

In celebration of Women's History Month, the Quad-Cities Campus Student Government Association hosted a BHC HERstory: Women's Empowerment Luncheon and Panel in honor of eight Black Hawk College employees.

SGA senators selected women who had personally made contributions to their continued student success, demonstrated achievements in their specific fields, and embodied the impact of women empowering women.



Members of the BHC HERstory: Women's Empowerment Panel – Dr. Emily Lehman, Zaiga Thorson, Ewelina Bergert and Melissa Medendorp in the back row and Lisa Hansen, Torria Norman, Jenni Wessel-Fields and Dr. Xixuan Collins in the front row. Not pictured is Dr. Irene Leites.

"When I think of the myself being empowered, I can't help empower someone else until I am empowered," said honoree Ewelina Bergert, assistant professor of business. "You have to think, who is around us that is pouring into our glass so we can do that for others.

"We can't pour out of an empty glass," she said.

Honoree Melissa Medendorp, an educational advisor, offered this advice: "Go outside of your box. I never realized how empowering it can be to find new things and learn to grow from that change.

"Just never be afraid to go outside of that box," she said.

Dr. Xixuan Collins, novelist and professor emerita of biology, was the keynote speaker at the luncheon.

“Find your tribe. Find your cheerleader,” she said. “Not necessarily only women, but people who will be there to cheer you on but also be honest to tell you when things are not working.”

The eight honorees/panelists were:

- Ewelina Bergert, assistant professor of business
- Lisa Hansen, director of TRIO Student Support Services & Tutoring
- Dr. Emily Lehman, professor of biology
- Dr. Irene Leites, instructor of music
- Melissa Medendorp, educational advisor
- Torria Norman, department chair and professor of English
- Zaiga Thorson, department chair and professor of art
- Jenni Wessel-Fields, professor of reading

[Read about the honorees.](#)

[Watch a short video from the panel discussion.](#)

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