

October 2023



Happy Halloween everyone.

With the changing seasons of the year come changing seasons to STEM-OPS and big news ...

Core partners and members of STEM-OPS want to welcome Basia Skudrzyk as the new principal investigator of the INCLUDES Alliance. She joins other core partner leads Dr. Stanley Andrisse of From Prison Cells to PhD (P2P), Dr. Richard Milner of Vanderbilt University's Institute for Race Research and Justice (RRJ), Syrita Steib of Operation Restoration, and Dr. Jill Stockwell of Princeton University's Prison Teaching Initiative. Together the team will continue to work toward the goals and mission that help support justice-involved people in education and workforce development. We thank Dr. Eden Badertscher for all of her energy and leadership in helping us develop this important program. She will continue to stay engaged as lead researcher and part of the Executive Committee. View [Badertscher's heartfelt LinkedIn message](#) to the STEM-OPS team and community about this project milestone.

---

*Please share this newsletter with your friends and colleagues.*

### **Newsletter at a Glance**

- From the Desktop of STEM-OPS Leadership
- Featured Stories
- The sySTEM Impacted Podcast
- STEM-OPS Blog
- STEM-OPS Core Partner Updates
- STEM-OPS Network "In the News"
- Upcoming Events and Opportunities
- Resources Recommended by STEM-OPS Core Partners
- Job Openings

# From the Desktop of STEM-OPS Leadership

By [Basia Skudrzyk](#), Principal Investigator

*Hello everyone. Thank you for the warm welcome. I am pleased and excited to start my new tenure as the principal investigator for STEM-OPS. I am honored to be coming on board to lead this fantastic and powerful project through its final year and to work collaboratively with project leadership and other stakeholders to find the paths and to build and sustain our work such that we continue to see positive reform to a system that often is viewed in such a negative light.*



*This October newsletter issue begins with a new section where one of STEM-OPS's Executive Committee members takes a moment to leave a note for all of our readers! It is my honor and privilege to be the first to welcome you. Next quarter, you will receive a leadership highlight from the founder and CEO of Operation Restoration, Syrira Steib, who continues to drive home the mission of empowerment, justice, education, and workforce development for all people.*

*Again, I welcome you and invite you to read about not only our accomplishments but the powerful movement that so many different organizations are working toward. If you would like to read more about my thoughts on the future of STEM-OPS, take a moment to check out [my blog post](#).*

## Featured Stories

### **NSF Includes Meeting**

The [NSF's Eddie Bernice Johnson INCLUDES National Network](#) brought together its Alliances on August 3 in Washington, DC, to share best practices and challenges centered on creating equitable systems, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity, and broadening participation in STEM education and workforce development for historically excluded populations in STEM—including Blacks and African Americans, Alaska Natives, Hispanics and Latinos, Native Americans, Native Hawaiians, Native Pacific Islanders, persons with disabilities, persons from economically

disadvantaged backgrounds, women and girls, as well as intersectional identities. STEM-OPS elevated their voices by communicating that justice-involved people fit the majority of all the listed excluded populations and continues to drive home the message of understanding the barriers and

realities of exclusion and importance of systems change.

*Pictured at right: Basia Skudrzyk, Una MacDowell, and Dr. Stanley Andrisse*



## Research Workshop



The STEM-OPS Research team gathered in Washington, DC, on August 1–2 to review the Systems Map and Working Group products. Dr. Ira Murray, Jason O'Malley, Mancy Thompson, Chris Etienne, Dr. Stanley Andrisse, Basia Skudrzyk, Una MacDowell, and Dr. Eden Badertscher convened to review, build on the foundations that drive the research and education behind the systemic barriers people experience when

being in carceral settings, and develop much-needed changes due to the lack of sustainable solutions for justice-involved people to succeed. Such data will better inform society and policyholders of the realities and harm currently being done due to ineffective practices and structures.

## Annual Executive Committee Meeting — Sustainability

The STEM-OPS program is just starting its fifth year and is focused on continuing to build on the goals and strategic plans the team has established. The Executive Committee met in person at Operation Restoration Headquarters on August 23–25 to discuss sustainability, identity, and communication practices that will allow STEM-OPS to continue to grow and move forward together and help create impact for people who are currently excluded from education and sustainable workforce opportunities. The team looks forward to partnering with organizations who can continue to help sustain its efforts and the research needed to help demonstrate the inefficiencies that are currently not allowing people to achieve their fullest potential. There is a severe workforce development gap; with the proper support network, training, education, and removal of barriers that currently don't allow people to work in spaces due to former

convictions, economic development and growth can be sustained and further developed.



