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Dr. Shanthi Srinivas, Editor
Dr. ODessa Downing, Co-editor

Welcome from our Presidential Sponsor, Dr. Soraya M. Coley

Greetings ACE Women's Network of Southern California.

I hope this edition of the Network's newsletter finds you well and feeling supported and empowered by your colleagues across Southern California. The ongoing rollout of vaccinations against COVID-19 serves as a source of tremendous hope. I am inspired by your continued commitment to teaching, research, and leadership duties at your respective campuses. You are truly doing amazing work during a uniquely challenging time.

Over the two years of Cal Poly Pomona's presidential sponsorship of the Network, we have been fortunate to have Dr. Shanthi Srinivas, a longtime faculty member and administrator at Cal Poly Pomona, serving as state chair. She has brought great vision and determination to continuing the work passed to us by our colleagues at California State University, San Marcos. Therefore, it is with gratitude that I announce that Dr. Srinivas will complete her term as state chair this summer. On behalf of the Network, I thank Dr. Srinivas for her outstanding service.



Though we will miss Dr. Srinivas in this leadership role, I am very pleased to announce Dr. Olukemi Sawyerr, Cal Poly Pomona's Associate Vice President for Academic Innovation, as the Network's next state chair. In addition to her work as an administrator, Dr. Sawyerr has also spent nearly two decades as a faculty member in our College of Business Administration. She is a gifted leader and committed scholar who is poised to leverage the great work already accomplished by Dr. Srinivas.

Thank you again for your participation and engagement with the ACE Women's Network of Southern California. Please continue to stay connected and join our mailing list to receive the latest news and events from the Network: <https://www.cpp.edu/acesocal/mailling-list.shtml>.

A Reflection of the Times

Lunch and Learn renamed Connect and Learn

Our Lunch and Learn series that you may be familiar with from last year took on a new name during the pandemic for obvious reasons and is now called Connect and Learn. This is an apt title indeed as we have been able to connect with women higher education leaders from across our vast state since we went virtual!


Coping, Thriving and Sustaining During the Pandemic

We kicked off the year with our first Connect and Learn in October 2020 and focused on the timely topic of how we have been coping, thriving and sustaining during the pandemic. Dr. Soraya Coley, President of Cal Poly Pomona, gave the keynote address and her presentation has been summarized below by Dr. Olukemi Sawyerr from our Planning Committee. You will also find a video of the event at <https://www.cpp.edu/acesocal/connect-and-learn.shtml>.

Dr. Coley began her remarks by encouraging participants to reflect on where they are along the path of coping, thriving and sustaining. She was asked to reflect through the lens of a university president; however, she opted first to reflect on these three words through the prism of our shared experiences regardless of our roles. She shared that, “coping, at its most basic level is a response to psychological stress,” the psychological stress that we have all been under due to the global pandemic and racial reckoning. She cited a report, [Women in the Workplace 2020](#), produced by the *Atlantic Magazine*, that shows that working mothers are taking on more domestic responsibilities than working fathers in the pandemic and are twice as likely as fathers to feel that the additional responsibilities have a negative impact on their career performance. Prior to the pandemic we were able to compartmentalize life – we had home and we had work. The pandemic has removed this demarcation and now we have blended and integrated lives. Not knowing how long the situation will last adds to the psychological stress.

President Coley addressed coping, thriving, and sustaining through the lens of a university president from two dimensions -- the dimension of the personal being and the dimension of the professional self. In addressing the dimension of the personal being, she encouraged the participants to, “get off your back! Let me repeat, get off your back! Be your own best friend.” We have to contextualize our experience in a pandemic, we have never experienced this before. So, we should stop comparing our pre-pandemic life to the adjustment we have had to make due to the pandemic. She offered what she referred to as a “potpourri” of suggested coping strategies to fit a wide variety of interests and circumstances for the dimension of the personal being:

Coping, Thriving, and Sustaining



Create a new routine that shifts into a new normalcy

Get in touch with your physical self – including sleep, healthy eating, and a little chocolate

