



# **Fostering Community and a Culture of Belonging in the Workplace**

**K-State Supervisory Foundations  
Pillar 1: Establishing Your Supervisory Foundations**

**Corey Williamson**

**Assistant Vice President for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging**



Part 1

# COMMUNITY HEALING HUB



# Welcome



# Next-Gen: Land Acknowledgment

K-State is committed to leveraging our rich history as the nation's first operational land-grant university. We lean into our land-grant heritage and mission as we reimagine how K-State engages with the communities, state, and world around us.

As the first land-grant institution established under the 1862 Morrill Act, we acknowledge that the state of Kansas is historically home to many Native nations, including the [Kaw](#), [Osage](#), and [Pawnee](#), among others.

Furthermore, Kansas is the current home to four federally recognized Native nations: The [Prairie Band Potawatomie](#), the [Kickapoo Tribe of Kansas](#), the [Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska](#), and [Sac and Fox Nation of Missouri in Kansas and Nebraska](#).

The land that serves as the foundation for this institution was, and still is, stolen land. The recognition that K-State's history begins and continues through Indigenous contexts is essential.

# Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging



**Rana Johnson, PhD**  
Vice President for Diversity,  
Equity, Inclusion and  
Belonging

**Inclusive Excellence** Focuses on institutional accountability to enhance diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging.

**Institutional Equity** Training, outreach, affirmative action planning, equal employment opportunity compliance and conducting investigations.



**Corey Williamson**  
Associate Vice President for  
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and  
Belonging



# DEIB Office

- Foster excellence in teaching, research and service
- Cultivate a campus culture in which all feel a sense of belonging
- Support the university's core values
- Encourages dialogue to identify common ground and navigate differences

# Office of Institutional Equity (OIE)

The Office of Institutional Equity is engaged in training, outreach, affirmative action planning, equal employment opportunity compliance and conducting investigations in accordance with [PPM 3010](#), laws, regulations, executive orders and other applicable policies that uphold equal opportunity and civil rights laws.



**Justin Frederick**  
Director and Title IX  
Coordinator



**Eric Bicaba**  
Investigator

**Derron Borders**  
Investigator



**Amber Shumway**  
Investigator



**Amanda Ruthstrom**  
Office Manager

# Student Ombudsperson Office

Student ombudsperson will listen to student concerns and help them navigate their situation through confidential guidance, resource referrals and more. The student ombudsperson assist with:

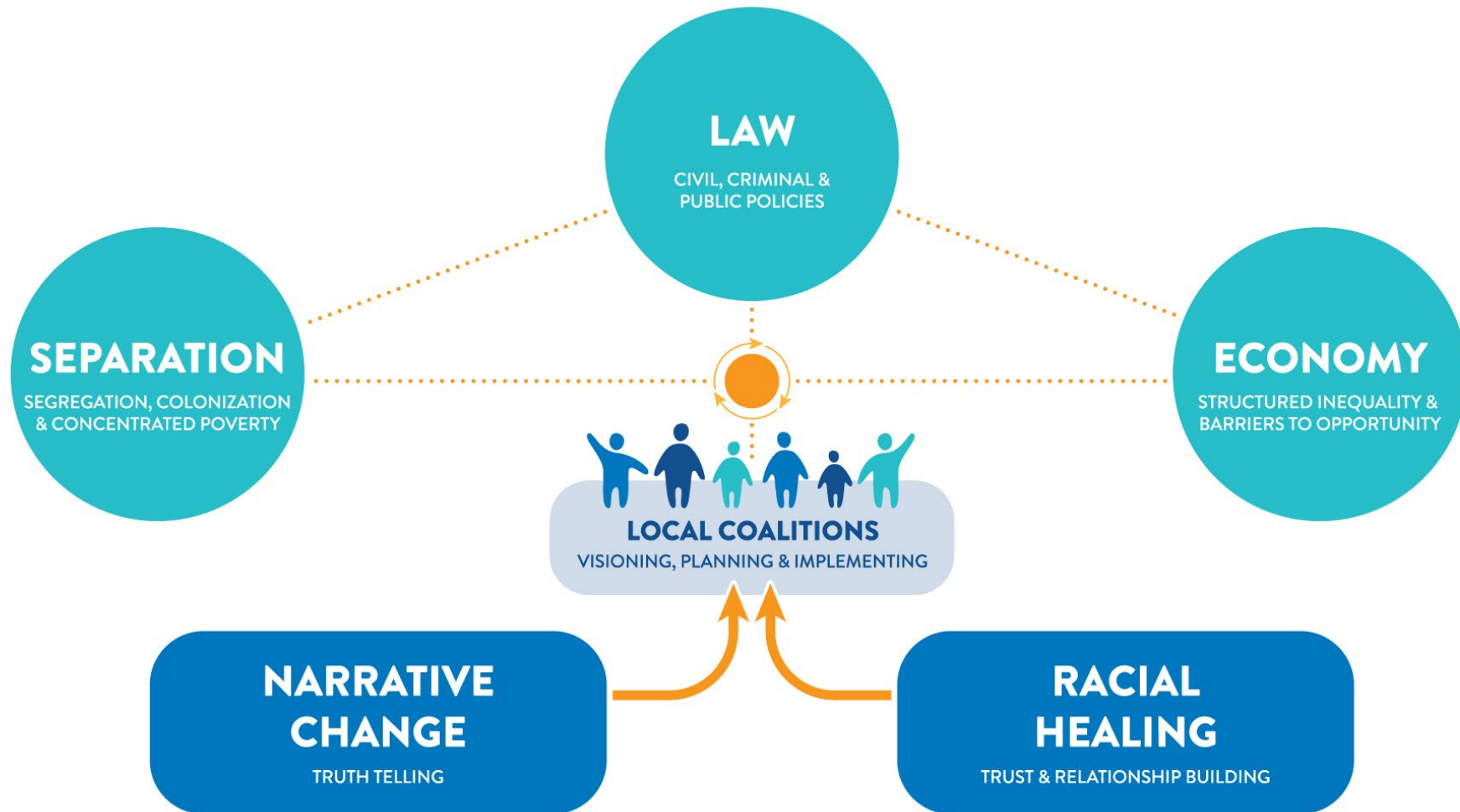
- Developing conflict resolution techniques.
- Navigating tough conversations and situations.
- Understanding university policies, procedures and resources.



