

— 2026 —  
**ACE**<sup>Ling</sup>  
— IN —  
**LEADERSHIP**  
CONFERENCE

SHAPING WHAT'S  
NEXT

INFLUENCE  
INNOVATION  
IMPACT



AUGUST 13-14, 2026



TEMPE, ARIZONA



ASIAN  
CORPORATE &  
ENTREPRENEUR  
LEADERS





Delivering water and power®

# UPHOLDING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, **TOGETHER.**

SRP is committed to promoting diverse perspectives and civic engagement in order to make a positive impact in the community. That's why we support organizations like Asian Corporate & Entrepreneur Leaders that develop and foster initiatives that enrich life for us all.

[srp.net/community-support](http://srp.net/community-support)

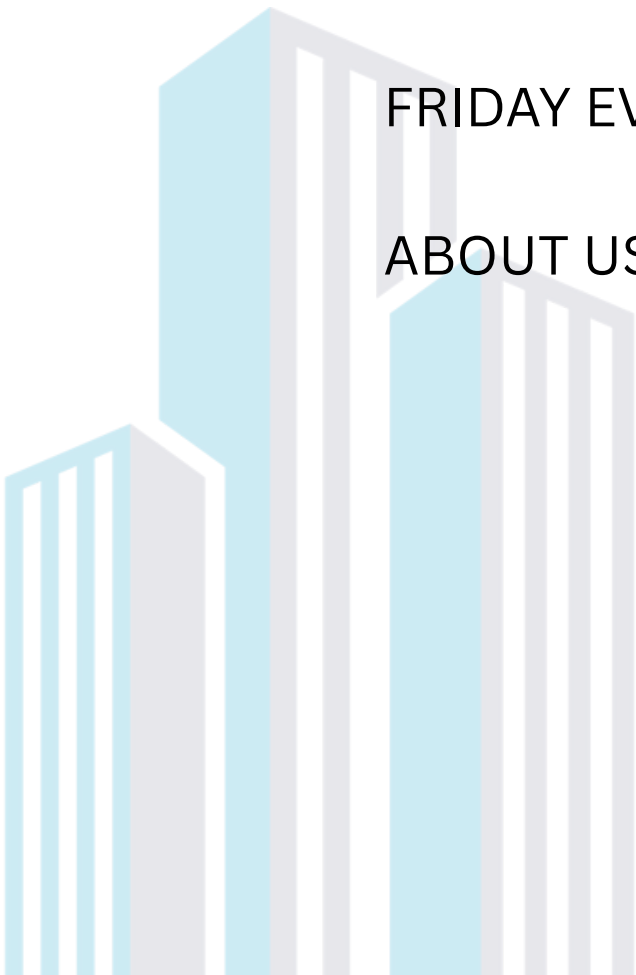




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**We are proud to support the  
2026 ACEling in Leadership  
National Conference.**

**Through professional development,  
mentorship, and service, the  
organization is empowering  
tomorrow's changemakers to lead  
with purpose and shape the future.**



# WELCOME



Dear Sponsors, Partners, Members, and Colleagues,

Welcome to Arizona and to our 14th Annual ACEling In Leadership Conference! This year, we proudly celebrate 20 years of empowering the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) community. Since our founding, ACEL has remained steadfast in its mission to cultivate leadership, foster mentorship, and champion community service across generations.

Our journey has taken us far—what began in Arizona has now expanded to Colorado, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Nevada. This remarkable growth reflects not only our dedication to addressing the evolving needs of the AANHPI community but also the steadfast support of our board members, volunteers, members, and partners who make this work possible.

This conference stands as a testament to our shared commitment to developing leaders at every stage of life. We hope it offers meaningful insights, sparks inspiration, and empowers you to drive positive change in your communities. As we celebrate two decades of impact, we also look ahead—with optimism and purpose—toward the next chapter of growth, leadership, and collective impact we will continue to create together.

Thank you for being part of ACEL's journey. Your continued support makes all the difference.



Jason Wong  
Founder & CEO

RUBEN GALLEGO  
ARIZONA

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BANKING, HOUSING AND URBAN AFFAIRS  
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS  
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Dear ACEL Leadership Conference Attendees,

As we celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I am honored to welcome you to this year's leadership conference. Your commitment to uniting AAPI leaders and strengthening their presence in communities, government, and the workforce is truly inspiring.

The Asian Corporate & Entrepreneur Leaders (ACEL) play a vital role in empowering AAPI professionals nationwide. Thanks to the exemplary leadership of President Jason C. Wong and the Board, AAPI individuals are better positioned to grow as leaders and entrepreneurs. As you attend workshops and speaker sessions, I hope you build meaningful connections with one another.

I wish you all a successful and impactful conference. Thank you for contributing to the betterment of Arizona. I am proud to represent the ACEL and its members in the United States Senate.

Sincerely,



United States Senator



**GREG STANTON**  
ARIZONA'S FOURTH DISTRICT

VICE RANKING MEMBER  
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION  
AND INFRASTRUCTURE  
AVIATION SUBCOMMITTEE  
HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT SUBCOMMITTEE  
WATER RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
WESTERN HEMISPHERE SUBCOMMITTEE



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**House of Representatives**

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MESA, ARIZONA 85210  
(602) 956-2463

STANTON.HOUSE.GOV

August 13, 2026

Greetings!

It is my great honor to welcome you to the 2026 ACELing In Leadership Conference. I hope you all make the most of your time here in Arizona. The work ACEL does in our state and around the country continues to empower Asian American and Pacific Islander professionals by providing all with the necessary resources to become accomplished leaders in our communities. I encourage you all to make the most of the professional and personal opportunities offered through this experience.

Year after year, ACEL uplifts Arizonans who work hard to create a more prosperous and welcoming community for all. This year's theme, "Shaping What's Next: Influence. Innovation. Impact", reflects the momentum and vision of emerging leaders nationwide. I look forward to seeing you continue to cultivate meaningful relationships, leaning on your mentors and each other as you advance in your personal and professional journeys.

Thank you to Jason Wong and to his team of leaders and mentors who give hours of their time in support of ACEL's longstanding commitment to stewardship, activism, and excellence. Your extraordinary efforts have made this year's conference a success, and I hope you depart with the inspiration and motivation to continue to make a positive difference in your communities and around the world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Greg Stanton".

Greg Stanton  
Member of Congress





August 13, 2026

Greetings!

As the Governor of the State of Colorado, I am honored to welcome you to the 2026 ACELing In Leadership National Conference. This important event, hosted by Asian Corporate & Entrepreneur Leaders (ACEL), celebrates and empowers the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) communities, and I'm proud to support its mission of advancing inclusive leadership.

This year's conference promises to be especially meaningful, celebrating 20 years of ACEL's dedicated efforts in providing training, resources, and mentorship to the AANHPI community. I hope that you are eager to integrate the valuable insights and knowledge gained from this conference into your roles as entrepreneurs, students, professionals, and public advocates. I am grateful for ACEL's work here in Colorado, where the positive impact that your organization's Denver Chapter (ACEL - Denver) brings to our state's AANHPI community is both profound and far-reaching.

Again, it is my earnest wish that the 11th annual ACELing In Leadership National Conference is successful and productive. I hope you have an outstanding event.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Jared Polis'.

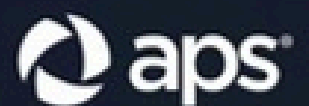
Jared Polis  
Governor  
State of Colorado





# The power of together

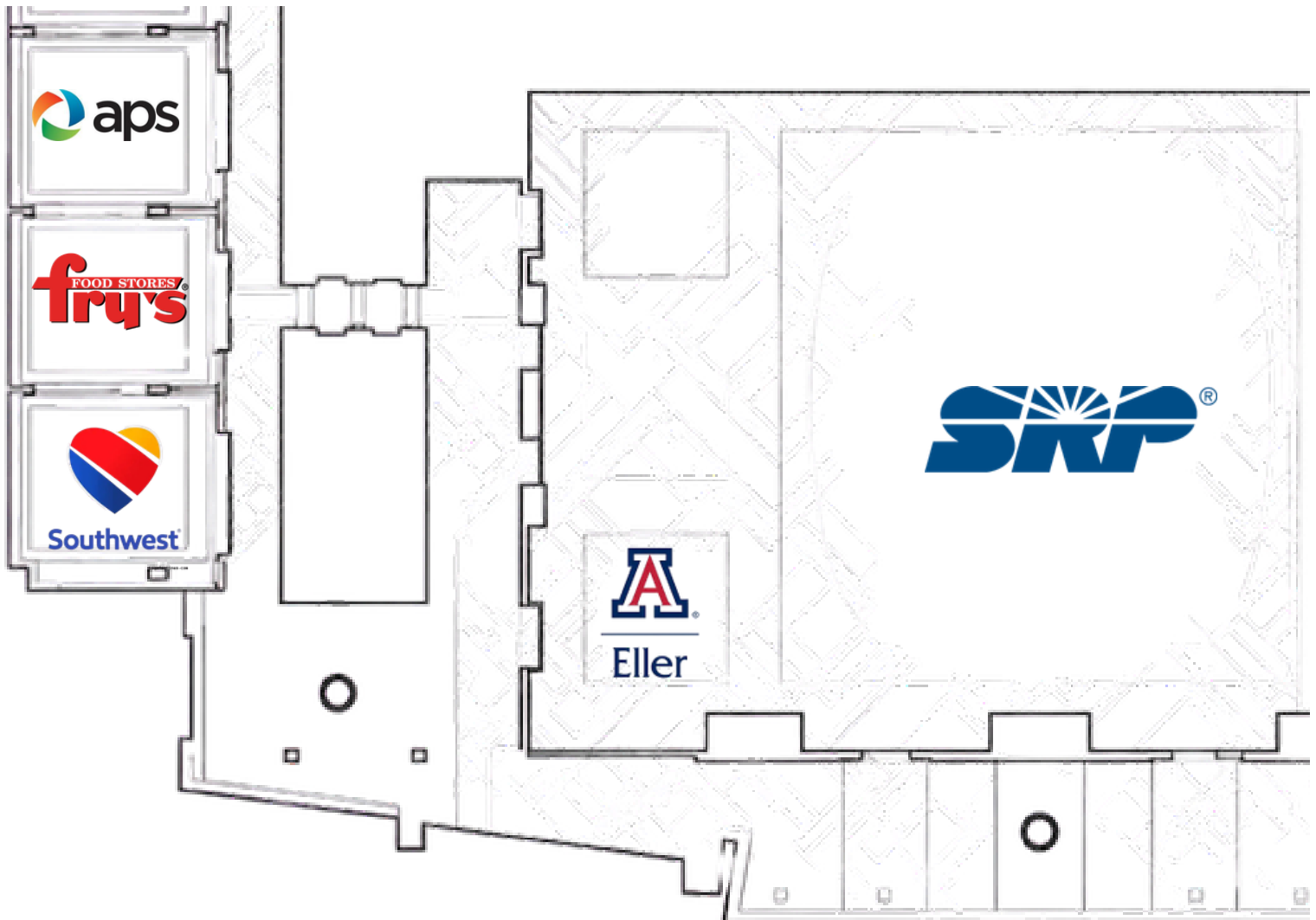
Caring, giving and making things better.  
It all starts by working together. Join us in  
celebrating the power of community.





