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Mission

The mission of the Harvard College Women’s Center is to promote gender equity by raising awareness of women’s and gender issues, developing women’s leadership, and celebrating women who challenge, motivate, and inspire. In alignment with these goals, we centralize resources and offer student-focused programming to strengthen individuals and student organizations. The Women’s Center is committed to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for all students that encourages dialogue and diversity.

Letter from the Director

It is with great pride that I have taken on the role as the director of the Harvard College Women’s Center this last spring. I am honored to work with the amazing students and staff of the Women’s Center as we continue to build on the great foundation laid by those who came before us.

It has been an incredibly productive year here at the Women’s Center. From our weekly Let’s Talk and Women’s Week programming to our Gender 101 Workshops and Women in Science Technology, Engineering, and Math (WiSTEM) Mentorship Program, our team has engaged Harvard’s campus in the mission of the Women’s Center. This year was not only productive in the output of excellent programming and education, but was also a year for reflective practice. As a team we evaluated our committee work and re-aligned the goals of our committees to ensure our programs directly align with the goals established under the reorganization and creation of the Dean of Students Office over the summer of 2018. We also focused on updating internal organization and transition documents to enable next years’ intern team to pick up where others left off.

Comprised of graduating seniors, our education committee has been busy this year on their own capstone project. In collaboration with the Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, they produced a short video, Beyond the Binary: Gender as a Constellation, which introduces the conceptual framework of the Gender 101 Workshop, to be released when students come back to campus next fall.

Our community outreach team has also had great success increasing the visibility of the Women’s Center in residential spaces. The Women of Color Collective ambassadors have created warm (literally hosting a “burn vacation” year-end bonfire) and welcoming environments in the Houses to foster community building. The Frosh Reps have engaged first-year students both through programming in the Women’s Center space and by tabling in Annenberg. By enhancing our focus on inclusive hiring practices, this committee also ensured we had an incredibly diverse candidate pool during intern hiring.

Through the work of our programming and events committee, including Women’s Week, Women’s Cabinet, and the ART Grant, we provided support to over 50 student organizations. The Women’s Cabinet also met with administrators to discuss enhanced access to spaces across campus for the purpose of fostering more inclusive social spaces.

Outside of committee work, our team has engaged the campus through Let’s Talk programming and our WiSTEM Mentorship Program. Last fall we hosted an event on “Environmentalism as Social Justice” that packed our space and set off continued conversations across campus, culminating in the Women’s Center’s commitment to environmental justice announced early this spring. Our WiSTEM Mentorship Program has also had great success in building a supportive community for women in STEM at Harvard, and has served as a model for other offices and organizations within and outside of Harvard.

It was also an impactful year for women’s leadership on campus, as was demonstrated during the speeches at our Women’s Leadership Award (WLA) Ceremony. I am continuously inspired by the tremendous breadth and depth of the work of our students, and the WLA applicants provided only a highlight of what our students have accomplished on campus with any given class year. There are so many other individuals working behind the scenes to promote gender equity and build a more inclusive campus, including the dedicated interns of the Women’s Center, that it gives me great hope for the future of this work at Harvard and beyond as graduates make their way into new communities.

On that note, I can’t wait to welcome our new intern team in the fall as they lead us into another amazing and productive year for 2019-2020. I look forward to see how they make their mark on the work of the Women’s Center and continue our work with the Harvard community to promote gender equity.

Sincerely,
Heidi Wickersham
Director, Harvard College Women’s Center
Campus Education

The purpose of the Campus Education Committee is to educate and support students, staff, and faculty around issues of belonging and inclusion as they pertain to gender identity. Campus Education interns inform the Harvard community on theory and best practices for gender inclusivity through Gender 101 workshops and other resource guides.

Gender 101 Workshops

This year, with three graduating senior members of the Campus Education committee, we focused on the legacy we’d be leaving behind for future interns and the Harvard community at large. Using knowledge gained over three years of facilitating the Gender 101 workshops, we extensively reviewed each portion of the workshop to identify areas of improvement. One result of our assessment was to create a new segment focused on the ways gender influences our language and how the limits of our language concretely impact efforts to be inclusive.

Enhancing educational materials was a top priority for our team this year. We collaborated with the Office of BGLTQ Student Life to create resource sheets outlining the offices and student organizations that provide services for gender equity and transgender members of the Harvard community. These sheets also inform readers on the importance of pronouns in affirming gender identity and offer ways to introduce and respect people’s gender pronouns.

We worked with the Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning to create a video explaining the gender constellation, the model we at Women’s Center use for thinking about gender. We wrote and modified the video script, recorded audio, and conceptualized visuals to display on screen. The video will serve as an accessible resource for anyone looking to understand how societal and individual experiences impact how we think about gender. To expand the reach of the gender constellation even further, we created a physical, interactive constellation in the Women’s Center office space. The physical constellation encourages visitors to reflect on the facets of identity that affect their own gender and allows them to see the diverse and nuanced gender experiences of people who have already interacted with the installation.

