

EMERSON LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

2025 MID-YEAR REVIEW



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INSTITUTE

SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



The Inspirational Paradigm for Jesuit Business Education offers a powerful framework to reimagine education as a profoundly ethical formation rooted in human dignity, moral clarity and human-centered vision. Deeply rooted in the Jesuit values of *cura personalis* (care for the whole person), ethical leadership, and service to others, the Emerson Leadership Institute (ELI) serves as a living laboratory for implementing the Inspirational Paradigm through leadership programs that center around fostering dignity and belonging.

Launched in Fall 2024 under the leadership of Edward Jones Dean Jackson Nickerson, the ELI's Dignity-Based Leadership Development Program offers a clear path for putting this vision into action, and redefines how leadership is understood and practiced at Saint Louis University and beyond. Since its inception, the ELI has offered a variety of professional development workshops, including Fostering Dignity and Belong (three iterations), Formulating the Right Problem, Leading Change from the Middle, and Negotiating through Dignity and Belonging, all taught by Dean Nickerson.

The series also featured a signature Fireside Chat on Dimensions of Dignity on January 24, with esteemed panelists: Harvard Professor Donna Hicks, Dean Jackson Nickerson, VP Fr. David Suwalsky, and VP Rochelle Smith. A cornerstone event of this year's program, the 4th Be Heard – Women in Leadership Conference, was held on March 28. The conference welcomed over 210 registered participants—more than half of whom were SLU faculty and staff—further highlighting ELI's growing visibility, impact, and commitment to serving the SLU and St. Louis communities.

Looking ahead, the Dignity-Based Leadership Development Program will continue into the 2025–2026 academic year. The ELI remains committed to integrating Jesuit values and the principles of Inspirational Paradigm to promote dignity and belonging throughout the university and the greater St. Louis community.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jintong Tang'.

Jintong Tang, Ph.D.
Mary Louise Murray
Professor of Management



A DIALOGUE ON DIMENSIONS OF DIGNITY

JANUARY 24, 2025

The Dignity-Based Leadership Development Program kicked off the new year on January 24 with a fireside chat on Dimensions of Dignity. Dignity violations are common in modern workplaces and can impair the relationships between leaders and employees. Treating others with dignity can have a significant impact on employee job satisfaction, vitality, sense of belonging and organizational flourishing. Although most leaders express a commitment to fostering dignity, many are not fully equipped to meet this challenge. This fireside chat featured prominent scholars and leaders to offer insightful perspectives on how dignity impacts organizational culture and individual well-being, as well as how leaders can cultivate a work environment where dignity is fostered

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LEADING CHANGE FROM THE MIDDLE

A DIGNITY-BASED APPROACH

FEBRUARY 14, 2025



Fear. Frustration. Anger. These and other emotions often are engendered whenever organizational leaders announce the newest change initiative and ask for buy-in. The emotions flow from being excluded from the discussion and decision. Leading Change from the Middle offered a dignity-based methodology that delivers results and builds a positive and collaborative organizational culture. In this session participants learned about three elements that comprise this methodology: (1) focusing on discovering all relevant stakeholders; (2) Communications, Strategies, Tactics, and the Sequencing (CoSTS) designed to gain agreement and commitment of those directly involved in the change initiative; and (3) specific ways to build and maintain relationships and avoid triggering negative emotions.

4TH ANNUAL BE HEARD WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

MARCH 28, 2025

The theme for the 2025 conference, Fostering Dignity and Belonging, aligns with the Dignity-Based Leadership Development Program launched at the start of the 2024-2025 academic year. At the 4th Annual Be Heard Conference, we explored the profound role dignity plays in organizational culture and individual well-being, behaviors that lead to dignity violations, practical strategies for leaders to cultivate workplace environments where dignity is prioritized and belonging is fostered.



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Marilyn Bush is President of Bank of America St. Louis and Business Banking Market Executive for Eastern Missouri and Southern Illinois. She also serves on the boards of Saint Louis University, the Donald Danforth Plant Science Foundation, and the Missouri Bankers Association.



EVENT EMCEE

The 2025 Be Heard conference was emceed by Michelle Li, NBC St. Louis Morning Anchor and Co-Founder of The Very Asian Foundation.

