Developing Leadership Skills in Women:
A Call for Collaboration

Meghan C. Wright, PhD
Texas Wesleyan University, USA

Dr. Meghan Wright is an Assistant Professor of Management at Texas Wesleyan University. She received her PhD in Organization Development from Benedictine University. Wright teaches management theory, international business, organizational behavior, and multinational management at the undergraduate level and organizational behavior in the MBA program. She guest lectures at other MBA programs in Texas and spends time researching women in leadership, diversity, and inclusion, and most recently, Gen Z. To date, she has presented at many academic and professional conferences on these research topics.

Author's
Contact Information:

Meghan Wright, PhD
Phone: 309-337-1862
Email: mcwright99@txwes.edu

Abstract

This article explores the impact of a leadership development program on business school students and their career trajectory. The findings of this study reveal how the intentional development of women leaders within a business school results in this population being more career-ready upon graduation and entrance to the workforce. Utilizing notable women leadership programs in Corporate America as a guide, supplements were made to the business school curriculum over a five-year period with a goal of permanently adding them based on data from this study. Specifically, as a business school, we grappled with how we could capitalize on areas of improvement to increase the impact our students made once they entered the workforce. Were we missing key opportunities to develop the leadership skills in our students during their academic careers as they earn bachelor's degrees? Answering these questions prompted enhancements to the curriculum to support more leadership development of students. The research focused on the female population and tracked their trajectory over a five-year period. This paper has implications for OD scholars and practitioners regarding ways to support leadership developmentin higher education.

Keywords: women in leadership, leadership programs, higher education, organization development, barriers to leadership, mentoring, work/life context

In the Summer 2016 issue of the *Organization Development Journal*, Baker and Cangemi noted reasons why women are earning a record number of bachelor's degrees yet are not being promoted to leadership positions in many professional and public sectors of society. This was not the first time an article had been published related to a lack of women in leadership positions (Soares, 2015; Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). A wealth of research has also been conducted and published on why women are not progressing or are progressing slowly. Looking at existing leadership development programs and initiatives in companies, as well as how business schools are supporting the development of women became the focus of our university's approach to enhancing the curriculum to address this leadership dilemma.

This paper addresses many explicit and implicit calls for higher education to play a bigger role in the leadership development of women. Responding to this call with curriculum enhancements as well as obtaining feedback from 21 women monitored for a period of 5 years developed the focus of this article. Within the curriculum enhancements, data presented indicates a positive experience that encourages more and continued enhancements for women at the university.

Literature Review

Extant literature on the history of women in leadership indicates that progress is being made as women enter leadership positions in companies. While women and men are capable of holding the same positions, lingering perceptions about women in leadership still exist. These perceptions are a reality for some corporate cultures and restrict the advancement of women to leadership roles. The literature also depicts barriers women have faced for decades when climbing the [proverbial] corporate ladder (Erickson, 2007; Hargrave, 2021; Wright & Yaeger, 2016) to leadership positions within the organization. These two streams of literature, leadership progression, and barriers women face are discussed in this section, as well as noteworthy calls to action uncovered in articles and reports.

Leadership Progression

Catalyst (2021) reported that women make up 46.9% of the labor force, with just over one-third in leadership positions as of the end of 2019. Within that representation, white women accounted for 32.6% while Hispanic or Latina women (6.2%), Black or African American women (3.8%), and Asian women (2.4%) made up a much smaller percentage of that representation. Further, many leadership positions within S&P 500 companies were at the lower levels among ranks of first and mid-level officials and managers (36.9%) or executive/senior-level officials or managers (26.5%) rather than at top-level positions, such as top earners or CEO (Catalyst, 2020). These percentages certainly do not warrant a negative tone and outlook. As noted by Geiger and Parker (2018) and the Pew Research Center (2018), progress is being realized as only 30% of women were in the workforce in 1950, but an all-time high number of women were leading major Fortune 500 firms in 2017, a total of 32 women or 6.4%. This progress carries over into government as more women are elected to the House of Representatives, Senate, state governor positions, and many other local and regional offices (Pew Research Center, 2015, 2018).

Another milestone, as reported by Pew Research (2015), was realized in 2017 when the number of women holding CEO positions of Fortune 500 companies reached an all-time high of 6.4%, with 32 women heading major firms. Comparing that to 1995 when there were no female CEOs on the Fortune 500 list shows more indications of progress, albeit not at the pace desired by women (Pew Research Center, 2018).

