Women's Leadership Initiative

at the Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center University of Oklahoma



THE CARL ALBERT CENTER®

2018 NEWSLETTER

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TAKING THE NEXT STEP

The 2018 election cycle in Oklahoma marks a new milestone for the Women's Leadership Initiative: nine graduates of N.E.W. Leadership and Pipeline to Politics are running for office, many for the first time. These brilliant and bold women are on the ballot for a wide variety of public offices in the state – from district judge to state legislative positions. To get to know the candidates better, we asked them to share how their experience with N.E.W. Leadership or Pipeline to Politics has prepared them to run for office and gave them the opportunity to share advice for other women who want to hold public office in the future.

"N.E.W. Leadership gave me the confidence to imagine myself in the race," stated Carri Hicks, who is running for SD 40. Being surrounded by proactive and bold women leaders inspired her to believe that it is possible to run for office with "grit, determination, and hard work."

The strong N.E.W. Leadership community has remained a support structure for these women, from their time participating in the program through their current season of campaigning. "The relationships I have built through N.E.W. Leadership continue to inspire and challenge me as I serve in the Legislature and campaign for re-election," stated Representative Cyndi Munson, who is campaigning for re-election in HD 85.

"One of the most important things I learned at N.E.W. Leadership is how to connect with people," stated Kassie McCoy, who is running for Rogers County Associate District Judge. For Jasha Lyons Echo-Hawk, who is running for HD 35, a highlight of her N.E.W. Leadership experience was hearing why it is important to stay and work in Oklahoma because Oklahoma needs us, "even when the political climate seems tough."

Natalie Mai, who is running for Oklahoma County District Judge, stated that, "Pipeline to Politics gave me the strength and conviction to run for office."

Pipeline to Politics showed Merleyn Bell, who is running for HD 45, the importance of "forethought and good organization" when running a successful campaign.

N.E.W. Leadership and Pipeline to Politics have provided encouragement and practical tools to these women to make the leap to run for public office.

The resounding piece of advice from all of the N.E.W. Leadership and Pipeline to Politics alumnae to other women who aspire to hold public office is that you can do it and you should do it. "If you have a passion for public service, do not let the fact that you are young or a female prevent you from running," asserted Kassie McCoy. Some people will try to deter you from running, but you must not listen to them. "Win or lose, you will learn so much from campaigning," stated Natalie Mai.

The process of running for office enriches you as a citizen and as a woman. Jasha Lyons Echo-Hawk emphasized the importance of doing your part to prepare for running for office and that "if you are laying down the groundwork, then it will come." A piece of practical advice from Carri Hicks is that "if you recognize a problem, be part of



Merleyn Bell



Devyn Denton



Jasha Lyons Echo-Hawk



Carri Hicks



Julia Kirt

TAKING THE NEXT STEP (continued)

the solution." Merleyn Bell recognizes the importance of choosing the right office to run for "that suits your skills and your professional goals." Julia Kirt, who is running for SD 30 believes that a good way to prepare for running for office is to "volunteer outside your normal circle and sector," exposing yourself to different people, causes, and viewpoints.

We are proud of each and every one of our graduates who is running for office this election cycle and look forward to even more running in future elections. We will be featuring each one individually on our social media this fall, so please follow us! @W_L_I on Twitter and facebook.com/womensleadershipinitiative.



Natalie Mai



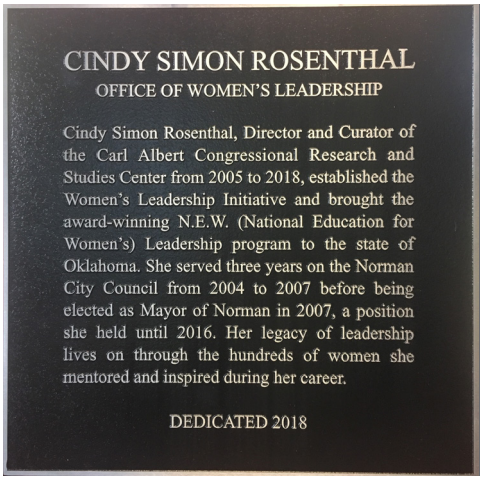
Kassie McCoy



Rep. Cyndi Munson

"If you are passionate about making positive change in your community, then you are qualified to run for public office!"