## 2026 ACEling in Leadership Conference Guide

- MAIN BALLROOM - SRP Room
- A TRACK: Southwest Airlines Room
- B TRACK: Fry's Food Stores Room
- C TRACK: APS Room
- D TRACK: UA Eller Room



# SCHEDULE

## THURSDAY, AUGUST 13th

| Time             | Activity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Location                                                                              |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8:00 - 9:00 am   | <b>Registration/Coffee/Opening</b><br>Topic: <b>Empowered to Lead: Confidence &amp; Resilience</b><br>Speaker: Mike Hayashi, Take Control Self Defense                                                                                          |    |
| 9:00 - 9:20 am   | <b>Networking Break</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                       |
| 9:20 - 10:35 am  | <b>1B: Present with Confidence and Make an Impact</b><br>Speaker: Tania Will Jeppesen, The Prepared Leader                                                                                                                                      |    |
|                  | <b>1C: Inverted Apprenticeship: Lexical Bridges for the AI-Native Workforce through an Asian American Cultural Lens</b><br>Speaker: Dr. Kevin Sakamoto, California State University                                                             |    |
| 10:35 - 10:55 am | <b>Networking Break</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                       |
| 10:55 - 12:10 pm | <b>2A: Know Your Worth: Compensation Strategies for Career Growth and Financial Success</b><br>Speaker: Dr. Hui Wu-Curtis, SupportU and Suture                                                                                                  |    |
|                  | <b>2D: The Human Algorithm: Leadership That No AI Can Replace</b><br>Speaker: Roger Lee, Contact Center Advocates, LLC                                                                                                                          |  |
| 12:10 - 12:30 pm | <b>Networking Break</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                       |
| 12:30 - 1:30 pm  | <b>Lunch</b><br><b>Fireside Chat: Breaking the Bamboo Ceiling: The Moment That Changed Everything</b><br>Speakers: Dr. Hui Wu-Curtis, SupportU and Suture   Moderator: Ron Li, Phoenix Suns & Phoenix Mercury   Emcee: Jack Liu, ProCARE Portal |  |
| 1:30 - 1:50 pm   | <b>Networking Break</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                       |
| 1:50 - 3:05 pm   | <b>3M Holy Shiitake! A Wok Star is Born</b><br>Speaker: Katie Chin, Wokstar Catering LLC<br>Emcee: Tania Will Jeppesen, The Prepared Leader                                                                                                     |  |

# SCHEDULE

## THURSDAY, AUGUST 13th

| Time           | Activity                                                                                                                                                                             | Location                                                                              |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3:05 - 3:25 pm | <b>Networking Break</b>                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                       |
| 3:25 - 4:40 pm | <b>4A: What Legacy Means Now: Success Beyond Status</b><br>Moderator: Phil Kim<br>Panelists: Hon. Roxanne Song Ong, Harish K. Ankaraju, Sandra Yang Scirpo, Jack Liu                 |    |
|                | <b>4B: Break Your Brain - Expand Your Vision. Elevate Your Leadership</b><br>Speaker: Lawrence Huey, Novus Global                                                                    |    |
|                | <b>4C: Creating Space: Building Communities That Empower Women to Lead</b><br>Moderator: Andrea Moreno<br>Panelists: Ashley Mina, Anisha Pandya Patel, Larissa Riley & Maria Morales |    |
| 4:40 - 5:00 pm | <b>Networking Break</b>                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                       |
| 5:30 - 7:30 pm | <b>Welcome Reception &amp; Mentorship Graduation</b><br>Keynote Speaker: Max Chan, Avnet<br>Emcee: Steve Erickson, Desert Botanical Garden                                           |  |

## FRIDAY, AUGUST 14th

| Time             | Activity                                                                                                                                                              | Location                                                                              |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8:00 - 9:00 am   | <b>Registration/Coffee/Opening</b><br>Topic: <b>Rise Ready: Purpose, Growth &amp; Impact</b><br>Speaker: Mark Strickling, The University of Arizona Foundation        |  |
| 9:00 - 9:20 am   | <b>Networking Break</b>                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                       |
| 9:20 - 10:35 am  | <b>5A: Breaking Through the Corporate Ladder: Lessons from the Executive Level</b><br>Speaker: Joy Park, Everise<br>Moderator: Dr. Hui Wu-Curtis, SupportU and Suture |  |
|                  | <b>5C Mental Health, Burnout, and Sustainable Success</b><br>Moderator: Clair Dresher<br>Panelists: Elizabeth Greene, Chris Heo, Tommie Ho and Sam Castro             |  |
| 10:35 - 10:55 am | <b>Networking Break</b>                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                       |

# SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, AUGUST 14th

| Time             | Activity                                                                                                                                                                                     | Location                                                                              |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10:55 - 12:10 pm | <b>6A: AI and the Future of Leadership: What Leaders Need to Know Now</b><br>Moderator: Max Chan   Panelists: Melissa Ho, Neha Gupta, Michael Cheung and Heather Yan                         |    |
|                  | <b>6B: THE POWER OF POSSIBILITIES</b><br>Speaker: Lawrence Huey, Novus Global                                                                                                                |    |
|                  | <b>6C: Quiet Power: Leadership for Introverts, Builders, and Thoughtful Operators</b><br>Moderator: Harrison Pham   Panelists: Cecilia Sun, Dr. Steve Valero, Dinesh Kakwani and Amanda Ho   |    |
| 12:10 - 12:30 pm | <b>Networking Break</b>                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                       |
| 12:30 - 1:30 pm  | <b>Lunch</b><br><b>From Heritage to Table: A Live Cooking Experience with Katie Chin</b><br>Speaker: Katie Chin, Wokstar Catering   Moderator: Kay Tam, AZFoodGuy                            |    |
| 1:30 - 1:50 pm   | <b>Networking Break</b>                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                       |
| 1:50 - 3:05 pm   | <b>7A: Build Your Brand. Strengthen Your Influence. Elevate Your Impact.</b><br>Speaker: Mark Strickling, The University of Arizona Foundation                                               |  |
|                  | <b>7B: The Evolving Leader in the Age of AI (v2.0): Because Leadership, Like Software, Needs Regular Updates</b><br>Speaker: Roger Lee, Contact Center Advocates, LLC                        |  |
|                  | <b>7C: Leading Without the Title: How Emerging Leaders Build Real Influence</b><br>Moderator: Kenny Ho   Panelists: Justine Banagan-Pangallo, Sumit Sharma, Pranjit Biswas and Daniella Thao |  |
| 3:05 - 3:25 pm   | <b>Networking Break</b>                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                       |
| 3:25 - 4:40 pm   | <b>8D: Lean Into Your Strengths: Show Up as a Lighthouse</b><br>Speaker: Van Lai-DuMone, Worksmart Advantage                                                                                 |  |
| 4:40 - 5:00 pm   | <b>Networking Break</b>                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                       |
| 5:00 - 6:00 pm   | <b>Gala Registration and Reception</b>                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                       |
| 6:00 - 8:00 pm   | <b>ACEL Leadership Awards Gala</b><br>Keynote Speaker: Joy Park, Everise<br>Emcee: Roger Cheng, AT&T and Andrea Moreno, ACEL-Phoenix                                                         |  |

## MEET THE EMCEES



### **Roger Cheng | Sr. Supplier Diversity Sourcing Manager at AT&T**

Roger Cheng is a dedicated Sr. Supplier Diversity Sourcing Manager at AT&T. With over 14 years of experience in the technology industry, Roger's expertise lies in leading business development initiatives through Supplier Diversity, having previously excelled with M/WBEs. Roger is affectionately known as "The Voice" for his captivating emcee and VOG (Voice of God) performances at various prestigious events nationwide. In acknowledgment of his unwavering support for gender equality, Roger was bestowed with the esteemed #Hes4Shes Champion title at the WBENC National Conference in 2017.