Journal your experiences

Set aside regular time for yourself, if even only ten minutes, where you can read something uplifting

Stay connected and be creative about ways to stay connected – socially distancing does not equal socially isolated

Find things that put a smile on your face

Give yourself a break

Learn to forgive others and yourself

Set goals, be flexible and acknowledge your accomplishments

Stay informed, but not alarmed

Practice gratitude

According to President Coley, "The pandemic has placed another level of challenges associated with caring about the impact of the pandemic on the lives of those I am here to serve; the challenge is only deepened because I can put actual names to the faces of those struggling." So, how do we cope with the demands of our new life? Using the above coping strategies for our personal being is useful. In addition, she has relied on her personal beacon statement which she crafted while serving as dean, "student centered, faculty and staff focused, and community minded." This statement has enabled her to practice principled, accountable, and compassionate leadership, which is required under the new circumstances. We have to identify new makers of success and adjust our approaches. "We can ill afford to say we'll get back to the work after the pandemic because too much is dependent on our progressing."

President Coley concluded by encouraging the participants to be self-nurturing, to find time to play and connect, to create mutual support groups and get off their backs!

ACE Women's Network SoCal Annual Conference

You may recall that we were all set to have our face-to-face Annual Conference on Inclusive Leadership on March 27, 2020 with over 150 participants registered, but the pandemic put a stop to our plans!



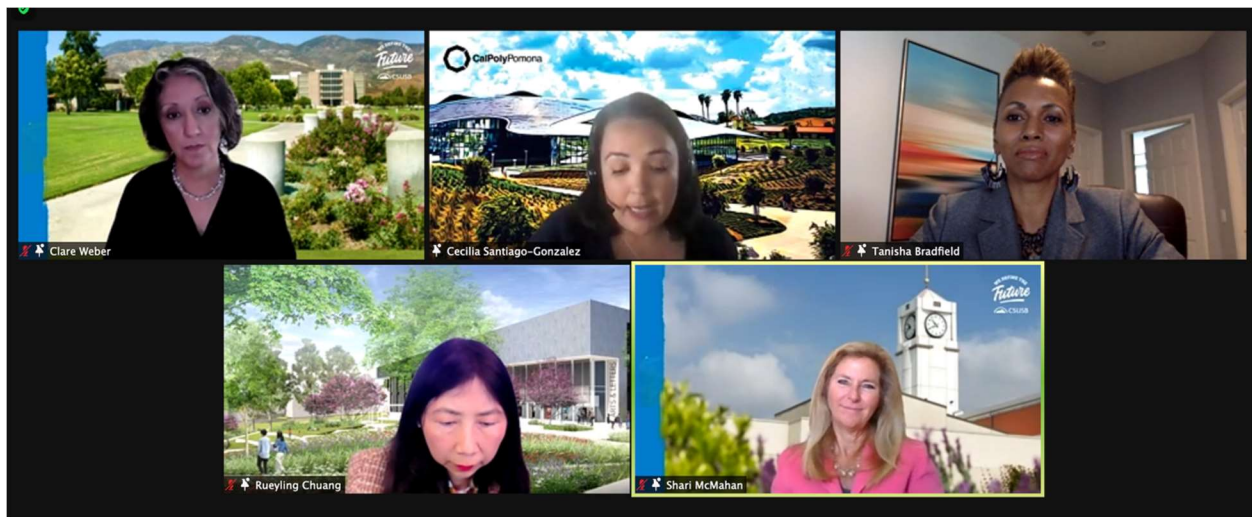
We were determined to offer this wonderful opportunity and later that year in November of 2020, we were able to offer this professional experience via Zoom. Dr. Robin Johnson, an acclaimed keynote speaker and facilitator guided us through an exploration of inclusive leadership with the goal of creating and sustaining an environment where team members succeed, learn from and leverage differences, and are engaged in their work with each other and the organization.

