



Institute of Systems Wisdom

Fellows Newsletter

Volume 11, Number 2

December 2, 2025

Institute of Systems Wisdom is an innovative social-academic-practice community that emerged in 2013 (and published a [Newsletter](#) beginning in 2014) as a result of applied consulting and research projects hosted within the Organizational Dynamics MS and MPhil programs at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn). When project members (faculty, scholars, practitioners, and students) moved from Penn to the Thomas Jefferson University Doctor of Management in Strategic Leadership and Doctor of Philosophy in Complex Systems Leadership programs, a co-laboratory relationship between the Institute and Jefferson was established. When Jefferson closed both leadership doctorates in 2021 then the School of Continuing and Professional Studies in 2023, the community continued within the *Institute of Systems Wisdom* where many were *Fellows*: <https://www.systemswisdom.com/institute-systems-wisdom>.

John Pourdehnad Strategic and Complex Systems Library Donated to Lehigh University

To support the learning and development of systems-informed educational frameworks, theories and applications at Lehigh University and its Lee Iacocca Institute for Global Leadership, an agreement was completed to create the *John Pourdehnad Strategic and Complex Systems Library* – graciously donated by John. In November, approximately 200 books in the collection were packed and transported to the allocated library space and will shortly be organized and catalogued. As arguably Russ Ackoff's most cherished student, longtime colleague and friend, the library collection includes copies of all of Ackoff's books and many private documents, as well as a wide and deep collection of additional books and materials collected by John that focus on systems and design thinking, complex project management, strategy, and organizational applications.

Here is my post about this on LinkedIn:

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7399875916165746688/>



John Pourdehnad with Scott Koewrer, Executive Director, Iacocca Institute



Iacocca Fellow Presentations are Now Online



As described on the [Lehigh University website](https://www.lehigh.edu/iacocca),

Lehigh University's [Iacocca Institute](#) has announced the establishment of a new network of global leaders drawn from across the nation and around the world, who will be regularly participating in institute programs and offering their insights on leadership and global developments.

The [Iacocca Institute Executive Fellows](#) is a network of business professionals, higher education officials, and multidisciplinary experts whose views and expertise will help advance the Institute's mission to prepare the next generation of leaders to thrive in a global economy. Among the Executive Fellows are **Larry M. Starr**, **Regina Tendayi**, and **Joseph Sweeney**.

Each month, a "package" is scheduled to be released by the Institute via websites and social media. Each package will contain a presentation/lecture referred to as a "Dialogue" supported with PowerPoint slides. Accompanying this may be a position paper and an interview. Topics vary widely but all concern some aspects of how global leadership must navigate the complex world.

Here is the [YouTube video recording](#) of the presentation by **Larry M. Starr** from February 2025 on the topic, *Global Leaders Must be Systems Thinkers. This is a Problem. What to do about it*. Here is a link to the [paper on which the presentation was based](#).

Here is the [YouTube video recording](#) of the presentation by **Regina Tendayi** from March 2025. Her topic was *Systemic Human Resource Management*.



