

Third Annual Student Leadership Retreat

**The Power of Us:
Building Coalitions Across Difference**

September 27, 2025



PennWest
UNIVERSITYSM

Office of Community, Opportunity,
Responsibility and Engagement (CORE)

Welcome

Dear Attendees,

We are thrilled to welcome you to the Third Annual PennWest Student Leadership Retreat! This is an exciting time for PennWest University as we continue to grow, adapt and stay responsive to the evolving needs of our society.

Our retreat planning committee has worked hard to ensure that today's event is both meaningful and rewarding for you. We've created an environment that promotes professionalism while encouraging supportive interactions.

We urge you to make the most of everything this retreat offers. Engage with the presentations, network with fellow students from other campuses and push yourself to step outside your comfort zone. Meet someone new, listen to different perspectives and broaden your mindset. This day is dedicated to your growth as both current and future leaders. Contribute to discussions, challenge your thinking, and leave today as a more knowledgeable and empowered leader.

We also want to extend our deepest gratitude to the advisors who have made it possible for students to attend today's retreat. A warm welcome to all faculty, staff, administrators and guests — thank you for your invaluable contributions to the development of these emerging leaders.

Wishing you an inspiring and successful day, and a bright future ahead as you create opportunities, tackle leadership challenges, and enhance your involvement in campus and community life. You are our greatest asset today and tomorrow, and we couldn't achieve our goals without your support and leadership.

Thank you once again, and welcome!

The PennWest Student Leadership Retreat Committee



PennWest Student Leadership Retreat Schedule

September 27, 2025

9 a.m.

Registration and Continental Breakfast

Gemmell MPR

9:20 a.m.

Welcome

Gemmell MPR

Presenter: Susanne Fenske, Ph.D., Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness and Student Affairs, PennWest University

9:30 a.m.

Speed Networking: Sharpen Your Pitch, Expand Your Circle

Gemmell MPR

Presenters: The Career Development Center

Learn how to craft a clear elevator pitch, practice professional handshake etiquette and build confidence through a speed networking carousel. Each rotation offers the opportunity to refine your delivery, make new connections and strengthen communication skills in a supportive setting. You'll leave with a polished introduction, increased comfort in networking and practical tools to carry into academic, professional and community opportunities.

10 a.m.

Opening Keynote Speaker: The Heart of Leadership

Gemmell MPR

Presenter: Frenchie Davis, MPH, Founder of Dis La Vérité: Institute of Emotional Literacy

Join Frenchie Davis for an interactive workshop on the connections between self-advocacy, consent and emotional intelligence in leadership and self-care. Students will gain practical strategies for setting boundaries, communicating needs and honoring values while navigating academic, professional and personal spaces. The session emphasizes the importance of emotional literacy as a foundation for effective leadership, healthy relationships and long-term well-being.

11 a.m. — Workshop Session I

It Starts with Us

Gemmell MPR

Presenters: Jaylyn Twitty, CORE Student Ambassador, PennWest Clarion; Alena Clark, Assistant Director of CORE Initiatives, PennWest University

Explore the foundations of community and the importance of building your inner circle. Through dialogue and reflection, you'll examine the role of identity, challenge stereotypes and unpack the values of CORE. Together, we'll discover how meaningful connections begin with self-awareness and a shared responsibility to create community — because it starts with us.

Noon

Lunch

Eagle Commons Dining Hall

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1 p.m. — Workshop Session II

Leaning into Discomfort: Intuition and Felt-Sense of Knowing

248 Gemmell

Presenter: Sheila Lorenzo de la Peña, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Art Therapy, PennWest University

Exhaustion is a given, so let's lean into our own wisdom and strength in support of the work ahead. We'll explore boundaries, get uncomfortable, practice self-compassion and reclamation through hands-on visual expression.

Diversity in Leadership

252 Gemmell

Presenter: Danielle Fleming, Women's Head Basketball Coach, PennWest Clarion

This session explores what it means to lead in spaces not built with our identities in mind. Through personal reflection and collective dialogue, participants will examine how authenticity, representation and community-building transform leadership. Learn how embracing your identity, amplifying diverse voices and creating space for others can break barriers and build a legacy of empowerment for future leaders.

2:15 p.m. — Break

250 Gemmell

2:30 p.m. — Workshop Session III

Pathways to Leadership: Student Voices on Resilience, Identity and Community

248 Gemmell

Presenters: PennWest student leaders

Join student leaders from across PennWest for a dynamic panel exploring resilience, identity, and peer-to-peer support. Through candid conversation, interactive activities, and shared experiences, you will gain practical insights on overcoming challenges, building meaningful connections, and leading with authenticity. This session also provides a unique opportunity to network across campuses, exchange advice, and explore ways to strengthen our communities while growing as leaders.