Barriers to Leadership

The key factors which affect women's leadership development noted by O'Neil et al. (2015) are "challenging organizational contexts, work-life integration, and career/life stage concerns" (p. 253). Trying to balance the work and life domains for women has been challenging for many decades and delivered in powerful ways through the reflections by Sheryl Sandberg (2013) and Ann Slaughter (2012). They both, along with many other influential women (Triffin, 2018), candidly discuss how difficult it can be to give attention to the push in the workplace while simultaneously being pulled in another direction by the life domain. Women will be prepared for these challenges through additional

conversations and candid suggestions from those who have "lived" this lack of balance.

The necessity of balancing work and life domains can shift or even increase at different points of any person's career or life stage. Women's priorities and responsibilities at different stages of life can directly impact their career choices and ability to advance into leadership roles (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005; O'Neil et al., 2005). Many corporations have addressed these barriers with policies and procedures that attempt to limit institutional and organizational barriers through introducing telework, telecommuting, alternative work schedules, flexible hours, job sharing, and other innovative work approaches (Bailyn et al., 2001; Diversity Woman, 2015; Ellison, 2004; Galinsky, 2011; Golden et al., 2006; Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2011; Kalysh et al., 2016; Sullivan & Mainiero, 2007; Woodd, 1999). Others offer virtual workshops and events, which allow women to navigate the work and life domains in order to engage in professional development or important meetings (Cullinan, 2016).

Managing the work and life domains at different career and life stages can significantly impact the self-confidence of women. Deemed as a crucial component to "leadership development and individual expressions of leadership presence" (O'Neil et al., 2015, p. 257), women often hold themselves back, noting a lack of typical leadership competencies (Steelman, 2019). Research into the self-confidence barrier women face indicates women do not apply to leadership positions unless they think they have 100% of the competencies required, whereas men will apply if they think they have 60% of the competencies (Kay & Shipman, 2014; Steelman, 2019). O'Neill et al. (2015) cite many scholars (Eagly & Carly, Fitzsimmons, Callan & Paulsen, Ragins et al., and Schein) who have noted "women are subject to more scrutiny, held to higher performance standards, have less opportunity to develop their leadership capital throughout life, and face more challenges to their leadership and authority than men" (p. 256). A corporate culture inclusive of these additional challenges can also decrease the level of self-confidence in women (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016).

Calls to Action

A heightened call exists for more leadership development skills to be taught in the business school as a result of continued scandals in corporate America due to greed, ethical differences, and other acts that have caused many to have distrust for business leaders (Crossan et al., 2013). This is a fair call since companies are developing leaders while also trying to keep pace with a rapidly changing world. Coupled with general operations and trying to gain or maintain a competitive advantage through products and services offered, leadership development programs are often a one-size-fits-all approach (Gurdjian et al., 2014). According to Beer et al. (2016), leadership training is a "$365 billion global industry" with "$160 million" (p. 50) of that being spent in the United States alone. One might expect that an investment of this size would generate a significant return regarding future organizational leaders; however, McKinsey (2014) reported the startling revelation that training fails to provide the desired results and "doesn't lead to better organizational performance" since most people revert to the former way of getting things done (Beer et al., 2016, p. 50).

Business schools typically include at least one or sometimes multiple leadership courses, either as a standalone class or as chapters/topics within other courses. That is simply not enough especially considering that "higher education holds one of the most important roles in shaping the future of our society" (Teague, 2015, p. 1). Some business schools have written white papers, held conferences, and authored books to respond to this increased need for more leadership education (Crossan et al., 2013). Is this effort enough, or does it just contribute to some incremental change that does not have any lasting and significant impact on students once they enter the workforce? Specifically, Cross et al. (2013) ask, "How are we changing the way we educate leaders today to ensure that they make a more positive difference in the world tomorrow?" (p. 286). We need to rethink how we challenge business schools in how they focus business education on character development

One of the four lessons proposed by Baker and Cangemi (2016) resonates with faculty as per the call for "women to become aware of and receive training on how to manage the double

blind, communication issues, and the misleading conclusions regarding tokenism" (p. 40), positing that raising awareness in these areas could help women advance into leadership positions. Additionally, these researchers view training as a way to "mitigate career obstacles" (p. 40) that can harm a desired career trajectory, including advancement to leadership roles. Although these authors were focused on organizational change intended to increase the number of women leaders, it is deemed applicable to changes also needed in the business school curriculum.

