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LOS ANGELES BUSINESS JOURNAL

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM & AWARDS 2025

Honorees & Finalists



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Los Angeles Business Journal
WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM & AWARDS 2025

The 2025 Women's Leadership Symposium & Awards: Recapping the Event

This year's 2025 Women's Leadership Symposium & Awards, which took place Wednesday, June 13th at the Intercontinental Los Angeles Downtown was a half day event of inspiration, education and recognition.

The top businesswomen in Los Angeles shared their wisdom through a series of dynamic discussions during the breakfast symposium covering topics such as the new era of leadership; building relationships; risk-taking and innovation; perspectives from CEOs; and much more.

The afternoon portion was a spirited luncheon awards program where we honored outstanding achievements by women who make a difference throughout Los Angeles.



JOE GRETO PHOTOGRAPHY

With hundreds of incredible nominees, there are clearly many accomplished and impactful leaders to draw inspiration from. This year, we named honorees in the following categories: CEO of the Year; Executive of the Year; Innovator of the Year; Emerging Woman-Owned Business Leader Award; Champion of Women Award; Mentor of the Year; Community Impact Advocate Award; The Accelerator Award; and NextGen Woman of the Year.

We honored achievements by a number of powerful women who have made a difference throughout Los Angeles. Each of these remarkable honorees and finalists are described in these pages.

Many thanks to our sponsors, who help to make this event possible. Special thanks to our Diamond Sponsor, **KeyBank**, and our Platinum Sponsor, **UCLA Health**.

Once again, congratulations to the honorees – Los Angeles area women who "lead by example," successfully blending effective business vision with a passionate commitment to positively making a difference, both in the world of business and in the communities they serve.





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FOR-PROFIT CEO OF THE YEAR HONOREE

SHOKOUH SHAFIEI

President; CEO
DSA Signage

Shokouh Shafiei is a seasoned executive with 20 years of diverse leadership experience in heavy industrial manufacturing. Her expertise spans engineering, operations and supply chain disciplines. Her background in turnarounds and corporate restructuring allows her to identify growth opportunities and develop highly profitable businesses that operate to their fullest potential.

Shafiei joined DSA Signage in July 2019 as COO and was quickly transitioned to the CEO role by the end of year. In her first four years as CEO, she successfully doubled revenue despite global pandemic challenges. Prior to joining DSA Signage, Shafiei held multiple leadership roles at Cummins Inc., a Fortune 200 global manufacturing company, where she guided manufacturing strategy and optimized operations.

Shafiei faced countless challenges after moving to the US on her own when she was 18 years old without speaking English. She started her career in construction and crossed paths with an inspiring senior client who helped her navigate the college application process – an interaction which set the foundation for all that she would accomplish both academically and through her career.

Shafiei serves on the board of directors for Rebel Vac Systems, a privately held Canadian manufacturer in the oil, gas and utility sectors across the United States and Canada. She is a firm believer in the power of leadership to create positive change within communities. She actively supports local nonprofit organizations such as We Are Family, Youth Business Alliance, Downtown Women's Center, and the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank.



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NONPROFIT CEO OF THE YEAR HONOREE

JOANNE NOWLIN

CEO - LA Region
American Red Cross

Joanne Nowlin has demonstrated exceptional leadership and dedication throughout her career in the nonprofit sector. Since joining the American Red Cross Los Angeles Region in July 2020, she has overseen a team of staff and volunteers serving over 10 million residents across five chapters. Nowlin's resilience and strategic acumen were evident as she guided her team through major disaster responses, including the 2025 California Wildfires, Hurricane Irma, Hurricane Dorian, and the Parkland Shooting.

Nowlin's professional journey is marked by her commitment to alleviating human suffering. Her leadership skills were honed at esteemed organizations such as Florida Atlantic University, Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, Gilda's Club South Florida, and Kids In Distress. She holds a bachelor's degree in finance from Florida State University, which has provided a strong foundation for her impactful work.

Nowlin's innovative strategies have not only enhanced the effectiveness of the Red Cross's disaster response but have also strengthened the organization's presence in the community. She has a passion for growing community outreach, strengthening government relationships and providing unwavering support to those impacted by disasters. With a deep commitment to celebrating diversity, she has fostered a culture of inclusivity and respect within her team, ensuring that every voice is heard and valued.

Nowlin's vision for the future includes expanding the Red Cross's reach to underserved areas and implementing programs that address the root causes of vulnerability. Her forward-thinking mindset and dedication to continuous improvement make her an inspiring leader and a true champion of humanitarian efforts.



VERONICA ARTEAGA

FINALIST (NONPROFIT)
President; CEO
Exceptional Children's Foundation (ECF)

Veronica Arteaga is the president & CEO of Exceptional Children's Foundation (ECF), and the first woman to hold this leadership position in the organization's history. She is responsible for leading ECF's lifespan continuum of programs and services for children and adults challenged with special needs. This includes a $28 million operating budget, 375 employees, a 21-member board of directors, and the provision of services to nearly 4,000 children and adults with special needs and their families annually.

A licensed clinical social worker, Arteaga is credentialed in Pupil Personnel Services. She holds a Master of Social Work from USC and a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from USCS. She is currently developing the ECF's long-term strategic plan to increase public and private funding, ensure fiscal stewardship and sustainability, build business and community partnerships, and increase agency enrollment, advancing the organization's impact in the community.



VERA QUINN

FINALIST (FOR-PROFIT)
President; CEO
Cydcor

Vera Quinn is a transformational leader whose strategic vision and people-first leadership has positioned Cydcor as the industry leader in outsourced sales and customer acquisition. As CEO and president of Cydcor, she has spent over 25 years shaping the company's growth, cultivating top talent and driving exceptional results for the company's Fortune 500 and emerging brand clients.

Quinn began her journey as a recruiter at an independently owned sales company before launching her own business as a bookkeeper. She later joined Cydcor, where her deep understanding of sales and business operations shaped her leadership approach. In 2024, Cydcor achieved double-digit revenue growth for the second consecutive year, setting a company record. Under Quinn's leadership, the company has expanded its network and successfully entered new industries including home security, consumer packaged goods, and experiential marketing, broadening its service offerings and strengthening its market position.



JUDY ZHU

FINALIST (FOR-PROFIT)
CEO
Synear Foods USA

Judy Zhu has been a fierce leader for Synear Foods USA, overseeing all facets of the company's marketing and brand strategy while also guiding a strong team that champions innovation.

Zhu's leadership has influenced Synear's success in a variety of ways, including securing national Costco distribution of its Pork Soup Dumplings across the United States, while overcoming regulatory and supply chain hurdles. The dumplings quickly became one of Synear's best-selling products. Additionally, she spearheaded the launch of more than five new items with Costco, including Wagyu Beef Soup Dumplings, Panda Buns and Ube Dessert dumplings, leveraging cutting-edge product design and R&D advancements to meet evolving consumer demands. Zhu is devoted to staying on top of consumer trends and keeping in close touch with the company's audience. Her expert negotiation also earned Synear a coveted Golden Ticket from Walmart Open Call in 2024.

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EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR HONOREE

KARLA SALAZAR

Executive Director
ScholarMatch

Karla Salazar is the executive director of ScholarMatch, an organization with the mission of supporting underserved, first-generation college students from low-income backgrounds to earn a bachelor's degree within five years. ScholarMatch serves 1,300 students annually, with an emphasis on students in Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area.

When Salazar joined ScholarMatch in June 2021, the organization and the students it serves had been through some deeply challenging circumstances caused by the pandemic. Even as its students struggled with their virtual classes, funders decreased their support due to fears of a recession while an increasing number of first-generation students nationwide paused or set aside their dreams of college.

Despite these challenges, Salazar's leadership has brought ScholarMatch to new levels. She ideated a vision to expand the organization's programming to community college transfer students and secured funding from Genentech to support this dream. She also developed a partnership with UC Scout to offer free A-G classes – required courses in high school for a student to be eligible to apply to schools in the University of California system.

In 2024, Salazar launched a new initiative to provide 1:1 college coaching to first-generation students in Southeast LA. This year, the organization plans to serve up to 200 students and reach 600 students annually in Southeast LA by 2027. She spearheaded partnerships with funders, school districts and school officials to bring this launch to fruition, including a $1.2 million grant from the Ballmer Group that provided seed funding for college persistence services for Southeast LA students.



MEGAN CREECY-HERMAN

FINALIST

President - West Region
Prologis

Megan Creecy-Herman is known for being a disciplined and forward-thinking leader in the dynamic supply chain and logistics industry – one of Southern California's most vital economic sectors. As West Region president for Prologis, the world's leading logistics real estate company, Creecy-Herman oversees a 260 million square foot portfolio across 12 major markets, generating more than $2.5 billion in annual net operating income.

Prologis develops and operates modern, sustainable logistics facilities such as warehouses and distribution centers, leasing them to a wide range of entities, from small and medium-sized businesses to some of the world's most recognized brands. Creecy-Herman has led the digital transformation of the company's property search experience, reimagining how customers discover and lease logistics space. Under her leadership, the team streamlined and digitized the process, eliminating 19 manual steps, five administrative queues and three approval layers.



SHERRI FRANCOIS

FINALIST

Chief Impact Officer, **SoLa Impact**;
Executive Director, **The SoLa Foundation**

Sherri Francois began her career in journalism, TV news, and documentary film making, producing pieces with Channel One, CBS, CNN, NBC, MTV and HGTV. After 15 years in NYC, where she started a family and earned an Emmy nomination, she returned to LA to become an entrepreneur, founding South Bay Multimedia, a television and video production company.

