

SESSION THREE

Using Your Influence: Driving Change and Uplifting Women

Experienced leaders have the ability to shape cultures, open doors, and create opportunities for others.

In this session, participants will explore how to use their influence to champion women, strengthen diversity in leadership, and create environments where more voices are supported and valued. Leaders will gain insight into how intentional actions and everyday decisions can help drive meaningful and lasting change.

MODERATOR



Kendra Brim

Kendra Brim (She/Her/Hers) is a leadership strategist, speaker, and community builder dedicated to developing people and strengthening organizations. She serves as Vice President of Programs & Organizational Advancement at Leadership Buffalo, where she designs transformative leadership experiences and cultivates cross-sector partnerships. Kendra is also the founder of K. Savannah Consulting, a firm that helps organizations execute strategy through strategy execution, operational alignment, and cross-sector collaboration, and Out of Bounds, a platform supporting athletes in their transition beyond sport. A former Division I basketball player at Colgate University, she brings a values-driven and experiential approach to leadership that centers growth, access, and meaningful impact.

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PANELIST



**Allanna
Kelly-Beaton**

Allanna Kelly-Beaton is a dynamic business leader and co-founder of Kelton Enterprises, overseeing 47 Tim Hortons locations across Western New York. Since 1999, she has grown the business to include over 1,100 employees, earning accolades like the 2025 Amherst Chamber Business of the Year and Entrepreneur of the Year from Niagara University.

Deeply committed to community and ethics, Allanna serves on various boards and partners with organizations like Golisano Children's Hospital and Tim Hortons Foundation Camps. Recognized on the Buffalo Business First 200 Influential Women's List, she continues to prioritize mentorship, trust, and local philanthropy.

PANELIST



Dr. Allison Brashear
WNYWF Board Member

Allison Brashear, MD, MBA, (She/Her/Hers) is a pioneering neurologist and transformational leader in academic medicine. As vice president for health sciences and dean of the Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences at the University at Buffalo, she guides UB's health sciences enterprise and advances clinical excellence as president and CEO of UBMD Physicians' Group. A global leader in ATP1A3-related disease research, her work helped bring three FDA-approved botulinum toxin therapies to patients worldwide. Formerly dean at UC Davis, she was elected to the National Academy of Medicine and serves on national boards dedicated to strengthening academic medicine and advancing women's leadership.

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PANELIST



Christian Johnson

Christian Johnson (She/Her/Hers) is an innovative entrepreneur and change-maker known for turning bold ideas into impactful businesses. She first gained recognition with her invention, Driver Watchdog, earning an invitation to the White House under President Obama. Her journey includes appearances connected to reality television and Shark Tank, amplifying her entrepreneurial voice. Christian has scaled a company to over \$5 million in revenue in just two years, showcasing her strategic expertise. As President and CEO of Beautiful Brains, she leads sustainable manufacturing and circular solutions like SmartCycle™, driving environmental impact while aligning business growth with climate and sustainability goals.

SESSION FOUR

Leading Without Losing Yourself: Boundaries, Balance, and Sustainable Leadership

Women leaders are often asked to stretch further, give more, and hold everything together.

In this session, experienced leaders will explore how setting clear boundaries, protecting their energy, and prioritizing well being can strengthen both leadership effectiveness and personal sustainability. Participants will gain practical insights on leading with intention while maintaining the clarity and resilience needed for the long run.

MODERATOR



Leah Halton-Pope

Leah Halton-Pope brings a strong background in government relations and a deep commitment to public service to her roles as Ellicott District Councilwoman and Majority Leader of the Buffalo Common Council, assumed in January 2024. Previously serving as Senior Advisor to Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes, she developed expertise in policy, legislative strategy, and community engagement. Her work at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center and as a Field Organizer for Obama for America strengthened her advocacy and coalition-building skills, while her time with Girl Scouts of Western New York reflected her dedication to youth empowerment. Halton-Pope focuses on inclusive leadership, economic opportunity, and amplifying diverse voices across the district.

SESSION FOUR

Leading Without Losing Yourself: Boundaries, Balance, and Sustainable Leadership

SPEAKER



**Dr. Kimberly
DeSimone**

Dr. Kimberly DeSimone is a tenured full professor, gender equity expert, and leadership scholar with over 20 years in academia and a decade of Fortune 500 leadership experience. Her research and widely published work focus on advancing women, workplace equity, and the hidden dynamics shaping leadership and advancement. She is the creator and host of the globally followed Advancing Women Podcast, reaching listeners in over 150 countries. An award-winning educator and speaker, Dr. DeSimone was named a Buffalo Business First Woman of Influence and has been invited to present globally, including at the United Nations. She also serves as an executive coach, helping leaders build sustainable, equity-centered practices and supporting women in navigating bias and systemic barriers.