### **Steve Erickson | Chief Engagement Officer at Desert Botanical Garden**

Steve Erickson is the Chief Engagement Officer at Desert Botanical Garden, where he leads initiatives to inspire and educate through nature-based learning. Prior to this role, he spent over 13 years with Teach For America, serving in several leadership capacities including Executive Director and Vice President of External Affairs. With a strong background in public affairs and community engagement, Steve has dedicated his career to advancing educational equity and fostering civic partnerships across Phoenix. His strategic leadership and deep commitment to community impact continue to shape innovative programs that empower individuals and strengthen the fabric of the region.



### **Andrea Moreno | Community Engagement Leader & Nonprofit Advocate**

Born and raised in Tolleson, Arizona, Andrea Moreno is a 23-year veteran of the utility industry dedicated to creating meaningful impact across Arizona. She has led initiatives that strengthen partnerships between organizations and the communities they serve. Fluent in English and Spanish, Andrea is recognized for her collaborative leadership and commitment to service. Her experience includes managing multimillion-dollar corporate and nonprofit budgets, developing community investment programs, and raising significant funding to expand educational opportunities for underserved women. She currently serves on several nonprofit boards, championing initiatives that empower communities and inspire the next generation of leaders.



### **Sherry Scott | Founder & Managing Partner at Cute Smiles 4 Kids**

Sherry Scott is a serial entrepreneur who has built and sold multiple businesses. She founded Cute Smiles 4 Kids and Fabulous Smiles Orthodontics, pediatric dental and orthodontic practices in Arizona and Texas, and brought Arizona its first Goldfish Swim School franchise. Now semi-retired, she retains one location. Earlier, Sherry held roles with GlaxoSmithKline and Morgan Stanley Private Wealth Management, and earned an MBA from the University of Southern California. Born in Taiwan, she is a devoted foodie and natural connector who serves as membership chair of the Scottsdale Chaîne des Rôtisseurs, the world's oldest food and wine society, and champions women's leadership and the next generation of Asian entrepreneurs.



**THURSDAY, AUG 13**  
**8:30AM - 9:00AM**

## **1M. THURSDAY KICKOFF SESSION: EMPOWERED TO LEAD: CONFIDENCE & RESILIENCE**

Begin ACEling with an inspiring kickoff focused on the mindset and qualities that define impactful leadership. Mike Hayashi will share insights on building confidence, embracing challenges, and developing the awareness needed to lead with purpose. This powerful opening session will set the tone for the conference by encouraging attendees to recognize their potential, strengthen their leadership journey, and approach opportunities with resilience, courage, and a commitment to creating meaningful impact.



### **Mike Hayashi | Owner of Take Control Self Defense**

Mike Hayashi is an internationally recognized speaker, educator, and martial arts expert who has delivered self-empowerment and personal safety seminars at more than 525 companies and universities across the United States, Aruba, and Jamaica. Holding a master's degree in education and multiple karate black belts, he has made over 450 television appearances and received an Emmy Award nomination. Driven by a mission to end violence against women, Mike's programs have impacted more than 500,000 participants in 27 states. His signature presentations include A Woman's Place Is in Control, Black Belt Media Mastery, The 15 Steps to Be a Triple-P Speaker!, and Maximum Impact.

**“Learn as if you will live forever, live like you will die tomorrow.” — Mahatma Gandhi**



# **HERE FOR EVERYONE**

## **A Great Place to Work**

Banner Health is proud to recognize the essential contributions of Arizona's Asian American community and our partnership with ACEL. Our inclusive culture ensures every one of our 60,000+ team members experiences a genuine sense of belonging—where all perspectives, backgrounds and cultures are recognized and celebrated.





## **1B. PRESENT WITH CONFIDENCE AND MAKE AN IMPACT**

Strong presentations are not only built well—they are delivered with confidence and connection. In this interactive working session, participants will learn how to create presentations with clear purpose, audience-centered structure, and a compelling point of view. The session will focus on practical delivery skills including voice, pace, pauses, presence, body language, and reading the room. Participants will practice with real presentation ideas, receive feedback, and build greater confidence as impactful communicators.

### **MEET THE SPEAKER**



#### **Tania Will Jeppesen | Founder of The Prepared Leader**

Tania Will Jeppesen is a leadership expert, speaker, and founder of The Prepared Leader. She regularly speaks at conferences, leads workshops, and facilitates leadership development sessions to help audiences build stronger communication, execution, and accountability skills. With 20+ years of experience across Fortune 50 companies and small to mid-sized businesses, Tania brings a practical, real-world approach shaped by her background in Operations, Human Resources, and Industrial Engineering. Her sessions are known for being clear, engaging, and immediately applicable.



## **1C. INVERTED APPRENTICESHIP: LEXICAL BRIDGES FOR THE AI-NATIVE WORKFORCE THROUGH AN ASIAN AMERICAN CULTURAL LENS**

The rapid integration of AI is creating new challenges between traditional leadership approaches and AI-native ways of working. This session explores emerging AI behaviors, from productivity theater to agentic creativity, while examining cultural perspectives that influence communication and adoption. Participants will learn a framework of lexical bridges that helps leaders translate competing priorities into shared language, stronger collaboration, and an operating cadence that balances human dignity with measurable momentum.

### **MEET THE SPEAKER**



#### **Dr. Kevin Sakamoto | Professor at Cal State University- Fullerton**

Dr. Kevin Sakamoto is a scholar-practitioner bridging organizational behavior and digital innovation. With 15+ years of e-commerce leadership at Zappos, Target, lululemon, and Dollar Shave Club, he specializes in digital transformation and product management strategy. He is an Adjunct Professor of Business at California State University, Fullerton and a Postdoctoral Fellow at Pepperdine, where his research examines AI's impact on organizational behavior. A TEDx speaker, published researcher, and co-host of the Product Ops Podcast, Kevin's mission is ensuring that as organizations scale technical velocity, they preserve the human dignity that sustains lasting growth.



## **2A. KNOW YOUR WORTH: COMPENSATION STRATEGIES FOR CAREER GROWTH AND FINANCIAL SUCCESS.**

Compensation conversations can be challenging for professionals at every stage of their careers. In this interactive workshop, Shantel Love and Dr. Hui Wu-Curtis will share practical strategies to help participants understand their market value, strengthen their negotiation skills, and approach compensation discussions with confidence. Attendees will leave with a personalized salary negotiation plan, effective responses to common objections, and actionable tools to advocate for their professional growth, career advancement, and long-term financial success.



### **Dr. Hui Wu-Curtis | COO of SupportU and Suture**

Dr. Hui Wu-Curtis is a strategic executive with more than 20 years of experience transforming global contact center operations across hospitality, utilities, financial services, telecommunications, and healthcare industries. She serves as COO of SupportU and Suture, a healthcare-focused BPO joint venture specializing in customer service, back-office processing, technical support, and sales. A data-driven change leader, Dr. Hui leverages AI and innovation to enhance operational excellence, improve processes, and drive business results. Passionate about developing future leaders, she mentors emerging talent and speaks on transformational leadership, inclusive culture, customer experience, and operational innovation.



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## **2D. THE HUMAN ALGORITHM: LEADERSHIP THAT NO AI CAN REPLACE**

AI is already transforming today's workplace—the question is how leaders choose to respond. This session explores what effective leadership looks like when AI becomes part of the team. Drawing from research and insights from leading organizations, participants will examine the uniquely human skills that drive trust, innovation, and performance. Attendees will leave with practical strategies and a 90-day implementation plan to integrate AI while strengthening the human leadership qualities that technology cannot replace.



### **Roger Lee | Founder & Principal of Contact Center Advocates**

Roger Lee is a customer experience and technology leader with more than 15 years of experience in global operations, AI product strategy, and contact center transformation. He helps organizations modernize their customer operations by aligning people, processes, and technology to create smarter, more connected experiences. A recognized CX thought leader, Roger has led transformation initiatives delivering millions in cost savings and revenue growth. He is a Six Sigma Black Belt, COPC leader, former Stevie Awards judge, and passionate mentor dedicated to empowering emerging leaders and advancing innovation in customer experience.





# Without a Heart, it's just a machine.

So in 1971, a little Heart built a different kind of airline—one that made sure everyone could fly.

Everyone has important places to go. So we invented low-fares to help them get there.

To us, you're not 1A or 17B. You're a person with a name, like Steve.

Here, we think everyone deserves to feel special, no matter where you sit or how much you fly.

And with all the places we're going next, we'll always put you first, because our love of People is still our most powerful fuel.

Some say we do things differently.

We say, why would we do things any other way?

Without a Heart, it's just a machine.

Southwest Airlines® is a proud supporter of the Asian Corporate & Entrepreneur Leaders Conference.

**Southwest**®

**2M. FIRESIDE CHAT: BREAKING THE BAMBOO CEILING:  
THE MOMENT THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING**

Join Ron Li for an engaging fireside chat with Dr. Hui Wu-Curtis, COO of SupportU and Suture. Dr. Wu-Curtis' leadership journey reflects resilience, perseverance, and the ability to navigate moments where potential is questioned and opportunities are challenged. Through her experiences across global industries, she has learned the importance of finding her voice, embracing her leadership identity, and creating pathways for herself and others.