In 2017, Francois joined SoLa Impact as chief impact officer, where she drives all social impact and community development to ensure SoLa uplifts the communities in which it invests. Her double bottom line strategy focuses on accessibility to high quality affordable housing, jobs, capital and education. Francois established the SoLa Foundation (SoLa Impact's 501c3 affiliate) in 2018 to help end intergenerational poverty in Los Angeles through creating access to STEM career training, higher education, and home ownership in underinvested and under-resourced communities.



EVE GLAZIER, MD

FINALIST

President, Faculty Practice Group, UCLA Health, Health Sciences Professor of Medicine David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA
UCLA Health

Dr. Eve Glazier has served as president of the UCLA Health Faculty Practice Group (FPG) since 2017. As the top executive leader of the FPG, she oversees all aspects of business solutions and administrative functions for Physician Support Services, Managed Care Contracting and the Office of Population Health and Accountable Care at one of the largest academic health systems in the world.

In the fall of 2024, Dr. Glazier helped to launch UCLA Health's first-ever Medicare Advantage Plan, which provides eligible individuals comprehensive health care coverage and convenient access to care. The plan includes 7,000 in-network physicians, specialists, hospitals and clinics comprising UCLA Health, as well as select independent physician associations and medical groups that provide patient-centered care. A trained internal medicine specialist, Dr. Glazier provides expert advice in the weekly syndicated Ask the Doctors column that is popular in news outlets around the country.



SHAWN SHEFFIELD

FINALIST

Chief Strategy Officer
Keck Medicine of USC

Shawn Sheffield, MBA, MHSA, is a highly regarded and energetic health care executive with deep experience in academic medicine. She has led Keck Medicine of USC's clinical growth and expansion efforts for over a decade. Sheffield oversees network development, including mergers and acquisitions, strategic partnerships, capital and venture planning and physician alignment strategies. Under her leadership, the health system's annual revenue has more than tripled, reaching $3.4 billion. During her tenure, she developed a regional network that spans from Bakersfield to Irvine.

In 2022, Sheffield played a key role, in Keck Medicine acquiring USC Arcadia Hospital, formerly Methodist Hospital of Southern California, bringing residents of the San Gabriel Valley greater access to specialized care and breakthrough technology. She also led the development of the new 100,000 square-foot medical office complex in Pasadena, which will serve the city and surrounding areas beginning in the fall of 2025.

UCLA Health congratulates

all honorees of Los Angeles Business Journal's Women's Leadership Awards including

Finalist

Eve Glazier, MD | Executive of the Year

President, Faculty Practice Group, UCLA Health
Health Sciences Professor of Medicine,
David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA

Nominees

Johnese Spisso, MPA | CEO of the Year

President, UCLA Health
CEO, UCLA Hospital System
Associate Vice Chancellor, UCLA Health Sciences

Fola May, MD, PhD | Community Impact Advocate

Associate Professor, Department of Medicine, Digestive Diseases
Attending Physician, Greater Los Angeles Veterans Affairs Medical Center
Associate Director, UCLA Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Equity
Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center

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INNOVATOR OF THE YEAR HONOREE

JULIE UHRMAN

CEO; Co-Founder
Angel City Football Club

Business innovator Julie Uhrman, CEO and co-founder of Angel City Football Club (ACFC), has led the club in becoming the most valuable women's sports team globally, with a $250 million USD valuation following its sale to Disney CEO Bob Iger and Willow Bay in 2024. Uhrman personally managed the entire sale process, carefully selecting Iger and Bay from multiple bids due to their shared values and strong commitment to developing the soccer program and ensuring players and coaches receive the facilities, resources and funding they deserve.

Uhrman's ability to transform ACFC into a cultural and financial powerhouse is reflected through its record ticket sales, league-leading $35.4 million revenue in 2024, and unmatched merchandise sales. She leads by fostering a community-first ethos that inspires fans and players alike, building a fan base that averages 19,500 attendees per game – setting a world record for women's football attendance.

Through ACFC's innovative 10% sponsorship model, Uhrman has ensured that $7.5 million of the club's sponsorship revenue is reinvested into Los Angeles communities, supporting programs focused on equity, essentials and education. She has personally attended over 100 Angel City community events, including partnering with Sprouts Farmers Market to replant LAUSD school gardens where children learn to grow food and prepare meals with fresh fruits and vegetables. Additionally, Uhrman facilitated ACFC's partnership with DoorDash, which has delivered over 2,000,000 meals to shelters, LGBTQ centers, homeless communities and other underserved groups across Los Angeles. Her leadership extends globally through initiatives like iACT, which empowers refugee communities through sports.



JENNIFER ACREE

FINALIST
Founder; CEO
JSA+Partners

Jennifer Acree is the founder and CEO of JSA+Partners, a Los Angeles-based communications agency specializing in digital media, consumer technology, and esports & gaming. As the firm's strategic lead, Acree ensures its roster of clients is supported day in and day out, spearheading tailored communications programs that garner tangible results and tie back to business objectives.

Acree launched JSA+Partners with a mission to disrupt a flawed traditional public relations agency model. As new business requests quickly flooded in, she expanded the firm from an individual consulting practice to a boutique agency powerhouse, offering strategic counsel, media relations, thought leadership messaging, and crisis communications. Acree is responsible for launching the firm's innovative Coverage Analysis and Tracking Solution, which enables painless coverage tracking, easy integration with existing PR trackers, quick visualization and analysis through a proprietary, multi-layered filtering system.



JERI HARMAN

FINALIST
Founder; Chairman
Avante Capital Partners

Founder and chairman of Avante Capital Partners, Jeri Harman has more than 30 years of experience in finance and M&A, involving more than $1 billion in aggregate investments, and has held numerous board roles across more than 20 private middle market companies.

In 2024, under Harman's leadership, Avante Capital Partners invested and committed nearly $180mm and was named the #3 best performing private credit family of funds, globally, by Pitchbook. That year, the firm launched an innovative employee ownership program not otherwise seen in the finance industry, through which eligible employees gain the opportunity to acquire ownership stakes in the company. Harman also facilitated the firm's Small Business Investing Scholars Internship Program, creating inclusive enterprises by promoting gender, racial and ethnic diversity in the private equity and direct lending industries. The 2024 internship program received more than 1,300 students applying to participate in the opportunity.



PILAR ORTEGA

FINALIST
Founder; CEO
International Technologies and Services, Inc.

With over 30 years of experience in the chemical and environmental technology sectors, Pilar Ortega has dedicated her career to creating practical, science-driven solutions to some of the industry's most pressing challenges. As the founder of International Technologies and Services Environmental, she has developed and patented a line of eco-friendly products that reduce hazardous waste, improve worker safety, and lower the environmental impact of hydrocarbon use across multiple industries.

Ortega has overcome significant challenges as a Latina woman in a male-dominated field, remaining focused, purpose-driven, and resilient, while growing her company into a trusted name among major refineries and environmental agencies. Having worked hands-on in industrial settings, Ortega witnessed firsthand the toll traditional chemicals and processes take on workers' health. This fueled her passion to create safer, plant-based alternatives – products that not only perform better but also align with modern environmental standards.



MERCY TOLENTINO STEENWYK

FINALIST
CEO; President
ForensisGroup

Mercy Tolentino Steenwyk is the founder and CEO of ForensisGroup, a nationally recognized expert consulting firm she launched in 1991 with a vision of bringing clarity to complex cases and justice in the legal system. She founded the firm as a mother navigating a male-dominated industry and built it into a pioneering enterprise that has supported over 30,000 legal matters.

Over the last three decades, Steenwyk has transformed the expert consulting industry by building a rigorous vetting model that connects attorneys, insurers and government agencies with top-tier experts in over 8,000 specialties. Her commitment to integrity and innovation has led ForensisGroup to develop proprietary technology that streamlines expert matching, reducing case delays and elevating outcomes. Her leadership has earned the company repeated recognition in the legal industry, including awards from the National Law Journal and AM Best.

Built to Lead.
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The Women's Leadership Symposium reminded us of what great leadership looks like: consistent, clear, and rooted in results.

As a nominee for **Executive of the Year (Non-CEO), Megan Creecy-Herman** represented the Prologis teams that show up every day for our customers and broker partners—teams who lead with purpose and deliver with precision.

We're proud to stand alongside L.A.'s brightest—and even prouder to keep building what's next, together.



Megan Creecy-Herman
President, West Region



Erin Mergenthaler
Leasing Manager



Mackenzie Lynch
Director, Investments



Analise Guttmann
VP, Leasing



Lauren Achtemeier
VP, Investment Officer



Lisa Reddy
VP, Leasing Office

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EMERGING WOMAN-OWNED BUSINESS LEADER HONOREE

ANNE-MARGOT RODDE

Founder; CEO
Creators Corp.

Anne-Margot Rodde has established herself as an influential leader in the traditionally male-dominated gaming industry. As founder and CEO of Creators Corp., a leading Fortnite game studio, she has led collaborations that bridged the gap between traditional sports and gaming, including creating games with the US Open and top professional athletes. These initiatives have addressed the ongoing challenge of integrating real-world sports with the virtual realm, and under Rodde's creative leadership, Creators Corp. won a Webby Award for its highly successful collaboration with basketball star Stephen Curry.