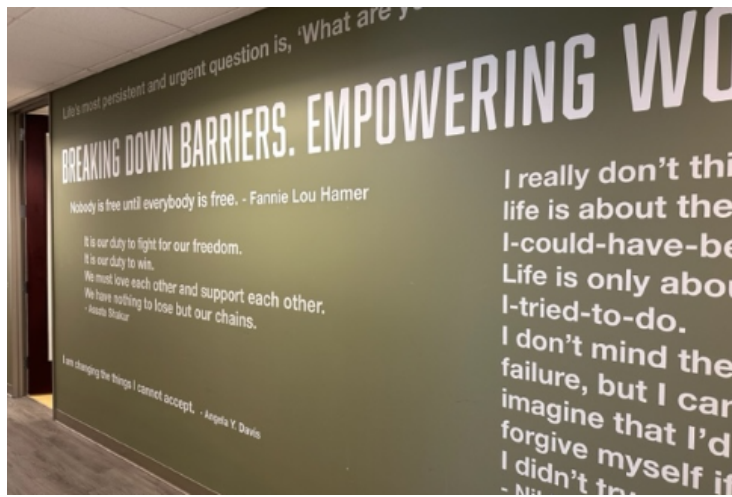
*Executive Committee members working hard while discussing sustainability*

extra space



*STEM-OPS Executive Committee members: Dr. Stanley Andrisse (P2P), Dr. Jolie Bernard (Jolie Bernard LLC, external collaborator), Dr. Eden Badertscher (EDC), Syrita Steib (OR), Dr. Jill Stockwell (PTI; on laptop), Basia Skudrzyk (EDC/P2P), Dr. Rich Milner (RRJ), Nadia Foster (EDC)*

*The powerful statements greeting visitors in the main*



## **STEM-OPS Hosts a Soft Launch of Its NSF-funded *Prisons Evolving as Connected Communities (PEaCC) Principles and Standards Paper***

On Tuesday, September 12, the NSF-funded Prisons Evolving as Connected Communities (PEaCC) team celebrated a significant milestone with the soft launch of its collaborative paper, *Principles and Standards for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Prisons*. This event brought together visionaries from diverse sectors and stakeholder groups who provided invaluable insights into the exploration of opportunities and challenges related to ICT access for incarcerated individuals and all members of prison communities. The authors are now diligently incorporating the wealth of advice and guidance received during this remarkable gathering. Stay tuned for a more formal launch soon as PEaCC continues its pioneering work in transforming the landscape of technology within the prison system.

## **The Rise Up Conference**

The [2023 Rise Up Virtual Conference](#) on September 6–8 marked the 52nd anniversary of the Attica Prison uprising, uniting justice-impacted individuals worldwide. The event, spanning three impactful days, centered on the theme of advancing higher education within and after incarceration. The conference commenced with a screening of *Since I Been Down*, a powerful exploration of the school-to-prison pipeline, accompanied by an engaging Q&A session. Subsequently, the conference delved into two days of insightful discussions led by both currently and formerly incarcerated individuals. These conversations spotlighted their indispensable contributions to the higher-education-in-prison (HEP) movement, spanning various tracks, including programming and informal education, advocacy, pathways to professions, equity and inclusion, and research/STEM. Rise Up organizers extend their congratulations to all conference participants and express gratitude to STEM-OPS, as well as valued STEM-OPS partners, for their sponsorship and support in making this event a success.

## **The sySTEM Impacted Podcast**

The sySTEM Impacted podcast, led by [Christopher Etienne](#) (PTI), shares stories of system-impacted people's successes and struggles related to accessing STEM education and careers.



In Episode 6, [\*\*\*Bridging the Divide: Exploring Educational Equity, Part 1\*\*\*](#), Christ Etienne and Boris Franklin dive into access to educational opportunities for students in low-income and more-affluent communities. They use personal narratives coupled with research to explore inequities in K-12 education and discuss current impacts and potential strategies that could be implemented to create more equitable access. [Take a listen!](#)

## STEM-OPS Blog

### [\*\*Unlocking Potential: Basia Skudrzyk and the STEM-OPS Journey\*\*](#)

In this heartfelt blog, Basia Skudrzyk introduces herself as the new principal investigator (PI) of the NSF Eddie Bernice Johnson INCLUDES Alliance STEM Opportunities in Prison Settings (STEM-OPS). She shares her personal journey and her dedication to this transformative role, emphasizing her experiences as a justice-impacted woman. Basia highlights the significance of education and support networks in the lives of justice-impacted individuals and the importance of post-incarceration support, emphasizes the need for education and community support for justice-impacted individuals, and outlines the future strategic framework for STEM-OPS and poses essential questions about the program's impact and direction. [Read more ...](#)

### [\*\*How Youth Can Help During Incarceration and Reentry\*\*](#)

This post, authored by Talia Proshan, senior at Ethical Culture Fieldston School and intern at P2P & [Womxn's Cohort Light to Life](#), presents ways that youth can offer their time, with adult oversight, to support justice-impacted individuals with reentry by keeping them informed of some of the latest technological advances while inside. [Read more ...](#)

###

We have a lot more content on the way, so make sure to check [our blog](#) on the STEM-OPS website often!!

