

Destined to Lead: NAMEPA Celebrates Women of Color History Makers in Diversity

In a national climate that struggles to resolve racial and gender tension, NAMEPA pauses as history raises the profile of a few out of many women who have answered the call to leadership and have committed their life's work to diversity, equity and inclusion.

The National Association of Multicultural Engineering Program Advocates, (NAMEPA) Inc. salutes the historical work of Women of Color in Diversity that rung the bell of history during the 2017-18 academic year. For the first time in the history of the United States, four major diversity organizations are led by African American women who hold engineering degrees. The American Society of Engineering Education (ASEE), The National Action Committee for Minorities in Engineering (NACME), the National Association of Multicultural Engineering Program Advocates (NAMEPA), and the Women in Engineering Pro-Active Network (WEPAN) are led by four African American female engineers, each of which is a product of diversity programs.

Other prodigies of diversity programs that have risen to historically impact their universities are women who hold inaugural positions within their institutions, including endowed directorship positions and inaugural diversity engineering programs. Each of these leaders are women and also are engineers and scientists.

There are so many others who, throughout history have blazed the trail that we now walk on. This is the first year of celebration and recognition of history makers that matriculated through diversity, equity and inclusion programs. There are current students that represent future leadership because of mentorship of program directors that labor in the trenches of student access and success. We are also celebrating engineering and STEM students who have demonstrated academic excellence above a 3.0 in undergraduate and graduate studies.

The 2017-18 Women of Color History Makers in Diversity are:

Bev Watford, first African American female President of the American Society of Engineering Education

Michele Lezama, first African American and female President and CEO of the National Action Committee for Minorities in Engineering (NACME)

Virginia Booth Womack, President of the National Association of Multicultural Engineering Program Advocates, (NAMEPA)

Amy Freeman, President of the Women in Engineering Pro-Active Network (WEPAN)

Stephanie Adams, first African American and first female Dean of Engineering at Old Dominion University

Elizabeth Holloway, Inaugural Leah Jamieson Endowed Chair of the Women in Engineering Program, and Inaugural Assistant Dean of Diversity and Engagement, Purdue University

Laverne Bitsie-Baldwin, Inaugural Dow Endowed Director of the Multicultural Engineering Program at Kansas State University

Audrey Poole O'Neal, Inaugural Director of the Women in Engineering Program at the University of California, Los Angeles

Tojan Rahhal, Inaugural Director of Diversity and Outreach Initiatives, University of Missouri, Columbia