One of Rodde's biggest achievements lies in how Creators Corp. has cracked the code for engaging Gen Z, a demographic many brands and publishers have struggled to reach. By focusing on driving gameplay and player engagement, she unlocked the full potential of Fortnite Creative, transforming it into a dynamic platform for innovative brand experiences. In 2024, Creators Corp. partnered with influential internet personalities such as Dude Perfect creator group, Fortnite star Clix, and more to amass 500 million minutes of play across their games The company doesn't just build games; it creates cultural moments that resonate with millions of players.

As a visionary founder, Rodde has been featured in major outlets like Fast Company, Forbes, Digiday, VentureBeat and Variety. This year, Rodde has spoken at both SXSW and CES, and is gearing up to speak at the Cannes Festival in June. Her drive continues to reshape the future of gaming, not just through her business acumen, but by inspiring the next generation of female creators and leaders.



ASIA YUYU QUIROZ

FINALIST
Founder
BESUKOH

Asia Yuyu Quiroz is the founder and designer behind BESUKOH, a brand she created to express intentional design and honor the strength, complexity and elegance of women. Quiroz was born in Los Angeles to Mexican immigrant parents. During her years at Cal State LA, she interned at Rocnation, where she developed a love for discovering new artists. Her background in communications and years in the music industry contributed to her deep understanding of the cultural impact of creative expression. She began by designing handbags as her first canvas to explore form, function and emotional connection.

BESUKOH is a small ethical brand taking pride in craftsmanship and originality. The company makes unique bags that are ethically and meticulously crafted in one of the meccas of leather goods, Spain. Quiroz's designs are an ode to femininity, celebrating the interplay that between grace and strength.



AMY ROSSETTI

FINALIST
Founder
R[AR]E Public Relations

Amy Rossetti is an emerging force in the Los Angeles business landscape, redefining real estate public relations through her boutique firm, R[AR]E Public Relations. With a decade of experience and a track record working with high-profile real estate clients, Rossetti launched R[AR]E at age 27 during the height of the pandemic, building it from the ground up into a national agency headquartered in Beverly Hills.

Rossetti's work elevates narratives around some of LA's most transformative residential and commercial developments, and the visionaries behind them. From revitalization efforts of historic projects to high-end residential spec homes, R[AR]E PR helps attract investment, attention and opportunity for the region and beyond. Rossetti has played a pivotal role in hiring talent locally, including professionals from top institutions like Douglas Elliman and the American Institute of Architects, ensuring LA remains a hub for creative and strategic communications professionals in the real estate space.



KAREN TATMAN

FINALIST
Founder; CEO
KMT Wealth Management

Karen Tatman is the founder and CEO of KMT Wealth Management, an SEC Registered investment advisory firm that adds value to their client's financial lives through empathy, expertise and an evidenced-based framework. In mid-2023, Tatman courageously left her corporate role to start up her company and create more space to do what she loves - serving clients as their personal, trusted advisor and sharing her expertise to make a difference in their lives.

Under Tatman's leadership, KMT's clients committed new assets under management totaling over $175 million in the past 12 months. She has carved out a niche client base by offering holistic wealth services for clients with $10 million and more in investable assets. With a deep financial expertise and a wealth of technical experience, Tatman combines her financial acumen with empathy, authenticity and a keen understanding of the psychology of money.



LUZ ZAMBRANO

FINALIST
CEO
Casupo

After years of working in the footwear industry, Luz Zambrano combined her deep industry expertise with a passion for sustainability and design to launch Casupo, a leather goods brand known for its color-forward, eco-conscious approach. With Casupo, she has established herself has a force in traditionally male-dominated world of manufacturing. One of the brand's key innovations is its commitment to reusing excess leathers left behind by larger brands at factories — an initiative that within five years has repurposed nearly three tons of leather that would have otherwise gone to waste.

Zambrano later transitioned from brand ownership to building Casupo Manufacturing, a full-service studio that helps emerging designers and established brands produce leather goods ethically and efficiently in Los Angeles and Mexico. Her company not only helps brands bring their visions to life, but also makes sustainability and transparency accessible to small and mid-sized businesses.

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CHAMPION OF WOMEN HONOREE

LYDIA COLARESI

VP, Digital Marketing - CRM and Marketing Solutions
Live Nation Entertainment

As a vice president for digital marketing and CRM strategy at Fortune 500 company Live Nation Entertainment, Lydia Colaresi builds and lead cross-functional groups across product, engineering, data science and marketing to develop AI-first messaging platforms. She leads a team of 90% women, with all leadership positions held by women. She is a passionate mentor, formally mentoring through her company's programs and personally guiding her team to achieve their career goals.

Colaresi has successfully advocated for equal pay and promoted eight women to manager and senior roles within her organization. Additionally, four of her previous direct reports have risen to become digital marketing leaders in the entertainment industry, showcasing the lasting impact of her mentorship. Her dedication to empowering women extends beyond her immediate team through active involvement in Women in Leadership, Women in Tech circles, and the Women Nation employee group.

Colaresi volunteers annually to promote science and STEAM education at Burbank schools, inspiring young minds to pursue careers in technology and innovation. As a Burbank Parent Education Council board member, she fosters educational initiatives that benefit local families, specifically new mothers.

Beyond her local contributions, Colaresi actively supports the National Council of Jewish Women, whose mission aligns with her passion for equity and empowerment. By advocating for their work in providing financial support to women in times of need, she furthers her commitment to making a tangible difference in the lives of others. Her community involvement complements her professional dedication to mentorship and advocacy, creating a ripple effect of positive impact.



SMITA BAGLA

FINALIST

Managing Partner
Aligned Strategies

Smita Bagla has exemplified visionary leadership through her multifaceted career as a serial entrepreneur, corporate strategist and global advocate for innovation. As managing director of Aligned Strategies and managing partner at Amritt, she drives transformative strategies for Fortune 500 companies and startups alike, specializing in AI, healthcare, education and digital transformation. She has founded multiple ventures, including an enterprise software company in the medical field in 2001 and a gamification innovation firm a few years later. She also pioneered AI solutions for cancer research early in her career.

As TiE SoCal President (SoCal chapter of The Indus Entrepreneurs, the world's largest nonprofit organization for entrepreneurs), she led and achieved a 400% chapter growth, launched the TiE SoCal Angels network, and established the West Coast Woman Entrepreneur of the Year award to spotlight women founders. As TiE Women's global co-chair, she mentored 1,200 women entrepreneurs worldwide in investment readiness.



ILEANA HOLGUIN

FINALIST

Executive, Higher Education & Healthcare
The PENTA Building Group

Ileana Holguin holds the position of executive for higher education and healthcare at The PENTA Building Group (PENTA), a general contractor based in Southern California, Nevada and Arizona. She guides teams through all phases of construction, from the initial project concept to final execution, with a passion for delivering legacy buildings that provide value to the community, such as schools and hospitals.

When Holguin began her career in construction over 25 years ago, she faced many challenges as the number of men far outnumbered women in the industry. She became an annual member of the National Association of Women in Construction, which further sparked her passion for advocating for and mentoring women and minorities in construction. At Holguin's previous construction firm, she spearheaded an annual construction event, inviting female high school students to learn and explore different career paths in the construction industry.



TIFFANY HUGHES

FINALIST

Managing Director, Foreign Exchange
PNC Bank

Tiffany Hughes began her career in foreign exchange on the trading floor – a fast-paced, high-energy environment where she thrived amid the intensity. She quickly built her own book of clients, setting the foundation for a career that would evolve alongside the industries she served. Her early years were spent in Silicon Valley, working with middle-market firms, growing alongside them as the sector transformed

As her expertise deepened, Hughes expanded her focus, working with money managers and eventually Fortune 500 corporations. She became a trusted advisor in managing foreign currency risk, optimizing foreign denominated cash flows, and developing strategies to mitigate financial risk. She joined PNC to grow the bank's capital markets division in Los Angeles. In addition to managing foreign exchange, Hughes serves as a market champion for PNC's Women Business Development board, leading local initiatives that support women financial decision makers.



