

AACUC Announces 2025 Maurice R. Smith Leadership Award Recipients

Honorees to be Celebrated at the 2025 AACUC Annual Conference in July

SNELLVILLE, GA, UNITED STATES, March 25, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The African-American Credit Union Coalition ([AACUC](https://www.aacuc.org)) has named its 2025 [Maurice R. Smith Leadership Award](#) recipients, who will be honored during the 2025 AACUC Annual Conference on Wednesday, July 23, 2025 at the Hotel at Avalon in Alpharetta, GA. The Honorees include:

- Carlos Calderon, President and CEO, OAS Federal Credit Union
- Ronaldo Hardy, President/CEO, Balance
- Susan Mitchell, CEO, Mitchell, Stankovic & Associates
- Jim Morrell, CEO, Peninsula Credit Union
- George Ombado, Executive Director/CEO, ACCOSCA
- Joe Thomas, President/CEO, NextMark Credit Union

The biennial awards, renamed in 2023 in honor of AACUC's Immediate Past Chairman and author of the 8th Cooperative Principle Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Maurice R. Smith, recognize credit union trailblazers who have demonstrated:

- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion thought leadership



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- A commitment and passion for engaging others in DEI
- Social impact of their work in the credit union community and our society

“This year’s Honorees’ influence spans continents and communities, including African American, African, women, LGBTQ+, Latino and immigrant communities,” said AACUC President/CEO Renée Sattiewhite. “Their impact is exactly what the legacy of this award represents.”

Carlos Calderon, I-CUDE, serves as President/CEO of OAS Federal Credit Union. He has shared his expertise with various credit union organizations and industry boards in the U.S. and abroad. □ His interest in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and helping the community led him to co-found the Network of Latino Credit Unions and Professionals and ACCESO, which supports the underserved immigrant community in Washington, DC. He was awarded the World Council of Credit Union’s Silver Award and named CEO of the Year by NAFCU in 2019. He holds an executive master’s degree in leadership from Georgetown University and an M.B.A. from Marymount University.

Ronaldo Hardy is a two-time credit union CEO and the current CEO of BALANCE, a national leader in financial wellness. His passion is helping leaders break free from mediocrity and build bold, trust-driven, innovative cultures. He has led award-winning transformations, including turning Southwest Louisiana Credit Union into a certified CDFI and securing \$950,000 in federal funding. As former CEO of NACUSO, he championed nationwide innovation and collaboration. He has also owned a consulting firm focused on leadership and cultural transformation. Today, he speaks on Audacious Authenticity, Training Trust, and Future-Ready Leadership—empowering leaders to ditch the masks, lead boldly, and build thriving organizations.

Susan Mitchell is a passionate believer in making a difference! As CEO of Mitchell, Stankovic & Associates, her innovative consulting services, strategic planning, board governance, and online education are impactful. She is a successful entrepreneur who forges alliances with Fortune 500 companies nationwide, facilitating the Global Future Forum and creating the Underground. She serves on the Board of the Worldwide and Via Stella Foundations and is the founding Chair of GWLN with 5,000 members from 88 countries, receiving WOCCU’s Distinguished Service Award. She received CCUL’s inaugural Diversity/Visionary Award, was honored with NCUF’s Outstanding Individual Lifetime Achievement Award, and was inducted into America’s Credit Union Museum HERstory.

For over three decades, Jim Morrell has dedicated his career to financial inclusion. As CEO of Peninsula Credit Union for 13 years, he’s been a driving force in empowering those living at a household survival budget. His commitment to financial well-being and advocacy has led him to serve on boards of the World Council of Credit Unions, America’s Credit Unions, and local organizations. As a I-CUDE with certifications in the U.S. and Africa, he’s a global advocate for cooperative finance. Morrell enjoys exploring the world with his husband Chris, savoring Northwest wines, and spending time on the water.

George Ombado, I-CUDE, HSC is the Executive Director of the African Confederation of Co-operative Saving and Credit Association (ACCOSCA), which is a regional association representing credit unions/co-operative financial institutions in Africa. Currently, he serves as a Board Member of the World Council of Credit Union based in Madison, Wisconsin, Treasurer of Cadasta Foundation based in Washington, DC, Board Member of the Africa Co-operative Development Foundation (ACDF), and Chair of the Management Committee of Proxfin Network established by The Desjardins International Development of Canada as a platform for dialogue with the financial inclusion space. He is also an AACUC African American Hall of Fame Alumni.

Joe Thomas, President/CEO of NextMark Credit Union in Fairfax, VA, has served the credit union community for nearly 40 years. Since 1999, he has led NextMark in delivering accessible financial services to local government employees and community members, with a focus on the needs of low- and moderate-income households. He currently serves as Vice Chairman of the World Council of Credit Unions and is a board member for the Virginia Credit Union League. His credit union journey began as a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer in Malawi, Africa. Joe holds an M.B.A. from Averett University and B.A. from Assumption University.

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About the African-American Credit Union Coalition

The AACUC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization created to increase diversity within the credit union community through advocacy and professional development. Recipient of the 2022 Anchor Award from the National Credit Union Foundation for its leadership and global efforts unifying financial industries in eradicating racism amid the COVID-19 pandemic and social unrest in 2020 with its Commitment to Change: Credit Unions Unite Against Racism initiative, AACUC has become an all-encompassing organization for executives, professionals, volunteers, consultants and regulators within the financial services industry. AACUC is considered a leader in the credit union movement, adopting the 8th Cooperative Principle (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) and enabling credit unions to become more diverse and inclusive. [Learn more here.](#)

About the Maurice R. Smith Leadership Award

The Maurice R. Smith Leadership Award – originally the DEI Trailblazers Award – recognizes leaders and organizations that inspire accountability for collective Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) efforts in the credit union movement and blaze the trail for others to follow. Honorees are selected based on the following criteria: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion thought leadership, demonstrated commitment and passion for engaging others in DEI and social impact of their work in the credit union community and our society. [Learn more here.](#)

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