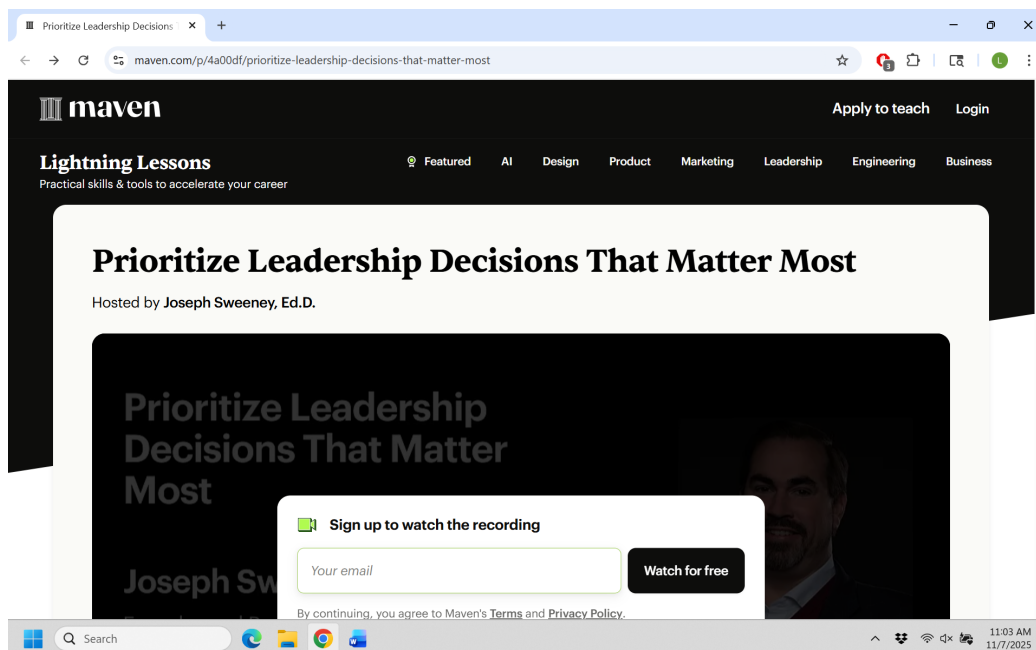
Community Updates and Milestones



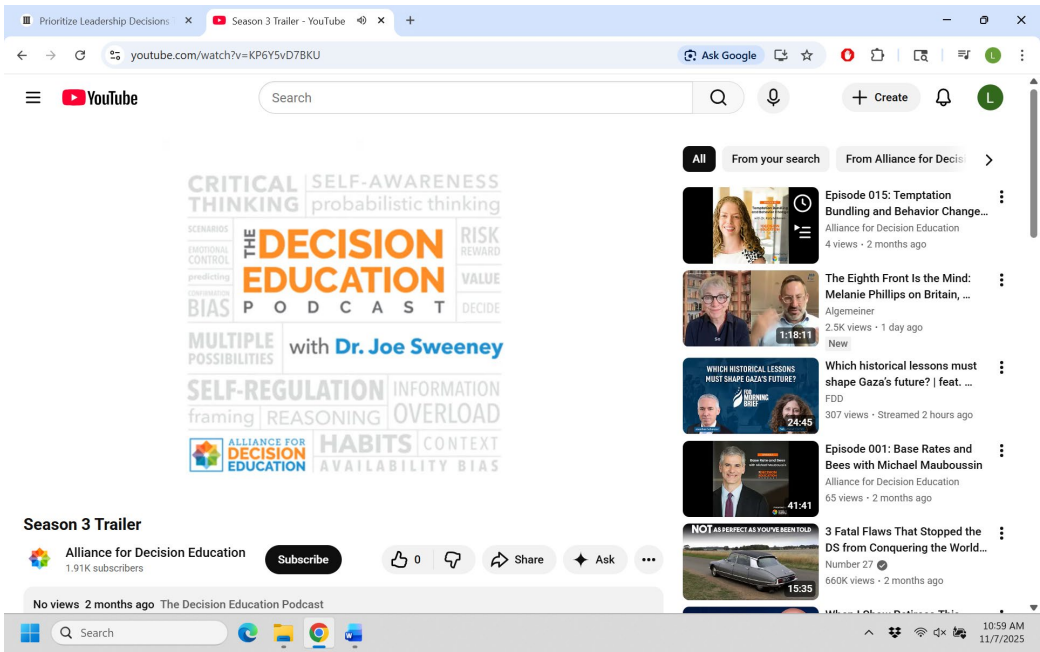
Joe Sweeney

Hi Larry,

Here is a short talk I gave to leaders that focuses on decisions made by *Frequency vs. Impact*:
<https://maven.com/p/4a00df/prioritize-leadership-decisions-that-matter-most>



Here is an earlier offering of the Decision Education podcast that I hosted:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KP6Y5vD7BKU>





Paul T. Raison, Jr.,

Good morning, Larry,

I accepted an offer to become the *Director of LITC (Low Income Tax Clinic)* for the *Campaign for Working Families*.

Campaign For Working Families Inc. The mission is to champion the financial well-being and economic mobility of individuals and families by leading programming and advocating for policies, initiatives, and support systems that ensure equitable opportunities and financial stability. CWF is driven by the belief that every individual and family deserves respect, dignity, and the tools/information to succeed, and CWF is committed to enacting positive change at both the policy and grassroots levels by fostering a culture of empathy, data-driven decision-making, and collective action. The following core values serve as a guiding framework for the Campaign for Working Families, helping to define its mission, goals, and actions in support of individuals and families throughout its communities:

Director of Low-Income Tax Clinic (LITC) will lead CWF's initiatives to provide free tax assistance, education, and advocacy services to low-income families. This individual will oversee all aspects of the clinic, including compliance, operations, and advocacy efforts, ensuring clients receive professional and compassionate services and support. The role requires a strategic, hands-on leader dedicated to helping underserved communities navigate tax issues and secure their financial stability.

