



DREXEL UNIVERSITY  
**Raj & Kamla Gupta**  
Governance Institute  
*LeBow College of Business*

# The 2025 Census Project

## INCREASING DIVERSITY IN NONPROFIT BOARDROOMS

*A collaboration between the Women's Nonprofit Leadership Initiative and Drexel University's Raj & Kamla Gupta Governance Institute*

### REDEFINING THE FACE OF THE NONPROFIT SECTOR

**Board diversity enhances institutional performance and is a crucial enabler of good governance for large public-serving nonprofits. Transparency about board composition is fundamental to stakeholder accountability, yet this transparency is rare.** Unlike public companies, nonprofit organizations are not required to disclose such information. Furthermore, though some boards voluntarily include photos and biographical information on their websites, many list only the trustees' names, and some provide no information on the board at all. Consequently it is challenging, even for researchers, to obtain accurate information on nonprofit board demographics.

**The Women's Nonprofit Leadership Initiative (WNLI) and Drexel's Gupta Governance Institute (GGI) seek to fill that gap in understanding.** Through the 2025 Census Project, leading academics and nonprofit governance experts will collect, analyze and report the demographic composition of governing boards at the region's largest nonprofit higher education and healthcare institutions (eds and meds), and engage in outreach and advocacy efforts to highlight gaps in diversity and support change. The project's four key pillars—research, knowledge sharing, programming and advocacy—align with WNLI's goal for governing boards of nonprofit healthcare and higher education institutions to reflect the diversity of their stakeholders and GGI's mission to positively impact nonprofit governance across the sector.



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**THE POTENTIAL TO MAKE A BROAD IMPACT ACROSS PHILADELPHIA**

Higher education and healthcare institutions play a significant role in this region’s overall economic health. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia’s Anchor Economy Initiative, Philadelphia’s eds and meds account for 13 percent of all jobs and 8.4 percent of the region’s income—or \$33.8 billion. Their impacts also extend beyond the economy. Their primary purpose is not to produce or sell goods or generate profits for shareholders, but to enhance the lives of the countless patients whose health they improve and students whose minds they train.

**Boards of these organizations have considerable power to make major decisions that shape institutional, educational and healthcare policies and practices.** To govern effectively and ensure the needs and concerns of all members of their constituencies are considered and reflected in governance decisions, their board members must understand the populations they serve and the diversity of life experiences they represent. **In a region that is majority female with substantial communities of color, the demographic composition of few eds and meds boards reflect the gender, racial and other diversity of their stakeholders.**

Change will not happen overnight, but The Census Project’s research, programmatic, outreach and advocacy initiatives have supported progress in both sectors since its launch in 2019. **But there is more work to be done to increase awareness and encourage the governing boards of these organizations, as well as all nonprofits in the region, to achieve a gender and racial balance reflective of their communities, and to provide more board leadership opportunities for women and people of color.**



*“Now is the moment to address board composition and board culture as a cornerstone of advancing a nonprofit’s mission, mitigating risks, strengthening preparedness, protecting reputation, serving stakeholders, and anticipating what is on the horizon and beyond. And now is the moment for boards to be transparent about the backgrounds and demographic makeup of their members.”*

— **Jane Scaccetti, JD**, Temple University trustee and former board chair of the Temple University Health System and Hospital; chair of the audit committee of Penn Entertainment; co-chair of the Women’s Nonprofit Leadership Initiative

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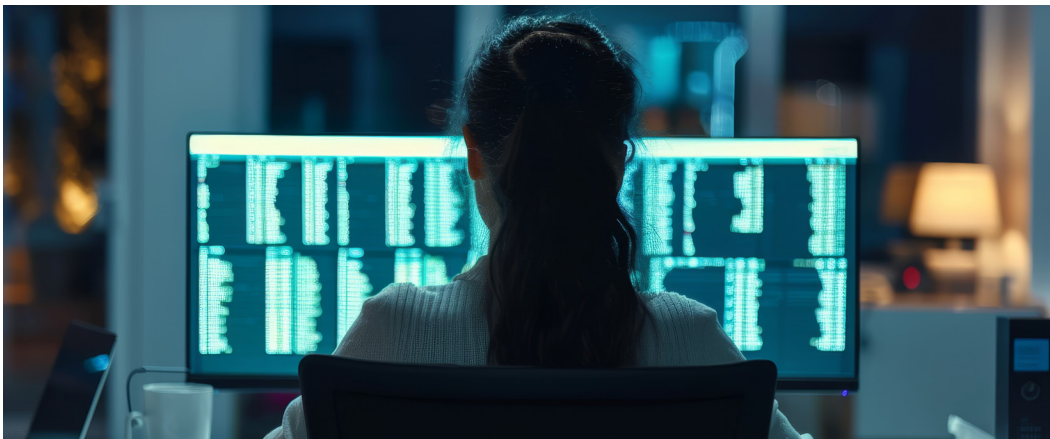
**PROPELLING ROBUST DATA COLLECTION AND IN-DEPTH INSIGHTS**

