

## Michele Wise Wright, Ph.D.

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Phone: (501) 247-2623  
North Little Rock, Arkansas  
E-mail: [careerwisdom@sbcglobal.net](mailto:careerwisdom@sbcglobal.net)  
LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/MicheleWrightPhD/>  
<https://www.mywaterbuddy.com/>  
<https://noacf.org/>



1990-1992

*NSBE UTSI Chapter Founder & President*



2023

*NSBE Lifetime Member & STEM Advocate*

Michele Wise Wright, Ph.D., is a lifetime member of the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE). She currently serves as the Director of Business Development and Outreach for the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers (SMPTE), the global society of media professionals, technologists, and engineers working together for the advancement of all things technical in the motion picture, television, and digital media industries.

Throughout her career as an engineer, innovator, educator, entrepreneur, creative, senior executive, nonprofit leader, mentor, and advocate, Dr. Wright has earned accolades for her profound commitment to highlighting and driving diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Leveraging advanced degrees in both engineering and public policy, Wright had led an array of initiatives, campaigns, and organizations focused on improving visibility, access, and opportunity for underrepresented communities, with a particular emphasis on STEM/STEAM and health equity.

As an award-winning leader within top-ranked corporations and as CEO of the Greater Ozarks-Arkansas Region (GOAR) with the American Red Cross, Wright not only received the Sister Friends United Inc. Women of Excellence Business Award but also the organization's inaugural Five-Year Service Award for her commitment to inspiring women and uplifting her community.

As the founder, creator, and CEO of My Water Buddy® and My Learning Buddy®, award-winning edutainment platforms that provide opportunities for improving well-being and enhancing educational development, Wright has expanded access to valuable curricula centered on physical and social-emotional health, as well as STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics).

As the co-founder, board chair, and senior executive director of the National Organization of African Americans with Cystic Fibrosis (NOACF), Wright has championed a diverse range of health equity initiatives. Through widespread involvement, partnerships, engagement, and outreach, under her leadership, NOACF has strategically helped to ensure that communities of people who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) are well informed of the existence, prevalence, and impact of CF on underrepresented communities.

Wright co-founded and co-chairs the annual Blacks, Indigenous, and Other Minority Ethnicities with Rare and Genetic Diseases (BIOMERGD) Conference, an annual event hosted by NOACF that coincides with Rare Disease Day and Black History Month, with a mission to help increase awareness of rare diseases in BIPOC communities by focusing on one genetic disease and one rare disease each year. She also engineered and led the development of The Wright Cystic Fibrosis Screening Tool®, in both patient and provider versions, in English and Spanish translations, to help people self-identify symptoms that could be related to CF as well as help medical providers identify people — and particularly people of color — who may have CF.

Simultaneously, Wright developed and launched the Advocating for Health Equity and Addressing Disparities (AHEAD) Initiative, in conjunction with the Coalition of Healthcare Advocates for Narrowing the Gap in Equity (CHANGE) Campaign, with a mission to increase awareness of health disparities in minority and underserved communities and to introduce a successful roadmap and advancement strategies for achieving health equity in healthcare, clinical treatment, medical diagnosis, and clinical trials across disadvantaged populations.

Using her rare voice within the rare disease space, Wright continues to advocate for “Terry Wright’s Law,” which will require that all known CF-causing gene variants (also called mutations) be used for newborn screening and diagnostic testing for CF. This will markedly improve equity in newborn screening for BIPOC individuals while benefiting all people with CF who may have delayed or missed diagnosis due to the presence of rare CFTR variants.

A native of Tuskegee, Alabama, Wright is the 2022 USA TODAY Woman of the Year for Arkansas and a 2023 AARP Purpose Prize Fellow — the first from Arkansas to receive this honor — in recognition of her global impact and nationally recognized contributions to STEM, STEAM, diversity, inclusion, and health equity. She is the recipient of the Nations of Women Change Makers 2021 Global Leadership Award and a nominee of the EveryLife Foundation of Rare Diseases’ RareVoice 2021 Award for Diversity Empowerment. She was also named among JB Dondolo’s “100 Voices for our Planet” and received the organization’s 2022 “Voices for Water” Water Change-Maker Award. In 2022, Wright and her husband, NOACF Co-Founder Terry Wright, became the first people of color to receive the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation (CFF) Arkansas Chapter’s annual Breath of Life Award, CFF’s highest award.

Wright is president and board chair of the Milton Pitts Crenshaw Aviation Training Academy (MPCATA), an organization that works to identify and mentor students in underserved and disadvantaged communities in order to provide access to educational opportunities related to the aviation and the aerospace industries. She concurrently serves as a board member and technical executive officer for the Arkansas Mentoring and Networking Association Inc. (AMNA), a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting opportunities, including access to STEM scholarships, internships, professionals, and careers, for historically underrepresented STEM students in Arkansas.

Wright earned her Ph.D. in public policy, with a double specialization in health and leadership policy, from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. She holds a Master of Science from the University of Tennessee Space Institute (UTSI), where she chartered and served as founding president of the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE), was the university’s first GEM Fellow, and was the first African-American full-time student to receive a master’s degree in engineering management/industrial engineering. She holds a Bachelor of Science in electrical engineering from Tuskegee University, where she was a dedicated member of NSBE, Miss United Negro College Fund, Miss Engineering, President of the Engineering Representative Council, and graduated as Electrical Engineering Student of the Year.

Dr. Wright is a nationally recognized motivational speaker. She was the commencement speaker for the Tuskegee University 2022 Graduate and Professional Schools Commencement Ceremony and was a featured speaker at the inaugural “World Woman Summit,” which included representatives from more than ten different countries. On the twenty-fifth anniversary of receiving her Bachelor’s degree from Tuskegee University, she returned to her alma mater and served as the keynote speaker for the “Order of the Engineer” Spring Pre-Commencement Ceremony, which is held in honor and recognition of all engineering student graduates.

She was the guest speaker and the first recipient of the “Outstanding STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) Leadership Award” presented by the Area Development Director of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) on behalf of the South Metro Atlanta Tuskegee Alumni Club (SMATAC) during their inaugural “Signature Scholarship Gala.” Through all these achievements, Wright always has believed that “the best is yet to come.” She takes this philosophy forward as she continues her work to make a positive impact for children, women, and underrepresented populations worldwide.

Wright and her husband reside in North Little Rock, Arkansas.