With more than 20 years of experience transforming global operations across healthcare, hospitality, utilities, financial services, telecommunications, and customer experience industries, Dr. Wu-Curtis has built a career focused on innovation, operational excellence, and developing high-performing teams. In this candid conversation with Ron Li, Dr. Wu-Curtis will share a defining moment in her career, the lessons learned from overcoming barriers, and how she turned challenges into opportunities for growth, influence, and leadership impact.

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**MEET OUR SPEAKER**

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**Dr. Hui Wu-Curtis | COO of SupportU and Suture**

Dr. Hui Wu-Curtis is a strategic executive with more than 20 years of experience transforming global contact center operations across hospitality, utilities, financial services, telecommunications, and healthcare industries. She serves as COO of SupportU and Suture, a healthcare-focused BPO joint venture specializing in customer service, back-office processing, technical support, and sales. A data-driven change leader, Dr. Hui leverages AI and innovation to enhance operational excellence, improve processes, and drive business results. Passionate about developing future leaders, she mentors emerging talent and speaks on transformational leadership, inclusive culture, customer experience, and operational innovation.



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**MEET OUR MODERATOR**

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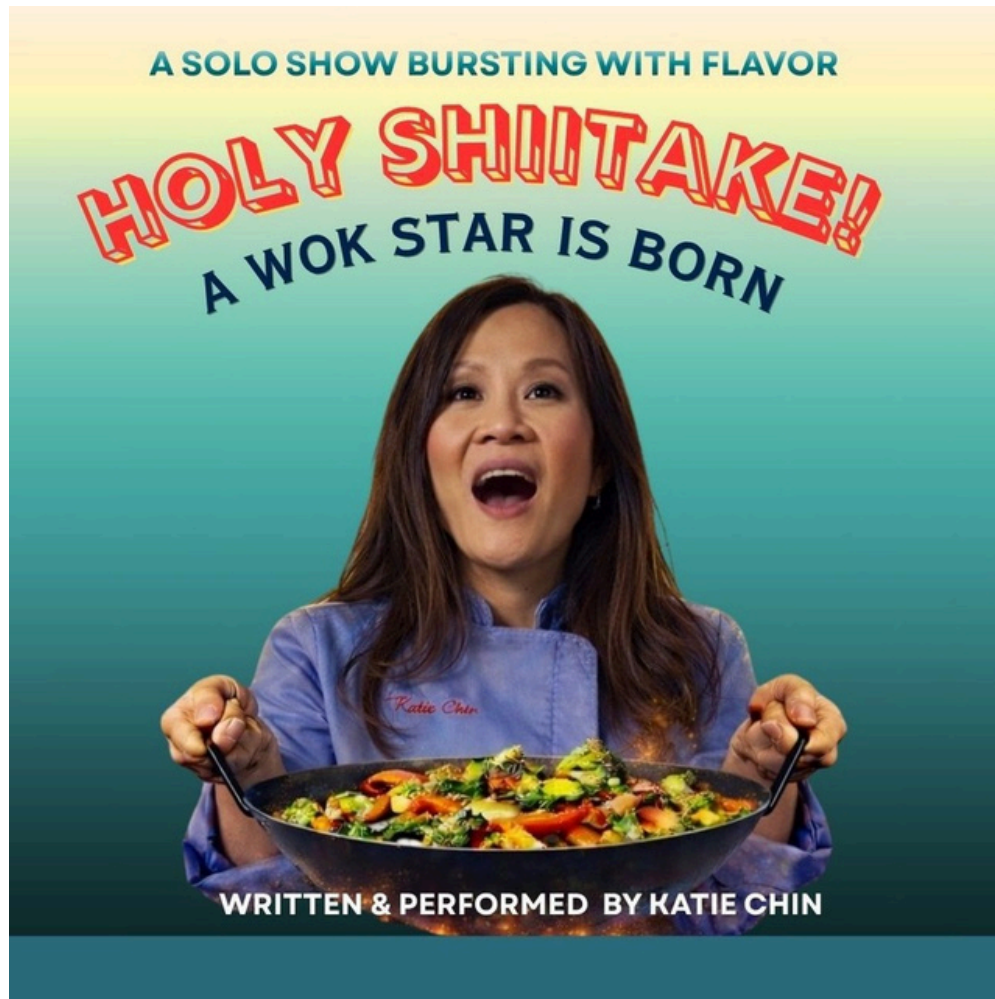
**Ron Li | Strategy & Analytics Leader, Phoenix Suns and Phoenix Mercury**

Ron Li leads strategy and analytics for partnerships, media, and new ventures across the Phoenix Suns, Phoenix Mercury, Valley Suns, and Mortgage Matchup Center. With a background spanning sports, entertainment, sponsorship, and business strategy, he brings expertise in driving growth through data-informed insights and strategic partnerships. Prior to joining the organization, Ron served as Senior Vice President of Client Strategy at Navigate, a leading sports and entertainment consultancy. He also held roles in sponsorship, research, and business strategy at Electronic Arts and the PGA TOUR. Originally from Hong Kong, Ron has lived and worked across Canada, Germany, Singapore, and the United States.





**THURSDAY, AUG 13**  
**1:50PM - 3:05PM**



### **3M. HOLY SHIITAKE! A WOK STAR IS BORN**

Join celebrity chef, author, and storyteller Katie Chin for a special featured experience at the 2026 ACEling In Leadership Conference. Through her presentation, Holy Shiitake! A Wok Star is Born, Katie shares an inspiring journey through culture, identity, resilience, and entrepreneurship. Combining storytelling, humor, and personal reflection, she explores leadership, authenticity, and embracing cultural heritage. Attendees will enjoy an evening of inspiration, connection, and meaningful conversation with fellow professionals, entrepreneurs, and community leaders.

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#### **MEET OUR SPEAKER**

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##### **Katie Chin | Celebrity Chef, Author & Culinary Ambassador**

Katie Chin is an award-winning celebrity chef, bestselling cookbook author, caterer, and Culinary Ambassador for the National Pediatric Cancer Foundation. Raised in the kitchens of her mother, renowned restaurateur Leeann Chin, Katie carries forward her family's culinary legacy while inspiring audiences through food, storytelling, and cultural connection. After a successful career in film and television marketing, she returned to her culinary roots and authored five acclaimed cookbooks, including Everyday Chinese Cookbook and Katie Chin's Global Family Cookbook. A frequent television personality, Katie has appeared on The Today Show, Food Network, and other national programs, using humor and authentic storytelling to celebrate heritage, resilience, and purpose.

### 4A. WHAT LEGACY MEANS NOW: SUCCESS BEYOND STATUS

For many professionals today, success is no longer defined solely by titles, salaries, or recognition. This session explores how leaders are rethinking legacy through impact, community, mentorship, and purpose-driven work. Speakers will discuss what it means to build something meaningful in today's world — personally and professionally — while balancing ambition with fulfillment. Expect an honest conversation about redefining achievement, creating long-term impact, and leaving behind more than just accomplishments.

#### Moderator



#### **Phil Kim | Managing Director & Co-Founder of Signature Wealth Concepts**

Phil Kim brings more than two decades of experience in financial planning and wealth management, helping individuals and businesses develop strategies to achieve their financial goals. A graduate of Cornell University, Phil holds the CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER® designation along with multiple FINRA registrations, including Series 7, Series 66, and Series 24. His commitment to education, excellence, and client service has established him as a trusted advisor and community resource. A frequent speaker on business strategy, financial planning, and career development, Phil builds lasting relationships through integrity, accountability, and a dedication to empowering others.

### MEET THE PANELISTS



#### **Harish K. Ankaraju | Executive Director, Tax at EY**

Harish K. Ankaraju is an accomplished tax executive with deep expertise in advising multinational corporations and private equity-backed businesses on complex U.S. and international tax matters. Based in Phoenix, Arizona, he is recognized for his technical excellence and leadership in guiding organizations through high-stakes transactions, regulatory changes, and global expansion. Beyond his professional achievements, Harish is an active leader in the Arizona business and life sciences communities and a strong advocate for advancing Pan-Asian professionals through mentorship, professional development, and inclusive leadership. He is committed to creating opportunities that inspire the next generation of leaders.



#### **Jack Liu | Co-Founder & CEO of ProCARE Portal**

Jack Liu is a healthcare technology entrepreneur and leader dedicated to transforming healthcare operations through innovative solutions. As co-founder and CEO of ProCARE Portal, he has guided the company's growth since 2019, expanding its platform to support more than 25,000 providers and establishing an international presence. Jack brings deep expertise in healthcare SaaS, provider compensation, performance management, and emerging market trends. He also serves as a board director for ACEL, a national nonprofit advancing AANHPI leadership and mentorship. Passionate about entrepreneurship and community impact, Jack enjoys mentoring emerging leaders, playing golf, and spending time with his two dogs.



### 4A. WHAT LEGACY MEANS NOW: SUCCESS BEYOND STATUS (CON'T)



#### **Hon. Roxanne Song Ong | Former Chief Presiding Judge, City of Phoenix**

Roxanne K. Song Ong has dedicated more than 45 years to serving Arizona's criminal justice system, breaking historic barriers as the first Asian American woman attorney and first Asian American woman judge in Arizona. The daughter of Chinese immigrants, she earned her bachelor's degree in education from Arizona State University and her Juris Doctor from the University of Arizona College of Law. Her distinguished career includes work in immigration law, criminal prosecution, and criminal defense before her judicial appointment in 1986. In 2005, she became the first woman and first person of color to serve as Chief Presiding Judge for the City of Phoenix.