## STEM-OPS Core Partner Updates

### **Initiative for Race Research and Justice, Vanderbilt University (RRJ)**

#### **Milner Presents at 2nd Annual Pedagogies for Higher Education in Prison Conference**

Dr. Rich Milner presented at the second Pedagogies for Higher Education in Prison Conference on September 15. The conference took place at Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) at Smyrna. Em Daniels and Milner served as keynote speakers. Milner focused on teaching and learning and the approach to building on the

relational aspect to increase self-efficacy and ultimately mastery for students in the carceral setting. The conference was hosted as a collaborative effort between partners from the Tennessee Higher Education Initiative ([THEI](#)), Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR), Rhodes College, and Lipscomb University.



*Milner (center front) with attendees of his keynote address*

### **Dr. Stan Andrisse Invited to RRJ**

On Thursday, September 28, RRJ hosted Dr. Stan Andrisse for a guest lecture and book signing. Andrisse's lecture, titled *Impact of Incarceration on Educational Outcomes for Communities of Color*, engaged an audience of over 20 attendees around myriad interconnected issues that fuel the incarceration crisis in the U.S., including the school-to-prison pipeline, increases in the number of people experiencing incarceration, racial disparities in contacts with law enforcement, and other systemic inequities that fuel mass incarceration. Andrisse also used his own life story to highlight the potential of justice-impacted persons to succeed in life when given opportunities to further their education and engage with mentors who see their humanity and cultivate their talents.

Attendees included Vanderbilt University faculty, staff, graduate and undergraduate students, and postdoctoral fellows. The audience included representatives from the Vanderbilt Prison Project—a coalition of Vanderbilt students seeking to expand educational opportunities in Nashville-area prisons that lead to Vanderbilt University degrees and certifications for those experiencing incarceration.

### **From Prison Cells to PhD (P2P)**

#### **P2P Wins Multi-Million Dollar Award to Support Community-led Project to Advance Digital Equity for Incarcerated People**

P2P was just awarded over 1 million dollars for the first year ([1OT2OD035976-01](#)) of a 5-year, \$6 million project titled, "Redefining & Investing in Community: Improving Telehealth Care and Educational Programs among People Incarcerated in Rural State

Prisons,” which is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Community Partnerships to Advance Science for Society ([ComPASS](#)). [Read more](#) about this exciting project. **Congratulations P2P!!**

## Operation Restoration

### One Woman, One Day, One Cab, Two Feet, Two Conferences

Operation Restoration founder, president, and CEO Syrita Steib recently addressed two conferences on the same day in New Orleans about the importance of recognizing, using, and advancing re-entry talent in the local workforce. Louisiana currently has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country; it also has the highest incarceration rate in the world. That presents an excellent opportunity to recruit formerly incarcerated persons for positions that help them with reentry and advancement to meaningful careers in the future.

Serving on a panel at the [NOLA Society for Human Resource Management \(SHRM\)](#), she addressed the topic of “Lessons from Re-entry: Reinvigorating an Underutilized Pool of Talent in Your Community.” Later that day, she continued the discussion about the importance of creating second chances for re-entry talent through education to employment pathways during the [Greater New Orleans GNOu Workforce Summit](#). Collaboration with economic development organizations can help move the needle on statistics that show that 44% of formerly incarcerated Black women are unemployed for the first 5 years after incarceration. Focusing on education and employment for women impacted by incarceration begins to build coalitions working toward eradicating inequalities and biases in the workplaces.



## Princeton University's Prison Teaching Initiative (PTI)

Chris Etienne just published Episode 6 of *The sySTEM Impacted* podcast, [Bridging the Divide: Exploring Educational Equity, Part 1](#). Make sure to check that out!

## RTI International

### 65th Anniversary!

In 2023, RTI is celebrating its 65th anniversary. Their vision is to address the world's most critical problems with science-based solutions in pursuit of a better future. The RTI team works with the STEM-OPS Alliance partners to find solutions to large, global challenges that improve the human condition. Dr. Natassia Rodriguez Ott and Dr. Nitya Venkateswaran are helping the team make a difference through evidence-based research that allows them to implement systems change.

## Education Development Center (EDC)



## New Hires to the EDC Backbone

In August, EDC welcomed **Sarah Jerome as STEM-OPS interim researcher** to the team. She will work closely with the Data & Measures Subcommittee. Sarah is a public health expert, researcher, and training and technical assistance (TTA) specialist, is dedicated to eliminating health disparities and promoting health equity for disenfranchised, marginalized, and underserved communities. She has experience in public health and disability policy; infant and early childhood mental health; maternal, family, adolescent, and child health; adverse childhood experiences; and substance misuse prevention.