The connection between the leadership progression of women and barriers to success are connected to the call within this paper for earlier opportunities for women. It is naïve to state that every woman in a leadership training opportunity will be equipped to navigate organizational barriers and ultimately progress into leadership positions in an organization. However, the *NH Business Review* (2019) conducted interviews with women in leadership roles in diverse industries and reported positive results. These women attributed their career trajectory into leadership, in part, to the presence of early-career conversations and knowledge of how to navigate organizational barriers. Specifically, Tara Trafton noted, "I credit being given the opportunity to having had the conversations about my career advancement goals early and as part of regular discussions with my manager" as a major contributor to career advancement to leadership. This connection is further developed by KPMG (2015) in the comprehensive leadership study conducted with 3,014 professional and college women between 18 and 64. The findings showed three key areas of focus "socializing leadership early in life, modeling leadership and building confidence through role models and networking, and providing or enhancing corporate development programs that move women forward" (p. 21). The research by KPMG (2015) also indicates the importance of encouragement in a woman's life, finding that 74% of women encouraged to be leaders throughout life actually aspired to hold this position in a company or organization versus the 48% who did not receive encouragement.

Further, the application of this call was relevant, as noted by research done by Northouse in 2016 and McKinsey in 2018, which revealed that women are earning the majority of bachelor's degrees yet not being represented in leadership positions in organizations. The calls to action perceived in the articles and reports discussed to this point were both explicit and implicit, but most importantly, prompted more investigation as to the impact of curriculum enhancements, conferences, and leadership opportunities offered to our college students. As a business school, how could we capitalize on areas of improvement to increase our students' impact once they enter the workforce? Were we missing key opportunities to develop the leadership skills of our students during their academic careers? A call for additional research on leadership programs for women was presented by Bonebright et al. (2012) to identify if programs make a difference in helping women deal with work/life issues. Pondering these questions and the call, we identified the women earning degrees at our university as our target population to launch the study. In the future, this information could inform changes in the curriculum, regardless of gender, and lead to more leadership-ready graduates in general.

Enhancing the Business School Curriculum

Enhancing the curriculum to develop leadership skills in female students became the focus. This was done in a way that addressed the barriers to leadership while simultaneously considering the needs of our own student population, many of whom are underrepresented, members of minority groups, or both. A strong desire to address the disproportionate number of bachelor's degrees not represented in leadership positions was also important, as indicated in our learning objectives and the School of Business mission statement. The goal of the research was to begin looking at ways to assist women with general leadership knowledge, personal understanding, leadership style formation, and tactics to navigate potential career barriers to leadership. Additionally, we looked to Hoyt (2013), who reported that female role models were effective in "heightened levels of leadership aspiration, leader self-identification, and performance" (p. 393). This section will begin with the university demographics to create a baseline for the diversity in women that would be in this research project. The remainder of the section is devoted to discussion on curriculum developments to support more

leadership development.

University Demographics

Our small, private liberal arts university in the southern part of the country has a large population of first-generation students: over 35% as of the academic year 2019-20. The male to female ratio is close to 50%.

The most represented races in the school are Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Two or More Races, and Unknown. These four race categories represent 57.4% of the female population. The other categories are American/Alaska Native, Asian, and white. The classifications and names of classifications are based on race/ethnicity definitions of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) to maintain consistency with federal standards for purposes of this research. According to the website, IPEDS is a "system of surveys conducted annually by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)."

The university possesses a diverse population of women with a significant number categorized as underrepresented (Soares, 2015, Catalyst, 2020; McKinsey, 2018) in leadership positions in general and as in S&P 500 companies (Pew Research Center, 2018).

Curriculum Development - Leadership Event

Students benefit greatly when able to understand what the workplace looks like from a personal and experiential perspective. The first step in enhancing the curriculum was to host an event where an open and honest conversation would encourage this type of real-life learning. The event began in the spring of 2016 with the goal of situating it near International Women's Day (March 8) to coincide with the mission and themes of a larger global initiative. Brooks (2000) asserts that conversations held in such contexts as a forum provide a transformational learning experience where women can feel safe sharing stories and feel strong in their voices.