**Dr. Kimathi Choma**  
Student Ombudsperson



# K-State TRHT Campus Center





# Community Healing Hub

The primary mission of the TRHT Campus Center Community Healing Hub (CHH) is to invite the Kansas State University community to engage in a transformative process intended to deepen human connections, encourage self-reflection, and challenge preconceived assumptions about those with different identities than our own.

Zanete Malan

Del'Sha Roberts

Tyrone Carter

Maggie Billman



# Opening The Circle

# Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Campus Center



Community Healing Hub

# What is a community healing hub?


- *Invitation to share lived experiences and heart stories*
- *An invitation to risk truth-telling and deep listening in a disarming and compassionate space*
- *An invitation to experience individual and interpersonal transformation through individuation and perspective taking.*
- *An opportunity to dip into our empathy well and to expand our capacity for compassion*

# Introductions

What is your name, birth order,  
and as a child,  
“What did you want to be when you  
grew up?”



# Touchstones


The seal of Kansas State University is visible in the top left corner, featuring a circular design with the text "KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY" and "FEBRUARY 1863" around the perimeter, and a central figure holding a sheaf of wheat and a plow.

**1.Be 100% present, extending and presuming welcome.** Set aside the usual distractions of things undone from yesterday, things to do tomorrow. Bring all of yourself to the work. We all learn most effectively in spaces that welcome us. Welcome others to this place and this work, and presume that you are welcomed.

**2.Listen deeply.** Listen intently to what is said; listen to the feelings beneath the words. “To ‘listen’ another’s soul into life, into a condition of disclosure and discovery<sup>3/4</sup> may be almost the greatest service that any human being ever performs for another.” -[Writer Douglas Steere] Listen to yourself also. Strive to achieve a balance between listening and reflecting, speaking and acting.

**3.Always by invitation.** It is never “share or die.” You will be invited to share in pairs, small groups, and in the large group. The invitation is exactly that. *You* will determine the extent to which you want to participate in our discussions & activities.






**4.No fixing.** Each of us is here to discover our own truths, to listen to our own inner teacher, to take our own inner journey. We are *not* here to set someone else straight, or to help right another’s wrong, to “fix” or “correct” what we perceive as broken or incorrect in another member of the group.

**5.Suspend judgment.** Set aside your judgments. By creating a space between judgments and reactions, we can listen to the other, and to ourselves, more fully, & thus our perspectives, decisions and actions are more informed.

**6.Identify assumptions.** Our assumptions are usually invisible to us, yet they under-gird our Worldview & thus our decisions & our actions. By identifying our assumptions, we can then set them aside and open our viewpoints to greater possibilities.

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**7. Speak your truth.** Say what is in your heart, trusting that your voice will be heard and your contribution respected. Your truth may be different from, even the opposite of, what another in the circle has said. Speaking your truth is not debating with, or correcting, or interpreting what another has said. *Own* your truth by speaking only for yourself, using “I” statements.