Several participants commented that they found the session engaging and meaningful. Key takeaways included:

- I appreciated the explanation about cultural competence and intercultural interaction strategies: denial, polarization, minimization, etc. Loved this term, "mushroom management," managers who keep people in the dark
- Really illuminating! Loved the BREATHE slides. Will definitely borrow that
- The information presented by Dr. Johnson was so informative for being an inclusive leader and also just being better in all relationships I'm involved. I couldn't help but think about applying this information in many facets of life
- Listening is different than active listening
- Use names with ideas/kudos
- How asking questions can redirect conversation to my agenda
- Intent vs. impact
- That it takes time to change culture

Connect and Learn Hosted by California State University, San Bernardino

We are so pleased to have our colleagues at CSUSB host our Connect and Learn series on the topic of Work Life Balance – Myth or Possibility? on April 16, 2021. We hope you had an opportunity to join us for our panel discussion and interact with colleagues as we shared our stories and explored strategies for achieving work life balance. Our distinguished group of panelists included Ms. Tanisha Bradfield, Director of Financial Aid, Orange Coast College, Dr. Rueyling Chuang, Dean, College of Arts and Letters, California State University, San Bernardino, Dr. Shari McMahan, Provost and Vice President California State University, San Bernardino and Dr. Cecilia Santiago-González, Assistant Vice President, Strategic Initiatives for Student Success, Cal Poly Pomona.



Their diverse perspectives and stories on achieving work life balance resonated and we were able to further reflect on this topic and share our experiences with our colleagues in the breakout rooms. We were overwhelmed with the survey responses from the participants. Here are some takeaways that the participants shared with us:

- All women have similar struggles with managing their careers as well as personal lives regardless of their position (or title!). It was heartening to hear this and know that we are not alone
- You can't have it all, and that is okay. It is also okay to put family first. Build the life you want, know that it won't be like others' lives, and don't feel guilty about it
- Be kind to ourselves as we wear many hats and Grace is necessary! I also was reminded of how wonderful it is to network with other women in leadership. Thank You!
- Don't apologize for either taking care of yourself or if you don't consistently adhere to your goals...give yourself some breathing room
- It was a great reminder that my life has been totally taken over by work and I need to reassess my priority in my life. Revalidating how we feel and function as women in a workplace is assuring
- Work life balance is a myth and women do not have to try to be everything to everyone

- No one's work/life is completely balanced. The blend of work and life is different for everyone, but everyone struggles, and everyone succeeds. It just depends on the day or the week
- We're all carrying a lot of guilt and we need to help each other with that :)
- Amazing to have the space to share experiences, struggles, and strategies
- Morning routine, being intentional about blending of work and balance, and priorities are key

Much thanks go to Dr. Clare Weber, Deputy Provost and Vice Provost for Academic Programs, Ms. Tiffany Melendez, Executive Assistant and the entire team at CSUSB for organizing a smooth and engaging event. Consistent with our goals for the Network, we hope to have many more such collaborative events to enhance the Network's presence within higher education institutions in the region.

Trust and Leadership

Our Spring Connect and Learn series in February 2021 focused on the importance of trust in effective leadership. Our very own Michelle Elrod, Director of Organizational Development with Employee and Organizational Development and Advancement (EODA) at Cal Poly Pomona presented on the topic of Leading at the Speed of Trust, adapted from the Franklin Covey series.

The focus was on how great leaders trust themselves and earn the trust of others to ensure that team members are energized and engaged. The ability to build, extend, restore, and sustain trust transforms managers into leaders. This condensed session focused on the first two waves, self-trust and relationship trust. The session gave participants the opportunity to learn how leaders can intentionally create trust and an environment where team members can collaborate more effectively, operate faster, and achieve sustainable results.

