

## Leveraging Familial Capital to Improve Graduate Students Experiences

Geraldine L. Cochran  
The Ohio State University



Graduate programs have increasingly sought to implement research-supported, practices and policies that improve experiences for STEM graduate students. In this presentation, I will share a study that contributes to the growing body of work on improving graduate education by examining the role of familial capital—knowledge, values, and support systems derived from kinship and community—in the experiences of students in physics bridge programs. Our findings highlight the importance of recognizing and valuing familial capital in graduate education policies and practices. We propose actionable recommendations, including institutional support for maintaining familial connections, milestone celebrations that are open to family, and financial support for graduate students. By integrating familial capital into departmental structures, graduate programs can create more supportive environments that acknowledge and leverage the strengths marginalized students bring to academia.

**Speaker bio:** Geraldine L. Cochran is an Associate Professor of Physics at The Ohio State University. Cochran is a Fellow of the American Physical Society (APS) and a Fellow of the American Association of Physics Teachers (AAPT). Cochran has extensive experience conducting physics education research that spans multiple levels of physics education including high school curricula, introductory collegiate level curricula, assessment in graduate education, and mentorship within the physics workforce. Cochran also investigates the experiences of marginalized people at various points in the academic pathway in physics, and interventions and programs aimed at making physics more accessible to all. Cochran is a member of the Inclusive Graduate Education Network research hub, a co-PI on the Inclusive Graduate Programs in Physics project, and the PI of the network for Transforming Introductory Physics Sequences to Support all Students.