#### **Sandra Yang Scirpo | Chief Customer Officer at SimpliSafe**

Sandra Yang Scirpo is a transformation executive and customer experience leader dedicated to creating opportunities for others to succeed. As Chief Customer Officer at SimpliSafe, she helps drive strategy, technology, and operational excellence while keeping customers and employees at the center of business transformation. Throughout her career, Sandra has guided organizations through modernization and growth by building strong teams and fostering innovation. Beyond her professional role, she mentors executives, professionals, and entrepreneurs, drawing from her journey as a first-generation immigrant and her belief in the power of community, guidance, and access to develop impactful leaders.

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### 4B. BREAK YOUR BRAIN - EXPAND YOUR VISION. ELEVATE YOUR LEADERSHIP

Break Your Brain is a powerful session designed to challenge leaders to move beyond practical, incremental thinking and expand what they believe is possible. Participants will explore the invisible barriers that limit personal and organizational growth, examine how vision influences leadership decisions, and discover new approaches to innovation and transformation. Attendees will leave with greater clarity, fresh perspectives, and practical next steps toward creating a bigger future for themselves and those they lead. Whether you're a founder, freelancer, or corporate professional, your personal brand is your most valuable asset. Learn how to position yourself with purpose, create trust across digital platforms, and turn authentic engagement into business opportunities.



#### **Lawrence Huey | Executive Coach at Novus Global**

Lawrence Huey is an executive coach with Novus Global who partners with senior leaders, entrepreneurs, and business owners to expand leadership capacity, strengthen strategic thinking, and increase organizational impact. Drawing on nearly two decades as a nonprofit founder and executive director, he brings extensive experience building teams, navigating complexity, and driving meaningful change. Lawrence has coached leaders across aerospace, defense, energy, finance, healthcare, sports, and technology, working with organizations including NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, the U.S. Department of Defense, Northrop Grumman, U.S. Bank, and the NFL. He helps leaders gain clarity, elevate performance, and create lasting transformation.

**THURSDAY, AUG 13**

**3:25PM - 4:40PM**

#### **4C. CREATING SPACE: BUILDING COMMUNITIES THAT EMPOWER WOMEN TO LEAD**

Strong communities can transform careers, businesses, and lives. This panel explores the importance of creating intentional spaces where women can connect, learn, and support one another. Panelists will discuss the role of community-building in leadership development, entrepreneurship, and personal growth while sharing strategies for fostering belonging, collaboration, and collective success.

##### **Moderator**



##### **Andrea Moreno | Community Engagement Leader & Nonprofit Advocate**

Born and raised in Tolleson, Arizona, Andrea Moreno is a 23-year veteran of the utility industry dedicated to creating meaningful impact across Arizona. She has led initiatives that strengthen partnerships between organizations and the communities they serve, building connections that drive positive change. Fluent in English and Spanish, Andrea is recognized for her collaborative leadership and commitment to service. Her experience includes managing multimillion-dollar corporate and nonprofit budgets, developing community investment programs, and raising significant funding to support underserved women's education. She currently serves on several nonprofit boards, championing opportunities that empower communities and inspire future generations.

#### **MEET THE PANELISTS**



##### **Ashley Mina | Founder and C.E.O of Your Work Wife Ashley**

Ashley Mina is a two-time award-winning community founder and co-founder of a boutique HR and recruiting agency dedicated to helping businesses and professionals thrive. Through her personal brand, Your Work Wife Ashley, she builds businesses and brands for women who are creating opportunities and redefining leadership on their own terms. Her work sits at the intersection of strategy, identity, and human connection, with a focus on building diverse, equitable teams, platforms, and organizations. Ashley believes that professional success should not come at the expense of personal fulfillment and empowers others to build businesses rooted in purpose, authenticity, and impact.



##### **Anisha Pandya Patel | Founder of MasalaMommy**

Anisha Pandya Patel is a maternal well-being coach, workplace strategist, speaker, and founder of MasalaMommy, where she helps organizations and families better support women through pregnancy, postpartum, and the transition back to work. With more than a decade of experience leading strategic initiatives across multiple industries, Anisha combines corporate expertise with evidence-based maternal health practices to empower women to thrive personally and professionally. She is the author of Expecting: A Pregnancy Journal and serves as Maternal Health Chair for the Phoenix-Gilbert Chapter of Chamber of Mothers, advancing initiatives that improve maternal health and strengthen communities throughout Arizona.



**Larissa Riley | Founder of Sun Scribe Creative**

Larissa Riley is a brand and messaging strategist with 20 years of experience shaping narratives for billion-dollar brands and visionary founders. After leading creative strategy in the corporate world, she founded Sun Scribe Creative, helping founders, creative teams, and growing brands clarify their messaging and create stories that build lasting connections. She is also the co-founder of Gals Against the Grain, a community supporting API founders, creatives, and business owners who challenge expectations and pursue their own paths. Drawing from her professional expertise and lived experience, Larissa builds communities centered on belonging, authenticity, and bold creativity.



**Maria Morales | Community Affairs Manager at Arizona Public Service**

Maria Morales is a community relations leader at Arizona Public Service (APS) with more than 25 years of experience advancing community engagement, customer outreach, and strategic partnerships across Arizona. A lifelong Arizona resident, she is passionate about connecting individuals and organizations with resources that strengthen communities. Maria has championed volunteerism, nonprofit partnerships, and customer assistance initiatives while supporting APS's commitment to safe, reliable energy service. She is a dedicated advocate for mentorship, servant leadership, and community impact, serving on nonprofit boards and employee resource groups. Through collaboration and service, Maria continues to create meaningful connections and lasting impact throughout Arizona.



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**THURSDAY, AUG 13**  
**5:00PM - 7:00PM**

**WELCOME RECEPTION**

## Welcome Reception & Mentorship Graduation

### MEET THE **KEYNOTE**



#### **MAX CHAN | CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER AT AVNET**

Max Chan is a technology executive with extensive experience leading global information technology, cybersecurity, digital strategy, and enterprise transformation initiatives. As Chief Information Officer at Avnet, he oversees the company's global IT organization and digital system integration business, delivering innovative technology solutions that support internal operations and external customers worldwide. Since joining Avnet in 2013, Max has played a key role in advancing digital capabilities, leading major system implementations, establishing Global Development Centers, and strengthening global application platforms before being named CIO in 2019. Prior to Avnet, he held IT leadership roles at VF Corporation and Johnson Controls, where he drove technology modernization and operational excellence. Max is passionate about leveraging technology to enable business growth, improve customer experiences, and build scalable solutions. He holds degrees from the University of Malaya and the University of Birmingham.

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**FRIDAY, AUGUST 14**

**8:30AM - 9:00AM**

**RISE READY: INSPIRING GROWTH THROUGH CONNECTION,  
PURPOSE, AND LEADERSHIP**

Start the second day of ACELing with renewed energy and inspiration as Mark Strickling shares lessons from his journey in leadership, mentorship, and empowering others to reach their full potential. Through stories and insights from his career in higher education and community engagement, Mark will encourage attendees to reflect on their own leadership impact, strengthen meaningful connections, and take action to create positive change in their organizations and communities.



**Mark Strickling | Discovery Gift Officer at University of Arizona Foundation**

Mark Strickling is a higher education leader with more than 20 years of experience dedicated to mentorship, professional development, and helping others achieve their full potential. He currently serves as Discovery Gift Officer with the University of Arizona Foundation in Philanthropy and Alumni Engagement, following a successful career as a Regional Director of Alumni. A proud University of Arizona alumnus, Mark earned his bachelor's degree in marketing from UArizona and an MBA from the University of Phoenix. He was an Arizona Ambassador and two-year letter winner on the Desert Swarm football team, including the 1994 Fiesta Bowl championship. Mark is passionate about building meaningful relationships and empowering future leaders.



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**5A: BREAKING THROUGH THE CORPORATE LADDER:  
LESSONS FROM THE EXECUTIVE LEVEL**

What does it take to reach executive leadership within a Fortune 50 company? This session provides insight into the strategies, mindset, and leadership qualities that shape successful corporate journeys. Through personal experiences and lessons learned, attendees will explore how to navigate challenges, build meaningful relationships, increase visibility, and position themselves for advancement. Participants will gain practical guidance on career growth, leadership development, and creating long-term success in today's evolving workplace.

**Moderator**



**Dr. Hui Wu-Curtis | COO of SupportU and Suture**



Dr. Hui Wu-Curtis is a strategic executive with more than 20 years of experience transforming global contact center operations across hospitality, utilities, financial services, telecommunications, and healthcare industries. She serves as COO of SupportU and Suture, a healthcare-focused BPO joint venture specializing in customer service, back-office processing, technical support, and sales. A data-driven change leader, Dr. Hui leverages AI and innovation to enhance operational excellence, improve processes, and drive business results. Passionate about developing future leaders, she mentors emerging talent and speaks on transformational leadership, inclusive culture, customer experience, and operational innovation.

