



Shelby Scholars Lecture Series

LENÁ POWE McDONALD

*Associate Commissioner for Academic Relations
Southeastern Conference*

ABOUT OUR GUEST

Dr. LeNá Powe McDonald leads all academic programs and initiatives across the 16-member athletic conference, including the SEC Academic Leadership Development Program, SEC MBA Case Competition, Study Abroad programming, and College Tour/Enrollment Management initiatives. She is the creator and executive producer of SEC Start Up, a student-athlete pitch competition and television production.

Dr. McDonald directs the SEC Artificial Intelligence Consortium, developing strategic partnerships and programming. Previous events include Teaching With AI in the SEC (in partnership with Auburn University), the AI in Sports Panel Discussion, and a Generative AI Research Panel Discussion. She also oversees professional development programming for administrators and coaches and serves as the SEC staff liaison for conference provosts, vice presidents and vice chancellors of marketing, and vice presidents and vice chancellors of research.

In 2024, under her leadership, the Conference began producing its SEC Economic Impact Report,

an annual publication highlighting the collective research excellence and economic contributions of SEC campuses.

Before joining the SEC, Dr. McDonald worked at the University of Alabama as Director of Internal Affairs and UA System Liaison in the Office of the President. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies (Community Development and Dance), a Master of Arts in Communication Studies, and a PhD in Higher Education Administration, all from the University of Alabama. She is an alumna of the Oxford Women's Leadership Symposium at the University of Oxford.

Dr. McDonald was named a Top Alumni Under 40 by the College of Education at the University of Alabama in 2023 and is a graduate of Leadership Birmingham (2025) and the Alabama Leadership Initiative (2024). She serves on several boards, including the Capstone Education Society Board of Directors and the Advisory Board of the O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center at UAB. She is a member of the Birmingham Chapter of The Links, Incorporated, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, and the Rotary Club of Birmingham.

*Friday, January 30, 2026
4 PM at Tuomey Hall*