A LASTING LEGACY



In honor of Cindy Simon Rosenthal's retirement in March 2018, we celebrate her legacy as founder of N.E.W. Leadership in Oklahoma, former director and curator of the Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center at The University of Oklahoma, former Mayor of Norman from 2007 to 2016, and accomplished scholar and author with a research focus on women and politics.

Cindy has shattered the glass ceiling in countless ways and has empowered other women to do the same. Under Cindy's direction, N.E.W. Leadership was honored from 2002-2016 by *The Journal Record*'s "Woman of the Year" celebration as a program "making a difference."

Among her many awards and honors, Cindy was a 2016 recipient of the Kate Barnard Award given by the Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women to honor outstanding elected and appointed women officials in public service in Oklahoma. She was also named "Woman of the Year" by *The Journal Record* in 2010.

In addition to pouring her passion and effort into the N.E.W. Leadership program and its participants, Cindy also generously donated a significant amount of her own personal money to ensure the program was successful.

A plaque with Cindy's name and accomplishments now hangs outside the women's leadership offices as a reminder of her legacy.

Thank you, Cindy, for being who you are, for pioneering N.E.W. Leadership in Oklahoma, and for empowering women to actively lead. Your legacy will live on for many years to come!



N.E.W. LEADERSHIP 2018

The 2018 N.E.W. Leadership class was made up of 35 promising women leaders who represented 21 colleges and universities. This intensive, five-day, non-partisan leadership program is designed to educate, inspire, and empower future women political leaders and remove the barriers faced by women in public life. Projects throughout the five days included scripting and filming a video on historic and contemporary women leaders, a four-hour campaign simulation, and an in-depth action project where attendees researched and presented policy arguments regarding the merits of paid family leave. This year's N.E.W. Leadership class also radiated a notable sense of community, vulnerability, and connectedness that will lead to lifelong friendships and connections between the participants, speakers, and faculty-in-residence.

Our two faculty-in-residence this year were Sarah Adams-Cornell, who serves as the executive director of Live Indigenous OK and is co-founder of a program to empower Native women called Matriarch, and Tamya Cox, who is currently the regional director of public policy and organizing for Planned Parenthood Great Plains. Sarah and Tamya joined more than fifty other women leaders to share their life and career experiences, while providing advice and encouragement to the participants.

N.E.W. Leadership remains the signature program of the Carl Albert Center's Women's Leadership Initiative. This year's program was held May 18-22 in Norman. The 4th annual EmPower Lunch at the Jeaneen and Bob Neifeh and Bud Wilkinson Event Center brought together the students, their mentors, alumnae, state and local elected officials, and many supporters of the program. With Natalie Shirley as the keynote speaker, more than 200 people attended this event, which wrapped up N.E.W. Leadership 2018.

PIPELINE TO POLITICS 2019

If you desire to increase your involvement in public service and community leadership and potentially run for office, you should attend the one-day Pipeline to Politics program, which will take place on Saturday, January 26, 2019. Pipeline to Politics is the product of an ongoing partnership between the Women's Leadership Initiative (WLI) and the Oklahoma Women's Coalition (OWC) and is designed for professional women and community volunteers. Attendees will be equipped with practical ways to impact their communities and steps involved in running for office, all within the convenient format of the one-day event.

WLI has sponsored this program six times prior to teaming up with the OWC in 2016 to jointly present the program. After successfully holding the event in Tulsa for the first time in 2017, the program will return to Tulsa in 2019. More information will soon be available on our website (www.ou.edu/wli), the OWC website (www.okwc.org), Facebook, and Twitter.