**8. Respect silence.** Silence is a rare gift in our busy world. After you or another has spoken, take time to reflect & fully listen, without immediately filling the space with words.

**9. Maintain confidentiality.** Create a safe space by respecting the confidential nature & content of discussions held in the circle. What is said in the circle, remains there.

**10. When things get difficult, turn to wonder.** If you find yourself disagreeing with another, becoming judgmental, shutting down in defense, try turning to wonder: “I wonder what brought her to this place?” “I wonder what my reaction teaches me?” “I wonder what he’s feeling right now?”



# Reflection Question # 1

*Share a story about one of the most impactful and positive experiences you had at your place of employment and how it made you feel in the moment. How is that experience reflected in your unit's overall culture?*

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# Reflection Question # 2

*Share a story about a time in your life when you wanted/needed to feel seen, heard, or understood – and you were. What did this allow you to do and/or be?*



# Reflection Question # 3

*Share a story about a time or an experience that deepened your understanding and sense of connection to people outside of your own racial, ethnic, or identity group. How did this shift your perception affect you and your attitudes or behaviors moving forward?*

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More than any other experience, this revealed the understanding that we all share universal humanity. I am in awe of the truth that we are one human race for the first time!  
—Healing Circle Participant

What are you  
taking with you  
from our  
experience today?



# *Closing the Circle*



# Next Steps







Part 2

# CULTURE OF BELONGING

# Outcomes

- Examine the opportunities to demonstrate critical hope
- Reflect upon the intersection of leadership and identity;
- Explore team members' roles and responsibilities to create a culture of belonging and community.



# Shared Agreement

- STAY ENGAGED
- GIVE GRACE TO OURSELVES AND OTHERS
- SPEAK YOUR TRUTH
- WELCOME DISCOMFORT
- EXPECT & ACCEPT NONCLOSURE

- CENTER JOY
- NOTICE PATTERNS OF PARTICIPATION
- RESPECT  
CONFIDENTIALITY
- RECOGNIZE THE DANGER OF A SINGLE STORY

# Kansas State University Next-Gen Values



## Connection

We are stronger together — **cultivating trust and building relationships** to connect our K-State community with our state, nation, and world.



## Courage

We lead with **bold conviction** — **rising to the moment**, even when the course is uncharted, to deliver the greatest good for areas of greatest need.



## Impact

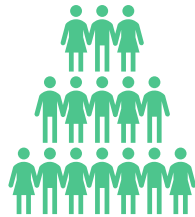
We listen, adapt, and challenge the status quo — **leading change through learning and discovery** that **transforms lives** and creates **shared prosperity for all**.

# Kansas State University Next-Gen Values



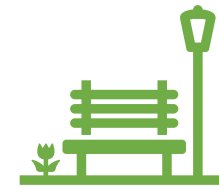
## Learner-Focused

We **welcome all** who seek to learn and grow — **providing an accessible, inclusive, and exceptional experience** that helps them achieve their potential.



## People-Centered

We are everything because of our people — supporting, valuing, and inspiring our entire K-State community and **championing a culture of belonging for all.**



## Stewardship

We are committed to our future - **using our resources responsibly to leave a positive, lasting legacy.**

# Because I Said I Would



# Culture of the Future

- An organizational environment in which people from culturally diverse backgrounds are heard, seen, uplifted, and supported at work.
- An organizational culture in which leaders consistently and authentically disrupt systems of unfair practices.

# DEIB Defined

**Diversity-** the state of having multiple races, generations, social and economic statuses, ethnicities, nationalities, sexual orientations, gender identities, religions, and cultural perspectives within your organization.

**Equity-** The process of reallocating resources, and implementing policies that eliminate structural barriers and historical disadvantages.

**Inclusion-** An environment where people feel valued and respected for their uniqueness and feel a sense of belonging.

**Belonging-** is a feeling that you matter to the group and that you are valued for your unique qualities and who you are. Belonging is a gift that is offered by a community to individual members.





# Critical Hope

Defined as an **optimistic** way of viewing and acting on the world from a critically historically conscious, socially and culturally situated perspective with a personal belief that inevitable **change will inspire a sense of community, advocacy, liberation, and justice** (Strikwerda, 2019)



# Critical Hope

- Critical hope is **not a naive hope** that things will get better; it is an abiding wisdom that **change cannot be created without a foundational starting point of hope.**
- To engage with critical hope is to **uphold multiple conflicting truths simultaneously**
- We try to understand the world based on **dichotomies**, but this habit **does not capture the complexity of human experience and existence**

# Elements of Critical Hope

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- **Material Hope** represents the material resources that we can generate to confront the issues that face our world.
- **Socratic Hope** involves critically examining our social location within an unjust world and confronting our complicity in inequity. It invites us to accept responsibility to address social issues and to build our agency to do so.
- **Audacious Hope** stares down the painful path; and despite the overwhelming odds against us making it down that path to change, we make the journey again and again.