4TH ANNUAL BE HEARD WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

2025 BAG DESIGN



EMERSON LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

PRESENTS



The 2025 Be Heard bag design reflects the theme of fostering dignity and belonging. Featuring a magnolia—symbolizing resilience, dignity, and strength—along with warm floral elements, the design evokes community, growth, and inclusivity. Incorporating Saint Louis University’s brand colors, it ties the conference’s mission to SLU’s tradition of leadership, service, and excellence. Designed by Tyler Merkle.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP: TRANSFORMING CULTURE THROUGH RECOGNITION

At the 4th Annual Be Heard: Women in Leadership Conference, participants engaged in an interactive Leadership Development Workshop focused on the power of recognition in shaping workplace culture. The workshop, presented by David Pickersgill and Rhonda Spencer of Barry-Wehmiller and Connie Deulley of The Gund Company, offered valuable strategies for fostering dignity, belonging, and a culture of appreciation. A dynamic panel featuring Esmeralda Aharon, Sheila Burkett, Connie Deulley, and Rhonda Spencer shared personal insights and actionable advice, helping attendees walk away with new tools to create more inclusive and empowering environments.



4TH ANNUAL BE HEARD WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE



WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PANEL

The Be Heard: Women in Leadership Conference featured an inspiring panel of industry leaders who shared powerful insights on fostering dignity, belonging, and authentic leadership in the workplace. Panelists included Delaney Clement (Archdiocese of St. Louis), Kristin Johnson (Edward Jones), Juanita Logan (World Wide Technology), and Tina Rene' Sappington, MBA (Integrated Solutions Worldwide, QNDX), with moderation by Paige Hulsey of KMOV News 4.

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NEGOTIATING THROUGH DIGNITY AND BELONGING

APRIL 22, 2025

The Dignity-Based Leadership Development Series for 2024-2025 concluded with Negotiating through Dignity and Belong. Beginning with an introduction to the classic model of negotiations, the program quickly moved beyond this model to explore critical factors to make negotiations within and among organizations more valuable, productive, and likely to generate dignity and belonging. Topics included how to make sure you are negotiating over the “right” issues, you have the “right” people at the table, and negotiating agreements will stand the test of time.



PROVOST-FACULTY SENATE GENDER EQUITY COMMITTEE (GEC) MEETING

APRIL 23, 2025

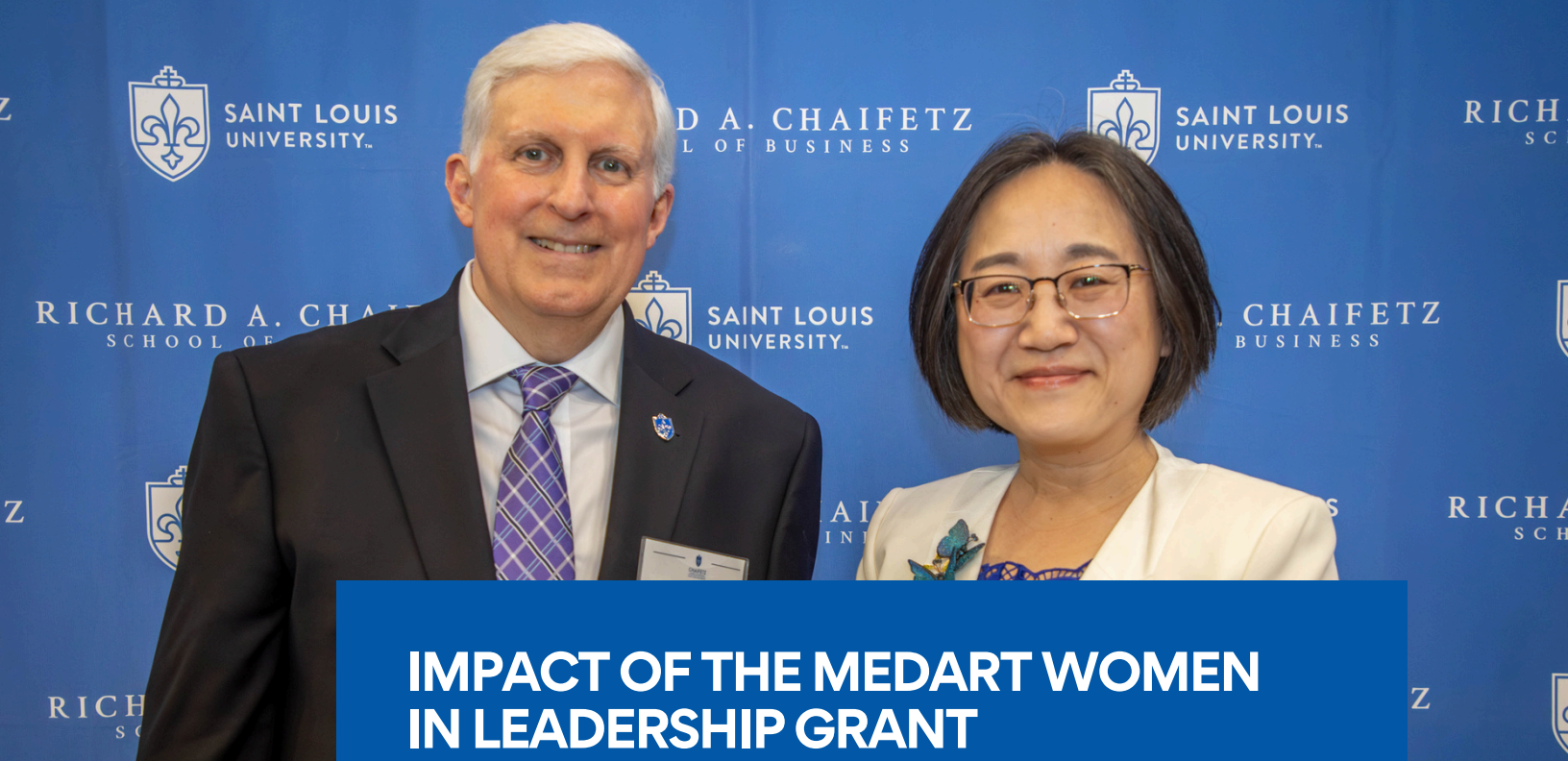
On April 23, the Emerson Leadership Institute once again hosted the end-of-year meeting for the Provost-Faculty Senate Gender Equity Committee (GEC). Provost Lewis and Faculty Senate President Chris Rollins attended the event, commending the committee for its impactful work over the years. Dean Nickerson also participated, sharing his reflections on the importance of fostering dignity and belonging through GEC initiatives across campus. The committee expressed heartfelt gratitude to Co-Chair Jintong Tang for her dedicated leadership and celebrated her retirement from the committee.