THOUSANDS STRONG

The 2018 Thousands Strong Campaign will run from October 15th through November 16th this year and will provide support for the 2019 class of N.E.W. Leadership. Both our 2016 and 2017 campaigns raised over $10,000 each and dramatically increased the number of new donors to N.E.W. Leadership. Thousands Strong is OU's crowdfunding platform, which has given the Women's Leadership Initiative a new method of fundraising. Through this platform we have been able to engage more alumnae giving than ever before and we plan to have a friendly competition between the N.E.W. Leadership classes to encourage more to give this year. To mobilize the most people to donate, we plan to have a matching donation challenge and other incentives to boost giving. To give back to N.E.W. Leadership through this campaign, please donate at **thousandsstrong.ou.edu**.

NEW EMPLOYEE PROFILES

Connie Hammond joined the Carl Albert Center in January as the graduate assistant for the Women's Leadership Initiative. She was a member of the 2017 N.E.W. Leadership class and is overjoyed and abundantly thankful to give back to the program that has inspired her to reach new heights and empower the women around her to do the same. She is currently working on her masters' in public administration at the University of Oklahoma and is a recent graduate of Oral Roberts University. In addition to her work at WLI, Connie also enjoys hiking, attending conferences, advocating for Israel, and learning about diverse topics and viewpoints.



Connie Hammond

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Makayla Williams joined the Carl Albert Center in August as the undergraduate assistant. She comes to the Center from the University of Oklahoma's Learn and Earn program which gives university departments the opportunity to design student positions that offer real world job experiences that align with a student's professional goals. Makayla is currently studying political science and business as a Sophomore. She hopes to gain more skills for event organization and management with the Center. "Pursuing a brighter future for women in the the field of public service has always been a passion of mine," said Makayla.



Makayla Williams

ALUMNAE SPOTLIGHT

Lindsay LaFevers Archer (2002) became the deputy general counsel for Agency Counsel at the Oklahoma Corporation Commission in May 2017. She was also named one of The Journal Record's Achievers Under 40 in 2017. She is the governance chair and serves on the Board of Directors of the Oklahoma Single Parents' Scholarship Program and has been selected to serve on Special Care, Inc.'s Parent Board.

Jasmine Fain (2018) completed an internship with Texas Senator Royce West of District 23 this summer, where she served as the vice president of the Dr. Emmett J. Conrad Leadership Program and on the coalition to redevelop policy surrounding voter registration and community developments. She also served as an intern for Commit! Partnership on the For Oak Cliff team as the marketing and resource development associate. A senior at Oklahoma State University, she is the executive director of the Set it Off: Stepshow, president of Her Campus, and the political action delegate for the African-American Student Association.

Rachael Farnan (2018) was selected from the NASA Aerospace Scholar Program to participate in an onsite STEM competition at NASA's Langley Research Center. She has also been admitted to the University of Texas at Dallas to complete her bachelors degree in molecular and cellular biology with a minor in biochemistry.

Taylor Finley (2018) is working as a staff assistant in the Washington, D.C. office of Congressman Frank D. Lucas (OK-03), where she manages constituent relations and the intern program, coordinates tours, and works with the legislative assistants. She enjoys running into other N.E.W. Leadership graduates on Capitol Hill. Additionally, she has been selected to be a member of the NHL Capitals Spirit Squad.

Mandy Heaps (2002) was slated as the president elect for Junior League of Oklahoma City and will serve as president for 2019-2020. She was also recognized as Oklahoma City University's Greek Advisor of the Year.

Leslie Illston (2003) came back home to OU to work as the Development and Alumni Relations Officer for the College of Atmospheric and Geographic Sciences. She is also completing her Masters of Public Administration at OU, which she plans to complete in May 2019. She is also overjoyed to announce that she and her husband welcomed their first child in July 2017.

Aleah LaForce (2018) is currently serving as an intern at Oklahoma Policy Institute this fall after participating in their Summer Policy Institute. She has also been accepted to the Caravan for Democracy Student Leadership Mission to Israel, which will occur this December and January.