**MEET THE SPEAKER**



**Joy Park | Chief Client Officer at Everise**



Joy Park is a transformational executive leader with nearly three decades of experience driving customer experience, operations, and business transformation across high-growth startups and Fortune 30 organizations. As Chief Client Officer at Everise, she partners with global clients to enhance customer and patient experience strategies, with a focus on healthcare innovation and operational excellence. Previously, Joy served as Senior Vice President at Comcast, leading global operations and strategic initiatives that advanced customer growth and organizational transformation. Passionate about mentorship and community impact, she supports multicultural communities through her advisory role with the Family Counseling Center of Greater Washington, advancing mental wellness and youth mentorship initiatives.



**"Great leaders are not defined by the absence of weakness, but rather by the presence of clear strengths." — John Peter Zenger**



**FRIDAY, AUGUST 14**

**9:20AM-10:35AM**

**5C: MENTAL HEALTH, BURNOUT, AND SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS:  
LEADING WITH RESILIENCE**

Success should not come at the expense of well-being. Many professionals, including AAPI leaders, navigate high expectations, cultural pressures, caregiving responsibilities, and the pursuit of achievement. This conversation explores burnout, workplace pressure, and practical strategies for building sustainable careers, maintaining resilience, and creating healthier approaches to leadership, performance, and long-term success.

**Moderator**



**Claira Drescher | Counselor, LAC at Arizona Trauma Therapists**

Claira Drescher is a psychotherapist and consultant specializing in trauma, anxiety, relationships, and life transitions. Before entering clinical practice, she spent more than 20 years in executive leadership roles across global financial institutions and healthcare organizations, gaining firsthand insight into the pressures of high achievement, burnout, and identity. Claira combines her leadership experience with culturally responsive, evidence-based care to help individuals and communities build resilience and navigate change. Passionate about meaningful conversations, she bridges the connection between leadership, mental health, and personal growth, empowering others to create healthier, more fulfilling lives.

**MEET THE PANELISTS**



**Elizabeth Greene | Managing Director, Global Inclusion, Learning & Development at Lam Research**

Elizabeth Greene is a talent development leader with more than two decades of experience advancing learning strategy, leadership development, and organizational growth in global environments. At Lam Research, a Fortune 500 semiconductor equipment company, she drives initiatives that strengthen workforce capabilities and support business transformation. Elizabeth holds an MBA, a bachelor's degree in East Asian Studies, and the SHRM-SCP certification. She is also a Make-A-Wish volunteer, ACEL mentor and speaker, and advisory board member for Northern Arizona University's workforce development committee focused on the semiconductor industry.



**Chris Heo | Professor at ASU Law & Bar Counsel, State Bar of Arizona**

Chris Heo is a professor at ASU Law and serves as Bar Counsel at the State Bar of Arizona, where he investigates and litigates lawyer ethics violations. Before transitioning to public service and academia, Chris was a partner at a national law firm, bringing extensive legal experience to his teaching and professional service. A longtime member of the Arizona Asian American Bar Association, he has served in multiple leadership roles, including treasurer, vice president, president, and ex-officio. A graduate of the State Bar of Arizona's Bar Leadership Institute, Chris is passionate about mentoring and developing the next generation of community leaders.



**Tommie Ho | Director of Business Intelligence at Blue Cross Blue Shield of AZ**

Tommie Ho is a data and technology leader focused on business intelligence, AI modernization, and enterprise data strategy. At Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona, he leads initiatives that transform complex challenges into measurable outcomes while enabling smarter decision-making through innovative solutions. Passionate about building high-performing teams, Tommie combines technical expertise with a people-centered leadership approach. Outside of his corporate role, he is an entrepreneur, consultant, and content creator sharing insights on leadership, technology, career growth, and innovation. He believes meaningful solutions begin with clear outcomes and empowering people.

**FRIDAY, AUGUST 14**

**10:55AM-12:10PM**

**5C: MENTAL HEALTH, BURNOUT, AND SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS:  
LEADING WITH RESILIENCE (CON'T)**



**Sam Castro | Associate Experience, Belonging & Wellbeing Partner at Choice Hotels International**

Sam Castro, LAC, is a workplace culture and employee experience leader focused on building environments where people feel valued, connected, and empowered to thrive. At Choice Hotels International, she leads initiatives centered on associate experience, belonging, wellbeing, engagement, and leadership development. Sam partners with leaders and manages Choice Resource Groups (CRGs) to create programs that strengthen culture and support organizational growth. As a Licensed Associate Counselor, she brings expertise in mental health and psychological safety to her work, helping organizations foster healthier workplaces through meaningful connections, inclusive practices, and people-centered leadership.

**6A. AI AND THE FUTURE OF LEADERSHIP:  
WHAT LEADERS NEED TO KNOW NOW**

Artificial intelligence is transforming how organizations operate, innovate, and compete. This panel examines how AI is changing decision-making, team management, innovation, and workplace dynamics across industries. Speakers will discuss the opportunities and challenges facing today's leaders, including how AAPI professionals and organizations can remain competitive, adaptable, and future-ready in an increasingly technology-driven world

**Moderator**



**Max Chan | Chief Information Officer at Avnet**

Max Chan is a technology executive with extensive experience leading global information technology, cybersecurity, digital strategy, and business transformation initiatives. As Chief Information Officer at Avnet, he oversees the company's global IT organization and digital system integration business, delivering technology solutions that support Avnet's digital-first vision. Since joining Avnet in 2013, Max has led major system implementations, established Global Development Centers, and advanced enterprise applications before being named CIO in 2019. Previously, he held IT leadership roles at VF Corporation and Johnson Controls. Max holds degrees from the University of Malaya and the University of Birmingham.

**MEET THE PANELISTS**



**Melissa Ho | Deputy General Counsel & Director of Compliance at Cavco Industries**

Melissa Ho is a legal and compliance executive with extensive experience advising organizations on regulatory strategy, corporate governance, and complex compliance matters. At Cavco Industries, one of the nation's largest manufactured housing companies, she oversees legal compliance and enterprise risk initiatives. Prior to joining Cavco, Melissa led regulatory matters for a global semiconductor company, providing guidance on evolving compliance frameworks and government-facing issues. A lifelong Arizonan, she is deeply committed to mentoring, community service, and supporting the continued growth of Arizona's legal profession through leadership, collaboration, and service.



**6A. AI AND THE FUTURE OF LEADERSHIP:  
WHAT LEADERS NEED TO KNOW NOW (CON'T)**

MEET THE **PANELISTS**



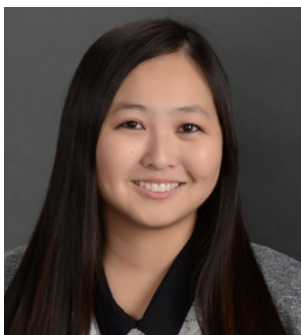
**Neha Gupta | Lecturer in Business Analytics at the University of Arizona Eller College of Management**

Neha Gupta is an educator and business analytics professional with more than 20 years of experience spanning business analytics, enterprise operations, and e-learning. At the University of Arizona's Eller College of Management, she teaches Statistical Inference in Management, helping students develop data-driven decision-making skills. Neha holds a Master of Science in Business Analytics from the University of Arizona and has worked across the insurance, consulting, and technology industries. Passionate about developing future leaders, she equips students with the analytical thinking, AI literacy, and practical business skills needed to succeed in an increasingly data-driven world.



**Michael Cheung | Founding Partner, Head of Quantitative Research & Portfolio Manager at Redwood Investment Management**

Michael Cheung is an investment executive with more than 15 years of experience in quantitative investing, portfolio management, and financial technology innovation. At Redwood Investment Management, which oversees approximately \$3 billion in assets, he leads the development of quantitative, algorithmic, and deep learning-based systems that power the firm's research and investment strategies. Michael is instrumental in advancing technology-driven portfolio construction and dynamic risk management. He also leads innovation initiatives focused on data science, automation, and scalable infrastructure to enhance investment decision-making, improve operational efficiency, and drive long-term performance across the firm's investment platform.



**Heather Yan | Marketing Leader at Choice Hotels International**

Heather Yan is a marketing strategist with more than 10 years of experience in digital marketing, specializing in SEO, local marketing, and customer engagement strategies that drive business growth. At Choice Hotels, she helps organizations strengthen brand visibility and customer engagement through data-driven marketing initiatives. She also founded Urban Lion Rock, a digital marketing and AI consulting agency, and Auri Pointe Language Academy, an education venture focused on language learning and cultural connection. Holding an MBA from the University of Washington, Heather is passionate about helping organizations leverage AI to boost productivity, improve efficiency, and make smarter business decisions.

“

***“To handle yourself, use your head; to handle others,  
use your heart.” - Eleanor Roosevelt***

”



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**FRIDAY, AUGUST 14**

**10:55AM-12:10PM**

## **6B. THE POWER OF POSSIBILITIES - THE HIDDEN KEY TO BREAKTHROUGH LEADERSHIP AND PERFORMANCE**

Leadership performance is shaped not only by circumstances, but by how individuals interpret and respond to those circumstances. This engaging session explores how assumptions, perspectives, and conversations influence decisions, relationships, and results. Participants will learn practical tools to identify limiting viewpoints, create more empowering conversations, and approach challenges with greater clarity and resilience. Attendees will leave with new perspectives to unlock potential and lead with greater possibility.

