

# Dr. Jarvis M. Watson

FOUNDER & CEO

ASCENDING ABOVE CONSULTING, LLC

Dr. Jarvis M. Watson (He/Him/His) is a nationally recognized change agent for diversity, equity, and inclusion with over **22 years** of dedicated expertise in programs and initiatives for access, awareness, and opportunity. A results-oriented Higher Education leader, Dr. Watson has built a distinguished career conceptualizing, developing, implementing, and evaluating cohesive DEIA strategies across some of the most prominent academic institutions in the country.

After a distinguished career in higher education, Dr. Watson made a **purposeful and deeply intentional transition into the mental health profession**. This shift was inspired by witnessing firsthand his colleagues and fellow equity leaders — across K-12 education, nonprofit organizations, and other industries — experiencing **profound burnout driven by systemic barriers, values misalignment, and chronic underrepresentation**. Recognizing that the **wellbeing of equity practitioners is inseparable from the work itself**, Dr. Watson pursued clinical mental health counseling to provide **healing-centered support to those on the frontlines of change**. He is committed to ensuring that the very people who dedicate their lives to building more just and inclusive spaces are **not left to carry that weight alone**.

Dr. Watson recently served as the **inaugural Managing Director of the Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University**. Prior to this role, he served as the inaugural Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the School of Visual Arts in New York City, where he partnered with executive leadership on institutional DEI strategic planning, campus climate assessments, anti-racist training, cultural programming, and inclusive faculty recruitment. He also served as **Interim Chief Diversity Officer at Stony Brook University**, unifying the campus through centralized diversity initiatives, statewide faculty recruitment, and DEI Task Force Working Groups.

## Columbia University

Inaugural Managing Director, Center on Global Energy Policy

## School of Visual Arts

Inaugural Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, New York City

## Stony Brook University

Interim Chief Diversity Officer & Assistant Dean for Student Support Services

## Kean University

GEAR UP Coordinator & EOP Counselor serving first-generation students

## Spotless Mind Mental Health Counseling, PLLC

Mental Health Counselor, Limited Permit

# A Legacy of Access, Equity & Inspiration

## THE VISION BEHIND ASCENDING ABOVE

Dr. Watson's inspiration for founding **Ascending Above Consulting, LLC** is rooted in a lifelong commitment to dismantling systemic barriers and creating sustainable pathways for historically marginalized communities. From his earliest role as coordinator of the GEAR UP program at Kean University — where he helped open doors to college enrollment for underrepresented populations — to co-developing the **Social Justice League** certification program at Stony Brook University, every chapter of his career has been driven by the belief that equity must be centered in every institution, at every level.

As Assistant Dean for Multicultural Affairs, Dr. Watson created heritage month programming, campus-wide diversity workshops, and culturally inclusive curricula. He served as a First Year Experience instructor, an adjunct professor in Africana Studies, and a faculty member in the Educational Leadership Program — ensuring that his impact reached students in the classroom as well as in administrative policy. Through collaborative efforts with the Educational Opportunity Program team, EOP at Stony Brook ranked as the **most successful program for retention and graduation** in the state system.

## Academic Credentials

- **Doctorate** in Educational Administration, Leadership & Technology — Dowling College
- **Master's** in Counselor Education — Kean University
- **Bachelor's** in English — Stony Brook University
- **Advanced Certificate** in Clinical Mental Health Counseling — LIU-Post Campus
- **Mental Health Counselor** — Limited Permit

## Thought Leadership

A frequent keynote speaker and presenter, Dr. Watson has delivered addresses and presentations on diversity, equity, and inclusion at **more than 15 regional and national academic conferences and events**. He has received numerous leadership awards recognizing his transformative contributions to higher education and the broader DEIA landscape.

Dr. Watson dedicates his time and expertise toward ensuring that DEIA is centered in complete talent management cycles and practices — building institutions where every person has the opportunity to ascend.