MAJA MATARIC

FINALIST

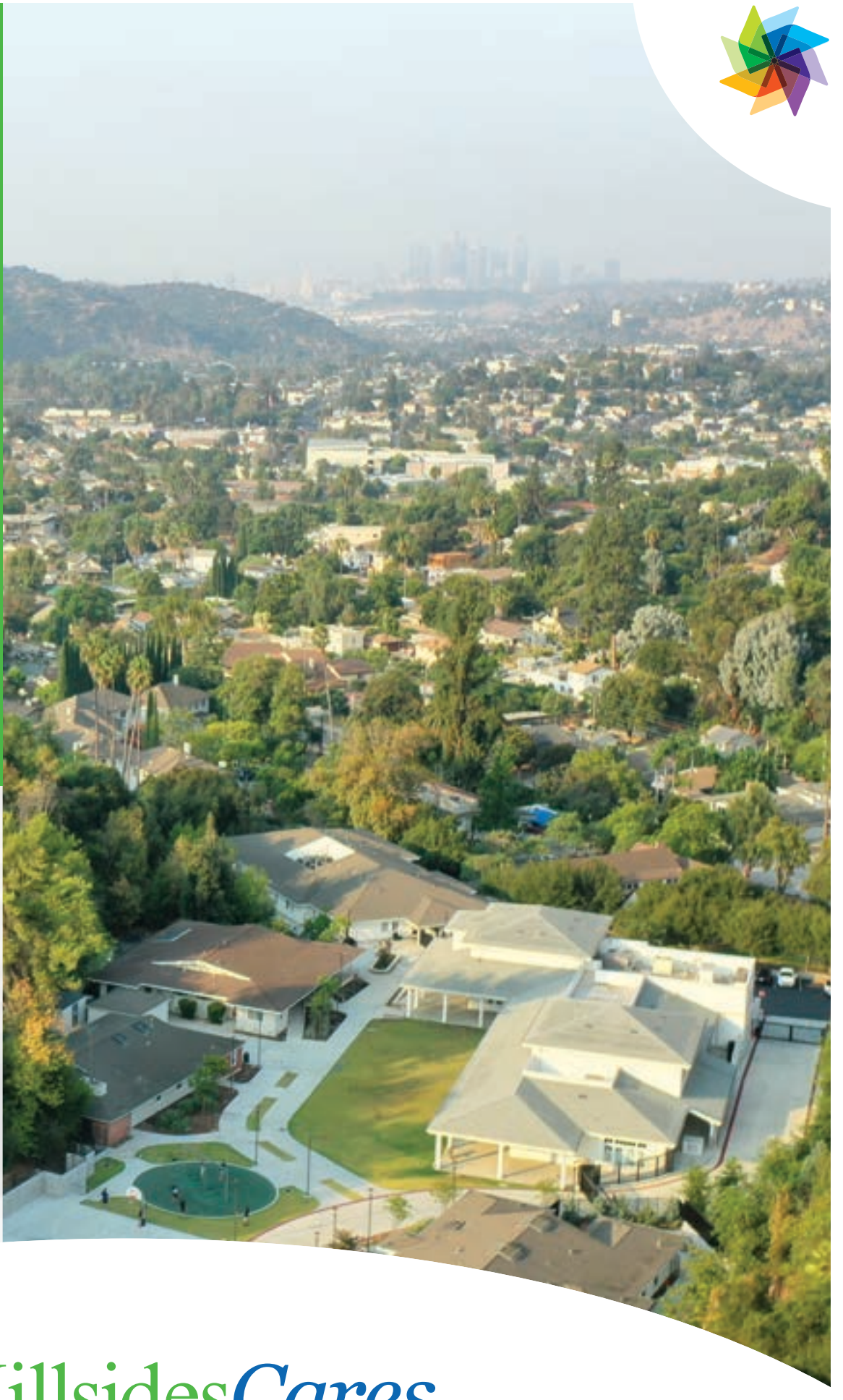
Chan Soon-Shiong Chair and Distinguished Professor of Computer Science, Neuroscience and Pediatrics
University of Southern California

Maja Mataric is the Chan Soon-Shiong chaired and distinguished professor in the Computer Science Department at USC, with appointments in the Department of Pediatrics Neuroscience Program, founding director of the USC Robotics and Autonomous Systems Center, co-director of the USC Robotics Research Lab, and the lead of the Viterbi K-12 STEM Center.

Dr. Mataric's research in the past two decades has been in the new field of socially assistive robotics (SAR) that she pioneered. SAR is focused on assistive HRI, enabling machines to help people through social rather than physical interaction. Dr. Mataric's work is known for validation and evaluation with beneficiary populations, including post-stroke rehabilitation, social training for children with autism spectrum disorders, and cognitive and movement exercises for healthy elderly users and those with Alzheimer's Disease, in real-world, challenging contexts such as in low-income homes, nursing homes and rehabilitation clinics.

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MENTOR OF THE YEAR HONOREE

KARLA LUNA

Tax Partner
BPM LLP

Karla Luna, tax partner at BPM LLP, has demonstrated exceptional leadership and mentorship throughout her nearly 25-year career in accounting. Early in her career at Gumbiner Savett, Luna was the only Latina tax practice member among 70 employees, navigating a predominantly white male environment. Rather than being discouraged, this experience fueled her ambition to succeed and create pathways for others. When Gumbiner Savett joined BPM in 2021, she took on the role of regional group leader for the Santa Monica tax team, integrating staff into the larger, regional firm dynamic and BPM's processes and culture.

As the founder and executive sponsor for BPM's Hispanic & Latinx Community Resource Group, Luna has grown the group to over 70 members, creating a safe space for collaboration and professional development. Her commitment to mentorship is evident in her dedication to helping women and minorities advance in their careers.

Understanding the importance of education, Luna has identified an elementary school in an underprivileged area to receive backpacks filled with school supplies, ensuring that Latino and other minority children have the necessary tools to succeed in their studies.

Luna is also actively involved in the CalCPA PATH Mentorship Program, guiding college students as they navigate their accounting careers. Her participation in this program reflects her dedication to building a diverse pipeline of talent for the accounting profession. Her efforts also demonstrate a deep understanding of the challenges faced by underserved populations and a commitment to creating positive change through education, access to resources, and mentorship.



MELISSA HARMAN

FINALIST

Partner
Moss Adams

As Melissa Harman advanced in the world of public accounting, she grew aware of the limited representation of women as partners in the industry, often overcoming adversity to build a respected career. She went on to become a leader at Moss Adams, where she'd become known for her dedication to people as much as her technical expertise. She has mentored countless professionals, sharing the wisdom she gained through both her personal challenges and the invaluable mentorship she received along the way.

Harman continues to be a forward-thinking, instrumental driver to technological innovation in the accounting industry. By spearheading initiatives to integrate data analytics and innovative auditing tools, she has transformed business operations to keep Moss Adams at the forefront of the field. Through her work she exhibits the rare talent of turning technical topics into actionable insights that help organizations and individuals move forward.



MICHELLE ITURRALDE

FINALIST

Market Executive, Global Commercial Banking
Bank of America

Michelle Iturralde is market executive for Global Commercial Bank at Bank of America in Los Angeles, overseeing a team of 12 specialists to provide banking solutions and capital services to LA-based global companies with annual revenues between $50 million to $2 billion. As a female banker in a male-dominated specialty, she heads up the bank's 75-year-old Aerospace & Defense practice for the Western United States and general industries for the LA and Inland Empire market. A top performer year after year, Iturralde leads her business peers in achieving double-digit growth, doubling the number of new client relationships and overseeing nearly $10 billion within her portfolio.

Iturralde dedicates her career and professional time to helping minority- and women-led businesses succeed, incorporating mentorship into her professional activities and bridging the gap between the organizations she volunteers with and her volunteerism and mentorship roles within Bank of America.



NIKKI KHORRAM

FINALIST

Associate Attorney
Winston & Strawn LLP

Nikki Khorram is an associate attorney at Winston & Strawn (Winston), one of the 50 largest law firms in the United States. In addition to working on multi-million-dollar, high-profile litigation matters for Winston's clients, Khorram has made it her mission to help new attorneys – particularly women and other diverse professionals – advance their careers through formal and informal mentorship.

Khorram's propensity for mentorship is shaped by her inherent need to give back to her community however she can, from pro bono and volunteer work to fostering inclusion in every facet of her professional life. Khorram advocates for her mentees when they aren't in the room, makes sure they are considered for meaningful assignments, and supports them as they grow into roles they might not feel ready for. Khorram has served as an informal mentor for years and officially began mentoring junior attorneys through Winston's Mentorship Program three years ago.



GISELE RAGUSA

FINALIST

Professor of Engineering Education Practice
University of Southern California

Professor Gisele Ragusa is an educator, researcher and mentor transforming impact-focused pedagogy in STEM. Since 2014, she has served as a professor of Engineering Education Practice for the USC Viterbi School of Engineering. Born with cerebral palsy, Ragusa faced early motor and language skills challenges, receiving formative formal and informal support and mentorship during childhood. She later chose to devote her early professional career to the service, support and mentorship of Pre-K-12 children as a bilingual science and special educator.

Ragusa currently leads the USC STEM Education Research Group with the mission to advance the lifespan of careers and achievements in STEM. Her research centers on STEM education, literacy, assessment and measurement. Her work is focused specifically on engineering education and innovation, global preparedness, PK-12 and teacher education, as well as advocating for sustainable pathways to higher education for historically underrepresented students.

Congratulations



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COMMUNITY IMPACT ADVOCATE HONOREE

KATHERINE KIRCHHOFF

Managing Director
Cain Brothers, a division of KeyBanc Capital Markets

Katherine Kirchhoff is a managing director at Cain Brothers, a division of KeyBanc Capital Markets' Post-Acute Care group. Her 40-year finance career has focused on helping business leaders achieve their organizations' growth goals by assisting them with capital funding, financial planning, feasibility analysis and strategic planning. Throughout her career, Kirchhoff has completed transactions totaling more than $6 billion, primarily in California.

Kirchhoff realized early in her career that she wanted to make a positive difference in the nonprofit healthcare industry, particularly in the senior living sector. She brings a breadth and depth of technical knowledge and leadership experience in strengthening senior living communities in California, having spent more than three decades on this mission. As Kirchhoff progressed in her career, she noticed that many senior living facilities require greater access to capital to provide safe, secure and comfortable environments for aging community members. She recognized this as a niche where she could make long- lasting impacts on the well-being of older adults and the organizations providing housing and care for them.

In 2023, Kirchhoff initiated efforts that led to new statewide legislation (Assembly Bill 839), modifying the eligibility criteria and enabling certain nonprofit senior living facilities to access the California Health Facilities Financing Authority, which serves as a conduit issuer for tax-exempt bonds and provides other financial assistance through loans and grants.

Kirchhoff was appointed to the State of California's Continuing Care Advisory Committee by Governor Schwarzenegger in 2007, and she has served on the LeadingAge California Finance Committee since 1997.



