

Breakout Room Leaders



Omari Pearson, Passion to Purpose

Life Beyond Sports: Omari Pearson has become a sought-after leader in education-driven life skills and mentoring. As an author, speaker, and consultant, he seeks to empower a generation with direction to attain their life goals through education and mentoring. He is the Founder and President to Purpose, an education-driven life-skills and mentoring company that equips middle school, high school, and college students with the necessary knowledge to empower themselves to be effective and productive members of society.

Omari serves as a consultant and trainer to the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), several state high school athletic and activity associations including: Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Connecticut, Hawaii, South Carolina, and North Carolina.

Being based in the Washington, DC area, Omari works with Montgomery County Public Schools, Baltimore City Public Schools, and Baltimore County Public Schools. Collegiately he works with Morgan State University and Howard University. Additionally, he works with several CUNY Colleges including: Medgar Evers College, Brooklyn College, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and New York City College of Technology.



Leslie Barnes, Duke Athletics | Associate Director of Athletics/Student-Athlete Development

Leslie is currently an Associate Athletic Director for Student-Athlete Development, at Duke University, Leslie has been working with student-athletes, coaches, and administrators for almost 25 years. In her current role, Barnes supervises programming and opportunities related to student-athlete personal and career development, as well as service and leadership. In addition, she has oversight of Duke Women's Tennis, and assists with staff leadership and development programs, as well as serves on Duke Athletics Sr Staff and DEIB advisory committee. Prior to Duke, she was the Life Skills Program Manager at The Ohio State University. She has also held positions in academic-athletic counseling and advising roles at Utah State University, Arizona State University, and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Originally from Nebraska, Barnes was a tennis student athlete in college. She obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology from Nebraska Wesleyan University and a Master of Education in Counseling/Psychological Services (emphasis in Athletic Counseling) from Springfield College.

Beyond the college campus, professionally, Barnes is currently serving as Vice Chair of the ACC Women's Tennis Committee, and part of the ONE LOVE Foundation advisory team. She has also served as a facilitator for various NCAA leadership workshops and ACC professional development conferences and student athlete programs. In addition, she has worked with the National Consortium for Academics and Sports facilitating "Mentors in Violence Prevention" and "Teamwork Leadership Institute" workshops.

Cricket Lane, UNC Chapel Hill Athletics | Senior Associate Athletic Director Student-Athlete Development

Cricket Lane is the Senior Associate Athletics Director for Student-Athlete Development at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She holds Ph.D. in counselor education from Wayne State University, and a M.A. in counseling from the University of Detroit. She has been working with student-athletes for over 25 years. In her current position, she is responsible for Life Skills programming for all student-athletes which includes personal development, career development, community outreach, and leadership development. She provides instruction for the first-year level of the Richard A. Baddour Carolina Leadership Academy and has sport supervision of rowing, track and field, cross country programs at UNC.

Her interest has been and continues to be in the well-being of student-athletes. This interest had led her involved at the national level. She has been consultant and lead facilitator for the NCAA National and Regional Leadership Conferences. She has chaired the NCAA Leadership Selection Committee, and the NCAA Postgraduate Scholarship Committee. She has presented and co-presented with other educators on various leadership and student well-being issues at national and regional conferences on the high school and college levels.

Shelley Johnson, UNC Chapel Hill Athletics | Assistant Athletic Director/Student-Athlete Development

Shelley Johnson earned a bachelor's degree in English and a master's in education from the University of Michigan, where she played field hockey, served as assistant captain, and earned All-Big Ten honors. Following her playing career, she served on the field hockey staffs at Michigan, Duke, and North Carolina. She earned a Master's in Sport Administration from UNC in 2006.

In 2004, Johnson began her work with the Richard A. Baddour Carolina Leadership Academy at the University of North Carolina and in 2010 became its first full-time director. She then served as its Executive Director from 2018-23. During this time, she coordinated and organized 3,000+ hours of leadership training for UNC's student-athletes and coaches annually. The Leadership Academy was not only the first of its kind but was widely considered the premier leadership development program in collegiate athletics.

In addition to directing the Leadership Academy, Johnson helped to launch leadership academies at three other colleges, as well as facilitated leadership workshops across the U.S. and abroad. She facilitated at the 2011 and 2012 NCAA Student-Athlete Leadership Forums in Chicago and then Dallas – in addition to the Leadership Institute in 2019. A native of Houston, Texas, she has also served an instructor in the UNC Department of Exercise and Sport Science – having taught undergraduate and graduate-level classes in Sport Administration.