In September, EDC welcomed **Michael (Mickey) Saine as STEM-OPS communications manager**. Self-described tech nerd, military veteran, and Chicago Bulls #1 fan, Mickey hails from Indiana. He is a co-owner of a property management company and the social media manager for P2P and media co-chair for media and messaging at Unlock Higher Education (UHE). He is deeply knowledgeable about information technology and is also deeply passionate about STEM training and opportunities for those who have been justice impacted. Mickey enjoys working out at the gym, deepening his learning on new tech trends & coding, and following basketball stats, so he is always prepared for a good debate with anyone who dares to test his support of his basketball team!



## EDC Staff Present at mEducation Alliance Annual Symposium

EDC staff presented "Inspiring the Next Generation of Innovators Through Biotechnology Learning Experiences," and "Integrating Learning Through Play with Technology in Formal Education," at the [2023 mEducation Alliance Annual Symposium](#) in Arlington, VA, September 11–13.

## STEM-OPS Network "in the News"

### Congratulations to the Leading with Conviction 2023 Graduates

Leading with Conviction™ (LwC) is a cohort-based, 12-month-long, advanced training opportunity developed by [Just Leadership USA](#) for mid- to senior-level leaders with a track record in advocacy, activism, and community organizing, including those working in the social, economic, or justice reform areas. LwC takes place both in-person and virtually. Training components include four weekend-long forums, six networking webinars, executive coaching, peer coaching, and regular networking and communication. Leaders are introduced to other people and practices closely linked to successful local, state, and federal efforts to dismantle oppressive systems and institutions in directly impacted communities nationwide.

## Upcoming Events and Opportunities

- **October 23–26:** [2023 Biennial Association for Justice-Involved Females and Organizations \(AJFO\) Conference](#)
- **October 26:** [Unlocking Employment: Opening Pathways to Economic Opportunity for People With Criminal Records](#)
- **October 28:** [2nd Annual Virtual Run/Walk for Education Justice](#)
- **October 30:** [Unlock Higher Education Monthly Meeting Speakers Series](#)
- **November 3–4:** [Beyond the Bars LA 2023 National Conference](#)
- **November 1–5:** [The AfroTECH Conference](#)
- **November 4:** [Prison-to-Professionals Cohort 34 Graduation](#)
- **November 9–11:** [13th National Conference on Higher Education in Prison \(NCHEP\)](#)
- **November 18-19:** [National Restorative Justice Symposium - 2023](#)

## Resources Recommended by STEM-OPS Core Partners

### BOOKS:

- [Cut the Carceral System Now](#) by Jack Norton
- [Unconfined](#) by Lily Taylor
- [What's Prison For? Punishment and Rehabilitation in the Age of Mass Incarceration](#) by Bill Keller
  - Book review: [What's Prison For? Concise Diagnosis of a Huge American Problem, The Guardian](#)
  - Book review: ["What's Prison For?" Examines Incarceration in the U.S., The New York Times](#)
- [The Nickle Boys](#) by Colson Whitehead

### MIXED MEDIA:

- [Rehabilitation and Education In America's Prisons](#)(1A Radio Program, NPR)
- [Ep122 Raquel Pinderhughes, Roots of Success](#)(Talaterra Podcast)
- [Colleen Eren, Author of Reform Nation, on #Prison Reform](#)(Sorry Not Sorry Podcast)
- [A Conversation with the U.S. Pardon Attorney Office: A Clemency Series](#)(National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers Video)

## Job Openings

- Various: [Aventiv Technologies](#)

- Various: [Center for Employment Opportunities](#)
- Various: [Honest Jobs](#)
- Various: [Jobs for the Future](#)
- Various: [Launchcode](#)
- Various: [Operation Restoration](#)
- Various: [Vera Institute of Justice](#) | [Vera Institute](#)

ALSO, FICGN welcomes job posts from other organizations on their website. If you'd like to add a job there, use this link to their [job board](#).

## Photo of the Quarter



*Meet LeLe G., a remarkable grandmother and an inspiration to us all! She's a true testament to the strength of love and determination in the face of adversity.*



## STEM-OPS Website

**Become part of the solution! Join the ever-growing [STEM-OPS community](#).**

\*\*\*

**REQUEST FOR YOUR FEEDBACK:** STEM-OPS is striving to improve and provide quality information and resources that demonstrate our commitment to our mission—providing access to all people to STEM education and workforce development. How can we do better? Send us feedback about this newsletter by taking [this survey](#).

Missed an issue of the newsletter? View our [newsletter archive](#).

Received this newsletter from a friend and want your own? [Join our mailing list](#).

If you have any comments or questions about this newsletter, please email [info@stem-ops.org](mailto:info@stem-ops.org).

---



Powered by Glue Up

All-in-one CRM Software for Growing Communities