### **MEET THE SPEAKER**



#### **Lawrence Huey | Executive Coach at Novus Global**

Lawrence Huey is an executive coach with Novus Global who partners with senior leaders, entrepreneurs, and business owners to expand leadership capacity, strengthen strategic thinking, and increase organizational impact. Drawing on nearly two decades as a nonprofit founder and executive director, he brings extensive experience building teams, navigating complexity, and driving meaningful change. Lawrence has coached leaders across aerospace, defense, energy, finance, healthcare, sports, and technology, working with organizations including NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, the U.S. Department of Defense, Northrop Grumman, U.S. Bank, and the NFL. He helps leaders gain clarity, elevate performance, and create lasting transformation.

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## **6C. QUIET POWER: LEADERSHIP FOR INTROVERTS, BUILDERS, AND THOUGHTFUL OPERATORS**

Thoughtful leadership is often an overlooked strength. For many AAPI professionals, leadership has traditionally been demonstrated through humility, preparation, and consistent execution rather than self-promotion. This session highlights how introverts, builders, and behind-the-scenes operators leverage listening, strategy, and expertise to lead effectively, build influence, and achieve meaningful results while remaining authentic to themselves.

### **Moderator**



#### **Harrison Pham | Managing Director at Highspring**

Harrison Pham is a business and technology leader with more than 14 years of industry experience and nearly a decade in executive leadership. As Managing Director at Highspring, a global professional services organization, he partners with IT and finance leaders to solve complex business challenges through consulting, managed services, and talent solutions. Harrison is passionate about building trusted relationships and delivering strategies that drive measurable business impact. Known for his collaborative leadership style and client-focused approach, he helps organizations navigate change, strengthen operations, and achieve sustainable growth through innovative, practical solutions.



**6C. QUIET POWER: LEADERSHIP FOR INTROVERTS, BUILDERS,  
AND THOUGHTFUL OPERATORS (CON'T)**

MEET THE **PANELISTS**



**Cecilia Sun | Managing Director & Head of Credit Card Customer Service at JPMorganChase**

Cecilia Sun is a customer experience and operations executive with more than 25 years of leadership experience across financial services, healthcare, and technology. At JPMorganChase, she leads approximately 5,700 employees across multiple locations in three countries, driving innovation, digital transformation, and operational excellence. Previously, Cecilia held executive leadership roles at YouTube, Blue Shield of California, and American Express, where she advanced customer-focused strategies and business growth. She also serves on the Board of Providence Health Plan. A Georgetown University graduate, Cecilia is passionate about developing leaders, enhancing customer experiences, and creating meaningful community impact.



**Dr. Steve Valero | Vice President of Technology at Diversified USA**

Dr. Steve Valero is a technology executive with more than 25 years of experience in SaaS, including leadership roles in EdTech and the startup Keap. Guided by his PhD research on job satisfaction and technology workforce retention, Steve has dedicated his career to mentoring and developing engineers, particularly introverted technologists. As founder of The Move Forward, he applies systems thinking to help professionals thrive in high-pressure environments, manage cognitive demands, and transition into impactful leadership roles while embracing their authentic strengths.



**Dinesh Kakwani | Tax Services Principal at EY**

Dinesh Kakwani is a tax executive who advises multinational companies on complex U.S. federal and international tax matters. At EY, he provides strategic guidance on areas including ASC 740, cross-border transactions, foreign operations, cash management, treasury, internal reorganizations, supply chain planning, intangible property alignment, loss utilization, and income characterization. Dinesh partners with organizations nationwide to develop practical tax strategies that support business growth and global operations. He earned an Executive MBA from New York University with concentrations in Finance and Leadership and a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting from Hofstra University.



**Amanda Ho | Director of Investor Relations at Pinnacle West**

Amanda Ho is a corporate strategy and investor relations leader with extensive experience in regulatory affairs, legal strategy, and stakeholder engagement. At Pinnacle West, she leads investor relations initiatives, including quarterly earnings communications, strategic messaging, and relationship management with institutional investors. Since joining the company in 2015, Amanda has held key leadership roles, including Senior Attorney in the Law Department and Director of State Regulatory Affairs. Previously, she served in various roles at the Arizona Corporation Commission. A Phoenix native, Amanda holds a Bachelor of Science in Finance and Juris Doctor from Arizona State University and enjoys family, travel, and exploring great food.



**6M. FROM HERITAGE TO TABLE:  
A LIVE COOKING EXPERIENCE WITH KATIE CHIN**

Food has the unique ability to bring people together, preserve traditions, and tell the stories behind our cultures. At the 2026 ACEling In Leadership Conference, “From Heritage to Table: A Live Cooking Experience with Katie Chin” will offer attendees a memorable culinary showcase celebrating the connection between food, culture, and community. Featuring award-winning celebrity chef Katie Chin and Arizona food influencer Kay Tam of AZFoodGuy, this interactive experience will combine live cooking, storytelling, and cultural exploration. Katie will share her passion for culinary traditions, family heritage, and the stories behind her dishes, while Kay will bring his expertise in food discovery, digital storytelling, and connecting communities through shared experiences. Together, they will showcase how food can inspire creativity, celebrate diverse traditions, and create meaningful connections across generations and cultures.

**MEET OUR SPEAKER**



**Katie Chin | Celebrity Chef, Author & Culinary Ambassador**

Katie Chin is an award-winning celebrity chef, bestselling cookbook author, caterer, and Culinary Ambassador for the National Pediatric Cancer Foundation. Raised in the kitchens of her mother, renowned restaurateur Leeann Chin, Katie carries forward her family’s culinary legacy while inspiring audiences through food, storytelling, and cultural connection. After a successful career in film and television marketing, she returned to her culinary roots and authored five acclaimed cookbooks, including Everyday Chinese Cookbook and Katie Chin’s Global Family Cookbook. A frequent television personality, Katie has appeared on The Today Show, Food Network, and other national programs, using humor and authentic storytelling to celebrate heritage, resilience, and purpose.



**MEET OUR MODERATOR**



**Kay Tam | Creator of AZFOODGUY**

Kay Tam is the creator behind AZFoodGuy, a leading Arizona food and lifestyle influencer known for sharing his passion for culinary experiences, restaurant discoveries, and cultural storytelling across digital platforms. Through Instagram, TikTok, and online content creation, Kay has built a strong community of food enthusiasts and grown a following of hundreds of thousands by combining creativity, authenticity, and innovation. His work highlights the diverse culinary landscape of Arizona while supporting local restaurants, entrepreneurs, and food communities. Kay’s journey reflects the power of storytelling and digital engagement, using food as a bridge to connect people, celebrate cultures, and inspire exploration through memorable culinary experiences.





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### 7A. BUILD YOUR BRAND. STRENGTHEN YOUR INFLUENCE. ELEVATE YOUR IMPACT.

Your personal brand is more than a résumé or job title—it is the reputation you build through your expertise, relationships, and professional presence. In this interactive workshop, participants will learn how to define their unique value proposition, communicate their strengths with confidence, and build a credible personal brand both online and in person. Gain practical strategies to strengthen your visibility, expand your professional network, and position yourself for greater leadership opportunities and career impact.

#### MEET THE **SPEAKER**



#### **Mark Strickling | Discovery Gift Officer at University of Arizona Foundation**

Mark Strickling is a higher education leader with more than 20 years of experience dedicated to mentorship, professional development, and helping others achieve their full potential. He currently serves as Discovery Gift Officer with the University of Arizona Foundation in Philanthropy and Alumni Engagement, following a successful career as a Regional Director of Alumni. A proud University of Arizona alumnus, Mark earned his bachelor's degree in marketing from UArizona and an MBA from the University of Phoenix. He was an Arizona Ambassador and two-year letter winner on the Desert Swarm football team, including the 1994 Fiesta Bowl championship.

Mark is passionate about building meaningful relationships and empowering future leaders.



### 7B. THE EVOLVING LEADER IN THE AGE OF AI (V2.0): BECAUSE LEADERSHIP, LIKE SOFTWARE, NEEDS REGULAR UPDATES

Leadership, like software, requires continuous updates. Building on the “Magic 5” traits — Resiliency, Other-Centeredness, Quality Execution, Empathy, and Realistic Thinking — this session explores how leaders can adapt in an AI-powered workplace. Participants will learn a practical roadmap across three levels: Foundation, Fluency, and Forward, including prompt literacy, human-AI collaboration, and strategic integration. Attendees will discover how to work alongside AI effectively while continuing to lead with confidence, empathy, and purpose.

#### MEET THE **SPEAKER**



#### **Roger Lee | Founder & Principal of Contact Center Advocates**

Roger Lee is a customer experience and technology leader with more than 15 years of experience in global operations, AI product strategy, and contact center transformation. He helps organizations modernize their customer operations by aligning people, processes, and technology to create smarter, more connected experiences. A recognized CX thought leader, Roger has led transformation initiatives delivering millions in cost savings and revenue growth. He is a Six Sigma Black Belt, COPC leader, former Stevie Awards judge, and passionate mentor dedicated to empowering emerging leaders and advancing innovation in customer experience.





**FRIDAY, AUGUST 14**

**1:50PM- 3:05PM**

**7C. LEADING WITHOUT THE TITLE:  
HOW EMERGING LEADERS BUILD REAL INFLUENCE**

Many AAPI professionals have learned to lead through expertise, collaboration, and results long before receiving formal leadership titles. This panel explores how emerging leaders build credibility, trust, and influence, drive initiatives, and create impact regardless of organizational hierarchy. Attendees will gain practical strategies for increasing visibility, advocating for themselves, and positioning themselves for future leadership opportunities.