We continue to maintain relationships with student organizations whose members annually participate in the workshops, expanding our impact how we think about gender. To expand the reach of the Gender 101 workshops, we extensively reviewed each portion of the workshop to identify areas of improvement. One result of our assessment was to create a new segment focused on the ways gender influences our language and how the limits of our language concretely impact efforts to be inclusive.

Community Outreach

The purpose of the Community Outreach Committee is to create opportunities within the Houses and Yard to promote social connections for students. Community Outreach interns are responsible for supporting and empowering students to advance the mission of the Center in creating social connections in their communities. Community Outreach interns expand the presence of the Center in the Yard and the Houses through the First-Year Representative Program, Women of Color Collective, and intern hiring. This committee coordinates other activities for student engagement, including holding open houses during first-year and junior parent weekends, hosting a table at Orientation and the annual Student Activities Fair.

First-Year Representatives

The First-Year Representatives (“Frosh Reps”) program is designed for first-year students to help promote and raise the visibility of the Center resources and events among other first-year students, act as a liaison between the Center and other first-years, and help the Center stay connected to dialogue in the freshmen class related to issues of gender.

Each year interns recruit and train Frosh Reps in the beginning of the fall semester. During the 2018-2019 academic year, the Women’s Center recruited five outstanding Frosh Reps who met throughout the year to design events surrounding gender identity relevant on campus. This year, the Frosh Reps hosted three events including “Halloween, Hot Chocolate, & Horror!”, in the fall, “Sophomore Social Life: Making the Transition,” and “A Candid Conversation: How is Life at Harvard?” in the spring.

On Halloween, students gathered for a screening of the horror movie, The VVitch, as well as a discussion following on representation of women in horror films. As the film was produced by a company called A24, the Frosh Reps had the unique opportunity of partnering with a student organization called A24 at Harvard, a chapter of a larger organization geared towards supporting student filmmakers on college campuses throughout the country. As such, A24 provided students who attended the event with merchandise such as free DVDs, pens, and notepads. Following the screening, students engaged in a conversation on how women are seen in media, grounding the conversation in the historical conception of the witch and drawing upon examples from the film itself. Students also enjoyed the plethora of fall snacks such as hot apple cider, hot chocolate, pumpkin pie, cookies, and Halloween candy.

The Frosh Reps had the opportunity to plan two events in the spring, as well as spread the word about HCWC’s Women’s Week to first-year students by tabling in Annenberg. On April 10 of 2019, students hosted “Sophomore Social Life,” a discussion on adjusting to the second year at Harvard academically, co-curricularly, and socially. Students considered questions on blocking groups, student organizations, and declaring a concentration. Next, for the first time, Frosh Reps were responsible for facilitating HCWC’s annual event during Visitas weekend. Welcoming newly admitted students into the space, Frosh Reps engaged with them in a candid conversation around life at Harvard from a first-year perspective. The spring allowed for Frosh Reps to increase the visibility of HCWC, as well as offer a much-needed space to discuss gender issues at Harvard.
The mission of the Women of Color Collective (WoCC) is to provide a space in which women of color can come together to discuss the intersections of race, gender, and culture; discuss how this intersection can be further complicated by other facets of identity; and create solidarity between women of color. Our vision is that through the Collective, women of color, whether they belong to an affinity group or not, will feel like they have a space in the Harvard community.

This spring marked the second year of the WoCC’s House program, which implemented a series of student-run social events in the undergraduate Houses. The team expanded WoCC’s impact from its previous year, meeting weekly to plan four social events and two study breaks in the Radcliffe Quadrangle, River, and River-Central neighborhoods. Programming kicked off with a painting and mocktails night in Mather House. Over the course of the evening, close to fifty members of the Harvard community joined us for an evening of painting, conversation, and delicious snacks. Canvases and materials were distributed upon arrival, and our WoCC Ambassadors provided inspirational quotes to help attendees brainstorm innovative designs for their projects. HCWC Interns and WoCC Ambassadors brought snacks for attendees to munch on while painting. Individuals gathered around small tables for painting and potting, 66 students signed up for the event, so we selected 35 students via a random lottery due to limited space and supplies. Shortly after, WoCC collaborated with the Women of Winthrop team to put on a wine-tasting event to celebrate six different wines made by women of color. The intimacy of the setting and the random lottery selection converged to foster an environment in which women of color could see new faces and make new friends.

Finally, we ended the year with a novel event called “Burn Voyage!” which allowed women of color to gather in the Adams House Randolph Courtyard and burn the negativity from the past year. We provided pen and paper for students to write down all the struggles they have faced as women of color and throw it in to a fire pit. All participants said that they would come to this event again next year, and all noted that they made a new friend during the event. One graduating senior event wrote, “I would come back to Cambridge for this event.”

