

Empowered to Innovate: Women in STEM Entrepreneurship

December 12, 2024

Speaker Biographies

Shelli Brunswick is a distinguished leader in the global space ecosystem, is renowned for her advocacy for space technology, innovation, and strategic leadership. A former U.S. Air Force Officer and Chief Operating Officer of the Space Foundation, she is now the CEO & Founder of SB Global LLC. With extensive experience in space acquisition and program management, and as a congressional liaison on Capitol Hill, Shelli has been instrumental in shaping policies and fostering collaborations that drive the industry forward.

As a Senator and an Executive Board Member for the Global Women Leaders Committee at the World Business Angels Investment Forum (WBAF), she champions entrepreneurship, innovation, and financial inclusion. A prolific keynote speaker and author, her recently released book, *What's Space Got to Do With It? 10 Life Lessons for Personal Growth*, explores leadership, resilience, and career success through the lens of space.

Shelli collaborates with global think tanks and contributes to initiatives shaping the future space paradigm. Her efforts to leverage space technology to address global challenges earned her inclusion in the 100 Voices for Our Planet, an initiative of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). She has also been honored as one of the Top 100 Women of the Future in Emerging Technology and received two Lifetime Achievement Awards.

Julie Collins is a Lead Faculty Instructor for NSF Innovation Corps (I-Corps) and technology innovation trainer and consultant. She is an industry leader in entrepreneurial program design and implementation having worked with private, governmental, and academic clients across industry sectors. She has advised thousands of deep tech entrepreneurs and executives on their market selection process and business model design and is a sought-after lecturer on the subject of customer development. Previously she ran a consulting practice focused on non-dilutive funding for early-stage technology startups. Julie holds a B.S. in Applied Biology from the Georgia Institute of Technology, and an M.S. in Microbiology and Molecular Genetics from Emory University.

Andrea Mohamed is COO and Co-founder of QuantumBloom, an early-stage startup that helps employers retain early-career women in STEM. Previously, she was at RTI International for over a decade, most recently serving as VP of Strategy, Innovation, Marketing and Communications.

At RTI, Andrea served on the largest business unit's executive team and executed a multi-year growth strategy resulting in record financials. Revenue grew from \$400 million to \$750 million and new business awards tallied \$1.3 billion, exceeding a target of \$700 million. She also oversaw an annual \$10M innovation and investment budget and architected a 3000-person reorganization.

Andrea also led or co-led several cross-functional teams at RTI, including: a COVID-19 response initiative that contributed \$500 million in new business, a three-year investment in opioid research and behavioral health resulting in \$370M in new business, and a multi-year investment to build AI capabilities for research applications.

Earlier in her career, Andrea held marketing leadership roles at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business where she launched the school's 2008 global expansion and contributed to the school's first #1 BusinessWeek ranking. In the early 2000s, Andrea worked in marketing and business development roles in the semiconductor industry and for IT organizations.

Andrea has an MBA and Health Sector Management (HSM) certificate from Duke University, where she was recognized as a Fuqua Scholar and HSM Scholar.

In 2021, Andrea was honored as a Triangle Business Journal Women in Business awardee and she is a member of CHIEF, a private network of executive women. Andrea lives in Cary, NC with her husband, two t(w)een children, and their two tuxedo cats.

Dr. Pamela Norris will begin her tenure as the Dean of the College of Engineering at the University of Delaware in March 2025. She is currently a Professor of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering at George Washington University (GWU) and the Frederick Tracy Morse Professor Emerita of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering at University of Virginia (UVA). Dr. Norris previously served in roles as the Vice Provost for Research at GWU and as the Executive Dean, the Executive Associate Dean of Research, and the Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Studies at UVA School of Engineering and Applied Science.

An interdisciplinary scientist, she holds patents for innovative thermal management techniques for jet-blast detectors and landing pads and for applications of aerogels in areas that include biological warfare detection and lab-on-a-chip. She has served on the Board of Directors of the UVA Licensing and Ventures Group (2016-2021), is an Inventor Member in the GW Chapter of the National Academy of Inventors and serves as a Senator at the World Business Angels Investment Forum (WBAF).