I'm still debating my future with H&R Block on a part-time basis. I am preparing to ramp up my financial planning activities more to complement my current position by catering to more affluent clients. Therefore, I'd be reaching all my planned client tiers.

Sincerely, Paul Raison, Jr., D. Mgt., iMBA, MST, CFP®, ChFC®, EA





Adena Johnston

Larry, My book, ***Growing Forward: An HR Guide for Adaptive Talent Management*** with John Pourdehnad writing the foreword has been published and is available via *Amazon* (eBook and print): <https://www.amazon.com/Growing-Forward-Adaptive-Talent-Management/dp/1966941064>.

The book launch party was a huge success, and John was joined by fellow speakers, our own **Joy Azikiwe-Oyeyemi**, Adrianna Gabriel (a Penn MSOD grad), and a special guest, Tamela Vieira who is the EVP for the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society.

The support from fellow cohort grads was really touching and over 100 copies were sold in the first week. Special thanks to **Bob Schatz** and **John Ervin** who really helped with *LinkedIn* visibility.

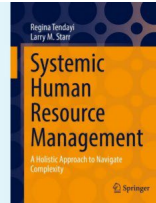
I welcome the opportunity to further explore the content through collaboratories of interested people and through my development work with organizations where the GARDEN Framework is applied in real time.

From the publisher

When the workplace faces intense complexity and change, organizations must ensure HR isn't isolated from business strategy. At the same time, business leaders need to become more sensitive to the human aspects of organizations to be truly strategic. Success requires both HR stepping up to the strategic table and business leaders recognizing that people systems are their competitive advantage.

Growing Forward introduces a systems thinking approach that helps leaders see their organizations as interconnected ecosystems. Drawing on sustainable gardening principles, direct experience leading organizations, and years as an executive coach, this book shows how small, strategic interventions can create organization-wide impact.

Systemic Human Resource Management



Regina Tendayi

I am pleased to share that Professor Larry Starr and I collaborated on the book, ***Systemic Human Resource Management: A Holistic Approach to Navigate Complexity***, available in all forms from Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Systemic-Human-Resource-Management-Professionals-ebook/dp/B0FGCJ23FD>. This is an HRM book based on systems and design thinking that reframes the HRM discipline providing the much-needed new approaches to managing HRM against a highly volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous and hyperconnected (VUCAH) business context. A must-read for HR C-suite leaders, professionals, graduate students, and leaders in general.

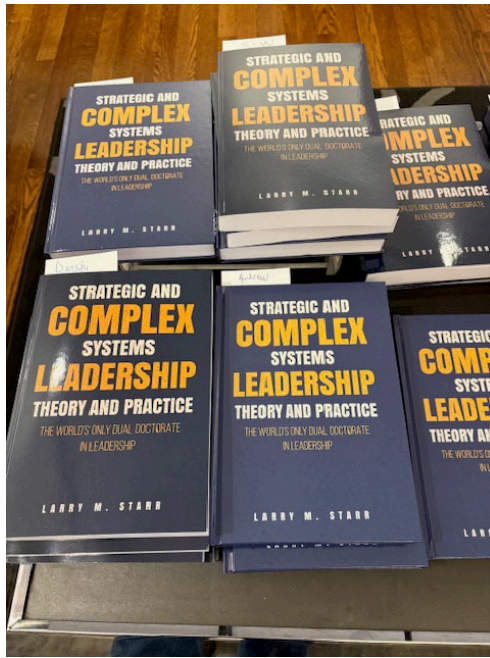
From Lehigh University: <https://global.lehigh.edu/news/iacocca-institute-executive-fellows-publish-new-book-navigating-hr-complexity>

Two Iacocca Institute Executive Fellows have co-authored a groundbreaking new book that redefines human resource management through a systems thinking lens

The book offers a fresh approach to human resource management (HRM) by applying principles of complexity, systems thinking, and design thinking to today's rapidly changing business environment. The book explores alternative HRM methodologies, tools, and frameworks tailored to volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous, and hyperconnected (VUCAH) contexts. Introducing the concept of Systemic Human Resource Management, the book presents holistic strategies for problem-solving and decision-making that align with the demands of modern organizations navigating disruption and change.