The response from the participants was enthusiastic and the takeaways significant! Here is a partial list of what the participants shared:

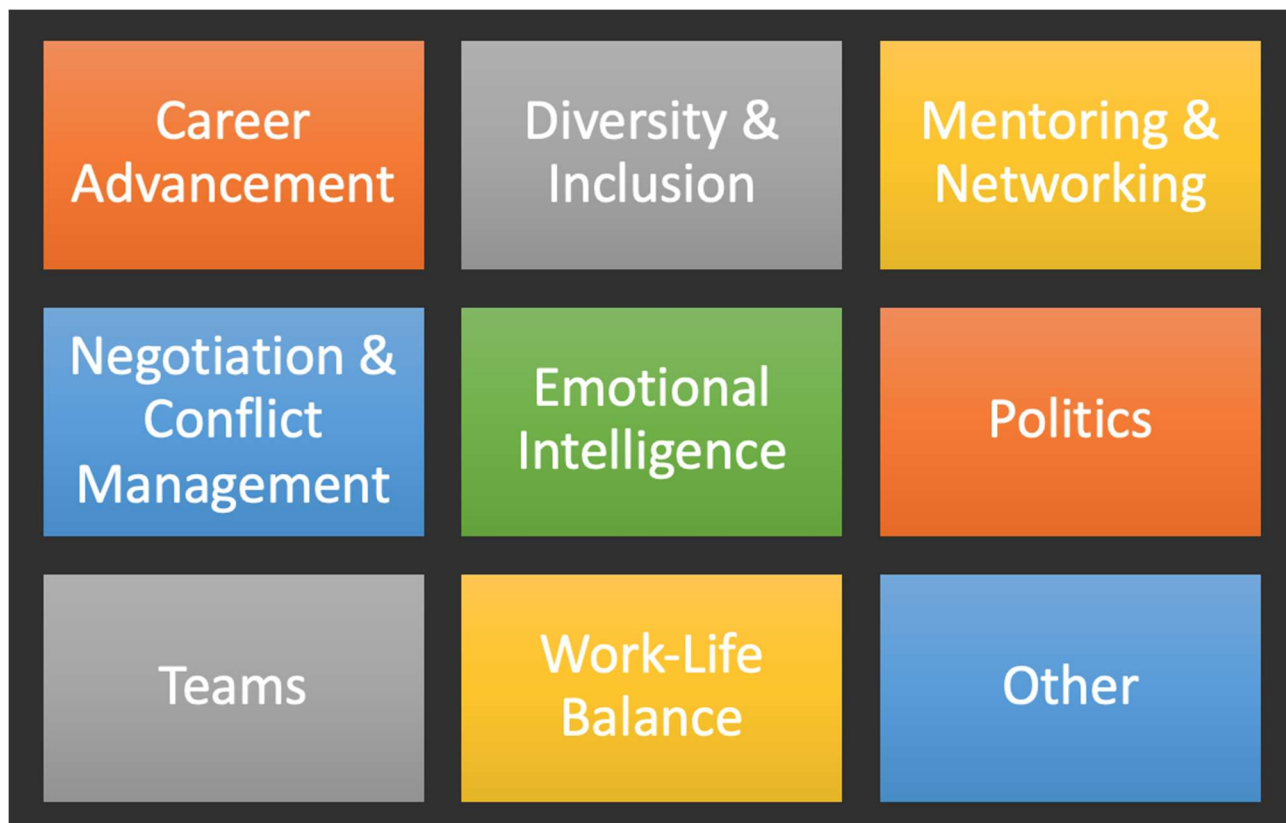
- I appreciated the opportunities to reflect on what it means to build trust, who do I trust, and the importance of developing and maintaining trust. I appreciate hearing other's perspectives, especially as leaders when we have to operate quickly and need to be intentional in explaining the why at the beginning and as time goes on
- Today's presentation was timely for me since I'm dealing with this "work-at-home" situation and worried that I'm "out-of-site-out-of-mind" to my colleagues and managers. I worry they don't trust me because they can't "see" all that I continue to do. Confidence is being tried during this pandemic, so this presentation was reassuring and reminded me to continue what I do. I also picked up some great tips and reminders when leading others and building trust! Thank you!
- Trust is the most critical leadership competency. Declare intent. Important to differentiate between fact and feelings
- To declare intent. I realized that since I am a "yes person" when tasks are handed down to me (i.e., I don't need to know intention to execute), that is not true of my team members. They need that, even if I do not