Dr. Norris is well-known for her mentoring skills and for her dedication to increasing diversity in the STEM disciplines. In 2016 she was honored with the Society of Women Engineers Distinguished Engineering Educator Award "for enduring, positive influence on students' lives as a gifted teacher, mentor, and role model; and for promoting greater diversity in STEM higher education." In 2021 she was elected an honorary member of ASME for "international leadership in nano, micro and macroscale thermal science and engineering research; for tireless efforts to advance diversity in STEM fields; and for demonstrating engineering excellence as an outstanding mentor for students and faculty."

Dr. Jacqueline Olich catalyzes strategic innovation and cross-sector collaboration. As founder and principal of Veza Alliance Management, she advises the Hampton Roads Biomedical Research Consortium and Elysia Creative Biology. A certified private director, she advances women in leadership through multiple roles: gender-lens investor with xElle Ventures, founding member of Chief private executive network, advisor to NC State's Women in Technical Leadership program, and mentor for the Springboard 2024 Healthcare and Technology Bootcamp cohort. At RTI International, she rose from founding director to Vice President of University Collaborations, developing domestic and global strategic partnerships and building a \$200M+ pipeline. As an administrator and member of the Graduate Faculty at UNC-Chapel Hill, she implemented programs for a \$4.2M Title VI joint Duke-UNC Department of Education Center. Earlier in her career, she co-founded Diba Industries, a medical diagnostics company acquired by Halma PLC (LSE: HLMA) that now forms a cornerstone of Arcmed. She currently coaches entrepreneurs in UNC's Econ 125 Introduction to Entrepreneurship course.

Dr. Karin Scarpinato Dr. Karin Scarpinato is the current Vice President for Research at Kennesaw State University (KSU), overseeing research strategy, research operations and innovation & commercialization. She is also Professor of Biology at KSU.

Dr. Scarpinato is the founder of a "Women in Research" networking group of nationwide women (A)VPRs that discusses best practices in their field. She is also the founding president of the Florida Research Development Alliance (FloRDA), which aims to improve state-wide collaborations and best practices related to research

development. Dr. Scarpinato is a national APLU Council on Research Leadership Fellow, appointed in their 2018-2020 cohort

Dr. Scarpinato previously served as the Senior Associate Vice President for Research at Florida Atlantic University (FAU), overseeing the strategic planning and operations of the central Division of Research, leading the institution to their Carnegie “R1” status. Dr. Scarpinato was an affiliate faculty in the Department of Biology.

Dr. Scarpinato was Assistant Provost for Research at the University of Miami. In Miami, Dr. Scarpinato was charged with increasing and supporting research campus-wide, including attracting extramural support, internal and external collaborations and improving the research support infrastructures.

Prior to coming to Florida in 2014, Dr. Scarpinato was Associate Dean for Faculty and Research in the College of Science and Mathematics, and Associate Dean for Research “in Residence” in the Office of the Vice President for Research and Economic Development at Georgia Southern University. She was also a tenured Associate Professor in the Department of Biology, conducting cancer research and teaching cancer-related courses. Her tasks included improving faculty-led research, improving research infrastructure and supporting undergraduate student research.

Prior to her tenure at Georgia Southern University, Dr. Scarpinato was Associate Professor at Wake Forest University, and Scientific Advisor to the Director of the Comprehensive Cancer Center. Dr. Scarpinato co-directed one of the basic research programs within the Comprehensive Cancer Center, providing research and grant support and forging strategic collaborations. She also co-directed NCI T32-funded graduate education programs, which included student recruitment, mentoring, obtaining extramural funding through training grants; she was instrumental in the reorganization of the graduate school into an interdisciplinary first year curriculum.

Dr. Scarpinato has since pivoted her research interests to studying research administrative and metrics-related outcomes and is published in this field.

Dr. Scarpinato is Lean Six Sigma Black Belt, a methodology that uses metrics and statistics to implement process improvements.

In addition to her academic roles, Dr. Scarpinato is the co-founder of “Research Ingenuity”, a start-up company focused on providing hands-on strategies for administrative offices to improve teamwork, collaboration and communication. Dr. Scarpinato is Lean Six Sigma Green Belt certified and working toward her Black Belt, a methodology that uses metrics and statistics to implement process improvements.