(Duncan-Andrade, 2009)





# Enemies of Critical Hope

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- **Hokey Hope** emerges when one is aware of inequities but ignores them in an effort to stay optimistic. When we highlight the progress we make without continuously recognizing the work yet to be done, we are engaging in hokey hope.
- **Mythical Hope** arises out of the belief that one momentous event could resolve centuries of injustice. This magic bullet lens ignores the complexity of systems of oppression and the equally complex solutions required to address these.
- **Hope Deferred** exists when one places blame on systems of power and oppression for creating inequities but ignores one's role in reinforcing these systems or failing to create a solution.

# Critical Hope Leaders



Leaders and change makers  
are in a position to be  
arbiters of critical hope

You have spheres in your life  
in which you are a leader and  
change maker

You have spheres in your life  
in which people listen to you  
and you carry influence

The practice of moral  
imagination that encourages  
leaders to envision a society  
with greater dignity, freedom  
and justice

# Leadership vs Leader

Leadership- is the process of solving our toughest challenges

Leader- is anyone who contributes to leadership

# Let's Talk about Leaders & Identity

- Identity plays a crucial role in shaping who we are as a leader. **A person's identity, including their cultural background, gender, race, ethnicity, beliefs, values, and experiences, can significantly impact their decision making, and effectiveness.**
- **Effective team members often draw on their personal values, experiences, and cultural backgrounds to inform their approach to being a leader.**

# Authentic Values Exercise

- Take a moment to identify 8 values within the list you received.
- How have your values influenced life decisions? Think about your friends and family, career, education, intimate relationships and any other important decisions you may have made.
- How have your values changed over time, and why did they change? How easy or hard was it to notice when your values had changed.



As authentic leaders, how do we build a collective culture that fosters community and belonging in the workplace?

# Offer Grace and Forgiveness



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- Grace is unearned consideration.
  - Forgiveness is possible only when the offender takes responsibility for their wrongdoing.
  - Unless we are willing to forgive at the individual, interpersonal and systems levels for wrongs that we have endured, equity and justice in the workplace will get little traction.
  - Grace and forgiveness recognize that none of us is perfect and that we are all learning

# Identify Intentional Space

- Brave Space- space where it is expected to feel discomfort, anxiety, ambiguity, and discord as opposing perspectives are shared. It is also a space where you can share your authentic perspective without fear of retribution (i.e. Antibias training).
- Psychological Safety/ Affirming Space- the belief that you will not be punished if you make a mistake. If the norm of the group is that we can talk about uncomfortable topics, that we are open to hearing opposing views (i.e. Community Healing Hub).

