



### Steven D. Abramowitch, PhD

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**5:30 pm–6:30 pm**

**Terrace Ballroom 1–3  
Pennsylvania Convention Center**

### Emerging from Ignorance

**A**s a suburban, white, middle-class child born in the post-civil rights era, I grew up with the blissful notion that I lived in a country of equal opportunity. After all, we're taught that the laws give equal rights to everyone. I happily went about my days playing kick-the-can, watching space shuttle launches, and wishing that I could be the next Karate Kid. Through college and graduate school, essentially nothing existed outside of my immediate sphere of influence because there was little time for anything else. The next phase of my academic career was all about writing grants, publishing, and figuring out how to teach. Thus, when I was personally confronted with the inequalities that actually existed in my adult world, it was like a cold slap to the face of the socially ignorant child that was still living inside me. I share this because I suspect that this is not an uncommon scenario. What was uncommon, however, was the response of my mentors who encouraged me to make these issues a priority if I felt passionately about them. Instead of the more typical "wait until you're tenured" or "there is no money in that type of work" advice that most junior faculty receive, I was fortunate to be in an environment that enabled me to emerge from my ignorance. This has led to an academic career focused on women's health research, creating an inclusive academic culture, performing community outreach, and, now, challenging undergraduate engineering students to emerge as more globally-minded and socially conscious engineers. This talk is a case-study to highlight the critical role that leadership plays in diversity and inclusion and the sustained impact that can result from principled advice to junior faculty.

**Steven Abramowitch, PhD**, is an Associate Professor of Bioengineering and William Kepler Whiteford Faculty Fellow in the Swanson School of Engineering at the University of Pittsburgh. There, he is the director of the Translational Biomechanics Laboratory and CampBioE, a summer camp program for middle and high school students that has been running for more than 10 years and specifically aims to provide opportunities for underserved students. He is the co-PI of two major NSF awards that are aimed at creating opportunities and environments to ensure the success of underrepresented and underserved students in Engineering at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. He also currently shares PI status on two NIH R01s focused on female pelvic health related issues. He has dedicated his research career to improving the quality of life for women suffering from pelvic floor disorders and his research has resulted in more than 60 refereed journal articles, 25 refereed conference papers, 7 book chapters, and 160 conference abstracts. Those works have been cited over 4000 times resulting in an h-index of 32.

Dr. Abramowitch is and has been the research mentor for a number of underrepresented PhD students and has been repeatedly recognized by his institution for his commitment to mentoring and service related to diversity.