WoCC Ambassadors noted the rewarding experience of leading WoCC this past year due to its capacity for building friendships, connecting students to the Women’s Center, and bringing women of color together. Even as WoCC Ambassadors worked to make social spaces for women of color thorough Harvard, WoCC itself became a community space for Ambassadors. One WoCC Ambassador expressed appreciation for the outreach of HCWC to connect with students who do not regularly engage with the office. She wrote, “Getting familiar with the WoCC and culture; discuss how this intersection can be further complicated by other facets of identity; and create solidarity between women of color. Our vision is that through the Collective, women of color, whether they belong to an affinity group or not, will feel like they have a space in the Harvard community and bringing women of color together. Even as WoCC Ambassadors worked to make social spaces for women of color throughout Harvard, WoCC itself became a community space for Ambassadors. One WoCC Ambassador expressed appreciation for the outreach of HCWC to connect with students who do not regularly engage with the office. She wrote, “Getting familiar with the WoCC and work they do was always something I’ve wanted to do while at Harvard, so I’m glad WoCC provided an avenue to do so.”

--WoCC Ambassador

Women of Color Collective

Women’s Cabinet

The Women’s Cabinet is a collaborative board of student leaders from women-focused student organizations throughout Harvard College. The goal of the Women’s Cabinet is to strengthen and amplify the voices of women students on campus. Finally, we ended the year with a novel event called “Burn Voyage!” which allowed women of color to gather in the Adams House Randolph Courtyard and burn the negativity from the past year. We provided pen and paper for students to write down all the struggles they have faced as women of color and throw it in to a fire pit. All participants said that they would come to this event again next year, and all noted that they made a new friend during the event. One graduating senior event wrote, “I would come back to Cambridge for this event.”

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In its twelfth year, Women’s Week continues to make a significant impact on campus by fostering dialogue about women’s and gender issues. The mission of Women’s Week is to sponsor student-led events that celebrate women’s achievements, promote dialogue about women’s and gender issues, and highlight the varied and intersectional experiences of women at Harvard and beyond.

Women’s Week 2019 explored the theme “Power Through,” in which participants reflected on the way women have overcome obstacles and empowered themselves in tough times. Through ten events organized by student groups, Women’s Week was truly a community-wide endeavor, demonstrating the shared passion of individuals, student organizations, faculty members, and administrators for empowering people to make change in their personal lives and in their communities.

“I am immensely humbled by the powerful space that we created.”

The ten events from this year’s lineup featured a range of topics, including celebrating women in STEM, feminism and motherhood, international politics, and more, with formats ranging from a phone-a-thon, intimate discussions, to various forms of artistic expression. The week opened with an event hosted by the Women’s Cabinet, titled “Strategies to Get Through the Struggle.” Students stopped by Ticknor Lounge for a bite to eat as they reflected on what empowered them at Harvard. Midway into the week, the South Asian Association hosted a get together to celebrate motherhood that led to a phone-a-thon to students’ mothers. The week concluded with an event sponsored by the Seneca, Satire V, and the Harvard College Stand-Up Comedy Society titled “Express Yourself,” an arts/comedy event that highlighted female and non-binary performers, with the added goal of encouraging more people from marginalized backgrounds to try new forms of creative expression. Attendees were treated to performances such as stand-up comedy, short stories, and original music.

The five days of programming included in Women’s Week was coordinated by Women Center interns and a 20-student steering committee with the collaboration of 19 student organizations. Throughout the week we engaged 307 student participants, expanding the reach of the Women’s Center, uniting women on campus, and increasing awareness of women’s shared and intersectional experiences.

The publicity was especially strong this year, in part due to the launch of a promotional video a week prior that was realized by the powerful space that we created.

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The publicity was especially strong this year, in part due to the launch of a promotional video a week prior that was entirely produced by student volunteers. Through its sponsorship and coordination of Women's Week the HCWC empowered students not only to challenge the obstacles women face, but to form a community and develop leadership skills in the process.

Christie Jackson '21

#WCW & Appreciations

Our Woman Crush Wednesday (#WCW) campaign continued this year, celebrating women at Harvard and beyond who challenge, motivate, and inspire. We highlighted the work of 26 amazing women on our social media this academic year, including students, staff, faculty, and alumnae who were nominated by students. These public shout outs are another way for the Women’s Center to appreciate the work of others, in addition to our weekly “appreciations.” As a staff we nominate individuals, student groups and offices that we think are doing great work in solidarity with our mission and send them physical certificates of appreciation in the mail.