**Moderator**



**Kenny Ho | Associate Corporate Counsel at Carvana**

Kenny Ho is an attorney and corporate legal leader at Carvana, where he manages the company's external litigation portfolio, including consumer disputes, commercial litigation, general liability, insurance matters, and regulatory investigations. He partners with business leaders to mitigate risk and protect organizational interests. Kenny serves on the board of the Arizona Asian American Bar Association and is a graduate of Valley Leadership Accelerate Class 1 and the State Bar of Arizona's Bar Leadership Institute Class 12. Active in the community, he is involved with ACEL and Lambda Legal. Outside of work, Kenny enjoys martial arts, exploring Phoenix's food scene, and writing his music blog.

**MEET THE PANELISTS**



**Justine Pangallo | Senior Analyst of Employee Experience at Southwest Gas**

Justine Pangallo is an employee experience and engagement leader at Southwest Gas, where she leads enterprise-wide engagement, listening strategies, and initiatives that strengthen workplace culture. A Filipina-American leader, Justine brings a diverse background spanning talent acquisition, sales leadership, and operations across technology, hospitality, and energy industries. She has built and scaled programs, led cross-functional teams, and advised executive leaders through a leadership approach grounded in influence, trust, and collaboration. Justine also serves as a Board Advisor for Ascend Las Vegas, supporting AAPI advancement and creating opportunities for future leaders.



**Sumit Sharma | Senior Director of System Service Line Administration at Banner Health**

Sumit Sharma is a healthcare executive with more than two decades of experience leading operational excellence, service line strategy, and healthcare transformation. At Banner Health, he oversees system service line administration and has held progressive leadership roles, including Director of Surgery Service Lines and Director of Process Engineering. Sumit brings expertise in process improvement, operational optimization, strategic integration, and advancing patient-centered care. He holds an MBA from Golden Gate University, a Master of Science from Northwestern University, and a Bachelor of Applied Science in Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering. Sumit is also an AAPI Executive Sponsor and advocate for leadership, community engagement, and inclusive healthcare environments.



**FRIDAY, AUGUST 14**  
**1:50PM- 3:05PM**

**7C. LEADING WITHOUT THE TITLE:  
HOW EMERGING LEADERS BUILD REAL INFLUENCE (CON'T)**

**MEET THE PANELISTS**



**Pranjit Biswas | Enterprise Solutions Architect at AWS**

Pranjit Biswas is an Enterprise Solutions Architect at AWS, speaker, mentor, and thought leader focused on the belief that leadership begins before receiving a title. With 18 years of experience, he has led complex initiatives, influenced executive decisions, and driven organizational change through technical expertise, collaboration, and relationship-building. Passionate about innovation and community engagement, Pranjit shares insights on leadership, artificial intelligence, and digital transformation. He helps professionals increase visibility, advocate for ideas, and build confidence to lead at every stage of their careers. His work reflects that leadership is defined by impact and the people you inspire.



**Dani Thao | Marriage and Family Therapist at Cedar Hill**

Dani Thao is a Marriage and Family Therapist, life coach, entrepreneur, and proud daughter of Hmong refugees. Through her personal and professional journey, she has navigated spaces where she was often the “first” or “only,” transforming experiences with imposter syndrome into opportunities for growth, healing, and leadership. Dani believes healing is about reconnecting with who we truly are rather than changing to fit expectations. Through her work, she helps individuals embrace their stories, build self-confidence, and create meaningful lives rooted in authenticity, resilience, and self-worth.

**Arizona, we've got  
your back.**

Arizona is our home, and we're stepping up to improve our state's health. AZ Blue in Action brings health to Arizonans – out in the community, on the road, and from our offices throughout the state.

[azblue.com/azblueinaction](https://azblue.com/azblueinaction)

**FRIDAY, AUGUST 15**  
**3:25PM-4:40PM**

## **8D. LEAN INTO YOUR STRENGTHS: SHOW UP AS A LIGHTHOUSE**

This interactive, creativity-based workshop is designed for AAPI professionals ready to embrace their strengths, honor their experiences, and lead with greater authenticity. Through hands-on exercises and strengths-based exploration, participants will identify leadership qualities shaped by their backgrounds, challenge limiting narratives, and develop practical tools for showing up with confidence. Attendees will leave with a personalized action statement and a creative reminder of the unique strengths they bring to leadership.



### **Van Lai-DuMone | Founder of worksmart Advantage**

Van Lai-DuMone is a speaker, author, and founder of worksmart Advantage, a leadership and team development consultancy focused on unlocking creativity, curiosity, and innovation in the workplace. She helps organizations transform culture and performance by empowering individuals and teams to embrace new ways of thinking and collaboration. Her book, *What If Pigs Can Fly? A Practical Guide to Follow Your Curiosities to Achieve Impractical Possibilities*, shares the inspiring story of how her mother and 19 Vietnamese refugee women helped pioneer the U.S. manicure industry, while providing a framework for readers to pursue curiosity and create new possibilities.



TEMPE TOWN LAKE

**Help ACEL  
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Race Across  
the finish line**

If you are interested in joining the team or would like more information, please send an email to [DragonBoat@ACELeaders.org](mailto:DragonBoat@ACELeaders.org)



**FRIDAY, AUGUST 14**  
**5:00PM - 8:00PM**

## **2026 ACEL LEADERSHIP AWARDS GALA**

### **JOY PARK**

#### **CHIEF CLIENT OFFICER AT EVERISE**



Joy Park is a transformational executive leader with nearly three decades of experience driving customer experience, operations, and business transformation across high-growth startups and Fortune 30 organizations. As Chief Client Officer at Everise, she partners with global clients to enhance customer and patient experience strategies, with a focus on healthcare innovation and operational excellence. Previously, Joy served as Senior Vice President at Comcast, leading global operations and strategic initiatives that advanced customer growth and organizational transformation. Passionate about mentorship and community impact, she supports multicultural communities through her advisory role with the Family Counseling Center of Greater Washington, advancing mental wellness and youth mentorship initiatives.



## **ACELence In Mentorship Program**

*No success story is ever written alone!*



**SCAN ME**

#### **Benefits:**

- Develop a network of resources
- Gain fresh perspective from local, seasoned veterans
- Encouragement & support
- Self-reliance & self-confidence
- Professional development & tips to improve lifestyle



**FRIDAY, AUGUST 14**  
**5:00PM - 8:00PM**

## **2026 HONOREES | ACEL IMPACT LEADER AWARDS**

### MEET THE **AWARDEES**



#### **ACEL Impact Leader Award for Legacy Leadership**

**Hon. Roxanne Song Ong**, Former Chief Presiding Judge, City of Phoenix

*Recognized for a lasting commitment to advancing community leadership, public service, and pathways for future generations through decades of dedication, integrity, and meaningful impact.*



#### **ACEL Impact Leader Award for Bridge-Building Leadership**

**Hon. Jenny Ho-Vijungco**, Honorary Consul of the Philippines in Arizona

*Recognized for strengthening connections across cultures, communities, and nations through diplomatic leadership, collaboration, and a commitment to advancing meaningful partnerships and shared opportunities.*



#### **ACEL Impact Leader Award for Health & Public Service Leadership**

**Dr. Amish Shah**, Former Arizona State Representative | Physician

*Recognized for advancing community well-being through healthcare leadership, public service, and efforts to improve access, outcomes, and opportunities for the communities he serves.*



#### **ACEL Impact Leader Award for Economic Empowerment Leadership**

**Adriana Kong Romero**, Tucson Market President, Bank of America

*Recognized for advancing economic opportunity and community prosperity through financial leadership, strategic partnerships, and a commitment to empowering individuals, businesses, and communities.*



#### **ACEL Impact Leader Award for Professional Excellence**

**Harish K. Ankaraju**, Tax Managing Director, EY

*Recognized for exceptional professional achievement, strategic leadership, and excellence in the field of tax advisory while advancing innovation, developing future leaders, and creating meaningful impact for clients, organizations, and the broader business community.*



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## Business & Community Partners



“

*‘A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.’ – Lao Tzu*

”

# ABOUT US



## VISION STATEMENT

A world where everyone has the skills & opportunity to lead.

## MISSION STATEMENT

To advance the Asian American & Pacific Islander community by providing a network of resources in professional development, cultural awareness, community service and mentoring.

## VALUES

- **Leadership:** Develop, inspire, and connect leaders
- **Education:** Excel at life-long learning
- **Accountability:** Honor commitments to deliver value
- **Diversity:** Embrace a culture of inclusion and innovation



**“Leadership is solving problems. The day soldiers stop bringing you their problems is the day you have stopped leading them.” - Colin Powell**





# 2026 ACE Ling In Leadership Conference Planning Committee



**Michelle Le**  
Chair



**Dayoon Kim**



**Tania  
Will Jeppensen**



**Ton Nguyen**



**Kundana Divi**



**John Xiong**



**Kirsten Chanel**

**Thank you to our committee and volunteers-your  
efforts made this conference possible!**



# Unity begins with all of us.



**We're on a Mission to end hunger and eliminate waste  
through our Zero Hunger | Zero Waste initiative.**



Last year, Fry's donated 16 million meals to Arizona's hungry families and diverted more than 103 million pounds of waste from landfills.

Fry's Food Stores is proud to support the great work of  
Asian Corporate and Entrepreneur Leaders



**WE'RE DELIGHTED YOU  
COULD JOIN US!**



**STAY CONNECTED**



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