- Trust is the most critical leadership competency. Declare intent. Important to differentiate between fact and feelings
- I learned that I have to use my skills in my trust account to build trust and be aware that it may not always be successful. Trust starts with me
- Basic leadership concepts that I have not reflected on for a long time - building trust, leading with intention and process
- The importance of building and maintaining trust in all aspects of life

As a follow up to this session, Franklin Covey generously agreed to provide an additional learning opportunity, complimentary, to those who attended the Leading at the Speed of Trust session offered through EODA, with Michelle Elrod facilitating the session. The purpose of this follow-up learning opportunity was for participants to gain insight on their trust quotients by getting feedback from their leader, direct reports (if applicable), and colleagues through the completion of a 360 questionnaire in advance of the session.

Your Feedback Matters

A big thank you to those of you who took the time to fill out our survey after each of our events. Your voice matters and helps to inform the Network's programming for the future. Additionally, many of the takeaways that you have identified in the survey feedback are included in this newsletter. Your suggestions for future topics have been summarized in the image below.



There has been a consistent number of requests for workshops related to mentoring and career advancement. As we plan for the next academic year, we will be sure to incorporate your feedback and we hope our programming closely aligns with your needs.

Updates from Campuses in the Region

Several of our sister campuses in the region have been offering significant professional enhancement programming to women leaders on their campuses. Here are a couple of highlights:

California State University, Fullerton (CSUF)

Dr. Irene Matz, the Institutional Representative for CSUF, reports that a Zoom gathering occurred on March 5, 2021 from 12:00-1:15 p.m. After a brief introduction of attendees, the ACE campus history was shared with the membership. The topic for the meeting was "What keeps you awake at night"; breakout rooms were formed with groups so that members could share their thoughts in a smaller setting. After a hearty discussion, they returned to the larger group where the conversation continued focusing mainly on dealing with the pandemic and the challenges with working in the present environment. The gathering ended with a song by Helen Reddy, "I am Women." Future meetings are planned for the 2021 Fall Semester.

California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH)

Since 2019, CSUDH Women's Leadership Workshops organized by Dr. Laura Talamante, Chair, Academic Senate and Co-Chair, Gender Equity Task Force and her colleagues have created a space for all women and men on campus to learn from female leaders in a variety of roles. The belief is that women's leadership development is leadership development for all. Recently, the Women's Leadership Workshops have expanded to include the larger California State University community. The year-end workshop, *When Women Lead & the Transformation of the CSU Presidency* (<https://news.csudh.edu/when-women-lead/>), highlighted that in 2018, for the first time in the history of the CSU system, the majority of the presidents were women. Dr. Soraya Coley (Cal Poly Pomona), Dr. Ellen Junn (Stanislaus State), and Dr. Jane Close Conoley (Long Beach State) shared their personal journeys as female leaders and their experiences as university presidents in the CSU system.

In addition, workshops offered during the year included the following topics: *Negotiating Positions & Salary in the CSU, Leading from Where You Are & Living the Advice You Give, Female Leadership, Intersectionality, & White Privilege, Working at CSUDH & Pursuing Advanced Degrees and When Women Lead & Demystifying the Process for Running for Statewide Office.*

Engaging our Institutional Representatives

At our first meeting with our Institutional Representatives (IRs) back in October 2019, we had approximately 5 IRs in attendance. Fast forward to our most recent meeting in March 2021 and we had over thrice the number in attendance representing approximately 15 institutions. In case you are wondering, IRs are members of various educational institutions in the Southern California region whose role is to represent their institutions. The IR is a key person in the development and implementation of the strategic plans of the ACE Women's Network – Southern California. The IR works in close collaboration with the state chair and serves as a liaison between the women at her institution and the members of the state network governing body.

Our wonderful group of IRs have been an integral part of our planning process and their input is reflected in many of the changes that have been made to enhance our programming. If you are curious about who your institution's representative is, please visit the list at <https://www.cpp.edu/acesocal/representatives-list.shtml>. If you know the IR for your institution, but do not see it on the link, please contact us so we may include them in our mailing list and invite them to future meetings. Alternately, if you have an interest in serving as an IR, please let us know so we may contact your university to formalize the process. We look forward to strengthening our network of IRs to further our reach with the higher education institutions in the Southern California region.