Ann Radcliffe Trust Grants

The Ann Radcliffe Trust/Women’s Center Community Fund (ART/WCCF) was created in the pioneering, independent spirit of Ann Radcliffe, who, in 1643, established the first scholarship fund for Harvard College and for whom Radcliffe College was named two-and-a-half centuries later. The ART/WCCF is primarily funded by the Houghton Endowment, which was established by a gift from Maisie K. Houghton ’62 and James R. Houghton ’38. The grant review process is coordinated through the Women’s Cabinet and applications are reviewed by a rotating subset of members of the Women’s Cabinet, previous ART grant recipients, and HCWC interns. Grants are awarded to student groups to fund projects that support the visibility of women, encourage dialogue about gender, and promote women’s leadership at Harvard College. The Harvard College Women’s Center awards an average of $35,000 in ART/WCCF grants to student initiatives each academic year. This year there were 14 grant requests totaling $37,709. We were able to fund 31 of the requests, awarding $15,000 in funding for 19 student groups.

Group: Harvard Society of Black Scientists and Engineers
Event: Black Health Movement Conference

The Black Health Movement Conference featured a panel of specialists centered on why African American Women have higher risk pregnancies. The panel explored social inequalities and other stressors that negatively impact black women. Following this panel the conversation on maternal health continued with a workshop centered on maternal health outcomes of refugees and immigrants, who have particular health disparities. The Conference aimed to provide attendees with an understanding of how to develop interdisciplinary approaches to addressing health issues within the Black community.

Group: Harvard Society of Black Scientists and Engineers
Event: Productions of Electra, Edges the Musical, Saccharine, Diary of Anne Frank

This year the Radcliffe-Harvard Dramatic Club received four grants to support their two productions each semester. These productions are so important to the campus community, the Ann Radcliffe Trust is proud to support this campus group and all the work and contribution they make to the arts on campus. Their productions are very popular among students of the college and the broader community. This year with productions of Electra, Edges the Musical, Saccharine, and the Diary of Anne Frank, they did not disappoint.
Let’s Talk Series
The Let’s Talk Series features weekly programming spearheaded by our undergraduate interns highlighting campus issues and building community.

Fall 2017 Events
How to Look Corporate AF* (and fashionable) 09.26.18
A conversation about how to present yourself professionally while keeping your personal sense of style alive.

UNPAID: Navigating Self Care and Emotional Labor 10.10.18
An event to highlight emotional burdens and how self-care can address these issues.

Pen, Paper, Pause: Journaling for Self Care and Reflection 10.17.18
A crafting event for students to decorate journals and enjoy snacks as they relax and intermingle in the Center.

Power to the People: Building Politics around Race and Gender 10.24.18
A panel discussion on why race and gender matter in politics and how students can get involved.

Combing Her Assent: Setting Your Own Standards 10.28.18
A conversation on how gender affects the college experience, and the impact of new freedoms of life on campus.

Environmentalism as Social Justice 11.28.18
A moderated discussion of the intersection of environmentalism and social justice advocacy and activism.

Spring 2018 Events
Food and Fascinating Conversation with Dr. Mtshali 02.21.19
Dr. Mtshali studies intersectionality, with a focus on race and gender, and teaches on Gender, Race, and Poverty.

“What Are You Gonna Do With That” Professional Opportunities for Identity-Based Studies 03.13.19
A pre-professional panel discussing the opportunities for students pursuing identity-based studies.

The Art of the Craft 03.27.19
A study break opportunity or students to connect around crafting as a form of self-care and stress management.

MANKILLER: Film Screening and Discussion 04.03.19
A screening of the documentary MANKILLER, about the Cherokee Nation’s first female principal chief.

Yes She Can: Discussing Hope & Change with Obama Whitehouse Staffer Andrea Flores 04.11.19
A book signing and discussion with Andrea Flores, discussing the recent publication of the book Yes She Can.

Swap ‘Til You Drop 05.08.19
A Clothing swap and brunch to divert textile waste from landfills during Spring reading period and move out.

Fall Spotlight
The Combating Harassment in the Workplace event was an opportunity for Harvard affiliates to connect with Dr. Kate Clancy and discuss her influential research and powerful work on sexual harassment in science and academia. The event was designed to produce conversation about the topic of harassment in STEM and provide attendees with concrete skills to apply to situations or departments they may encounter. The event was set in the format of a 30 minute dinner where attendees could mingle amongst themselves and with Dr. Clancy followed by a 15-20 minute presentation by Dr. Clancy on sexual harassment and her research. After the presentation, attendees sought recommendations, asked questions about Dr. Clancy’s research, and shared their experiences in STEM in an expanded Q&A period.

Environmentalism as Social Justice
In collaboration with the Harvard Black Men’s Forum, Harvard Undergrads for Environmental Justice, Harvard-Radcliffe Asian American Women’s Association, Environmental Action Committee, Harvard College Conservation Society, and the Harvard Black Students Association, the Let’s Talk Series spearheaded a series of events highlighting the link between Environmental Justice and Social Justice. The goals of the event were to understand environmentalism and social justice, to know the barriers to solidarity between groups, and create a platform and avenues for collective action. After an overview of the history of the Environmental Movement and Environmentalism on Campus, student groups discussed challenges they experience in their work around Environmental and Social Justice and how they may overcome barriers to solidarity and common purpose.