From the publisher

This book introduces ***Systemic Human Resources Management (Sys HRM)*** as the much-needed answer to people management in a complex context. It reframes human resource management through the lens of complexity, systems, and design thinking to provide innovative HRM methodologies, approaches, tools, and frameworks that suit the emerging disruptive business environment being experienced worldwide. HR and other leaders, professionals, academic institutions, and scholars benefit from novel ways of perceiving decision-making and problem-solving against a highly volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous, and hyperconnected (VUCAH) context described in this book.



ChatGPT-enhanced Larry

Colleagues,

Creating ***Strategic and Complex Systems Leadership Theory and Practice*** was a labor of love. The chapters contain an edited collection of papers by me, ***Andrew Braverman, Jarrod (Jay) Combs-Harris, Scott Koerwer, Harry McCloskey, Darshi Mody, Sung Won Paek, John Pourdehnad, Boris Vishnevsky, Xuejuan Joyce Zhang, and Vince Barabba*** from Systems Wisdom.

I wrote my chapters and assembled the others as a testimony to you - the community who designed, developed, taught in, and learned from each other in the Jefferson Doctor of Management (D.Mgt.) in Strategic Leadership and the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Complex Systems Leadership programs. It is available in all forms from Amazon:

https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0FTNXGPV4?ref=pe_93986420_774957520,

From the publisher

This new book, ***Strategic and Complex Systems Leadership Theory and Practice***, contains a sample of the writing of students, faculty and scholar-practitioners from the Thomas Jefferson University Doctor of Management in Strategic Leadership and Doctor of Philosophy in Complex Systems Leadership programs. The programs were designed by more than 100 people using the system-informed methodology of Interactive Planning and Idealized Design. Following faculty and regulatory approval in September 2015, the first two cohorts of students were admitted in Spring and Fall 2016 followed by 6 more cohorts totaling more than 60 active doctoral candidates. The book is a testimony to the community who designed, developed, learned from and taught in the world's only applied research dual-doctorate leadership degree program.



Sung Won Paek

To support the Philadelphia Korean community and to promote the development of leadership for the *Young Korean Academy* (celebrating 112 years), **Rev. Dr. Sung-Won Paek** created an annual conference. For this 3rd year, two speakers were **Larry M. Starr** and **Regina Tendayi**. Approximately 100 people attended the event which included presentations, the screening of a soon-to-be released film about a historic Korean leader, networking, and a Korean dinner.

Ideal Society – Human Management

Regina Tendayi, DMgt

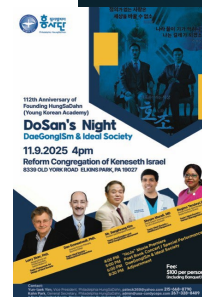
An Ideal Society focuses on balancing individual rights with collective well-being through a system that ensures equality, justice, and opportunity for all. I provide the meaning of human management based on a corporate people management perspective, which means the process that involves planning, organizing, leading, and controlling people-related issues within an organization. For example, recruitment, performance management, leadership development, managing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB). Therefore, an ideal society, human resources, within a corporate setup, encompasses HR leadership practices that are aspirational and strategic, both for employee well-being and business performance.

Framework for the Design of an Ideal Society

Larry M. Starr, PhD

- Lee Iacocca Institute for Global Leadership, Lehigh University
- School of Business, Thomas Jefferson University
- Dept. of Medical Education, Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine
- Global Consulting, Systems Wisdom LLC

November 9, 2025





Colleagues, I was invited to give a talk at this national conference in Phoenix.

911, EMS, Fire, Law Enforcement

Friday, Dec. 5, 2025: 11:35 AM – 12:25 PM

Why EMS Responders Rarely Apply a System Approach to Emergencies — And What You Can Do - Dr. Larry M. Starr – Lehigh University and Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine

Abstract: While people may work in an EMS, healthcare or educational system and aim to solve the problems in that system, they rarely apply a system-based approach. We often tend to classify these difficult problems as “complicated” for which an analytic approach — the foundation of the scientific method — is thought to be appropriate and effective. But, time-sensitive emergencies are not only complicated, but they are also “complex.” They share interconnected elements and are characterized by uncertainty, unpredictability, dynamic change and non-linearity for which analytic thinking may be insufficient. This is when systems thinking, and approaches are appropriate and effective.

