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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GLASE Hosts Inaugural Vivid Canopy Program at Indoor Ag-Con
Business leaders share why diversity is critical to success in the 2024 market

LAS VEGAS, NV, February 23, 2024 - Cornell University's [Greenhouse Lighting and Systems Engineering](#) (GLASE) consortium announced today the launch of its [Vivid Canopy](#) network to celebrate and foster diversity in the controlled environment agriculture (CEA) industry. The new professional network will kick off at [Indoor Ag-Con](#) with a session on Monday, March 11 from 3:00 - 5:00 pm PT. An interactive panel led by [Women in CEA](#) (WiCEA) will feature leaders from Vertical Harvest Farms, Dr. Greenhouse, and Skout Strategy. Participants will engage with panelists and other attendees at roundtable discussions led by Eden Green Technology and Re-Nuble.

The biggest challenge for today's controlled environment agriculture industry is [labor](#). According to the 2022 Greenhouse and Nursery Labor and Employment Survey by AmericanHort, employers are experiencing a shortage of about 20% in their workforce. Producers must change hiring practices to find and retain experienced staff to operate an efficient greenhouse or indoor farm. While today's workforce is [more diverse](#) than ever before, professionals in the green industry have few ways to connect with individuals with similar lived experiences.

"Vivid Canopy is an opportunity to have an open and honest conversation regarding underrepresented communities in the industry. We want to create a space where connections can be made between people all working toward the same goal: a healthier and more sustainable future for everyone. This is necessary, especially now, as the indoor agriculture

industry is growing and expanding. It will take everyone's voices to reach our collective goal," states Stacia Lewis, Grower, Eden Green.

Diversity and inclusion are strategies to adapt to the changing workforce. "Leaders of CEA companies have an opportunity to be transparent about the demographics of their workforce to attract more candidates and foster diversity in the industry," shares Gretchen Schimelpfenig, Executive Director of GLASE.

"Like many industries being revolutionized by emergent technologies, women, minorities, and people with disabilities are often underrepresented. Opportunities to network and hear from a wider range of industry voices helps diversify perspectives and expand the vision of what CEA can really accomplish - for everyone," says Nona Yehia, CEO and co-founder of Vertical Harvest Farms.

"Women are natural collaborators and with WiCEA we are hoping to provide all women in CEA and their allies more opportunities to foster collaboration, support their professional development, and offer mentorship to those looking to advance within or enter the industry," shares Erika Parente, initiator of the Women in CEA community.

"We're excited to partner with GLASE to co-host 'Vivid Canopy,'" says Suzanne Pruitt, Event Director, Indoor Ag-Con. "At Indoor Ag-Con, our core mission is to create a hub that fosters connections for all members of the controlled environment agriculture sector. Vivid Canopy embodies this mission by promoting diversity, inclusivity, and providing a platform for meaningful networking and job-sharing opportunities. Join us for a gathering where ideas will flow, new contacts will be forged, and the CEA community grows together."

GLASE plans to host more Vivid Canopy networking events at green industry conferences in the future, like Cultivate and the [GLASE Summit](#). Join the [Vivid Canopy group on LinkedIn](#) to stay in the know.

About GLASE

Guided by its Industry Advisory Board, GLASE and its partner academic institutions research the leading edge of LED systems engineering, plant photobiology and physiology, and greenhouse environmental controls and commercialize emerging technology to save growers

money and reduce the carbon footprint of greenhouse operations. Since 2017, the GLASE consortium has delivered specialized short courses on high-tech greenhouse technology to provide credible continuing education for the CEA industry. Resources can be found at <https://glase.org> and [@GLASEconsortium](#) on YouTube.

About Women in CEA

Women in CEA (WiCEA) is a community open to all women (and allies) working in controlled environment agriculture. WiCEA's purpose is to foster a collaborative and supportive environment through the power of networking, information and resource sharing. The WiCEA community endeavors to strengthen the overall industry of CEA, creating food stability in the face of climate change and geopolitical instability in a dynamic world. With a vision for 80% of CEA companies to have their female employees join WiCEA by 2025, the group is creating a space for women to innovate, connect and inspire.

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