A CASE FOR CAMPUS COLLABORATIONS AND CORPORATE PARTNERSHIP



In implementing this Dignity-Based Leadership Development Program, ELI has nurtured collaborations with academic units across the campus including the Provost Office, Division of Diversity, VP for Mission and Identity, and all colleges and schools. The ELI's work provides a compelling case for how fostering dignity and belonging can move Jesuit mission from principle to practice.

Through the Dignity-Based Leadership Development Program, ELI has also established close partnerships with corporate leaders such as Barry Wehmiller and The Gund Company, both representing industry champions of Jesuit values and humanistic leadership. By collaborating with both internal and external partners, the Dignity-Based Leadership Program has contributed to a broader movement for human-centered leadership and sustainable growth.



IMPACT OF THE MEDART WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP GRANT

Throughout the year, the Emerson Leadership Institute (ELI) has received generous support and contributions from both internal and external stakeholders. Among these, the Medart Women in Leadership Grant—established in 2023—has had a particularly meaningful impact. Dr. Jintong Tang shares the following outcomes made possible by this transformative support:

RESEARCH IMPACT

- The grant reignited Jintong’s commitment to a research project initially launched during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Producing bold, rigorous work for premier academic outlets is a multi-year journey—often marked by setbacks, self-doubt, and emotional toll. The Medart Women in Leadership Grant provided crucial encouragement and support, helping Jintong persevere through the most challenging moments. The resulting research on [women’s entrepreneurship](#), funded by this grant, was published in July 2024 in the Journal of Business Venturing—the top-ranked journal in the field of entrepreneurship (CiteScore 16.7, Impact Factor 7.7, ABS 4*, ABDC A*, Financial Times 50 Journal).
- This research was featured in SLU Research Institute’s Impact Report published in April 2024, titled “[Breaking Barriers in Female Entrepreneurship](#).”

- This research received the [2025 Scholarly Works Honorable Mention](#) from the Office of the Vice President for Research at SLU.
- It also earned three prestigious awards in 2025 from the Chaifetz School of Business: the Diamond Publication Award, the Faculty Research Best Paper Annual Award, and Faculty Three Year Research Award.

CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

- As a seed grant, the Medart Grant played a pivotal role in securing additional funding from the Office of the Vice President for Research, the Chaifetz Center for Entrepreneurship, the Division of Diversity, the School of Medicine, and the UMSL DBA program.
- The 2024 and 2025 Be Heard – Women in Leadership Conferences were made possible through this grant, each attracting over 200 registered participants. The events garnered extensive media coverage and generated significant engagement on social media.

LOOKING AHEAD TO THE 2025-2026 ACADEMIC YEAR

Building on the impact and success of the Dignity-Based Leadership Development Program in the AY 2024–2025, the ELI will expand the program on a broader scale for the AY 2025-2026. Stay tuned!

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ELI'S 2024 IN REVIEW

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@emerson
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eli@slu.edu
jintong.tang@slu.edu