WNLI is an association of Philadelphia area women leaders who believe board diversity enhances institutional performance and is necessary for achieving true institutional diversity, equity and inclusion. WNLI has worked to significantly increase diversity on the governing boards of nonprofit healthcare and higher education institutions since 2012 and has earned a national reputation as a provider of reliable and accurate information about nonprofit board demographics.

In 2019, WNLI conducted the first comprehensive census of women on the boards of the 50 largest eds and meds in Greater Philadelphia. The inaugural census report revealed a large gender gap with women of color being the most underrepresented group. A follow-up report in 2022 showed increased gender and racial/ethnic diversity on boards in both sectors, but highlighted persistent gaps including the fact that board chairs remained predominantly white males.

**GGI has joined WNLI as its research partner for the 2025 Census Project. GGI is recognized as a premier research center of effective and responsible nonprofit governance.** The Institute’s research is conducted by world-renowned faculty and published in top academic journals. Its thought leadership, grounded in the latest research, uses objective, empirical evidence to identify and solve challenges and maximize opportunities facing nonprofit boards and management teams. GGI’s knowledge sharing initiatives, programmatic activities and advocacy efforts foster high-impact collaborations between nonprofit leaders, governance experts, Drexel faculty, board members and trustees, donors, community organizations and other stakeholders.

The 2025 Census Project research team will be led by Drexel’s Teresa Harrison, PhD, professor of economics and GGI academic director. Leveraging methodologies and data architecture developed by Dr. Harrison, **the team will collect more robust data and expand the scope of previous Census Project research** to include regional and national benchmarking data. The 2025 report will also include **more in-depth quantitative and qualitative analyses** and provide insights into the effect of board diversity on consolidation trends in the education and healthcare sectors through **economic and industry-focused lenses.**



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*“When I became President of Widener University, less than one-fifth of our trustees were female. The goal during my term was to increase the board’s diversity to better reflect the demographics of the student body and improve governance and decision-making. By the time I left the presidency in 2022, we had doubled the percentage of women trustees on the university’s board. The Census Project reports in 2019 and 2022 reinforced the importance and impact of our efforts and provided suggestions for intentional and implementable actions that helped us speed the pace of change.”*

— **Julie E. Wollman, PhD**, professor of practice and associate dean for executive programs, University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education; former president, Widener University

## HIGHLY VISIBLE DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS

The report will launch in November 2025 during Nonprofit Directors Dialogue: GGI’s premier annual event for nonprofit executives and boards, which will include a panel discussion of key census findings and recommendations. In addition, the featured speaker during an end-of-day reception will tell the story behind the numbers and offer specific recommendations for increasing board gender and racial diversity.

**Major media and communications outreach and advocacy efforts will increase the reach and impact of the 2025 Census Project and amplify its calls to action around board diversity.** Paid digital and social media campaigns featuring prominent and influential leaders will reach across multiple platforms to maximize the report’s visibility and encourage and support organizations and those they serve in demanding change.



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**THE NEED**

Our goal is to raise \$75,000 to support research, writing, publication, outreach and advocacy. The lead sponsor of this initiative will be recognized as a contributor alongside WNLI and GGI in the report and related events and marketing and communications campaigns.

**Project expenses include:**

Undergraduate and graduate research assistants to assist with research and writing the report	<b>\$15,000</b>
Graphic design, including infographics and data visualization optimized for print and digital distribution	<b>\$12,500</b>
Launch event, which will generate media coverage, drive audiences toward the report and encourage action based on the report’s findings	<b>\$15,000</b>
Digital content development, editing and production, and targeted digital and social media campaigns to maximize the report’s visibility and reach across multiple platforms and amplify key messages and calls to action	<b>\$25,000</b>
Educational events throughout the region including presentations to educate and engage stakeholders, and roundtable discussions with boards to better understand and help navigate specific challenges to diversification	<b>\$7,500</b>

**To support increasing board diversity  
 in Philadelphia’s anchor institutions or to learn more, contact:**

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