MERIDITH BAER

FINALIST

Owner
Meridith Baer Home

Meridith Baer is a trailblazing entrepreneur, designer and businesswoman, celebrated for her pioneering role in establishing the practice of "home staging" and founding Meridith Baer Home, the premier home staging firm in the United States. As an innovator in design and real estate, she has elevated countless properties, from modest homes to multi-million-dollar estates, helping homeowners achieve unparalleled success.

Under Baer's leadership, the company has transformed thousands of properties and gained recognition in elite publications such as Architectural Digest, The New York Times, and Forbes. Through her company, Baer has donated over 150 truckloads of furnishings to charitable organizations that uplift individuals and families in need. Her contributions span a diverse range of impactful initiatives, including ArcSpace, The Broad Stage, No Kid Hungry, YWCA Greater Los Angeles, Children's Home, Exceptional Minds, Girls Inc., Habitat for Humanity, Hopics, among others.



CYNDIE CHANG

FINALIST

Managing Partner, Los Angeles Office
Duane Morris LLP

Cyndie Chang is a dynamic legal industry leader who resolves and manages business challenges and risks, including litigating lawsuits to trial. She advises and partners with clients to enforce their rights, mitigate exposure and litigate their commercial disputes involving complex, class action or B2B disputes. Her practice involves contracts, licensing, products liability, product safety and recall, unfair competition, fraud, construction defect, trademarks, trade secrets, California Proposition 65, COVID-19 and real estate.

Chang has held significant leadership roles in organizations and nonprofits that advance diversity and professional development in the community. She currently serves on the Board of Directors for Loyola Law School, Los Angeles, and the Committee of 100, a nonprofit group of prominent Chinese Americans, which recently published its report on the state of Chinese Americans and its advocacy on behalf of victims of hate crimes and Asian racial profiling.



ANN KONO

FINALIST

Co-Founder
TeachAAPI

Ann Kono is a dynamic leader with a distinguished career spanning finance, operations and education. As the co-founder of TeachAAPI, she has been instrumental in advancing inclusive education, ensuring that Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) history and perspectives are integrated into K-8 curricula. Kono's ability to navigate complex systems, build strategic partnerships, and drive impactful change has positioned her as a transformative force in the nonprofit sector.

Kono grew up in the inner city of Boston, where she learned firsthand the power of education in shaping opportunities. Despite the challenges of navigating under-resourced school systems, she excelled academically and went on to build a successful career in finance, often being one of the few women in leadership rooms. Now, through TeachAAPI, she is working to ensure that all children, regardless of background, have access to a more inclusive and representative education.



ANGELA REDDOCK-WRIGHT

FINALIST

Employment & Title IX Mediator
Signature Resolution / RLG

After 25 years as an employment litigator and workplace and Title IX investigator, Angela Reddock-Wright transitioned to a full-time neutral in 2020. She is a leading Title IX attorney mediator with her own firm and part of the distinguished panel of neutrals with Signature Resolution. Reddock-Wright has mediated some of the most sensitive and high-profile cases involving private, public, entertainment, gaming, technology, union/labor and nonprofit sector employers, addressing issues such as race and gender discrimination, retaliation, sexual harassment, assault, hazing, bullying, pay equity, PAGA and wage and hour claims.

Reddock-Wright is a past president of the Southern California Mediation Association and is a member of the panel of mediators with the US District Court, Central District of California. Additionally, she is a distinguished fellow with the International Academy of Mediators, the National Academy of Distinguished Neutrals, and the College of Labor & Employment.

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Shirley Wiliani is not just a business leader—she's a business liberator. As the founder and CEO of ALC, a thriving global CFO advisory and HR Consulting firm, Shirley built a high-performing company from the ground up—then made the boldest move of her career: she fired herself. After 15 years of being indispensable, she let go of control, empowered her team, and created a business that could scale without her at the center of every decision. Through her keynotes and workshops, she is inspiring business leaders to do the same.

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SPEAKER TOPICS

BEYOND PERKS:
How Real Culture Drives Real Profits

THE CULTURAL ADVANTAGE:
Outperforming Competitors Through Workplace Dynamic

CULTURENOMICS:
The New Science of Organizational Wealth

> An eye-opener... Shirley's workshop was inspiring and deeply impactful.
> - Aaron Blank, CEO of Fearey

Los Angeles Business Journal
WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM & AWARDS 2025

Honorees & Finalists



THE ACCELERATOR AWARD HONOREE

ALANA ABBITT

Chief Product Officer
Miso Robotics

With over 15 years of experience in product management, Alana Abbitt has established herself as an expert in growing global service businesses, with a particular talent for driving recurring revenue generation across diverse industries. Her career trajectory spans payment services at PayPal, consumer product innovation at Honest, pioneering IoT solutions at Ring, and now, revolutionizing robotics services at Miso.

In her current role at a robotics startup, Abbitt faced a great challenge: within her first six months, the entire leadership team, including the CEO, departed. Rather than retreat in the face of this unprecedented vacuum, she stepped forward to fill the void. She reimagined the company's direction by auditing product lines, analyzing market potential, and presenting a compelling new vision to a new CEO and board. Her leadership accelerated a new course for the company, completing an 18-month product development cycle in just six months.

Abbitt exemplifies the multifaceted nature of modern leadership, making waves in both cutting-edge technology and cultural entrepreneurship. She's revolutionizing robotics in the quick-service restaurant industry, leading product development in automation solutions that tackle the dull, dirty and dangerous work that has long challenged the sector.

As one of few Latina executives in robotics, Abbitt's become a powerful advocate for diversity in tech, actively mentoring others and creating pathways for underrepresented voices. It's this unique combination of technical acumen, cultural awareness and entrepreneurial spirit that makes her not just an "Acclerator," but a leader who's actively shaping the future of multiple industries while inspiring the next generation of diverse leaders.



FARRAH BRITTANY

FINALIST

Founding Agent
The Agency

With over a decade of experience in luxury real estate, Farrah Brittany has played a pivotal role in shaping the growth and vision of The Agency, where she serves as a partner and founder. Collaborating with the renowned Umansky Team, Brittany has played a key role in over $5 billion in real estate transactions. As an emerging leader with an ever-expanding network, her ability to navigate high-profile, multi-million-dollar transactions with poise and insight has garnered the attention of industry leaders and clients alike.

Throughout her career, Brittany has faced challenges ranging from high-stakes negotiations to managing client expectations in an ever-evolving market. These experiences have shaped her resilience and adaptability, further solidifying her leadership capabilities. Additionally, she dedicates time to mentoring aspiring real estate professionals, offering guidance and support as they grow in their careers.



MONICA DINSMORE

FINALIST

Head of Esports
Electronic Arts (EA)

Monica Dinsmore is the head of esports at EA, where she spearheads the publisher's competitive gaming strategy across a trio of IP: Apex Legends, EA SPORTS FC, and Madden NFL. Her focus on player-centric strategies has cultivated loyalty among the core player base and successfully re-engaged lapsed players. Her forward-thinking approach – centered on long-term fan investment and development of sustainable and accessible esports ecosystems – has helped EA to grow during times of industry volatility.

Since joining EA in 2021, all three esports brands registered record-breaking viewership and attendance year-over-year. The first-ever season of the EA SPORTS FC Pro Open set the bar at the highest engagement to-date with more than 100,000 viewers tuning in to watch in addition to millions of views across social media platforms. In February 2025, the Apex Legends Global Series Year 4 Championship set the record as the most-attended event in EA esports history.



MIKESHAYA EDWARDS

FINALIST

Director of Operations Member Services
M. Edwards Legacy LLC

With a heartfelt desire to serve in a field where she could help people in their most vulnerable state, she pursued higher education to broaden her career opportunities, graduating as class valedictorian from California Baptist University with two master's degrees. After overcoming several hurdles while attempting to climb the corporate ladder, she took on a position as a prominent health care executive for one of the largest hospitals in Riverside County. Most recently, she serves as hospital operations director at Kaiser Permanente in LA, where she is responsible for the development and implementation of organizational growth strategies and profitability related to member satisfaction and retention.

Edwards recently built and purchased two rental properties and continues to purchase additional properties under her LLC, M. Edwards Legacy, increasing her economical reach and ability to provide housing to low-income families.



ERICA ELSASSER

FINALIST

SVP; Senior Relationship Manager, Commercial Banking
KeyBank

Erica Elsasser began her career at KeyBanc Capital Markets in 2011, working with clients to evaluate capital structures, issue bonds, and evaluate ratings strategies and considerations. After completing hundreds of transactions and helping her clients raise over than $100 billion, she was offered her current role of SVP, senior relationship manager, commercial banking.

Elsasser currently works closely with clients to meet their commercial banking needs through KeyBank's capabilities in cash management, payments, equipment finance and other banking products and services. In just 11 months, she has brought new clients to the platform, managed over 20 client relationships, and expanded the team's prospecting efforts. She has also spearheaded the development of the team's commercial banking sponsor coverage initiatives, building out COI relationships with sponsors in the region. Beyond business development, Elsasser is actively involved in recruiting and mentoring talent as KeyBank builds its West Coast presence.

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LOS ANGELES BUSINESS JOURNAL
WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM & AWARDS 2025

Honorees & Finalists



NEXTGEN WOMAN OF THE YEAR HONOREE

DANIELLE WILLIAMS

Analyst
Avante Capital Partners

Danielle Williams has been a rising star at Avante Capital Partners since she joined the firm in 2019 as manager partner Ivelisse Rodriguez Simon's assistant and to support the firm's marketing efforts. Williams has continued to work her way up in the firm, now serving as an analyst and supporting the fundraising team. She is also responsible for identifying, underwriting, executing and managing investment opportunities. Prior to her ascension at Avante Capital Partners, she was an office services assistant at Latham and Watkins in San Diego.

