

Press Release

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In honor of National Community Development Week, Rev. Anthony Evans, NBCI President, and Commissioner Aaron S. Demerson to deliver Keynote Address at the ACCEYSS Faith & Leadership Summit, April 14-15.



San Marcos, TX - In honor of National Community Development Week, Dr. Shetay Ashford-Hanserd and ACCEYSS Network will host the ACCEYSS Faith and Community Leadership Summit on Friday, April 14 - Saturday, April 15 at the Embassy Suites by Hilton and San Marcos Conference Center in San Marcos, TX. **Our Call to Action: "Activating Faith-Based Institutions to Diversify the STEM Workforce Pipeline."**

The ACCEYSS Faith and Community Leadership Summit facilitates a collaborative exchange for faith-based and community leaders to connect with researchers, industry professionals, government officials, economic developers, and workforce professionals with a common vision of serving *low-income, impoverished, formerly incarcerated and historically marginalized youth and young adults*.

The Summit will kick-off with a collaborative grant writing workshop on Friday afternoon, April 14, to assist organizations gain access to much needed funding to support their respective missions, followed by a networking reception. Panel conversations and table talks will take place on Saturday, April 15 to discuss how to build capacity of faith-based organizations and leveraging university-school-community-industry partnerships to DIVERSIFY the STEM Workforce and increase ACCESS to STEM Resources in Black and Brown Communities. The summit will close with a discussion about the mental, physical, and spiritual health in Black and Brown communities.

On Saturday morning (April 15) the Summit will begin with an address from Rev. Anthony Evans, President of the National Black Church Initiative (NBCI), followed by a Keynote Luncheon Address from Commissioner Aaron S. Demerson from the Texas Workforce Commission.

About Rev. Anthony Evans and NBCI

Originally from Savannah, Georgia, an advocate for justice, at an early age, while as a student in Vermont, Reverend Evans mobilized local colleges to raise over \$15,000 to help fund the investigation of the Atlanta child killings in the early eighties. After which, Reverend Evans earned a bachelor's degree in religion in 1981 from Middlebury College in Vermont. He was ordained in 1982 and went on to earn a Master's of Divinity in 1988 from Howard University School of Divinity. Shortly after earning his Masters, Reverend Evans became President of the National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) in 1992 and for the past twenty-five years he has devoted his expertise to leading the organization, working tirelessly on social and economic justice issues facing the black faith community.

Under Reverend Evans' leadership, NBCI has brought together a coalition of 150,000 churches from across the country, including over 15.7 million African Americans who join together to fight against health disparities, promote financial literacy, protect babies from abuse and neglect, and help preserve the environment. Reverend Evans remains a tireless advocate of the African American community and is determined to preserve the moral authority of the black church's voice. Reverend Evans has provided expertise and guidance related to health disparities in all stages of planning and project implementation to ensure cultural sensitivity of project materials and to support participation and engagement of African American and other minority families. He serves as a liaison with the Black Churches at all four recruitment areas and helps to identify churches and facilitate recruitment of community service providers at these churches. Reverend Evans has assisted in program evaluation to improve community uptake, and manuscript preparation to disseminate research.

About Commissioner Aaron S. Demerson

Aaron Demerson serves as the Commissioner Representing Employers for the Texas Workforce Commission. Governor Greg Abbott appointed him to the three-member Commission on August 20, 2019. In his role, Commissioner Demerson serves as an advocate for over 620,000 Texas employers and over 3 million small businesses. Commissioner Demerson's team is devoted to serving as the first line of resources for all Texas employers. His office provides a variety of tools including employment law conferences and an employer hotline to help businesses start, grow and thrive in Texas. Demerson is also devoted to supporting the economic development and education that helps advance the skilled workforce that Texas demands.

About ACCEYSS and Dr. Shetay Ashford-Hanserd

ACCEYSS (Association of Collaborative Communities Equipping Youth for STEEAAM Success) was founded by Dr. Shetay Ashford-Hanserd as one of 70 two-year design and development launch pilots funded by the National Science Foundation's INCLUDES program. The outcomes of the ACCEYSS project yielded creation of the ACCEYSS Model (i.e., informal K-12 STEM curriculum framework) and initiation of the ACCEYSS Network (The P2P Movement dba ACCEYSS Network, 501(c)(3), EIN: 38-4057454, DUNS: 081273876) with inaugural partners from the Greater San Marcos region. Additionally, she founded the STEEAAM pathways project in rural communities with partners in Luling, which was funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. She has consolidated her efforts under the umbrella of the ACCEYSS Network to strengthen the STEEAAM workforce ecosystem in the Greater San Marcos region. As a scholar-activist and chair/associate professor in the Department of Organization, Workforce, and Leadership Studies at Texas State University, she is transforming her research into action through the ACCEYSS Network's work. The ACCEYSS Network specializes in helping faith-based and grassroots organizations with resources and funding so that the STEEAAM (science, technology, engineering, entrepreneurship, agriculture, arts, mathematics) equity gap can be bridged in underserved communities.