ACE Women's Network Annual Meeting

In mid-March we enjoyed the ACE Annual Meeting, a virtual event which included the 2021 Women's Network Leadership Conference. This year's theme was "Becoming: Inspiring Gender Equity and Women's Advancement in Higher Education". An opening session included a candid "Conversation Among Women Leaders". Afternoon sessions focused on reinvigorating and refocusing regional networks, sustainability strategies, collaborating to lift women higher, strategic engagement and mentor programs. Following a federal relations update, attendees relaxed/practiced self-care during a short yoga activity. The conference ended with an inspiring closing by Johnnetta B. Cole (President Emerita, Spelman College and Bennett College) and a special toast to women in higher education leadership.

We continue to be inspired by the Network's IDEALS:

- IDENTIFIES emerging and successful women leaders
- DEVELOPS their leadership abilities through state and national programming
- ENCOURAGES the use of those abilities
- ADVANCES them through nomination to appropriate positions
- LINKS them to one another and to mentors
- SUPPORTS the tenure of mid- and senior-level women administrators and presidents throughout their career cycles

Message from the State Chair



It was approximately two years ago that the ACE Women's Network of Southern California was moved to Cal Poly Pomona with President Coley as our Presidential Sponsor. When I was asked to be the State Chair, I was excited about the prospect of playing a role in an organization where there were abundant examples of high functioning women professionals who were making a difference. Now looking back over the last two years, our Network has made significant progress in offering much needed programming as well as extending its reach to our surrounding academic institutions.

Much thanks are due to the strong support of President Coley, the dedication of our planning committee members, the engagement of our institutional representatives and our ever growing audience. Our events continue to be well attended and we receive requests from women professionals who want to play an active role in our Network. Our survey results indicate that there is a strong desire for continued programming and networking. The pandemic while dampening our ability to meet face-to-face has not affected our commitment to engage virtually. In many cases, virtual meetings have allowed us to have a farther reach as evidenced by the participation of our colleagues from Northern California in our Connect and Learn events.

As we put together this edition of the newsletter, we are proud of the work and progress we have collectively achieved. A special thanks to ODessa-Elise Downing for formatting the newsletter and making it an informative and engaging read.

On an important note, I am in the process of transitioning to a supportive role and I am so pleased that my colleague, Dr. Olukemi Sawyerr, Associate Vice President for Academic Innovation has stepped up to serve as the new State Chair, effective this summer. It has been an honor to serve as your state chair and I hope you will continue to support the Network and take advantage of the many opportunities that it offers to create a strong community of vibrant women professionals in higher education.

ACE Women's Network, Southern California*Cal Poly Pomona*

Dr. Soraya M. Coley
Presidential Sponsor

Planning Committee Members

Dr. Shanthi Srinivas
State Chair and Presidential Fellow for Leadership Development

Kimberly Allain
AVP, Employee & Organizational Development and Advancement

Alison Baski
Dean, College of Science
Interim Dean, College of Engineering

Sarah Calderon
Administrative Analyst, Registrar's Office

ODessa-Elise Downing
Interim Budget Analyst & Payroll Specialist, University Housing Services

Tari Hunter
Director, Office of Student Life & Cultural Centers

Shokoufeh Mirzaei
Professor, Industrial & Manufacturing Engineer Department

Theresa Navar-Rodriguez
Events Specialist & Commencement Coordinator

Teshia Roby
AVP, Learning & Research Technology

Olukemi Sawyerr
AVP, Academic Innovation

Lucinda Schell
Administrative Operations & Budget Analyst, Office of the President

Bharti Sharma
Associate Professor, Biological Sciences Department

Helen Yniguez
Director, Events & Special Projects

(909) 869-2716

Website: <https://www.cpp.edu/~acesocal/>

Email: acesocal@cpp.edu