



Meet the Educators Behind the Impact.

Experienced facilitators who bring professional expertise and a deep commitment to inclusive leadership. We guide participants through complex conversations with empathy, offer practical tools grounded in research, and model the very leadership practices we teach.



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In this program we pause, reflect, and engage more deeply with how we lead. Leadership isn't just about strategy; it's showing up with compassion, courage, and presence in the face of real-world challenges.”

- Trymaine Gaither



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Leadership is shaped by the mentors who guide us, networks we build, and opportunities we create for others. I'm excited to help cultivate these connections with purpose and intention.”

- Megan Spaulding



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Leadership is personal. Our job is to help participants explore who they are—and who they want to be.”

- Dr. Lauren Van Koughnett



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Understanding what matters is the key to expanding leadership and negotiation skills.”

- Dr. Elizabeth Umphress



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We're not here to give all the answers—we're here to create space for reflection.”

- Shirline Wilson



Mindfulness & Organizational Change



Trymaine Gaither, Special Assistant to the Provost for Inclusive Excellence, Washington State University

Trymaine trains faculty and staff in mindfulness-based approaches, self-awareness, contemplative pedagogy, and healing-centered practices. A native of Charlotte, North Carolina, Trymaine Gaither has been in the education sector for more than a decade. His work in advancing inclusive excellence has earned him recognition, including the 2021 Black Faculty Excellence Award from Washington State University. Through his role at the university, Trymaine facilitates mindfulness retreats, trainings, and other

learning experiences designed to foster awareness and understanding. He is a Certified MBSR (Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction) Teacher, having completed his training through the Center for Mindfulness at Brown University, where he also serves on the External Board of Advisors. As a community organizer, Trymaine served as an appointed Board Member of the Mecklenburg County Community Relations Committee from 2012 to 2016 in Charlotte, North Carolina. He also led a city-wide "Know Your Rights Initiative," informing groups of their rights within policing practices. In addition to facilitating trainings for the CMPD police force, he currently serves as Co-Chair of the Police Advisory Board for Washington State University. Trymaine attended North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University, earning his degree in Business Management.

The program's faculty combine decades of experience in coaching, organizational development, and systems change. Through live instruction, personalized feedback, and interactive exercises, faculty challenge participants to think differently, engage more intentionally, and lead with clarity and compassion. Every session is rooted in trust, curiosity, and the belief that growth begins with honest self-inquiry.



Coaching & Higher Education Experience



Megan Spaulding, Seattle University

Megan has worked in higher education and career development for over 20 years and oversees all aspects of the Center including business student/alumni career advising, employer relations, event/program management, and operations as well as supporting three staff members. For over 16 years Megan managed the Albers Mentor Program

at SU which involves over 150 business

executives serving as mentors to over 300 students annually.

Megan's educational background includes a BA in Organizational Communications and an MA in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis with an emphasis in Student Development. She has extensive training in career coaching, professional development, advising, teaching, mentorship, project/program management, young professionals' development and organizational learning. She is grateful to be part of the WE'RE Leadership Development Program and looks forward to collaborating with all program participants.



Elizabeth Umphress, Ph.D Professor of Management, William D. Bradford Endowed Professorship University of Washington.

She earned her B.A. from the University of Texas at Austin and her Ph.D. in Organizational Behavior from Tulane University. Her research centers on social justice in organizations, with a focus on inclusion, ethics, and organizational justice.

Dr. Umphress teaches Dynamics of Negotiations and Ethical Leadership to executive and MBA students, and has led executive education programs for companies such as Microsoft, NASA, Citigroup, and Lockheed Martin. Her consulting work emphasizes inclusive leadership, strategic communication, and employee empowerment. She has co-authored 31 peer¹ reviewed research articles and received multiple teaching awards, including Hybrid MBA Excellence in Teaching (2023, 2022, 2020) and Professor of the Year for the Master of Science in Entrepreneurship (2019). A dedicated mentor, she has co-authored 16 publications with doctoral students and previously served as Associate Editor for the Academy of Management Journal.



Transformative Alignment Across Disciplines



Dr. Lauren Van Koughnett, WE'RE

Prior to joining WE'RE, Lauren spent nearly two decades in higher education, most recently serving at the state board as the director for student services. In that role, she represented student services departments for 34 Washington community colleges, managing relationships with state agencies, legislators, community organizations, and student groups.

A lifelong Washingtonian and the first in her family to earn a doctorate, Lauren completed her studies in Educational Leadership at the University of Washington with a focus on Emotional Intelligence. She is known for translating complex challenges into clear strategies that inspire action, excelling in strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, and cross-functional collaboration. Her leadership portfolio includes developing multiple leadership programs, overseeing statewide projects serving more than 190,000 students, and managing multimillion-dollar budgets. Across sectors, she has advanced opportunity through transformative leadership designing initiatives that strengthen communities', culture, expand leadership capacity, and align people with purpose. As WE'RE's Leadership Development Program manager, Lauren partners with universities, state officials, and corporate leaders to deliver programs that cultivate inclusive workplaces, deepen leadership presence, and drive meaningful business outcomes. Combining professional expertise with passion, she integrates strategy, wellness, and relationship-building to foster lasting change and organizational excellence.



Expertise in Leadership & Impact



Shirline Wilson, Executive Director WE'RE

Prior to joining WE'RE, Shirline spent seven years as the state executive director for Education Reform Now Washington. In that role, Wilson served as a project and coalition leader across multiple organizations, managing relationships with state agencies, legislators, community-based organizations, and civil rights groups. She served as an architect of the Black Joy Consortium, a collective body of stakeholders who champion improved education systems in Washington state by focusing on the experiences of Black students and families. Wilson has served in various leadership and management roles at Intellectual Ventures, Cypress Consulting, and Microsoft. She holds a master's degree in Education Policy from the University of Washington and a Bachelor's Degree in Organizational Development from Antioch University.

Empower the Next Chapter in a Leadership Journey: Support Your Team's Growth

2026 Dates:
February 12 – April 22, 2026

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

- Schedule an organizational info session
- Nominate a mentor/mentee pair
- Finalize participation for the 2026 cohort



Developing the Inclusive Leaders Tomorrow Demands.