This event, the Women in Leadership forum, was organized to bring women from various leadership positions within companies to campus for a half-day workshop-style event. Since 2016, the theme and approach have included women sharing stories about navigating organizational contexts and breaking through barriers to attain leadership positions. Approaching the forum this way has been well-documented in research (Brooks, 2000; Catalino & Marnane, 2019; Collay & Cooper, 2008; Crossan et al., 2013; Diversity Woman, 2015; Dugan & Komives, 2007) and therefore important to integrate into the event model. Using this model created a way for students to learn about self-confidence, work-life integration, and mentorship. Extending the invitation beyond students to staff, faculty, and alumni also had value-added benefits for the university and the female students. These benefits were in the form of opportunities to create a pipeline of mentors for the students (Crossan et al., 2013) and allow a time of reflection. Again, looking to corporate leadership programs for guidance, this was consistent with many in practice (Catalino & Marnane, 2019; Crossan et al., 2013; Griffin, 2018; New Hampshire Review, 2019; Ragins, & Cotton, 1996). More information regarding event goals is listed in Appendix.

These goals were instrumental in developing a theme to frame the intent and topic of the event each year. Examples of topics include: "Know Your Value," "Grow Your Value," "Voices in Leadership: Developing Your Leadership Presence," and "Grow Your Network."

Curriculum Development - Faculty Mentors

Professors are often role models for students and can take on a coaching/mentoring relationship. This might be an intentional act or more of an organic approach that results from positive relationships carried over from the classroom (Crossan et al., 2013). When that happens, some faculty utilize their professional networks to connect students with career mentors, identify internships, and include them in networking events. Specifically, at the university, we adjusted the academic advising model to a centralized service within advising staff, with faculty serving only as career mentors/advisors rather than as career and academic advisors. Using this model created time for students to meet with faculty advisors to talk about internships, networking events, available professional development workshops and encourage university and volunteer engagement. Additionally, the time spent together is used to develop career goals and

identify ways to develop more career readiness. Mentoring is viewed "as an effective practice of leadership development and focuses on learning and development" (O'Neil et al., 2015, p. 262), which come in the form of reflection and awareness of the self to build a toolbox of more strengths. This new model has only been in place for one semester at the time of this publication but will certainly be a way to engage in more reflection for both faculty and students.

This shift also supported our female students with the ability to communicate their values and core purpose through an intimate discussion and reflect on assessments that had been taken during specific classes. Looking back at self-assessments taken in class and through the Career Services Center, as well as reflecting on information gained from the Women in Leadership forum, became a focus of the conversations held during these advising sessions. This process specifically helped our female students gain clarity about their lives and career choices and also helped them see an authentic way of adding value to the company in their first career position.

Curriculum Development – Student Leadership Organization

Starting a student leadership organization further supports development. The university started an American Association of University Women (AAUW) chapter and embraced the organization's mission of promoting equity and education for women and girls. This student organization was started two years ago and is still recruiting members and building awareness on campus. Hosting small group events, providing networking opportunities in a peer-to-peer model, and engaging with faculty mentors have been part of the work done in a short period of time. The impact of this organization on female students will become part of the monitoring system for the university as soon as the 2020 fall semester (Catalino & Marnane, 2019).

Methodology

The participants in this study were female students attending the university at the time of this study. Although some of the enhancements to the curriculum were open to the entire university campus and alumni, we were focused on the impact on women in leadership positions upon graduation. For purposes of this research, 21 university graduates were monitored from 2015 to 2019. These women entered both Fortune 500 companies and small firms. An email was distributed to each participant and included a link to a Qualtrics survey with completion to be anonymous. The survey questions were qualitative and included some demographic information regarding years in the workforce, the number of vertical company promotions or career promotions, and finally, the number of curriculum enhancements utilized.

Findings

Initial informal success metrics were met as communicated through anecdotal conversations that happened around campus and through generic event surveys given each year. Other informal success measures were realized as the panelists participating in the forum lingered to speak individually with students at the conclusion of the event. These conversations typically included sharing business cards, providing verbal LinkedIn invitations, and extending stories that had been shared during the formal event session. Additionally, alumni in attendance engaged in the same manner with students as well as members of the panels. This not only gave students a way to begin building a professional network but, more importantly, a virtual external, informal mentor to follow. Students could track relevant workplace events or situations through this relationship and better understand unique organizational and societal structures that impact women in leadership each day.

Formal measurement of the forum impact on student's leadership development was derived from McKinsey & Company and the recommendation from Gurdjian et al. (2014). Monitoring participants' career development can be a key metric to the success of a leadership development program (Catalino & Marnane, 2019; Griffin, 2018; Gurdjian et al., 2014).

