500 Interviews With the World's Leaders Become Research Data on AI

JMU and the Innovative Leadership Institute® will study 500+ leadership interviews to find why most AI initiatives produce activity rather than value.



ILI & JMU SSLS for Research and Podcast Sponsorship Partnership

COLUMBUS, OH, UNITED STATES, September 22, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- The James Madison University School of Strategic Leadership Studies (JMU SSLS) and the Innovative Leadership Institute® (ILI) today announced a research collaboration built on more than 500 recorded conversations with senior leaders, captured while they were deciding what to do rather than reconstructed years afterward.

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>
> *Maureen Metcalf*

Since 2015, ILI has produced Innovating Leadership: Co-Creating Our Future, heard in more than 120 countries and ranked by Listen Notes in the top 1% of podcasts worldwide. Its guests have included two former heads of government — Kim Campbell of Canada and George Papandreou of Greece — the United Nations' AI advisor, Ford's former chief strategy officer, and a three-time Fortune 500 chief information officer. Seventy-five further interviews recorded with the International Leadership Association add the voices of leading scholars, among them Barbara Kellerman, Manfred Kets de Vries, Otto Scharmer, and Mats Alvesson.

Researchers at JMU SSLS and The Innovative Leadership Institute Think Tank™ (ILI Think Tank™) are now coding every conversation that touches artificial intelligence, using qualitative content analysis to trace how those leaders sensed change, made decisions, and executed — and which of those practices separated the organizations that got real value from AI from the ones that generated activity.

That question sits at the center of Decision Velocity™, the ILI Think Tank™ research theme for 2026. AI adoption is its hardest current test: the technology accelerates whatever decision system an organization already has, which is why identical tools produce transformation in one company and expensive noise in another.

“Most of what is written about AI and leadership is speculation or vendor material,” said Maureen Metcalf, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of the Innovative Leadership Institute®. “We spent years asking leaders what they were actually doing while they were doing it. Bringing university researchers to that archive turns a decade of conversation into evidence, and evidence is what boards can act on.”



JMU ILI Strategic Leadership Partnership



Featured Podcast Voices

“This partnership enables SSLS faculty and doctoral students to transform real-world leadership experiences into actionable scholarship,” said Margaret F. Sloan, Ph.D., Director of the School of Strategic Leadership Studies at James Madison University. “The ILI interview archive offers a rich Innovative Leadership Institute®· James Madison University School of Strategic Leadership Studies source of practice-based evidence, helping us generate research on AI leadership that is timely, rigorous, and immediately relevant to leaders navigating change.”

First findings will be presented at the International Leadership Association 2026 Global Conference in Toronto on Thursday, 29 October, in a session titled “From Hype to Practice: Evidence-Informed AI Leadership Lessons.”

Under the collaboration, JMU SSLS becomes the institutional co-sponsor of the program, which is carried by WCBE 90.5 FM in Columbus and distributed through the NPR national podcast directory and the Public Radio Exchange. The parties are also exploring carriage on WMRA 90.7 FM, James Madison University's NPR member station serving the central Shenandoah Valley.

About the Innovative Leadership Institute®
The Innovative Leadership Institute® is a women-owned leadership think tank and advisory firm

working with chief executives, boards, and senior teams. Founded in 2001, ILI advises on strategy to execution; on innovation, complexity, and AI leadership; and on leadership continuity and succession, delivered through Innovative Executive Solutions™, leadership pathway programs, certification, and the Are You Ready® assessments. Its research arm, The Innovative Leadership Institute Think Tank™ (ILI Think Tank™), houses the Decision Velocity™ research hub. Founder Maureen Metcalf received the 2025 Gold Stevie® Award for Female Executive of the Year. innovativeleadershipinstitute.com

About the JMU School of Strategic Leadership Studies
The School of Strategic Leadership Studies (SSLS) at James Madison University develops ethical, evidence-based leaders and researchers equipped to address complex organizational and societal challenges. Through innovative graduate programs, applied research, and partnerships across sectors, SSLS prepares scholar-practitioners to lead change, foster collaboration, and generate actionable knowledge that advances leadership practice, organizations, and communities

More about the collaboration and ILI's institutional partners:
innovativeleadershipinstitute.com/partners/

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