Attendees were composed of Harvard undergraduate and graduate students, a Harvard faculty member, and two faculty members from Boston University. This was a level of professional diversity that the Women’s Center rarely receives the opportunity to host and there was incredibly productive conversation as a result of the sharing of these differing perspectives. Many graduate students shared how they knew of or faced instances of harassment in their time at different universities, which highlighted the importance, and real-world verification, of Dr. Clancy’s work while also exposing gaps in developing research (ex. the lack of research on how nationality/race status impacts vulnerability to harassment). Faculty members present sought recommendations on how to improve their departments and how codes of conduct can be used to make workplace environments that are hostile to harassers and harassment. At the end of this event the facilitators spoke with participants to understand what they took away from this discussion and the overall impression was that the event was well-received.

-Brandi Mount ’19

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Spring Spotlight

“What Are You Going To Do With That?” Professional Opportunities in Identity-Based Studies

The purpose of this Let’s Talk was to address the gap in resources and information for students pursuing concentrations that end in “studies,” identity-based concentrations such as African-American studies, Women, Gender & Sexuality studies, and South Asian studies. The event, entitled “What Are You Going To Do With That?”: Professional Opportunities For Identity-Based Studies, consisted of a panel and discussion. Panelists included representatives from the Harvard Office of Career Services (OCS), as well as recent alumni in these fields. Panelists informed students of resources available through OCS, as well as offering their own personal experiences in fields around race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality and how they navigated professional life. Students were very engaged in the conversation and many commented that this event was “breath of fresh air” on Harvard’s campus, which traditionally focuses on fields such as finance and consulting. Interest for the event was high, and some students who were not able to attend even reached out to HCWC via email asking for notes from the event. Representatives from OCS were also pleased by the immensely positive response, as this event aligns with similar programming they have held in the past that they wish to continue. The success of this event strengthened HCWC’s relationship with OCS, opening the possibilities of more events along similar lines in the future.

This event also allowed for the HCWC to co-sponsor with cultural organizations on campus, such as the Asian American Women’s Association, Association of Black Harvard Women, Black Men’s Forum, Black Students Association, Harvard Undergraduate Union of Mixed Students, Radcliffe Union of Students, and the South Asian Association. Representatives from these organizations enriched the conversation with their perspectives and, overall, attendees left the event expressing feelings of increased confidence and excitement about their future in identity-based and social justice work.

Swap ‘Til You Drop

This year the Women’s Center hosted our ‘Swap Till You Drop’ event, which is a clothing swap inviting community members to donate or swap their gently used apparel and wares during Spring reading period. In alignment with our sustainability goals, this event reduced textile waste by collecting items that would normally be thrown out or left in houses for summer clean-ups crews to deal with, diverting them from landfills and putting them to good use in new hands. The Center also provided a fun and welcoming brunch for those who came to talk about sustainability and up-cycling while taking a break from studying and reflecting on the events of the past year. We saw great attendance this year, and marked our swap success by only having a small number items to donate at the end of the day.

Leadership & Development

Women’s Leadership Awards Ceremony

The 2019 Women’s Leadership Awards (WLA) Ceremony celebrated a variety of forms of women’s leadership, spanning from community-building and mentorship to critical activism and challenges. On Wednesday, April 24, the WLA celebration took place in the Holmes Heritage Room at Piocheiner House, in the Radcliffe Quadrangle. The 2019 award winners are: for the Women’s Leadership Award, Anwar E. Omeish, for the Women’s Professional Achievement Award, The Friends of Harvard Women’s Basketball Head Kathy Delaney-Smith, and for WiSTEM Mentor of the Year, Mami Iwamoto, MD. These women were the center of the event and their remarks and nominations illuminated the vast range of contributions these women have been making throughout the Harvard community.

As the Women in STEM (WiSTEM) Program continues to grow, mentors nominated by their mentees for the honor of Mentor of the Year have increased. In this year’s nominations, mentors were appreciated for their long-term and short-term career advice, careful attention to the study plans of their mentees, and everything from lending out their laptops to showing up with groceries. The program honored Mami Iwamoto, MD nominated by her mentee Najya Williams ’20. Iwamoto is a mentor who has given four years of service in this program with multiple students, in a university system where STEM continues to be space rendered gender exclusive by default and by the networks of apprenticeship and learning that have for so long dictated the bounds of STEM fields. Williams wrote that Iwamoto’s joy and pride in her work as a STEM student, artist, and an undergrad were unlike anything “I’ve yet to experience from any other leadership or authority figure while on this campus.”

“The work we do not do today is work that someone else will have to do tomorrow.”