Promotion

Nearly half (47%) of the women surveyed indicated receiving a promotion within their career over the last four years, while 24% indicated leaving for a better position with another company. The

remaining 29% stated they had not been promoted as of the date of the survey.

Attendance at Women in Leadership Forum

Of the women surveyed, 43% attended the event once, and nearly 30% attended it twice. Since the event had been held four times at the point of this article, about 14% equally attended either three or four times.

Value of Women in Leadership Forum

Exactly half (50%) of the women mentioned that one of the most value-added aspects of the event was the real-life stories and experiences shared by women on the panel representing successful organizational leadership positions.

Excerpts from participants surveyed discussed what was most valuable about attending the Women in Leadership forum:

- "An opportunity to network with women in leadership positions and learn about their experience in the workforce" [P2].
- "The most value I get from attending the forum is listening to successful women and taking all their life tips while incorporating them in my own life/career" [P5].
- "[I] know how to ask for more…and take charge in the workplace and not be afraid to do so" [P9].
- "I always feel more motivated and confident in my abilities after attending this event" [P3].
- "To me, it is inspiring, a great network opportunity, and empowering each other. You gain different perspectives from all the different women in the room and their experiences. It is always great to hear someone's story to know more about them and how it has influenced their career" [P11].

When asked for three reasons why female students should attend this event, three themes emerged and were consistent with a large majority of the literature reviewed for this article. Students cited self-confidence, networking, and stories about organization and life contexts as valuable leadership development benefits. Specifically, 90% cited an increased level of self-confidence from attending this event and hearing stories from women in leadership

that had navigated organizational contexts and broken through societal and organizational barriers. As for the importance of networking, 72% stated this was a reason to attend, further stating they had identified professionals that could potentially be a mentor for them. Finally, 83% believed the valuable insight into current situations of organizations and stories on how to address them in an effort to attain a leadership position was a reason to attend.

Discussion

Success for the university and women at large is defined by meaningful results (Dishman, 2016), which have been presented. Additional data will be collected on the faculty mentorship model and leadership organization engagement in coming semesters and will build a stronger case for their impact on career progression. The previous section shows progress for the women in this study and, at the very minimum, indicates the ability to "mitigate the glass cliff" through increased confidence and a better understanding of organizational contexts that can limit career progression for women. This mitigation is evident in the large number of participants that indicated receiving an internal or lateral promotion. It does not go without reason that other factors could have contributed to these promotions, and those questions will be added to future research on the impact of the curriculum supplements.

Based on this study, it seems plausible that continued exposure to career perspectives from successful women would positively impact female students at a university. The survey responses presented indicate the gratitude and appreciation these females have toward curriculum enhancements intentionally focused on their leadership development and general career readiness. This answers the call made to academia for more "programs and research" that make a difference in women (Baker & Cangemi, 2016; Collay & Cooper, 2008; Crossan et al., 2013; Hess, 2007).

Self-confidence

Promotions indicated by participants address the self-confidence barrier that has been observed as preventing women from applying for

promotion unless they possess 100% of the desired qualifications for the role (Kay & Shipman, 2014) or accepted promotion.

This event minimized or potentially eliminated barriers to leadership positions related to women being more risk-averse and timid in highly competitive environments as compared to men (Baker & Cangemi, 2016; Dishman, 2019), as noted by the number of responses regarding self-confidence.

Organizational and Life Contexts

With awareness of limitations as leaders through assessments and time to work on developing these weaknesses, women can be much better prepared to face the uncertainty of life and career stages with confidence. Coupled with hearing how other women have navigated these life and career-stage concerns, they understand how to lobby or negotiate organizational policies that are not barriers to their leadership path (Baker & Cangemi, 2016; Pew Research, 2015). Engaging in these learning opportunities is exactly what Baker and Cangemi (2016) suggested as a way to mitigate the barriers to leadership within the organizational context. Arguably, many companies are addressing organizational contexts (Catalino & Marnane, 2019; Diversity Woman, 2015; Gurdjian et al., 2014; O'Neil, Hopkins & Bilimoria, 2015) that limit opportunities for women to advance to leadership positions. Companies are also implementing innovative ways to support the integration of the work and life domains; however, statistics indicate that opportunity exists for more attention and effort (Dishman, 2019; Diversity Woman, 2015; O'Neil et al., 2015). The opportunity presented by Dishman (2019) in her interview with Havas Group CTO, Patricia Clarke, states that women are "progressing to mid-level manager," but a slowdown exists beyond that corporate rank (McKinsey, 2018; Pew Research Center, 2018). This is just one example of continued work needed in supporting the promotion of women through leadership development programs in companies and higher education.