Williams graduated from the University of Michigan with a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology. During her undergrad, she was a student-athlete on the Michigan Women's Basketball team for four years. Her experiences with high-level college basketball have provided a competitive advantage for her in the finance industry. She comfortably excels in a corporate environment while working with teams and individuals, finding ways to win in today's market. Williams also holds a Master of Management degree from the Stephen M. Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan.

Williams has been heavily involved in supporting Avante Capital Partners' Small Business Investing Scholars Internship Program since its inception, which helps to bridge the gap between the industry and students who may not otherwise have exposure to certain positions or firms. From its launch in 2020 to 2024, the program expanded from hosting nine interns to 40 interns with 31 SBIC firms participating. Last year, the program received a record number of over 1,300 students applying to participate in the opportunity.



BARBARA AGUIRRE

FINALIST
Project Coordinator
AC Martin

Barbara Aguirre began her professional journey at the University of California, Riverside, where she earned a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering. Despite being one of the few Hispanic women in a predominantly male field, she thrived, balancing rigorous coursework while conducting sustainability-focused research. Her work sparked a deep interest in material science and sustainable design. Aguirre went on to study at USC, where she pioneered a new academic path pursuing a dual master's degree in architecture and building science.

Graduating in 2021, Aguirre entered another male-dominated industry – architecture – with the same resilience. She has since won numerous accolades, including the Paul Welch Scholarship, the Jim House Scholarship, the LAA Scholarship, Women in STEM honors, and the Great Minds in STEM award. At her firm, Ac Martin, Aguirre helped pioneer the internship program, actively participating in hiring and mentoring high school and college students seeking meaningful professional experience.



CAYLIE BONTZ

FINALIST
Senior Associate
KWP Real Estate

Since her start in the commercial real estate industry just three years ago, Caylie Bontz has demonstrated exceptional professional growth and commitment, rapidly expanding her knowledge and network while achieving an impressive 88 leasing transactions and representing over 177,000 square feet of retail.

Bontz is a licensed sales agent and senior associate at KWP Real Estate, representing over 750,000 square feet of commercial space across Greater Los Angeles, and the current president of the Association of Corporate Real Estate Executives of Southern California. She currently represents over 750,000 square feet of commercial space across LA. She is responsible for property marketing, tours and contract negotiations on behalf of private capital and institutional landlords, working to secure future business through constant pipeline development. As an expert advisor, she provides commercial property owners with merchandising plans and proposed marketing strategies.



KRISSY DELAPINIA

FINALIST
Digital Content Coordinator
Hope the Mission

In her role as digital content coordinator at Hope the Mission, Krissy Delapinia has demonstrated exceptional leadership and innovation. Her creative use of social media has revitalized the organization's digital presence, effectively engaging younger audiences through authentic storytelling and strategic content that resonates with new generations of supporters. Notably, Delapinia raised over $50,000 in a single day for global generosity movement event GivingTuesday with just a two-person team. Her strategic marketing efforts led to record-breaking attendance at Hope's annual Thanksgiving event, Drumstick Dash LA, establishing it as the largest Thanksgiving Day race in LA for three consecutive years.

Delapinia's innovative approach to raising awareness about homelessness is exemplified by her 40-hour immersive experience living homeless in Oildale, which provided valuable insights and directly contributed to the establishment of Hope the Mission's first tiny home facility.



MEREDITH GEE

FINALIST
Head of Product Design
Akido Labs

Meredith Gee is a rising healthcare and technology leader shaping the future of access and equity in LA and beyond. As head of product design at healthcare provider and AI company Akido Labs, she has designed and scaled platforms that have reduced the cost of patient visits by 90% and enabled doctors to see six times more patients, helping address the nation's physician shortage while improving care quality. Gee's AI-driven care model was featured in Fast Company and presented at MIT's AI Symposium for its potential to transform access to care globally. She has since scaled the program across a 500,000-patient network, leading implementation of new models of care that blend technology with human connection.

Gee serves on the Akido AI Ethics Council, a cross-institutional initiative with Caltech and USC, and advises the nonprofit Future Communities Institute, focused on tech-enabled care programs and civic innovation.

Recognizing the remarkable.

Congratulations to Partner Karine Philippon and all the 2025 Women's Leadership Awards nominees!



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Congrats to the 2025 Nominees

Alana Abbitt
Jennifer Acree
Ranee Adipat
Barbara Aguirre
Bridget Ahern
Wanda Ahmadi
Susie Albin-Najera
Veronica Alcaraz
Farah Alkayed
Katherina Alznauer
Cindy Ambuehl
Belva Anakwenze
Mona Andrews
Nancy Antoniou
Edana Appel
Sharon Appelbaum
Veronica Arteaga
Elen Asatryan
Rosemarie Chiusano Aubert
Sally Aubury
Rainy Austin
Anna Avetisyan
Jaclyn Aviles
Melanie Babyan
Sarah Bacay
Meridith Baer
Smita Bagla
Paula Bahamon
Sarvenaz Bahar
Nuzi Barkatally
Laura Baron
Jamie Barrios
Jill Basowski
Theresa Becerra
Laura Berens
Susan Berman
Barbara Bernstein
Kavitha Bhatia, MD, MMM, FAAP, FACHE
Tania Birker
Christina Blumer
Kristen Blunt
Shelby Boagni
Caylie Bontz
Amy Born
Pamela Bosco
Alona Bowman
Kelley Brack Jamison
Giovanna Brasfield
Michelle Brazil
Priscilla Brehm
Elizabeth Brink
Farrah Brittany
Katie Brody
Kerri Brouilette
Dawn L. Brown
Kellie Brown
Lila Brown
Stephanie Bum
Cheryl Calhoun
Galen Callahan
Babette Campbell
Kaitlynn Campbell
Reena Hajat Carroll
Rachel Casal
Cécile Chalifour
Cyndie Chang
Jennifer Chang
Michelle Chang
Verna Grayce Chao
Shawna Charles
Amy Chen
Stephanie Chen
Weihua Cheng
Diana Ordaz Cherrington
Sandra Cho
Andrea Choe
Nancy Coblenz
Lydia Colaresi
Margo Conley
Moira Conlon
Nicole Conn
Erika Contreras
Megan Creecy-Herman
Nicole Cressman
Jessica Cruz
Heather Culbertson
Eva Davis
Martha de la Torre
Penelope Deihl
Krissy Delapinia
Rosa Delgado
Christine Deschaine
Kat Dey
Anita Dharapuram
Hayley Dickson
Kerra Diener
Monica Dinsmore
Robin Dodson
Erin Donovan
Jesse Draper
Sabrina Dukhovny
Carolyn Dundee
Kathryn Edgerton
Mikeshaya Edwards
Erica Elsasser
Tamika Farr
Mia Farrell
Bernadette Fernandez
Tanya Flynn
Suzy Foster
Sherri Francois
Mindy Freedman
Elaine Fresch
Susan Fries
Barbara Gadbois
Kristen Gaer
Karyn Gallen
Deanna Garcia
Maria Garcia
Ellyn Garofalo
Anush Gasparian
Meredith Gee
Eve Glazier, MD
Tessa Graham
Samantha Grant
Demetria L. Graves
Debra Gray
Lindsay Green
Dianne Gubin
Ikram Guerd
Tamara Gurney
Emily Gustin
Isabel Gutierrez
Adaobi Gwacham
Kristen Haines
Candice Hakimfar
Dominique Hamler
Brandy Han
Jeri Harman
Melissa Harman
Jennifer Harris
Betsy Hart
Sarah Hartman
Jonelle Hayes
Wessam Hazaymeh
Kelly Heinen
Elva Hernandez
Sandra Hernandez
Mary Hewitt
Beth Hilbing
Jade Hoang
Ileana Holguin
Katina Holliday
Cathy J. Hood
Lana Hout
Maki Hsieh
Tiffany Hughes
Neela Hummel
Maria Hunter
Michelle Iturralde
Jenn Johnston
Christianne Jordan
Courtney Jurado
Grace Kangdani
Ava Kaufman
Kulwant Kaur
Nikki Khorram
Debby Kim
Katherine Kirchhoff
Lee Ann Kline
Taylor Kogler
Ann Kono
Sara Kornblatt
Alexandra Krasovec
Jennalynn Kristedja
Jenny Krusoe
Rosanne Kuder
Kristina Kury
Amy Kwan
Deborah La Franchi
Francine Lai
Marie A. LaMolinara
Tina LaMonica
Wendy Lane
Dina LaPolt
Kate LaQuay
Amanda Lee
Eunice Lee
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At KPRS, we believe it's the invaluable contributions of women that make us an even better building partner. We're proud to be a part of the 2025 Women's Leadership Symposium & Awards and celebrate our nominees, Michelle Rabinovich, Director of Preconstruction & Director of Los Angeles and Jennalynn Kristedja, Director of Learning and Development. Congratulations to all the honorees!