As much as uplift and trailblazing in the university through academic and personal mentorship, critical thinking and pointed activism have been essential parts of the leadership and work the Women’s Center seeks to support within the College. The undergraduate senior who won Women’s Leadership Award, Anwar Omeish, spoke of the need for challenging perspectives within the community in her acceptance of the award, reading, “I am here to stand alongside you as we look our complicity in the face, look our power straight in the eyes and understand that the work we do not do today is work that someone else will have to do tomorrow.”

The Women’s Professional Achievement Award went to Coach Kathy Delaney-Smith, the winningest head coach in Ivy League history, who insisted on asking the attendees even more of the ways in which she constantly challenged herself and her students—doing the things that the world insisted would never be possible, and inserting herself into situations where she was told she did not belong. A table of women’s basketball seniors cheered loudly alongside college administrators and Women’s Center staff as she insisted with energy and hilarity on hope and defiance. She closed with a call to break down the stereotypes of competition between gender minorities in favor of community uplift.

Kirin Gupta ’16, graduate program coordinator
Women’s Leadership Conference

For 30 years, the Women’s Leadership Conference (WLC) has brought female Harvard students together with successful women in academics, business, media, government, public service, health, science, and the arts. For the more than 25 participants selected to attend the WLC during the 2019 winter session, it created a network of peers, administrators, faculty, and local and national leaders committed to the advancement of women. Participants of the four-day conference attended workshops and discussions about advancing female representation in all professional arenas.

Smart Cookies Series

To supplement the WiSTEM Mentorship Program, the Women’s Center sponsors and coordinates the Smart Cookies series which are conversations with innovative women leaders open to the entire Harvard Community. These events hold space for STEM-related conversations and are geared towards diversifying undergraduate women’s approach to their STEM concentrations. At these events we welcome accomplished Women in STEM who have been innovators in their fields to share their best practices, how they overcame challenges, and what pushed them to re-think success for women in STEM professions.

This year we partnered with the Pakistani Students Association (PSA) and the South Asian Women’s Collective (SAWC) to bring Dr. Tasneem Zehra to campus. Dr. Zehra is a Pakistani theoretical physicist and Assistant Professor of Physics at the Lahore University of Management Sciences. Her talk “Pushing Boundaries and Creating Multiple Dimensions: An Evening with Tasneem Zehra.” focused on career opportunities for women in theoretical physics as well as personal reflection on her experience in the field as a woman. PSA worked diligently with the staff of the Women’s Center to welcome Dr. Tasneem Zehra, writer, educator and Pakistan’s first female string theorist to campus. The goals for this event were to both provide a model for women in STEM, as well as highlight Pakistani contributions to the field of physics. Students from all backgrounds were drawn to the event and the resulting conversation was informative and inspiring. The Women’s Center truly appreciates the leadership and contributions of our student organization co-sponsors in supporting and increasing the visibility of Pakistan’s first female string theorist.

Ann Radcliffe Trust Lecture

During the College’s orientation for first-year students, the Women’s Center hosts A Taste of Harvard Academics, Ann Radcliffe Trust Lecture. The mission of the lecture is to expose students to a senior female faculty member doing innovative and exciting work that will invigorate them for what lies ahead in their time at Harvard. In doing so, we honor the legacy of Ann Radcliffe and similar pioneers of women’s education in Harvard and Radcliffe history. In 2018, we welcomed Dr. Gabriela Soto Laveaga, Professor of History of Science. Laveaga’s talk, Questioning Historical Narratives: Rethinking the Limits of Knowledge with the History of Science, illustrates how some of our most well known histories are incomplete and need to be expanded.

WiSTEM Mentorship Program

The mission of Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (WiSTEM) Mentorship Program is to create and maintain an environment that fosters the personal growth and professional development of women students in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics communities at Harvard University. Ultimately, the goals of the program is to help retain women in STEM fields and increase the number of women STEM concentrators who persist at Harvard by providing meaningful mentorship and leadership development opportunities.

This year was highly successful for the WiSTEM Mentorship Program. WiSTEM encourages undergraduate students to explore how they might make their particular contributions and experience the greatest possible satisfaction in STEM fields. In September, 82 undergraduate student mentees were matched with 76 mentors in graduate school, medical school, postdoctoral fellowships, and beyond. The mentees were 53% people of color and 23% women. WiSTEM provided an event where members received mentorship training and met up with their mentors/mentees. We developed a mentoring guidebook with resources and advice from previous years, and participants fill out a mentoring agreement establishing their goals for the year. According to June 2019 End-of-Year Survey data, 72% of participants indicated that their mentorship match was a “good” or “great” fit for their academic and career interests. Furthermore, 73% of pairs held 3 or more meetings with their mentor/ mentee during the academic year with 15% holding 7 or more meetings.

Outside of mentoring, the program provides an opportunity for participants to network and meet other women in STEM. For example, we held a WiStEa event at least once per semester where participants can talk with each other and invited faculty members over tea and cookies.