Implications

The call for collaboration among the field of Organization Development (OD) and higher education is at the heart of this study. We should consider the knowledge, research, and consulting experience of this field as a key leader in the development of women into more leadership positions and at higher ranks. OD consultants and academicians should lead the discussion and approaches to develop women as leaders earlier, specifically within the academic realm. This is not a new concept as KPMG has developed a robust leadership development program for women to "to create a sustainable pipeline of exceptional female leaders" (KPMG, 2015, p.6) and recently extended this to include working with high school seniors (Griffin, 2018). Other women leadership development programs used as a model for purposes of this study came from Havas Group, LinkedIn, Bank of America, IBM, Eli Lilly and Company, Texas Instruments, Principal Financial Group, Unilever, and Disney (Dishman, 2019; Diversity Woman, 2015; Griffin, 2018; Samani & Thomas, 2016).

Although this study only considered 21 women for this longitudinal, five-year research, it warrants acknowledging the fruit it bears, as noted within the responses and promotion statistic. The promotions may not be to management positions, but it is fair to say that promotion within a company or to another company is yet another step higher on the corporate ladder toward advanced leadership ranks.

Limitations and Future Research

This article presents findings from the first iteration of this research. Due to the participants being in the early career stage, it is difficult to know how much corporate culture played a role in their advancement. Additionally, the survey did not collect information regarding leadership development programs offered at these named companies or access to affinity groups. All these opportunities may have influenced the trajectory of these women's career paths, and that has been duly noted as the research on the curriculum supplements continues. Recognizing these limitations is important for future research; however, it is worthy of noting that they all acknowledged the curriculum supplements as playing a key role in their ability to advance in their careers within five years of graduation.

In the next research phase, we will conduct

a pre-test with our student population and include a gender survey question to extend the impact on all students rather than just the women attending our university. This procedure will provide more robust data to analyze in determining the impact of curriculum supplements on career progression. Additionally, the post-graduation survey will address the corporate culture and additional opportunities that mitigated potential career barriers, as presented in this paper.

Conclusion

The call to enhance the business school curriculum to develop women leaders is being made with this article. The challenges women face with regard to understanding organizational contexts, navigating barriers to success, building strong networks, engaging a mentor, and integrating work and life domains need to be presented to women prior to their early career years. Utilizing leadership programs within corporate America as a guide, business schools can enhance the curriculum to contribute to a healthier increase in women in leadership positions. Making these enhancements to the higher education curriculum alongside collaboration with organizations (Bonebright et al., 2012) presents the field of OD with a challenge to lead the effort.

Additionally, the hope is that through reading this paper more practitioners might reconnect with their *alma mater* as guest speakers or mentors for female students. If we as organization development scholars and practitioners embrace the slow increase in female leaders in a way that inspires us to bring about change, we can begin making a difference at a level more granular than the early career phase. Reaching these women earlier may result in women navigating the organizational context easier and knowing what to expect when it comes to barriers to attaining leadership positions. Through a robust business school curriculum that facilitates more learning beyond the classroom to support the development of female leaders, we can have a more career-ready workforce more inclusive to women as leaders.

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Appendix

Event Goals –

The following are goals for the Women in Leadership Forum event and may broaden as the event grows. At this point, we are using these to help guide the event preparation and provide a framework for the scope of the event.

1.   Celebrate –We look forward to an event to celebrate women as this will be held in conjunction with International Women's Day, which is not widely recognized or celebrated in the greater Fort Worth area. We want to be the "hub" of activity on this important date.

2.   Connect – Women will have a common area to gather women across divergent backgrounds to build a community of leaders. Texas Wesleyan University will facilitate the continued platform for this goal as we grow this event and elevate the presence of Texas Wesleyan University in the greater Fort Worth area.

3.   Challenge – This event will present current and future challenges to students by openly talking about them and working through them collectively to impact the world of business.

4.   Empower – The workforce is diverse and highly competitive; therefore, events such as this will shape our students' confidence and create effective leaders.

The benefits of building this event are multifaceted. They include creating a community of leaders that opens networking doors for our students, engaging alumni with the university and our current students, and elevating the presence of Texas Wesleyan as a thought leader in women's issues.