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Jennifer Lee
Guadalupe Lemus
Julia Leonard
Andrea Leventhal
Lavena Lewis
Michelle Lewis
Jennifer Lieser
Courtney Lingle
Betty Liu
Ruishan Liu
Dana Lowy
Karla Luna
Allie Lutz
Mahru Madjidi
Hannah Maile
Rochelle Maize
Lana Manganiello
Leslie Margolin
Nina Marino
Sheila Marmon
Marianne Martin
Angella Martinez
Jasmyn Masters-Culpepper
Bailey Masullo
Jessee Matana
Maja Mataric
Folade May
Natalie May
Marcia Mayeda
Leslie Mayer
Erin McAnally
Carly McGinnis
Laura McHolm
Stacey McKinnon
Parini Mehta
Rashmi Menon
Debra Ellwood Meppen
Thea Mercouffer
Sheri Messerlian
Lisa Helfend Meyer
Karen Miessner
Janice Miller
Julie Miller
Ekaterina Mironova
Cynthia Mitchell-Heard
Kayoko Mitsumatsu
Carissa Moore
Octavia Morgan
Elisabeth Moriarty
Ali Wood Moser
Devon Munos
Susan Napier
Lizbeth Nevarez
Toni Newman
Puanani Norwood
Joanne Nowlin
Ifunanya Nweke
Kelly O'Neil
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Doreen Olson
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Jessica Ormandy
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Heather Quinn
Vera Quinn
Asia Yuyu Quiroz
Michelle Rabinovich
Tirue Rafayelyan
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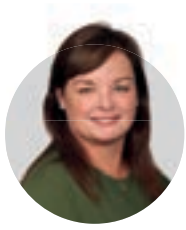
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LOS ANGELES BUSINESS JOURNAL
WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM & AWARDS 2025

Building Wealth Strategies for Today and Tomorrow

Sandra Madden is the Wealth Director for PNC's Private Bank in Los Angeles, where she helps clients align their wealth with purpose, from immediate cash management needs to legacy-focused estate planning strategies.

In this Q&A, Sandra talks about the Private Bank's role in Los Angeles and how her team ensures their clients are set up for their financial futures.

What makes PNC Private Bank uniquely positioned to serve high-net-worth clients in Los Angeles?
Madden: PNC Private Bank is the sixth largest in the US, with $130 billion in AUM and more than 160 years of experience serving high-net-worth clients. Our team of tenured advisors is based locally in Century City and comprised of professionals who live in Los Angeles and understand the unique financial landscape of the market. From customized mortgage solutions to wealth planning and investment management, we deliver the personalized experience of a boutique firm while leveraging the resources of one of the largest asset managers in the country.

How does PNC Private Bank balance personalized attention with the breadth of a full investment platform?
Madden: Our planning-led approach centers on each client's long-term goals. Rather than reacting to market headlines, we help clients



maintain diversified portfolios, manage concentrated risks and stay disciplined through market cycles. We offer a full investment platform, including tailored credit solutions and fiduciary services, paired with skilled trust and estate administration.

How does PNC Private Bank approach portfolio diversification during times of economic uncertainty?
Madden: Our approach begins with in-depth financial planning to understand each client's goals, risk tolerance, and exposure. We build resilient, globally diversified portfolios across US, international and alternative asset classes designed to weather economic uncertainty. We view market volatility as an opportunity, using tax-harvesting and strategic rebalancing to add long-term value.

What sets your strategy apart from other wealth management providers?
Madden: What sets us apart is our open-architecture platform. This allows us to source best-in-class investments across both public and private markets. Our solutions are highly tailored, often serving clients with complex balance sheets, including concentrated equity, business ownership, and generational wealth.

For business owners and executives, we take a holistic view, recognizing that their professional and personal goals are deeply intertwined. Whether they're preparing for a liquidity event, considering succession, or planning a future sale, we provide guidance on leadership transitions that help align personal wealth strategies to the next chapter of their lives.

How does PNC Private Bank support clients through complex M&A transactions?
Madden: I like to say that PNC Private Bank bridges business and personal wealth. We have a deep understanding of how business and personal wealth intersect, the complexities and challenges of business ownership, and how to navigate those challenges. Additionally, PNC Private Bank is backed by the strength, security, and capabilities of PNC — a leading national bank. So we have the expertise to guide clients through the full scope of the transaction, identifying tax and gifting opportunities while aligning with the owner's post-liquidity goals and long-term priorities. We also have a team of experts who can provide advisory services on the transaction itself. But it all starts with an approach that is grounded in the goals and values that matter most to each business owner and their family.

What are you most optimistic about in the wealth management space and how is PNC Private Bank preparing clients to capitalize on those opportunities?
Madden: We're most optimistic about the convergence of opportunities within tax policy changes, global diversification, and innovation in private markets. As the shape of future tax legislation becomes clearer, we're actively working with clients and their tax advisors to position their portfolio for maximum after-tax efficiency. We're also helping clients revisit international allocations after a long period of US outperformance, identifying regions and sectors poised for relative strength. At the same time, clients are gaining access to new opportunities in private credit, direct lending, and other alternative investments that can complement traditional portfolios.

Women are also poised to control an unprecedented share of wealth over the next two decades, both through wealth creation and inheritance. We are deeply committed to empowering our clients to confidently navigate this historic shift through personalized guidance, thoughtful strategic planning, and a focus on financial literacy.

Learn more at PNC.com.

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LOS ANGELES BUSINESS JOURNAL
WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM & AWARDS 2025

Despite Backlash, Most US Workers Support Current DEI Policies

Despite scrutiny, DEI programs continue to receive strong support from employees, according to new survey data from The Conference Board.

Indeed, 58% of US workers believe their organization devotes the appropriate level of effort and resources to their DEI initiatives; 21% don't believe their organization's efforts go far enough.

"DEI values and initiatives are essential for many US employees and continue to receive strong, positive feedback," said Allan Schweyer, principal researcher, human capital, The Conference Board. "Leaders should focus on what really matters for their workforce amid the noise, as these initiatives are crucial for attracting and retaining current and future talent."

The survey data gauges employees' and executives' perceptions of DEI initiatives and backlash.

WORKER VIEWS OF DEI INITIATIVES

Employees support DEI initiatives, with nearly a quarter expressing a desire for more.

- 58% say their organization's DEI approach is appropriate—but 21% say it is insufficient.
- 21% feel too much effort and resources are allocated.

Most companies have DEI initiatives that include fairness policies and equitable pay programs.

- 81% say their company has fairness policies and executive leaders who actively promote DEI.
- 76% have programs that promote equitable compensation and benefits.
- 74% have a dedicated DEI leader.

Employees find initiatives that emphasize the importance of DEI and fair pay the most impactful.

- 63% report a positive impact from executive leaders communicating the importance of DEI.
- 62% say the same for initiatives that promote equitable compensation and benefits.

However, they're uncertain about the impact of measuring DEI objectives.

- 52% say that measuring DEI targets has a neutral or negative effect on their work experience.

Demographic differences shape employees' views of DEI, with millennials showing the most support.

- Millennials: 52% say their organization dedicates the right amount of effort to DEI and 32% say their efforts are not enough.
- Gen X: 57% and 22%, respectively.
- Baby Boomers: 63% and 12%, respectively.

Employees consider DEI vital for workplace culture but are unsure about its impact on productivity.

- 71% of respondents say that DEI initiatives improve their sense of belonging.
- 62% say they enhance engagement.
- Only 43% believe DEI positively impacts productivity, with 17% seeing it as detrimental.

Nearly half of women wouldn't work for a company that doesn't take DEI seriously.

- 49% of women wouldn't work for a company that doesn't take DEI seriously vs. just 29% of men.

Women's perceptions of DEI initiatives are more positive than men's.

- 73% of women report a positive impact from equitable compensation initiatives vs. 51% of men.
- 71% of women report a positive impact from DEI workshops vs. 50% of men.

Black respondents are more likely to perceive DEI efforts as insufficient.

- 56% of Black respondents say they would not work for a company that does not prioritize DEI, compared to 40% of White (non-Hispanic), 33% of Hispanic, and 33% of Asian respondents.
- 40% of Black respondents say their company's current DEI efforts are not enough, compared to 19% of White (non-Hispanic), 25% of Hispanic, and 23% of Asian respondents.

EXECUTIVE VIEWS OF DEI BACKLASH

The political and legal landscape for corporate diversity efforts is increasingly contested.

- 63% of surveyed executives view the political climate for DEI as very or extremely challenging.
- 63% say the 2023 Supreme Court decision on affirmative action negatively affected their DEI efforts.

Executives are bracing for persistingor intensifyingscrutiny of their diversity initiatives.

- 69% expect scrutiny of DEI efforts to persist or increase in the next three years.

Most companies are revising their DEI terminology, but few plan to reduce their DEI communications.

- Only 9% of surveyed executives intend to scale back external DEI communications over the next year—and just 3% plan to do so internally.

Learn more at ConferenceBoard.org.

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The Board of Directors of the Beverly Hills Conference & Visitors Bureau proudly congratulates Wanda Ahmadi and Wessam Hazaymeh on their nominations for the 2025 LABJ Women's Leadership Awards. Guided by CEO Julie Wagner, the Beverly Hills Conference & Visitors Bureau is committed to fostering a workplace where women's voices are elevated, recognized, and celebrated across all levels of leadership.

LOS ANGELES BUSINESS JOURNAL
WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM & AWARDS 2025

CHIPS Women in Construction Framework Features Major Enterprises

Last year, the US Department of Commerce announced the CHIPS Women in Construction Framework, a set of five best practices, as well as the first voluntary commitments to the Framework from Intel Corporation and Micron Technology.

The Framework was developed as part of US Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo's Million Women in Construction initiative designed to expand the American construction workforce by doubling the number of women in construction over the next decade. Under the Framework, companies will work with contractors, trade unions and other community and workforce partners to implement best practices that will expand the construction workforce by increasing the participation of women and economically disadvantaged individuals. These recruitment and retention best practices will help support on-time and successful completion of CHIPS program-funded projects. Semiconductor manufacturing companies that have already signed non-binding Preliminary Memoranda of Terms (PMT) may voluntarily adopt the Framework.

