Diversity and inclusion are, ostensibly, foundational values of the North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM). A major goal of the current organizational strategic plan is to, “understand and serve the perspective of under-represented and under-served stakeholders,” which unequivocally states, “NASSM should be a diverse and inclusive academic society,” (Cunningham et al., 2016, p. 5). To this end, the organization has sought to create a more inclusive climate for individuals across a number of diversity dimensions (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation, disability status). Across its history, NASSM has taken several formal steps to increase its focus on diversity and inclusion, including the formation of a standing Diversity and Inclusion Committee, the creation of the Joy DeSensi Diversity Award for Inclusive Excellence, undertaking multiple organizational climate studies, and the inclusion of diversity as a topic area in conference presentations and articles in its associated journals. However, despite these efforts, the executive leadership of NASSM has remained strikingly homogenous.

Leaders play an important role in setting and enforcing norms and priorities in an organization, particularly with respect to diversity and inclusion (Burton, Welty Peachey, & Damon, 2020; Cunningham, 2019). Having a diverse leadership board is, therefore, related to the development of equitable policies and practices in organizations (Cook & Glass, 2014). Unfortunately, a glass ceiling (i.e., invisible barrier to top-level leadership) seems to persist for diverse individuals in NASSM. The Executive Council has, for example, historically been comprised primarily of individuals from research-intensive institutions and has had poor representation of non-white groups. From 2005 to 2020, less than 7% of the Executive Council were non-white. As such, the perspectives of many diverse stakeholders in NASSM are unlikely to be considered in organizational decision-making. Indeed, recent findings from member surveys suggest that NASSM is perceived as undervaluing perspectives of those at teaching institutions and racial minorities, along with other forms of diversity (Rich, Olushola Ogunrinde, & Odio, 2018).

Given the importance of inclusion in advancing NASSM, it is important to ensure the inclusion of diverse groups in organizational leadership. This workshop, consistent with the most recent strategic plan of the organization (Cunningham et al., 2016), seeks to engage in conversation about the experiences and barriers to leadership faced by underrepresented groups in NASSM. This workshop will include a panel discussion with individuals from underserved backgrounds and groups who have held leadership and/or administrative positions in the organization. Panel members will have served on or chaired standing committees or been elected to the Executive Council of NASSM. Discussion will focus on identifying barriers and exploring strategies to advance diverse representation in leadership in NASSM. Topics may include, but are not limited to, organizational governance, coded messaging, intersectional identities, institutional incentives, and other barriers.