“I really enjoy mentorship and exploring the diversity of interests that I learn about. I want to find a way to work that into my future goals”

Overall, we sent out monthly newsletters covering discussion topics, articles about women in STEM, upcoming events, and talks featuring women in STEM. We also offered a member database for members to connect, and manage a Facebook group for members.

Overall, the program has achieved its goals for the 2018-2019 year. According to the midyear survey, 63% of members indicated that participating in the WiSTEM program influenced their career or academic interests. Additionally, 84% indicated that the program has made them feel more included in the STEM community at Harvard. For our annual Mentor of the Year Award, we had ten phenomenal mentors nominated by their mentees. This year’s winner was Dr. Mami Iwamoto, whose mentee, Na-nya Williams, said “When I struggled with classes or was in the process of working through research ideas, she was right there to ask me the good, bad, and downright hard questions, while still honoring my goals and actively pushing me to push myself harder toward them.”

Additionally, we held a career panel and networking dinner each spring. This year featured a keynote address by Professor Anouska Bhattacharyya from the Harvard Women and Gender Studies Department, who discussed common problems faced by women pursuing STEM careers. The panelists included Kit McDonnell (Manager of Capital Markets and Special Projects at Ginkgo Bioworks), Oksana Kharchenko (Senior Design Engineer at Amazon Robotics), Rachel Murray (Co-CEO at She Geeks Out), and Romiya Barry (Doctoral Researcher in Clinical Research).

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Overall, we saw enhanced participation and satisfaction with our program helping ensure we continue to foster a thriving community of women in STEM at Harvard.

Nicolle Black-Petite, WiSTEM coordinator
Internship Program

Working at the Women’s Center is an opportunity for Harvard College undergraduates to garner the professional skills for advancement in the workplace while promoting gender equity in their campus community. This internship empowers students to raise awareness of women’s and gender issues through weekly events and committee work. The committees are broken into campus education, community outreach, and programming and events. These programs include the annual Women’s Week events, managing Women’s Cabinet, coordinating volunteer Women of Color Collective Ambassadors and Frosh Reps, as well as the design and implementation of Gender 101 workshops to campus student groups and offices. Interns are given opportunities to influence their campus community and highlight ideas that are important to them and the community and through their efforts the Women’s Center is able to continuously produce mission-driven work.

Meet Our Interns

Jenna Gray ’19
Brandi Moore ’19
Kara Chyung ’19
Kate Gehling ’19
Julie Chung ’21
Mirielle Wright ’21
Christie Jackson ’21
Emma Lin ’21
Janani Krishnan-Jha ’21
Jasmine Hyppolite ’21
Norah Storniolo ’21
Sophia Mautz ’21

Senior Reflections

Since beginning my role as a campus education intern as a sophomore, I’ve exposed hundreds of people to new ways of thinking about gender and how to make their organizations and offices more inclusive. Harvard community members routinely approach me and express their gratitude for the Gender 101 workshop and love of the Women’s Center space. Throughout my three years as an HCWC intern, I’ve improved my public speaking and communication skills, learned how to plan events, and gained strategies for evaluating feedback, among countless other professional development experiences.

Only when people ask me, “where do you work?” do I remember that the Women’s Center is not just my home, but my place of employment. The staff, physical space, and interns of the Women’s Center have been central to my sense of love, belonging, and community during my time at Harvard. Our staff and interns’ concern for another’s wellbeing, exemplified through our check-ins at weekly staff meetings, have taught me that work isn’t separate from our emotional lives. I arrived at one staff meeting feeling forlorn and dissatisfied with my sophomore spring class schedule. I began crying upon my check-in and continued to do so throughout our meeting; nowhere else on campus would I have felt comfortable expressing myself so openly. After our meeting, multiple interns and staff offered to help me in any way they could. The next day, our then program manager sent me an article from the Harvard Business School, “The Right Way to Cry in Front of Your Boss.” My time at the Women’s Center has affirmed my long held belief that every opportunity in life is a learning opportunity.

Jenna Gray ’19

When I began working at the Women’s Center, I saw it as a job—a place to develop important skills for the workplace. Of course, the Women’s Center internship is a job, a job that has pushed me to grow and develop skills that will serve me for the rest of my professional life. As an intern, I have learned how to manage social media platforms, create graphics, and expand the Center’s reach both on- and off-campus; I have learned how to collaborate closely with student organizations and offices to which I had no personal connection; and I have learned how to direct a year-long project, overseeing a committee and a dozen events. I do not take these experiences for granted, recognizing that I am going out into the workforce with more professional and project management skills than many students beyond the Center have the opportunity to develop.

