WELD COLUMBUS
Executive Women's Series
December 2026

Community Building – Meeting in the Middle

As organizations navigate an evolving legal, cultural, and business landscape, leaders are being challenged to redefine what inclusive leadership looks like in practice. Join us for a thought-provoking panel discussion exploring how organizations can move beyond compliance-driven approaches to foster a culture of belonging, strengthen community connections, and create measurable business impact. Drawing on perspectives from philanthropy, higher education, and corporate leadership, our panelists will share insights on building trust, finding common ground, and leading effectively through complexity and change.

Mikaela Hunt, Chief Communications Officer, Ohio Department of Commerce, will moderate a dynamic conversation featuring:

- **Dr. John Comerford**, President, Otterbein University
- **Margaret Finley**, Head of Culture & Engagement and Corporate Affairs, Advanced Drainage Systems
- **Dan Sharpe**, Senior Vice President of Community Research and Grants Management, The Columbus Foundation



Dr. John Comerford



Margaret Finley



Dan Sharpe



Mikaela Hunt
Moderator

For WELD Columbus Corporate Members Only

You will receive an invitation from Stefany Wendeln if your organization qualifies for this event.

8:00am-9:30am

2

DECEMBER

Kegler Brown Hill & Ritter
65 E. State St.
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Speaker Bios



Dr. John Comerford
President
Otterbein University

Dr. John Comerford is president of Otterbein University and a vocal advocate for access, affordability, and innovation in higher education. Under his leadership, Otterbein established a scholarship that covers full tuition for Ohio students from families with financial need; set up a fund to invest in crowdsourced ideas from the University community that would immediately grow enrollment or revenue; and created a four-year career and professional preparation curriculum guided by trained advisors and mentors so Otterbein graduates are workforce ready. Comerford also serves as president of the Coalition for the Common Good, a higher education system of private, independent nonprofit colleges and universities founded by Otterbein and Antioch Universities to improve equity in education through expanding graduate programs, workforce development, and degree completion.

He is a board member of the Columbus Council on World Affairs, Delaware County Finance Authority, Educational and Institutional Insurance Administrators, Inc., Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Ohio, and Ohio Foundation of Independent Colleges.

Speaker Bios



Margaret Finley
Head of Culture & Engagement and Corporate Affairs
Advanced Drainage Systems

Margaret D. Finley is an executive, coach, speaker, and community leader committed to helping people and organizations thrive. She serves as Head of Culture & Engagement and Corporate Affairs at Advanced Drainage Systems, where she helps shape the employee experience and strengthen connections across an organization of approximately 7,000 people. Margaret is also President of the Central Ohio Belonging Consortium (COBC), bringing leaders together to advance inclusion and belonging throughout the region. Her work reflects a belief that people do their best when they feel seen, respected, and able to contribute.

As founder of Move HER Forward Coaching & Consulting, Margaret creates experiences that help women and girls lead with courage, purpose, and confidence. Her platforms, *The Ambitious Woman* and *The Ambitious Girl*, connect leadership development across generations - from classrooms and campuses to workplaces and boardrooms. She brings the same commitment to her speaking, coaching, and community partnerships. Margaret is the author of ***Protect Your Peace*, a book about becoming emotionally grounded, purposeful, and unbothered.** Across her work, she encourages people to recognize their strength, claim their ambition, and move forward with intention.

Speaker Bios



Dan Sharpe
Senior Vice President of Community Research and Grants Management
The Columbus Foundation

Dan joined The Columbus Foundation in 2004. His responsibilities include overseeing the development and implementation of grant policies, program priorities, and strategic grantmaking. Under his leadership, the Community Research and Grants Management team plays a unique role in convening community discussions around areas of need, participating in and leading community initiatives and partnerships to address these needs.

Prior to this role, Dan has contributed to The Columbus Foundation in multiple capacities, most recently as Director of Community Leadership and Nonprofit Effectiveness. Additionally, he has served as an officer for Community Research and Grants Management, online media manager for Communications and Marketing, and project manager of a regional college student engagement and retention effort where he managed the program's research, construction, and implementation.

Dan was selected to participate in the Harvard Business School Executive Education Young American Leaders Program (YALP)—a program of the U.S. Competitiveness Project at Harvard Business School. He is a graduate of Leadership Columbus, a past co-chair of the Create Columbus Commission, and was recognized as one of Columbus Business First's 40 Under 40. Additionally, Dan has been named a Future 50 by Columbus CEO, a Rising Star by the national Business Journals, and received Ohio Wesleyan University's Young Alumni Award.

Dan is a graduate of Ohio Wesleyan University with a Bachelor of Arts in politics and government, and has a Masters of Public Administration from the Voinovich School of Leadership & Public Affairs at Ohio University, Athens.

Speaker Bios



Mikaela Hunt
Chief Communications Officer
Ohio Department of Commerce

Mikaela Hunt is a communications executive, storyteller, and community connector known for turning complex ideas into clear, actionable narratives. She spent nearly 17 years in television news, with much of her time at NBC4 in Columbus as a producer, reporter, and anchor. That experience shaped her ability to lead and communicate in high-stakes, fast-moving environments.

Today, she serves as Chief Communications Officer for the Ohio Department of Commerce, where she leads statewide strategy at the intersection of business, technology, consumer protection, and public trust. Her work focuses on helping people understand and navigate change, especially as innovation reshapes industries and everyday life. Her team has been recognized by PRSA and PR Daily for excellence in communications and brand storytelling.

Mikaela also co-hosts Cbuzz, the Columbus Chamber's podcast highlighting Central Ohio's business leaders and innovators. Through that work, she continues her passion for elevating meaningful conversations and connecting people across sectors.

A graduate and current board member of Leadership Ohio, she was also named one of Columbus Business First's 40 Under 40. She remains actively involved in the community through the Hilliard Environmental Sustainability Commission and as host of Amazon Girls Tech Day.

Mikaela lives in Hilliard with her husband and two sons and brings both heart and strategic insight to every conversation. She is especially energized by conversations about what is next and how leaders can communicate, adapt, and build trust in a rapidly changing world.