ALUMNAE SPOTLIGHT (continued)

Raegan Mach (2018) is serving as an intern with Girl Attorney, LLC. She is now attending the University of Central Oklahoma as a junior, majoring in political science with minors in pre-law and leadership, while working as a student assistant for UCO's Legal Counsel. She participated in Oklahoma Policy Institute's Summer Policy Institute.

Rylee McKee (2018) spent the summer serving as an intern for Senator James Lankford. Next spring, she will study abroad in Wales through the Brad Henry International Scholars program on a full scholarship and will be studying law and political science.

Charlotte Mitchell (2015) spent the last year working on the Todd Lamb for Governor campaign and just recently started a new job as district scheduler for Congressman Tom Cole. She is currently working in his Norman office.

Melanie Murphy (2017) is attending graduate school at George Mason University, studying international commerce and policy. She recently accepted a position as a project manager for a $96 million USAID-funded project in Pakistan.

Arden Nerius (2018) served as the government relations intern for the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber this summer, where she wrote policy memos for members and worked on their legislative scorecard. She is now working for the Cleveland County District Attorney's Office as a legal intern.

Leah Roper (2010) is currently practicing employment law after graduating from OU Law. She has also been recognized by Super Lawyers as a "Rising Star" in 2017 and 2018, as well as being selected to NextGen's Under 30 and Oklahoma Gazette's Forty under 40. She also serves on the Board of Directors for the Oklahoma Women's Coalition, the Plaza District Association, and Community Literacy Centers, and is co-chairing the 20th annual Plaza District Festival this year.

Amanda Sandoval (2014) graduated from Oklahoma State University and is currently working as a community mobilizer with DCCCA. She is also the communications director for Dream Action Oklahoma and is part of the National Board of Directors as the director of expansion within her sorority, Sigma Lambda Alpha Sorority Inc. She was awarded the Women Lead Award from the organization Women Lead, which recognizes women who work to steer the community towards justice for all.

Natalie Santa-Pinter (2016) was awarded the Warren/St. Francis Scholarship to attend the University of Oklahoma-University of Tulsa School of Community Medicine. She is in her second year and currently serves as president of her class. This past summer, she did research at King's College, London, on Intrahepatic Cholestasis of Pregnancy. She was awarded the Tulsa County Medical Society Betty Louise Conrad Memorial Award and Scholarship and she served as the Oklahoma Academy of Family Physicians liaison and independently organized a "Health and Policy" lecture series.

Kate Springer (2018) is now attending Oklahoma City University School of Law, where she is pursuing a law degree in energy.

Hannah Walcher (2016) graduated from University of Central Oklahoma in December 2017 with a bachelor of science in forensic science and a bachelor of arts in criminal justice. She became the campaign manager for Congressman Steve Russell in February 2018. In August 2018, she was 1 of 14 accepted into Edmond Police Academy to pursue her dream job to become a law enforcement officer. Shortly after being accepted into the academy, she was invited to become a member of the National Society for Women in Forensic Science.

Brooke Wambold (2017) is studying abroad this fall semester in Israel at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

Jessica Ward (2006) is working for the Department of Human Services as an assistant general counsel in the State Office.

Jenna Worthen (2008) is happy to announce that this year marks 10 years in professional fundraising for political and nonprofit entities. She is the Founder and CEO of James Martin Company, working with candidates, PACS and nonprofits to craft and implement intentional development strategies. As a passion project, she has also created an online community housed on Instagram called @MomWhoWorks, working to redefine what it means to be a working mom in a world without working dads.

Maggie White (2015) is currently a second-year student at Georgetown Law Center. She serves as an extern for a judge in the Washington, D.C. Superior Court's family docket and plans to become a family lawyer. Next semester, she will be in a clinic that will allow her to advocate for low-income children in partnership with Georgetown's Medical School. Over the summer, she worked in the Domestic Violence and Family Unit of the District of Columbia Legal Aid Society where she primarily assisted with helping survivors obtain Civil Protection Orders against their abusers.

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