emotional. This time last year I was feeling overwhelmed and defeated; I wasn’t sure being in leadership was really for me. At the conference I received support from people who looked like me and held positions I aspire to hold. If it wasn’t for them, I wouldn’t still be in this position today. I will move mountains to be here!” –  
**Juanita Tookes, University of Michigan, Flint**

“We really loved the panel and the energy of everyone in the room. It was such a good feeling here. The sisterhood and sharing were amazing, and the personal stories are very relatable. This is our second time attending the luncheon and we look forward to next year.” – **Group of Employees from Michigan State University**

**Thank you for joining us for our most successful WOCC Luncheon to date!** With 176 attendees from 20 of Michigan’s colleges and universities, the energy in the room was unmatched. The food, the wonderful moderator for the panel discussions, Carolyn Clifford of Channel 7 news, the panelists, the DJ—everything came together beautifully.

A heartfelt thank you to Schoolcraft College and our luncheon planning committee for the exceptional work. We can’t wait to gather again November 2026 at Central Michigan University.

# *Members on the Move...*



**OAKLAND  
UNIVERSITY™**

It is a truly remarkable occasion when we have the honor of celebrating members of our own community. Today, we proudly recognize two extraordinary women whose dedication, excellence, and unwavering commitment have led to outstanding professional achievements.

Please join me in offering our warmest and most enthusiastic congratulations to these distinguished rising leaders on their well-earned promotions:

**Dr. Stephanie J. Lee**, appointed as Oakland University's Ombudsman

**Brittney Mitchell**, promoted to Assistant Dean of Students

Their accomplishments reflect not only their exceptional talents, but also the bright future they are helping to shape. Let us celebrate their success and continue to support them as they embark on these important new roles.

## WHAT WE ARE READING AND LISTENING TO...

*by: Tyler Clements*

As women in higher education, we carry a unique blend of scholarship, lived experience, and purpose. Our journeys are layered, and our leadership is intentional. This spotlight celebrates women whose voices challenge norms, elevate equity, and illuminate pathways for all of us rising within the academy.

**A leader is someone who "knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way."**



### *The Academic Woman Amplified* Hosted by Dr. Cathy Mazak

This podcast helps women scholars reclaim their time, power, and scholarly voice while pushing back against burnout culture.

### *Unapologetically Ambitious* by Shellye Archambeau

A bold roadmap for pursuing goals with clarity and confidence. Archambeau's lived experiences offer both strategy and inspiration for women balancing leadership, identity, and ambition.



EMBER 2022 | SSU '10

## MENTAL HEALTH CORNER

*by: Robin M. White, MPA*



### ***Balancing Emotional Intelligence and Chakras: A Vital Practice for Women of Color in Higher Education, By Tonya Trotter, EI Consultant, WCCCD***

Navigating the higher education sector as a woman of color often necessitates a delicate balance between achieving excellence and managing exhaustion. Amid the demands of scholarship, leadership, and advocacy, cultivating emotional intelligence and spiritual well-being becomes essential rather than optional.

#### **Emotional Intelligence: The Inner Compass**

Emotional intelligence—the capacity to understand, manage, and express emotions effectively—plays a pivotal role in leadership and resilience. For women of color in academia, it serves as a vital tool for self-preservation and empowerment. This skill enables individuals to navigate the microaggressions, biases, and feelings of isolation that may arise in predominantly white or male environments. Furthermore, it enhances communication, conflict resolution, and the establishment of professional boundaries, fostering deeper connections with students, colleagues, and the broader community.

#### **Chakra Balance: The Energetic Foundation**

In addition to mental and emotional well-being, chakra balance addresses the spiritual and energetic grounding often overlooked in academic settings. When chakras—the body's energy centers—are aligned, individuals may experience increased feelings of centering, confidence, and alignment with their purpose. For instance, a balanced root chakra can foster a sense of safety and belonging, while an open throat chakra empowers one's voice and advocacy—crucial in environments where women of color frequently go unheard.

#### **Why It Matters**

Balancing emotional intelligence and chakra alignment transcends the notion of self-care; it embodies sustainability. This practice is essential for resisting burnout, safeguarding inner peace, and reclaiming agency within a system that often demands more than it offers. By achieving this balance, women of color can not only thrive personally but also exemplify holistic leadership for others.

**IN A FIELD THAT VENERATES INTELLECT, WE MUST EQUALLY HONOR INTUITION, SPIRIT, AND EMOTIONAL TRUTH. FOR WOMEN OF COLOR IN HIGHER EDUCATION, ACHIEVING THIS EQUILIBRIUM IS NOT MERELY A HEALING PROCESS, IT IS A *REVOLUTIONARY ACT*.**

#### **Something to Ponder by: Kristin Benton**

Just because you can handle everything, doesn't mean you should?" ~ William C. Taylor, American writer and entrepreneur

"The best investment that you can make is in yourself." ~ Warren Buffet

"Start where you are. use what you have. Do what you can." Arthur Ashe, American tennis player and Civil Rights Activist

## UPCOMING EVENTS...

### Education & Professional Development

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**MI-ACE WOMEN'S NETWORK ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2026**  
***ELEVATED: ASCEND AND TRANSFORM YOUR WORLD***

JUNE 15-16, 2026

KELLOGG CENTER, 219 SOUTH HARRISON ROAD  
EAST LANSING, MI 48824

**REGISTRATION OPENS JANUARY 2026!**



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**WOMEN OF COLOR COLLABORATIVE FALL  
LUNCHEON**  
**HOSTED BY CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY  
MOUNT PLEASANT, MI**  
**NOVEMBER 13, 2026**  
**11:30 A.M.-1:30 P.M.**



***Newsletter Committee Members:***

**Robin M. White, MPA**, Oakland University - Chair  
**Kristin Benton, CFRE**, Wayne State University  
**Tiana Bosley, Ph.D.**, University of Olivet  
**Tyler Clements**, Michigan State University  
**Lauren Davis-Day, LMSW**, University of Michigan