



ATHENA
NextGen

Thought
Leadership
Series

ATHENA Orlando Women's Leadership, Inc. Expands Board of Directors

ORLANDO – ATHENA Orlando Women's Leadership, Inc. is pleased to announce the addition of three new members to its Board of Directors, including an incoming member. Traci Smith, a founder of ATHENA in Orlando has joined as Founder and Strategic Advisor, Oriel McKinney has joined as Secretary, and Patti Brownsord has filled the newly created role of Director of Data Management. Additionally, Kelly Ferris will take over the role of Vice President of Communications Strategy & Social Media in January 2024.

As is true with the current Board, McKinney, Brownsord and Ferris, are alumnae of ATHENA's NextGen program and will serve three-year terms.

"We're looking forward to the future with an expanded leadership team on our Board. ATHENA Orlando Women's Leadership is approaching its ten-year milestone in 2024, and we're dedicated to strategic expansion and the development of innovative programs that cater to the diverse needs of women leaders across various sectors and industries," said Jennifer Johnson, ATHENA Founder and Strategic Advisor.

Traci Smith is the Director of Treasury Sales and Strategic Partnerships at Cogent Bank. She has over 20 years of Commercial Banking experience with a specialty in Treasury Management. She started her banking career at First Union/Wachovia in 1997 and spent most of her banking career at CNLBank leading the Treasury Sales Team. Smith joined Cogent Bank in 2018 as a Commercial Relationship Manager and now oversees the state of Florida supporting Cogent Bank's large commercial clients and partner/vendor integrations.

Oriel McKinney is a finance professional, business strategist, author, and speaker. She serves as the Principal Consultant of The Small Biz Engine®, a business development firm. The moniker "The Small Biz Engine®", suits her leadership and collaborative work to a tee as her experience includes a successful tenure in business strategy and development, finance, nonprofit management, and entrepreneurship. As the mastermind behind several success stories, brands, and businesses, she methodically assesses her projects and delivers profit-driven strategies again and again.

Patti Brownsord co-owns Grounded With Data, a market research and data analysis coaching and consulting firm. With a practical and analytical approach, she has a knack for simplifying complex processes into visually appealing models that clients can easily convey to their stakeholders. She brings a

wealth of knowledge and experience in hospitality, tourism, wellbeing/health, restaurants, and talent acquisition. As the founding chair of the UCF Data Science Advisory Board, she is committed to data-driven decision-making.

Kelly Ferris, APR, is a seasoned communications professional who believes in the power of storytelling to build connections and bring people together. She is a proud alumna of UCF where she earned bachelor's and master's degrees in communications. Her more than 15 years of experience includes everything from corporate and executive communications, employee engagement, and digital and social media to strategic communications, brand management and driving change within an organization.

"As our organization and our incredible alumnae base have continued to grow, we've expanded our Board to provide opportunities for even more programming and offerings," said ATHENA Orlando President Melanie DiVirgilio. "We're thrilled to have the benefit of additional insights from one of our founders and to have fresh perspectives from these new board members. We're thrilled to welcome Traci, Oriel, Patti and Kelly!"

Founded in 2012, ATHENA Orlando Women's Leadership, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) that provides dynamic programming around the ATHENA Leadership Model® and ATHENA's Eight Leadership Principles: *Live Authentically, Learn Constantly, Advocate Fiercely, Act Courageously, Foster Collaboration, Build Relationships, Give Back, and Celebrate.*

One of its core programs is the ATHENA NextGen Thought Leadership Series, the only leadership program of its kind empowering women to level up. Nearly 400 women have graduated from the program and they're rising to the top of Orlando's business organizations. Through a masterclass series of eight monthly sessions, participants collaborate and connect with their peers in a variety of industries. It's changing the course for how women lead.

For questions about ATHENA Orlando Women's Leadership, Inc., please visit athenaleadershiporlando.org.

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ABOUT ATHENA INTERNATIONAL

ATHENA International is a catalyst for developing diverse, transformative leaders who create a balance in leadership voices worldwide. We ignite, amplify, and celebrate girls, women and allies through experiential programs that empower them to discover and activate the authentic leader within. The established ATHENA Leadership Model is at the heart of everything we do and is driven by the Eight Principles of Enlightened Leadership: Live Authentically, Learn Constantly, Build Relationships, Foster Collaboration, Act Courageously, Advocate Fiercely, Give Back and Celebrate. Our gold-standard ATHENA Leadership Programs give individuals and organizations the tools and knowledge needed to sustain and grow a global community of allied leaders. We support women entrepreneurs in reaching new levels of success through ATHENAPowerLink®, an innovative mentorship program that connects selected women entrepreneurs with an advisory board tailored to fit their needs and grow their businesses. For more than 40 years, we have recognized outstanding women and pioneering leaders with global, national and community ATHENA Leadership Awards. With nearly 8,000 recipients we

celebrate the changemakers and trailblazers who open doors of leadership and opportunity for women in communities across the globe.

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