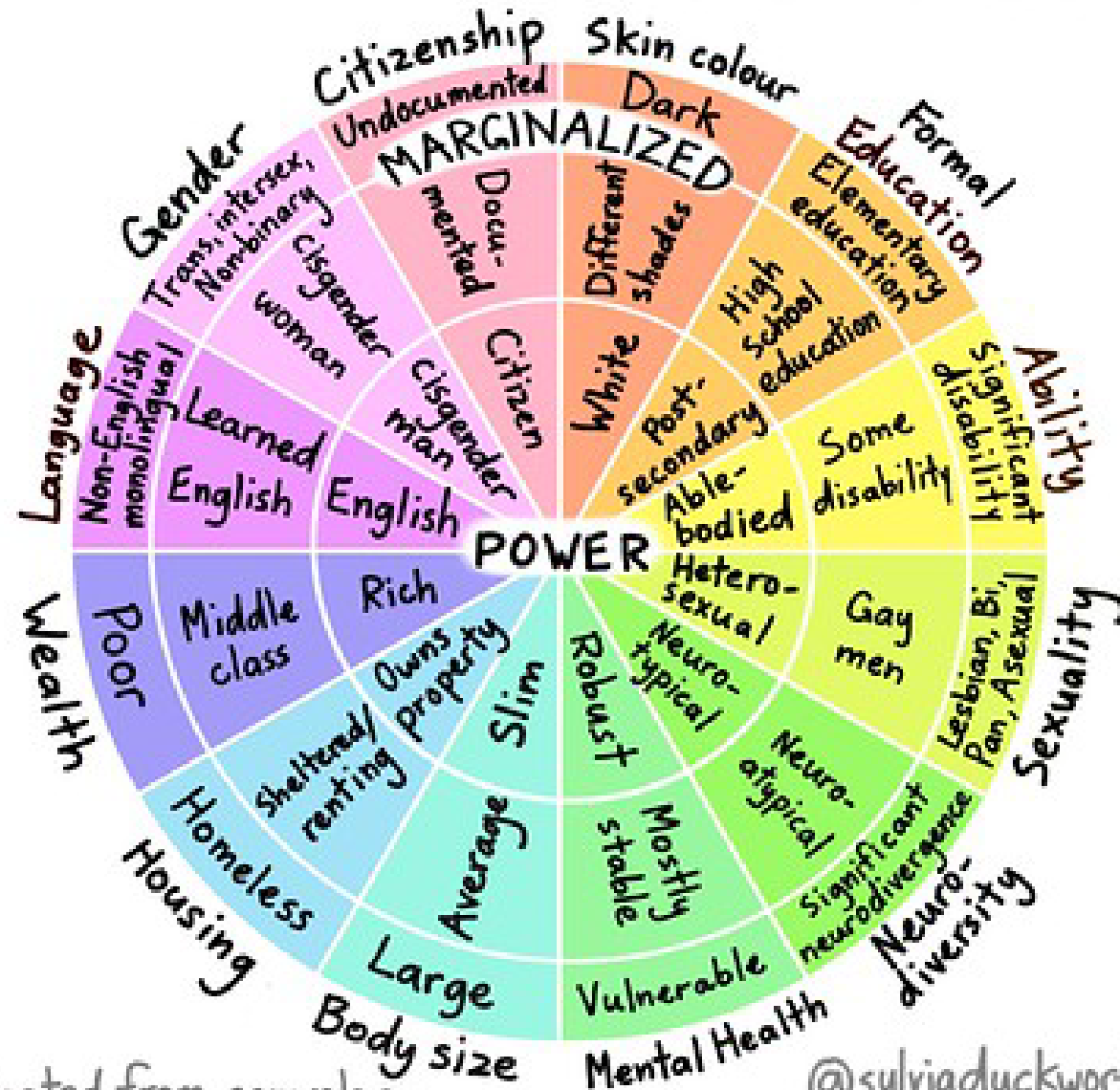
# Create Brave and Safe Spaces

- Acknowledge that the extent to which safety and bravery are experienced varies by identity group.
- Learn about and discuss the historical, systemic inequities that continue to create unsafe environments for some groups.
- Listen to and value the experiences of different identity groups.
- Become an ally for underserved and underrepresented groups.
- Apply your influence and power to help create a more even playing field for others.

# Acknowledge Equity and Power

- Equity, power and privilege are inextricably entwined.
- Equitable work environments must consider the impact of power and privilege on underserved identities within the workplace.
  - Power- the ability to decide who has access to resources and the capacity to direct or influence the behaviors of others, oneself, and/ or the course of events. Operates intentionally and unintentionally on individual, institutional, and cultural levels.
  - Privilege- a system that maintains advantages and disadvantages based on social group memberships.

# WHEEL OF POWER/PRIVILEGE



Adapted from ccrweb.ca

@sylvriaduckworth

# Embrace Cultural Humility

- Continuous learning process, an intentional investment in mutually beneficial relationships, and facilitation of healing centered engagement.
- State of always learning and never knowing.
- Critical feeling alongside critical thinking.
- Solidarity instead of charity.

# Commitment

- What commitment are you willing to make today?
- Create a Because I Said I would Card
- Identify someone you met during the Community Healing Hub to exchange cards.



# The Journey Continues...

- Truth Racial Healing and Transformation
- Wildcat Dialogues
- 'Cats Connect
- KSUnite



# Resources

Wilkinson, B. B. (2021). *The diversity gap: Where good intentions meet true cultural change*. HarperCollins Leadership.

Winters, M.F. (2020). *Inclusion conversations: Fostering equity, empathy, and belonging across differences*. Berrett Koehler.

Winters, M.F. (2017). *We can't talk about that at work: How to talk about RACE, RELIGION, POLITICS, and other polarizing topics*. Berrett Koehler.

O'Malley, E. and McBride, J.F. (2022). *When everyone leads the toughest challenges get seen and solved*. Bard Press.

Seemiller, C. and Crosby, B. C. (2019). Exploring and enhancing leader, educator, and leadership educator professional identities. *New Directions for Student Leaders* (pp. 71-86). Wiley Periodicals.