This is not a trivial endeavor. Systems thinking is not commonly used because while analytic thinking is embedded into our educational curricula, systems thinking is not. It is rarely taught, learned or applied. Yet, there are some notable examples of systems thinking-informed approaches that can be models for EMS and first aid problem-solving. You’ll learn how to use system thinking, as well as when it’s appropriate.





Eugene deKlerk

Eugene wrote, "My time at SAP and SAP NS2 have come to a close, and I'm incredibly grateful for the journey. Across both teams, I've had the opportunity to work with smart, talented, driven, and generous people. I've grown a lot, learned even more, and had the chance to be part of work that mattered. To everyone I had the chance to work with: thank you for the support, collaboration, and good conversations along the way.

I am looking forward to the next challenge at ***Cora Systems***, the worldwide leader in providing enterprise project and portfolio management solutions to global organizations and government agencies."





Rume Joy Azikiwe-Oyeyemi

Wrote Joy, "Honored doesn't even begin to cover it 🙏 I'm grateful to share that I've been named one of ***"The Top 50 Women Leaders of New Jersey for 2025"*** by [Women We Admire](#), #3! As an HR Professional my deepest commitment has always been to people: creating workplaces where staff can thrive, building systems that are both human-centered and high-performing, and investing in the next generation of leaders in and beyond the classroom. "

Here is another link: https://www.linkedin.com/posts/rume-joy-a-o_womeninleadership-newjersey-hrleadership-activity-7392322799358337024-ISVn/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_ios&rcm=ACoAAACJqOEbNbWaczKsIV6h55CwCXKfBm8hE94





From: Tamara M Campbell, MD, PsyD, DFAPA, Executive Director

VHA Office of Mental Health

US Department of Veterans Affairs

and

From: LaVerne D. Harmon, M.S., CRC, GCDF

Supervisory Rehabilitation Counselor

Compensated Work Therapy Program Manager

VA Maryland Health Care System

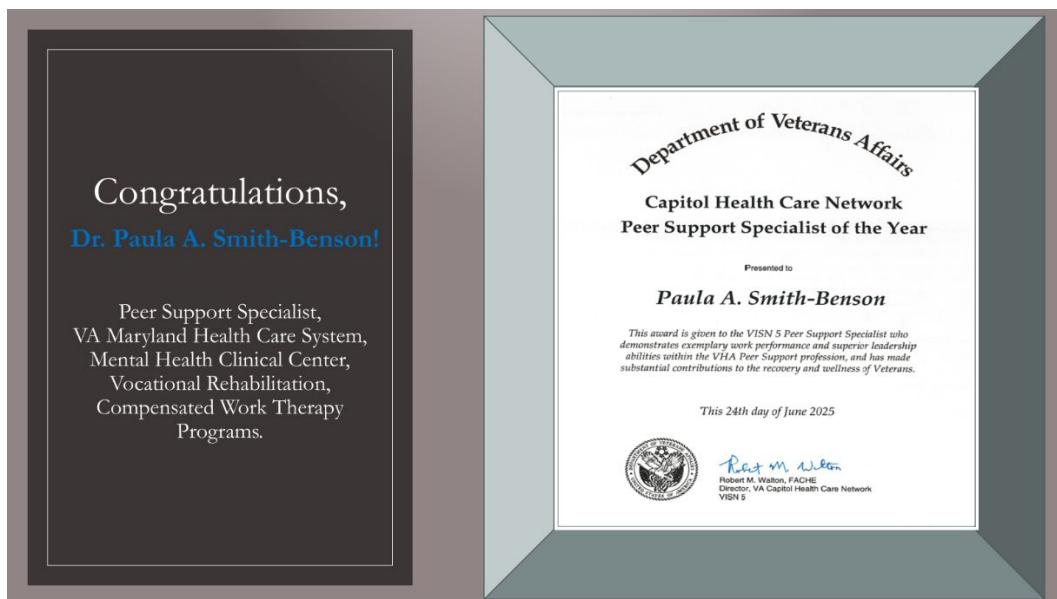
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

To: Paula A. Smith-Benson, DMgt, CPRS, Peer Specialist

Vocational Rehabilitation Services

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Congratulations to Dr. Paula Smith-Benson - selected as the VISN 5 Peer Support Specialist of the Year for 2025!