But the Women’s Center internship experience is so much more than a job. It is a safe space, where you can feel free to be yourself while also having your beliefs challenged and world view expanded. It is a support system, where you will be motivated with hugs, cookies, and motivational words. Most importantly, it is a constant source of inspiration, from the incredible work that Naisha, Bridget, and Heidi do every day to keep the Center thriving, to the countless ways that my fellow interns engage with their communities on issues of social justice. I am forever grateful for this experience, for this community, for this family.

Kate Gehling ’19

Class of 2019 Interns

Jenna Gray ’19
Kate Gehling ’19

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Kate Gehling ’19
Meet the HCWC Staff

Heidi Wickersham, Director
Responsible for the leadership of the Center, Heidi handles the strategic development, operational management, financial planning, program development, and alumni relations. Heidi also works collaboratively with Center-affiliated student groups to advise them on strengthening visibility and to assist them in the creation, implementation and evaluation of an array of programming that raises awareness of women’s issues and promotes gender equity.

Bridget Duffy, Department Administrator
Bridget manages the financial and logistical needs of the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, which includes the Women’s Center, the Office of BGLTQ Student Life, the Office of Diversity Education and Support, and the Harvard Foundation for Intercultural and Race Relations. In addition to her financial portfolio, Bridget works to support the Anne Radcliffe Trust grant process and helps plan the annual Life, the Office of Diversity Education and Support, and the Harvard Foundation for Intercultural and Race Relations. In addition to her financial portfolio, Bridget works to support the Anne Radcliffe Trust grant process and helps plan the annual Women’s Leadership Awards Dinner and Celebration.

Gerard Cogliano, Administrative Coordinator
Joining the team in spring, Gerard supports the day to day management of the space, coordinates meetings, and assists the director and department administrator with various projects. Some of his projects include creating the Women’s Weekly newsletter, managing the website, and updating other informational materials.

Gerard is currently working toward a Master’s in Urban Planning and Community Development at the University of Massachusetts, Boston.

Kirin Gupta, Graduate Program Coordinator
Kirin joined the staff in spring and supports the programming efforts of the undergraduate interns with a focus on Women’s Week, the Women of Color Collective, Women’s Cabinet, and intern hiring. She also leads the Gender and Sexuality Workshop at GSAS, and is a resident tutor in Winthrop House.

Kirin is a currently a PhD candidate in the Harvard History Department, with a secondary field in Women, Gender, and Sexuality.

Nicole Black-Petite, WiSTEM Program Coordinator
Nicole has coordinated the WiSTEM Mentorship Program since 2016, including creating applications, matching pairs, leading orientation, managing programs and panels with guest speakers, as well as conducting assessment. Nicole is also an executive board member of the Harvard Graduate Women in Science and Engineering.

Nicole is currently a Ph.D. Candidate in the Harvard John A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences.

Support Our Work

Your support allows the Women’s Center to carry out our mission and to enrich students’ experiences at Harvard. Nearly 60% of the Women’s Center’s annual budget comes from the support of alumni and friends in the form of endowed funds or individual gifts. Two different gift funds enable our work: The Fund to Support the Harvard College Women’s Center supports current-year operations. This fund is used to augment educational programs and events, to sustain our two mentoring programs, and to support student internships, in addition to other needs. The Ann Radcliffe Trust supports student projects and student organizations that promote women’s leadership on campus, raise women’s visibility, and address the significance of gender in society.

Opportunities to Support the Harvard College Women’s Center

- $50,000 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Covers 100% of student grant requests we receive for one academic year
- $100,000 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Funds one full year of student-led programming at the HCWC
- $250,000 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Supports one small discussion-based event in the Women’s Center lounge
- $500,000 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Funds one leadership training or skill-building workshop for undergraduate students
- $1,000,000 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Covers the kick-off event for participants in our Women in STEM Mentorship Program
- $2,000,000 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Supports one undergraduate student internship at the HCWC for one year
- $5,000,000 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Covers the cost of our annual Women’s Week celebration in March
- $7,500,000 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Supports the Women’s Leadership Awards Dinner and Celebration
- $10,000,000 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Funds one full year of student-led programming at the HCWC
- $15,000,000 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Covers 100% of student grant requests we receive for one academic year

To make a donation to the Harvard College Women’s Center, visit us online: http://hcwc.fas.harvard.edu/support or, fill out the slip below, cut it out, and mail it to us.

I want to support the important work of the Harvard College Women’s Center.
Enclosed is my contribution of $ _____________. Please apply my donation to the following fund:

Fund to Support the Harvard College Women’s Center (Please note “Fund #331400 - HCWC” in the memo line of your check.)
Ann Radcliffe Trust (Please note “Fund #331402 - ART” in the memo line of your check.)

Name (please print): ________________________________ Class year/Affiliation: ________________________________
Address: ___________________________________________ City, State, Zip: ________________________________

Please make out checks to “Harvard College” and mail to Harvard College Women’s Center, Canaday Hall, B Entry, Cambridge, MA 02138

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Cambridge, MA 02138

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Thank You for your Support!