Leading Without Burning Out: Mental Wellness Strategies for Student Leaders

252 Gemmell

Presenter: Lan Griffith MA, LPC, NCC

This session empowers student leaders to sustain their advocacy by protecting their mental health. Participants will explore the emotional labor, identity pressures and burnout risks unique to DEI work, then learn practical tools to navigate these challenges — including setting boundaries without guilt, practicing self-compassion, managing stress in the moment and building strong peer and mentor networks. Through guided reflection and peer dialogue, attendees will gain actionable strategies to lead with resilience, sustain their impact and foster inclusive campus communities without sacrificing their well-being.

3:30 p.m. — Wrap-up and Closing Remarks

Gemmell MPR

Presenters: The Office of CORE

Keynote Speaker

Frenchie Davis



Frenchie Davis, MPH, is an authority on human sexuality, public leadership and health with a focus on the African American community. She is a certified life coach specializing in REBT (Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy) and emotional intelligence. Davis combines her love and expertise of social services, education and pop culture to entertain, educate and enhance the emotional and sexual health of her audiences.

Davis founded Dis La Vérité: Institute of Emotional Literacy as a health equity firm to cultivate the normalization of not only being mindful of feelings and needs but also understanding and honoring the journey those feelings must travel. For more than 20 years, she has worked with

vulnerable, marginalized populations, including teen parents, HIV survivors, Black male youth, domestic violence survivors, and social justice victims. She works both nationally and internationally through workshops, lectures, blogging and TV appearances, including HBO's "Def Poetry Jam" (2003). She also hosted and produced a sexuality talk show, "Libido Talk" on WBAI 99.5 FM in New York City from 2011-2014.

Davis is a board member for the Incarnation Institute of Sex and Faith (IISF) and collaborates with a wide range of community stakeholders and organizations. As a global citizen, she has spent a significant portion of her career advocating in the U.S. and abroad for an end to HIV prevalence. She is a returning presenter for the State of Michigan Health and Human Services HIV division.

She was also a research scholar at the Cuba Delegation for Race, Culture, Gender and Sexuality and a scholar at the Black Feminism Summer School. She studied abroad in Cachoeira, Brazil, for the Decolonization of Black Feminism with renowned academic and activist Angela Davis. In fall of 2018, Davis was featured as a sexpert in the book "Untrue" by New York Times best-selling author, Wednesday Martin, Ph.D. Davis continues to dedicate her passion to building communities that reimagine sexual and emotionally healthy cultural ecosystems for Black and disenfranchised communities.

Diversity and Inclusion / Non-Discrimination Statement

Pennsylvania Western University promotes an inclusive environment that supports the academic, cultural and personal growth of all members of the campus community. The university values the richness of diversity and believes that the intentional recruitment, retention and accommodation of individuals who differ and are similar broaden and deepen the educational experience and the scholarly environment. By respecting pluralistic perceptions, and continuously assessing and monitoring the campuses and community environments, the university community will foster open communication as students, faculty, staff and community learn to interact effectively with one another, creating and sustaining a supportive and respectful climate. Pennsylvania Western University is committed to creating an environment free of unlawful discrimination for all its employees, students, contractors, vendors and visitors. Accordingly, discrimination based on an individual's gender, gender identity, race or color, ethnicity, national origin or ancestry, age, mental or physical disability, religion or creed, genetic information, affectional or sexual orientation, veteran status or any protected class is prohibited. Pennsylvania Western University is committed to the principles of free expression and academic freedom. As such, "discrimination" as defined in this policy is neither legally protected expression nor the proper exercise of academic freedom.

For information regarding civil rights or grievance procedures and inquiries concerning the application of Title VI, Title VII, Title IX, Section 504, ADEA, the ADA and its implementing regulation, please contact:

Amy Salsgiver, Executive Director of Compliance and Title IX
Andrew Matt, Associate Director of Compliance and Title IX

Sponsor:



Office of Community, Opportunity,
Responsibility and Engagement (CORE)

 @PennwestCORE

 core@pennwest.edu

Dr. Sheleta J. Camarda-Webb
Associate Vice President for CORE Strategic Initiatives
Camardawebb@pennwest.edu

Rogers J. Laugand III
Assistant Vice President for CORE Student Support
laugand@pennwest.edu

Savannah L. Dorsey
Assistant Director for CORE Initiatives
Dorsey_s@pennwest.edu

Alena E.M. Clark
Assistant Director for CORE Initiatives
Clark_a@pennwest.edu