



13th Annual Disability Symposium  
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA  
APRIL 11, 2014

## PLENARIES

### **Angela Duckworth, Ph.D.**

Dr. Angela Lee Duckworth is an associate professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania and a 2013 MacArthur Fellow. Angela studies non-IQ competencies, including self-control and grit, which predict success both academically and professionally. Her research populations have included West Point cadets, National Spelling Bee finalists, novice teachers, salespeople, and students. Angela received a BA in Neurobiology from Harvard in 1992 and, as a Marshall Scholar, a Masters in Neuroscience from Oxford. She completed her PhD in psychology at the University of Pennsylvania. Prior to her career in research, Angela founded a non-profit summer school for low-income children which won the Better Government Award for the state of Massachusetts and was profiled as a Harvard Kennedy School case study. Angela has also been a McKinsey management consultant and, for five years, a math teacher in the public schools of San Francisco, Philadelphia, and New York City.

### **True Grit**

Dr. Duckworth will focus in particular on self-control (regulating attention, emotion, and behavior in the face of momentary temptation and distraction) and grit (perseverance and passion for long-term goals). She will discuss how these competencies (or lack thereof) play out in children and adults, their relationship to traditional measures of talent and achievement, their underlying psychological mechanisms, and learnable, teachable strategies that facilitate their expression for students (and teachers).

### **Adam Taliaferro, Esq.**

While playing football for Penn State in a game against rival, Ohio State, Mr. Taliaferro made a routine helmet-to-helmet tackle that would change the course of his life. He had broken his neck—a similar injury suffered by the late, Christopher Reeve. Given only a 3% chance of ever walking again, he fought insurmountable odds to not only walk, but to walk well. Though playing football is no longer in Adam's future, many around the nation have followed his inspirational tale of recovery, leading authors Scott Brown and Sam Carchidi to chronicle his remarkable story in their 2001 book *Miracle in the Making*. Mr. Taliaferro is currently a Health Care Advocate with Bristol Myers Squibb and holds office as the youngest Freeholder in the state of New Jersey as a member of the Gloucester County Board of Chosen Freeholders. He has also started his own foundation, "The Adam Taliaferro Foundation," that provides financial assistance to individuals affected by spinal cord injuries which has raised over \$1 million to date. Through

his foundation and his passion for motivational speaking, Mr. Taliaferro continues to provide hope for many people who may feel that there is no reason to hope at all.

## **Navigating Life's Challenges Through Belief in One's Self**

Throughout our lives we face challenges. Adam Taliaferro's story speaks to the strength of the human spirit and how we all have the ability to overcome obstacles. It starts with belief in one's self. Adam will lead you on his journey explaining how his life changed in an instant the moment he was paralyzed from the neck down while playing football at The Pennsylvania State University. Although his dream of playing football was over, through the efforts and assistance of disability services, Adam was able to graduate from Penn State and later go on to graduate from The Rutgers School of Law.

"The injury itself was horrible, but the life lessons I learned were priceless," says Adam, "and I know I would not be where I am today if it was not for the tremendous assistance I received from the offices of disability services along my journey. I was fortunate enough to be provided with the tools I needed to achieve my academic goals and beyond."