Presentation: Dr. Paula Smith-Benson came to the VAMHCS Mental Health Clinical Center with more than 30 years leadership experience in diversified environments and held the Certified Peer Recovery Specialist credential since 2021. She served as a program subject matter expert on Peer Services to ensure peer services were included in all aspects of the Vocational Rehabilitation Compensated Work Therapy Programs. Her reach not only went above and beyond transporting Veterans as needed to designated employment destinations, contacting Veterans daily or weekly for wellness check-ups, and providing support in the facilitation of Vocational Skills Development, Positivi-Tea, Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP), and Honest, Open and Proud (HOP) recovery groups; her advocacy often reached beyond the parameters of the VAMHCS and extends far into the local community and beyond.

Dr. Smith-Benson, thank you for your exemplary peer support services and congratulations on being selected as the VISN 5 Peer Support Specialist of the Year for 2025!

Here is a link to a WJZ TV News interview with Paula from November 5, 2025 about her award:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_xNnhSLxSM



But, there's more!

Paula also wrote, "Here is a link and description for my live broadcast from Wednesday November 26: <https://www.facebook.com/billionairemastermindforum/>:

Is It Time We Rethink How We Care for Those Who Served Us?

Join **Rev. Dr. Paula Smith-Benson** on Wednesday, November 26, 2025, at 8:00 AM ET for "REIMAGINING VETERAN CARE" on the Billionaire Mastermind Forum as we explore how to honor Veterans' wholeness—not just treat their wounds. Catch the replay until Thursday, November 27, 2025, at 712-432-1085, pin 915358#. Explore spiritual, emotional, and technological breakthroughs reshaping how we care for Veterans—especially our elders and Black service members.

Billionaire
MASTERMIND FORUM

PRESENTS

REIMAGINING VETERAN CARE

*Reframe veteran care to honor dignity,
wholeness, and spirit. Discover
transformative models, healing tools,
and lasting empowerment.*

8 AM | WEDNESDAY
ET | November 26, 2025

LIVE
BROADCAST

DIAL IN
667-770-1523

PIN CODE
915358#

Rex. Dr. Paula Smith-Beyon
Presenter

www.billionairemastermindforum.org

Join us Monday - Friday





Larry Hirschhorn

Larry wrote that he is presenting a paper at a seminar called “Reversal Theory and the Group Mind” It is a new approach to Group Dynamics. The abstract is below.

This theoretical paper introduces Reversal Theory (RT) as a new conceptual framework for understanding work group dynamics. It supplements and expands Wilfred Bion’s influential model of work group and basic assumption functioning. Drawing on Michael Apter’s Reversal Theory—a structural phenomenological approach to motivation and emotion—the author translates its four “meta-motivations” (conforming/rebelling, mastering/sympathizing, serious/playful, self-/other-focused) into four modalities for understanding how a group accomplishes its work. Using the concept of reversal, the paper suggests that working groups use a modality’s two modes to respond flexibly when facing obstacles, viewing anxiety as a signal rather than a threat. It demonstrates how RT readily explains four Basic Assumptions, including Bion’s dependency, fight/flight, “one-ness,” and “me-ness,” while offering new insights into Basic Assumption Dependency. The paper demonstrates how RT’s hedonic-arousal framework weaves together three levels of group life: the group as a whole, the responses of individual members, and the interactions between them. It proposes a new set of terms to describe a group’s primitive states, suggesting that they appear when Basic Assumptions, as social defenses, fail. The group tries to obliterate itself in a totalitarian gesture. The paper ends with suggestions for future research to test these ideas.



Myles Bassell

Myles who earned the award of “2024 Professor of the Year” is now Professor and Associate Dean in the Koppelman School of Business, Brooklyn College, City University of New York (CUNY). He wrote that he attended a high impact seminar in Cambridge focused on “Teaching with AI” with a group of educators who like him are passionate about artificial intelligence and who collaborated with each other and “two amazing AI experts”: Mitchell Weiss, the Richard L. Menschel Professor of Management Practice at Harvard Business School (HBS) and Dan Levy, Senior Lecturer in Public Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) and co-author of *Teaching Effectively with ChatGPT*.



