



# NASDEV WIL 2026 CONCEPT DOCUMENT DEVELOPMENT

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT  
DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONALS

**THEME:**

“NEW HORIZONS IN LEADERSHIP: WOMEN LEADING, MEN  
PARTNERING FOR ETHICAL AND EQUITABLE INSTITUTIONS”

**CONFERENCE DATES:**

19 - 22 AUGUST 2026

**HOST INSTITUTION:**

UNISA |   
university  
of south africa

**REGISTRATION PERIOD:**

01 APRIL – 03 JULY 2026



# 1. Introduction

The observance of Women's Month in South Africa each August continues to serve as a powerful reminder of women's historic and ongoing contributions to social justice, leadership, and institutional transformation. Rooted in the legacy of the 1956 Women's March to the Union Buildings, Women's Month remains a critical platform for interrogating gendered power relations and advancing equity within all sectors of society, including higher education and the TVET sector.

The National Association of Student Development Professionals (NASDEV) marks a significant milestone in 2026 as it celebrates 30 years of advancing student development, professional practice, and transformational leadership in South Africa. In this milestone year, NASDEV intentionally positions the 2026 Women in Leadership (WIL) Conference as both a commemorative and forward-looking intervention that reflects on past gains while charting new pathways for ethical, inclusive, and collaborative leadership.

Distinctively, the 2026 WIL Conference explicitly brings men into the conversation as strategic partners in advancing gender equity and institutional excellence. While centring women's leadership, the conference recognises that sustainable transformation within higher education requires shared accountability, ethical partnership, and constructive dialogue across gender lines. Men are therefore invited not as replacements or competitors, but as allies and co-stewards of equitable institutional cultures.

Under the theme "New Horizons in Leadership: Women Leading, Men Partnering for Ethical and Equitable Institutions," the conference responds to contemporary challenges facing higher education, including ethical leadership deficits, institutional mistrust, gender-based violence, intersectional inequalities, and increasing demands for accountability and innovation. The conference seeks to create a rigorous and reflective space for women leaders, male allies, student leaders, and professionals to collectively reimagine leadership that is principled, future-focused, and socially responsive.

## 2. Background and Rationale

Despite progressive policy frameworks and increased participation of women in higher education, leadership spaces remain uneven and contested. Women continue to encounter structural barriers such as gendered organisational cultures, unequal access to decision-making, emotional labour expectations, and limited mentorship opportunities. These challenges are further complicated by intersecting identities related to race, class, disability, age, and institutional location.

At the same time, higher education institutions are navigating complex transitions characterised by ethical scrutiny, technological disruption, resource constraints, and social instability. In this context, leadership that is ethical, accountable, and collaborative is no longer optional but imperative. Student affairs and development professionals are uniquely positioned to influence institutional values, leadership development, and student success, making targeted leadership interventions both timely and necessary.

The NASDEV Women in Leadership Conference 2026 responds to these realities by foregrounding women's leadership while deliberately engaging men as partners in transformation. The conference advances a relational and systems-oriented approach to leadership, emphasising dialogue, shared responsibility, and institutional integrity as foundations for sustainable change.

## 3. Conference Objective

The objectives of the NASDEV Women in Leadership Conference 2026 are to:

- Critically engage with ethical leadership, accountability, and governance challenges in higher education.
- Strengthen women's leadership capacity while promoting constructive gender partnerships.
- Foster collaborative leadership approaches that support institutional transformation and social cohesion.
- Advance intersectional and inclusive leadership practices responsive to diverse institutional contexts.
- Build sustainable leadership ecosystems through mentorship, coaching, and intergenerational knowledge exchange.
- Generate actionable strategies and recommendations for policy, practice, and institutional renewal.

# 4. Conference Theme and Sub-Themes

## 4.1. Main Theme

“New Horizons in Leadership: Women Leading, Men Partnering for Ethical and Equitable Institutions”

This theme positions women as drivers of leadership change while affirming men’s roles as partners in upholding ethics, accountability, and institutional excellence. It reflects an evolving understanding of leadership as relational, dialogical, and grounded in shared responsibility.

## 4.2. Sub - Themes

### I. Leadership Ethics and Accountability

- Exploring how women leaders’ model ethical leadership and accountability within institutions.
- Examining men’s roles as partners in upholding ethical standards and promoting transparency.
- Case studies of decision-making that embed fairness, integrity, and responsibility.

### II. Collaborative Leadership for Institutional Transformation

- Examining joint leadership models where women lead and men contribute as allies.
- Strategies for co-creating inclusive organisational cultures and sustainable change.
- Tools for fostering collaborative decision-making in hierarchical and complex institutions.