"It is a simple question of math. If we are going to meet the national and economic security imperatives of the CHIPS Program, we are going to have to figure out how to fill the hundreds of thousands of jobs we are creating, and we won't fill those jobs without growing our construction workforce to include more women," said Raimondo. "The CHIPS Women in Construction Framework will help get more women into our construction workforce by bringing together companies, communities, unions and other workforce training partners to both develop the talent pipeline and ensure workplaces have the support systems needed."

Adoption of the Framework is intended to build upon the existing efforts of these companies and best practices established through labor, industry, government and community leadership to increase representation of women and economically disadvantaged individuals in the construction workforce.

Companies that voluntarily adopt the Framework will collaborate with contractors, trades unions, and other community and workforce partners in their efforts to implement the following practices:

1. Set goals and monitor progress towards increasing the participation of women on CHIPS-funded construction projects.

2. Build community partnerships with community organizations with a track record of increasing women and economically disadvantaged individuals' exposure to and recruitment into the construction industry.

3. Develop training pathways such as training investments, apprentice utilization goals, or apprentice readiness program partnerships that serve women and economically disadvantaged individuals.

4. Provide access to supportive services such as child care or transportation that will increase retention of women and economically disadvantaged individuals in the workforce.

5. Maintain healthy, safe and respectful workplaces and prevent and address harassment, discrimination, retaliation and violence through workplace training, policy and practice.

The Department of Commerce also announced the first voluntary company commitments from Intel Corporation and Micron Technology to participate in the Framework.

"Intel is a leading semiconductor manufacturer in the United States, and we're proud that our worksites are creating thousands of construction jobs nationwide. With leadership comes responsibility and we're committed to supporting our contractors and other stakeholders in their efforts to hire and train more women in the field," said Intel chief global operations officer Keyvan Esfarjani. "As Intel embarks on a generational expansion of its US manufacturing operations, we appreciate the opportunity to work with the Biden-Harris Administration and support our contractors and key partners on our shared goal to attract more women to construction careers."

"Micron's leading-edge memory manufacturing depends on a skilled US manufacturing and construction workforce. Currently, construction workforce availability is one of the most pressing issues facing the US semiconductor industry at a time when we need all the well-trained workers we can get. Our historic commitments in Idaho and New York, supported by the CHIPS and Science Act grants, focus on developing the next generation of construction careers," said Micron executive vice president of global operations Manish Bhatia. "Through PLAs and with the support of our community partners, we are creating pathways for all, including women and veterans in construction, while addressing barriers to entry, including increasing access to childcare at our sites."





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Initiative Aims to Accelerate Growth and Leadership of Women CFP Professionals

The CFP Board recently announced the launch of Accelerate & WIN, a comprehensive program designed to accelerate the growth, influence and leadership of women certified financial planner (CFP) professionals.

Women remain significantly underrepresented in the financial planning profession, making up only 24% of all CFP professionals. This disparity persists despite a growing need for more women in the field — both because consumers want diverse perspectives and because firms must attract and retain women to stay competitive.

While CFP Board has long focused on addressing this challenge and made progress, it has not been enough. To drive meaningful change faster, Accelerate & WIN is advancing a multiyear strategy grounded in research, thought leadership and strategic partnerships. Careers in financial planning align with what women seek in a profession: meaningful work, flexibility and strong growth potential. CFP Board's approach will strengthen the entire talent pipeline, engaging college-bound high school students, college students, recent graduates and career changers to build a more diverse and competitive profession for the future.

"Women's moment in financial planning isn't coming — it's now," said CFP Board Chair Liz Miller, CFP, CFA. "Accelerate & WIN won't just open doors – it can reshape our profession."

In 2025, key highlights of the program include two research initiatives: the Building Wealth: Insights on Women's Aspirations & Growing Financial Power report (published in February) and a fall research report studying how financial services firms successfully attract and retain women financial planners, which will be released at the 2025 Connections Conference in Chicago (Oct. 6-8).

CFP Board is also hosting several women's initiative webinars and a career-changers studio. The first webinar, "Serving Women Clients: Addressing Unique Financial Challenges," was held in April and will explore insights from recent CFP Board research and strategies for addressing the specific needs of women clients at every stage, whether they're building wealth, managing life changes or navigating retirement.

A second webinar, "Women in Financial Planning," will be held on October 25 and will feature interviews with successful women CFP professionals who will share their journeys into the industry, as well as key data points from recent CFP Board research. Held in the fall, the CFP Pro Career Studio will be a live, three-part virtual event for women that aims to deepen potential career changers' understanding of what financial planners do, answer questions through guidance from career changers and help them take their first steps to making a career change.

Additionally, an invite-only Power Women Design Summit in May brought together CFP professionals, financial planning leaders and organizations that empower women and girls and other thought leaders to explore effective strategies for attracting women to the profession and keeping them on the path to CFP certification. Insights from the summit inform CFP Board's action plan. A second invite-only meeting in the fall will be announced soon.

"Accelerating the growth of women in financial planning is about giving consumers the choice they deserve," said CFP Board CEO Kevin R. Keller, CAE. "It equips the profession to meet the evolving needs of today's clients."

Accelerate & WIN will be led by Lisa Davis, JD, chief program officer and Jillien Meier, managing director, program development. Success will be measured by the growth of women CFP professionals, increased enrollment of women in financial planning degree programs, research demonstrating the business case for firms to increase numbers of women advisors, proven best practices and strategic partnerships that advance the profession.

CFP Board is the professional body for personal financial planners in the US. CFP Board consists of two affiliated organizations focused on advancing the financial planning profession for the public's benefit. CFP Board of Standards sets and upholds standards for financial planning and administers the prestigious CFP certification — widely recognized by the public, advisors and firms as the standard for financial planners — so that the public has access to the benefits of competent and ethical financial planning. CFP certification is held by more than 100,000 people in the US. CFP Board Center for Financial Planning addresses diversity and workforce development challenges and conducts and publishes research that adds to the financial planning profession's body of knowledge.

For more information, visit cfp.net.



LOS ANGELES BUSINESS JOURNAL
WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM & AWARDS 2025

Insights into Women's Health Shed Light on Gaps in Knowledge and Barriers to Care

A recent national survey of women in the US by Cleveland Clinic, in collaboration with YouGov, highlights knowledge gaps, barriers to care and growing interest among women in clinical research participation.

The survey revealed that many women are not aware of how certain health conditions impact women and men differently. For example, despite nearly two-thirds of Alzheimer's disease diagnoses being in women, 32% of women believe it affects both sexes equally. Similarly, 31% of women believe stroke affects women and men equally, even though it's more common and fatal for women. In addition, even though heart disease is the leading cause of death in both men and women in the United States, 62% of women don't realize it impacts women and men at similar rates.

"Midlife is a critical time for women's health, and making informed decisions starts with women understanding their health risks and getting the appropriate screenings," said Beri Ridgeway, MD, executive vice president and enterprise chief of staff at Cleveland Clinic. "We are committed to supporting women with the tools and resources they need to feel confident in managing their health."

Barriers to care centered on cost. Almost half (47%) of women said the cost of healthcare (33%), and/or the cost of healthy food or exercise (27%) prevents them from prioritizing their health. Stress and anxiety (30%) and caregiving (14%) were also common challenges.

The survey also showed that when it comes to menopause, women are divided on the use of menopausal hormone therapy (MHT). While a combined 41% of women believe MHT is unsafe (12%), have been advised against its use from their doctor (7%), and/or don't think they need it (26%), a combined 29% said they currently use it and find it helpful (5%), would consider it even though they have concerns (11%), and/or want to learn more (15%). In addition, 33% stated they were not familiar enough with MHT to form an opinion.

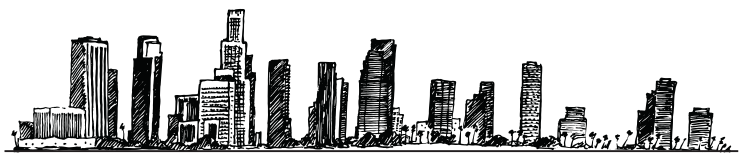
"From research, we know menopause is a critical area of study and treatment for women's long-term health, including, as a potential factor in reducing risk for Alzheimer's disease," said Maria Shriver, founder of the Women's Alzheimer's Movement at Cleveland Clinic, and chief visionary and strategic advisor of the Women's Comprehensive Health and Research Center. "We now understand that a woman's health must be treated holistically, and I am excited that Cleveland Clinic is leading the way in creating a groundbreaking center where every woman will be treated in her totality."

> 'Midlife is a critical time for women's health, and making informed decisions starts with women understanding their health risks and getting the appropriate screenings.'
>
> BERI RIDGEWAY, MD
> Cleveland Clinic

While women have historically been underrepresented in clinical trials, the national survey also showed that 53% of women would be interested in joining clinical trials — especially ones focused on women's health (29%). However, 17% expressed interest but said they don't know how to get involved.

"We're committed to moving medicine forward through innovative clinical trials and research," said Serpil Erzurum, MD, Cleveland Clinic's chief research and academic officer. "It's encouraging to see strong interest in participating in research. We will continue our focus on creating opportunities for women to join studies that could have an impact on women now and in the future."

Research is a priority of the Women's Comprehensive Health and Research Center launched in April 2024. The center supports women in midlife and beyond, focusing on four areas: access, connectivity, education and research and innovation.



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