Andrew Braverman

According to his Contact Page on *TheOrg*: <https://theorg.com/org/pure-storage/org-chart/andrew-braverman-d-mgt>, effective September 2024, Andrew had accepted an appointment as Adjunct Professor at Rutgers University.



Syed Kazmi

Syed wrote: Hi Larry, I have been promoted to and accepted an appointment as Program Director for the M.S. in Digital Marketing and Analytics program at Manhattan University. Here is a link to the program: <https://manhattan.edu/academics/graduate-programs/digital-marketing-analytics.php> and <https://manhattan.edu/campus-directory/skazmi01> and my university website: <https://manhattan.edu/campus-directory/skazmi01>



Sagar Sharma

Here is a link to the 2025 Spring-Ford Area School District Board of Directors where of which Sagar is an elected member (since 2023): <https://www.spring-ford.net/board-of-education/sf-school-board>. Spring-Ford Area School District (SFASD) is approximately 20 miles northwest of Philadelphia, 25 miles south of Reading, and 5 miles north of Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.



William Myles

William is the CEO of the Albany Housing Authority in Albany, GA. Born and raised in public housing in Meridian, Mississippi, he began his public housing career in Meridian. William oversees the daily operations of approximately 1,200 public housing apartments, 115 Section 8/Housing Choice Vouchers, and ongoing real estate improvement efforts for the agency and 60+ employees. Currently, the public housing and Section 8 programs combined provide affordable housing for nearly 2,500 families) in the Albany Georgia area. Read more: <https://www.albanyha.com/a-message-from-the-executive-director>



Rosa Colon-Colacko

Rosa has moved from her role as Senior VP, Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer at Tufts Medicine where she was responsible for advancing diversity, racial and health equity, inclusion, and Community Health. She is now President of **Global Equity & Learning Partners**, a consulting and interim management practice that designs and implements inclusion, racial and health equity, human capital, talent management, cultural transformation, customer experience, and change management strategies to build equitable and learning organizations. She maintains US offices in Wilmington, DE and European offices in St. Paul's Bay, Malta: <https://globalequitylearning.com/>.

Rosa was featured for the cover story in the July 2025 issue of *Women Thrive* magazine: https://magazine.womenthrivemagazine.com/july-2025-women-thrive-magazine?_ga=2.265283535.1584035360.1751532049-1314579174.1731131282#page1





Tom Guggino

Tom has a *YouTube* Channel containing some of his activities and performances: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNkUXAzM7eVWHJmaPw2mqjw> but can be found in other *YouTube* sites such as [this interview on PBS](#). His professional communications website <https://presentconnect.net/> describes his strategic communications services and his book *Present! Connect!* written while a member of our doctoral programs: <https://www.busessexpertpress.com/books/present-connect-create-and-deliver-presentations-that-capture-entertain-and-connect-to-any-audience/>





Boris Vishnevsky

Boris remains Partner and CTO Strategist/Architect at [AlphaNuTech](#) where he “anticipates opportunities before they are obvious; turns transforms AI, data, and cloud technologies into a decisive operational advantage; and translates complex emerging technologies into strategic, business-aligned execution, ensuring scalable impact, operational excellence, and competitive advantage amid accelerating change.”

Boris reports he has also created a new organization, [Alynify](#), a talent innovation company dedicated to redefining recruitment through technology, authenticity, and business alignment. Using a proprietary Dynamic Talent Evaluation and Recruitment Platform (DTERP) enables organizations to seamlessly extend and enhance their human capital capabilities by combining AI-driven insights with expert human oversight. Boris was recently interviewed which can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WCjXW89T3vk>.





As a courtesy and to support the University of Hull's Centre for Systems Studies, here is their most recent **Newsletter**: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/centre-systems-studies-newsletter-september-2025-issue-matt-lloyd-ply-jllue/>



Please keep your email up to date with me and please remain connected and continue to share personal and professional updates, and any reports of activities you would like to report to our community.

I wish each of you and your families a safe and happy holiday and New Year celebration.

A 2026 summer holiday party can be held if you want one and help me do the prepare work.



Institute of Systems Wisdom

Fellows Newsletter