### III. Future-Focused Leadership and Strategic Foresight

- Equipping leaders to anticipate emerging trends, technological disruption, and social shifts.
- Scenario planning and strategic thinking as tools for equitable institutional growth.
- Women and men collaborating to build resilient and adaptable organisations.

### IV. Intersectional Leadership and Power Dynamics

- Understanding how race, class, disability, and other identities intersect with leadership.
- Strategies for women leaders to navigate systemic barriers while engaging male partners.
- Building institutions that value diversity, equity, and shared accountability.

## V. Ethical Crisis Leadership and Resilience

- Women leaders managing crises, uncertainty, and organisational risk.
- Men as allies in reinforcing ethical practices and resilience during institutional challenges.
- Case studies on navigating reputational, financial, or social crises ethically.

## VI. Building Sustainable Leadership Ecosystems

- Developing leadership pipelines that promote shared responsibility across genders.
- Systems thinking for institutional development and succession planning.
- Collaborative mentorship, coaching, and intergenerational knowledge transfer.

# 5. Indicative Conference Topics

- Ethical Leadership and Accountability in Higher Education
- Women Leading Institutional Transformation
- Gender Partnership and Shared Accountability
- Intersectionality, Power, and Leadership Practice
- Crisis Leadership and Organisational Resilience
- Strategic Foresight and Future-Oriented Leadership
- Mentorship, Coaching, and Leadership Pipelines
- Student Affairs Leadership in Times of Change
- Gender-Based Violence, Ethics, and Institutional Responsibility
- Building Trust and Integrity in Higher Education Institutions

# 6. Expected Outcomes

- Enhanced ethical awareness and leadership competence among women and male partners.
- Strengthened cross-gender and cross-institutional leadership networks.
- Practical frameworks for collaborative and accountable leadership practice.
- Strategic recommendations for policy, governance, and institutional development.
- Reinforced commitment to gender equity and ethical institutional cultures.

## 7. Target Audience

- Women professionals in student affairs and higher education
- Male allies and leaders committed to gender equity.
- Emerging and established institutional leaders.
- Student leaders and representative.
- Transformation, governance, and policy practitioners
- Higher education executives and decision-makers

## 8. Format and Methodology

The Women in Leadership Conference 2026 will adopt a deliberately structured and dialogical methodology that reflects the conference's commitment to partnership, ethical engagement, and shared accountability.

The programme will include periods of parallel engagement, where women and men convene in separate spaces to explore leadership and developmental content relevant to their distinct positionalities and experiences within higher education. These parallel sessions will allow for critical reflection, candid dialogue, and focused capacity-building within each group.

On the following day, joint plenary and collaborative sessions will be convened to bring women and men together to share insights, engage in dialogue, and co-create strategies for ethical and equitable institutional leadership. This approach is intended to deepen mutual understanding, strengthen partnership, and translate parallel learning into collective action.

The overall programme will comprise keynote addresses, panel discussions, interactive workshops, and facilitated dialogue sessions, ensuring a participatory, reflective, and practice-oriented conference experience.

## 9. Proposed Programme Outline

- 19 August 2026: Registration and Official Opening (18:00)
- 20 August 2026: Full-Day Conferencing
- 21 August 2026: Half-Day Conferencing; Site Visit (Freedom Park: 14:00–17:00) and State Theatre (18:00)
- 22 August 2026: Conferencing until 14:00 and Gala Dinner (18:00)

## 10. Conclusion

The NASDEV Women in Leadership Conference 2026, hosted during NASDEV's 30th anniversary year, represents a strategic investment in ethical, inclusive, and future-oriented leadership in higher education. By centring women's leadership while intentionally engaging men as partners, the conference advances a vision of shared accountability, institutional integrity, and transformative change. It reaffirms NASDEV's commitment to social justice, professional excellence, and collaborative leadership, while inviting the sector to collectively shape new horizons in leadership for generations to come.

### Conference Fees

Category	Amount
Delegate from affiliated Institutions. (University & TVET)	R7 000.00
Delegate from unaffiliated Institutions. (University & TVET)	R8 000.00
Student delegate	R7 000.00

#### Payment for Conference Registration Fees

Registration fees are payable through the following bank details:

**Name:** National Association of Student Development

**Reference:** Name of the Institution

**Account Holder:** NASDEV

**Bank:** First National Bank

**Account:** 62708577020

**Branch:** Bellville Civic Centre

**Branch Code:** 254005

**Type:** Gold Business Account