



Women's Leadership
Alliance

Changing the Conversation

Annual Report

2022

A Message from Women's Leadership Alliance Board Chair

Dear Friends of the WLA,

In January 2022, our board of directors enthusiastically welcomed Stephanie Gularte to become the new Executive Director for the Women's Leadership Alliance. As you will see in this report, this leadership transition marked the beginning of an exciting new chapter for WLA, providing the opportunity to focus our intentions, our governance, and our programs in order to deepen our impact.

From the start, the WLA was created out of a spirit of possibilities. The founders firmly believed that the careers that we have forged in this industry should be made available to more women and to a greater diversity of women. For that to occur, we must commit to changing the conversation about what the financial advising industry looks like, and we must intentionally cultivate opportunities for women to discover and to succeed on the path to financial advising. More than ever, our board is committed to our mission of attracting and developing women on this path, empowering them to build thriving careers, and creating a stronger, more diverse industry in the process.

After a productive 2022, our 2023 year at the WLA is shaping up to include even more movement forward in our growth and impact. Later this year, I look forward to joining Stephanie to share our new strategic plan with you. I am certain you will be inspired.

Finally, as a valued WLA supporter, I'd like to thank you, our valued WLA supporter, for your help in making our work as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization possible. As a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization, your generosity drives our mission and our programs and energizes our long-term vision of attracting, engaging and empowering the next generation of female financial advisors.



Sincerely,



Kalita Blessing, CFP®, CAP®, AEP®
Wealth Advisor
Board Chair



A Message from the WLA's new Executive Director

Dear WLA Supporter,

When I began my role as Executive Director of the Women's Leadership Alliance in January of 2022, I knew that I was being given the opportunity to work with an incredible group of women who were committed to building on a strong foundation. Since then, I have discovered the larger community of advocates who believe in the mission of the WLA, to ensure that more women have the opportunity to discover and to thrive in the career of financial advising. This has set the stage to form some powerful partnerships that will allow us to expand our impact, reaching and empowering more women than ever before.

At the beginning of the year, as I learned about the history and the future potential of the WLA, the board of directors and I agreed to prioritize five key strategic goals. In this report, you'll read details of the work that we've accomplished in furthering these goals.

- **Launch Sally Law Initiative**
- **Build New Partnerships**
- **Elevate Profile of WLA**
- **Enhance Reach and Impact of Programs**
- **Enhance Board Governance Structure**

Our momentum has set the stage for a comprehensive 3-year strategic planning process that began at the end of 2022. Led by our board chair, Kalita Blessing, along with board members Kimberlee Bouska and Laura Webb, industry consultant Andrea Schlapia, and myself, with input from the full WLA board of directors and our stakeholders, we are committed to building a thoughtful plan that will empower the WLA to further enhance the focus of our programs to expand our reach and deepen our impact in 2023 and beyond.

I don't want to miss this chance to thank you, our WLA community, for your support in advancing our mission. Your belief in our vision to inspire more women to discover the path to financial advising, and to provide the tools and mentorship to ensure their success along that path, makes our work possible.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie Gularte". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Stephanie Gularte
Executive Director
Stephanie@WomensleadAlliance.org



Strategic Goals 2022



The year 2022 was a busy and productive new chapter for the WLA. The following includes a summary of the work we accomplished in this year of organizational and leadership transition:

Launch Sally Law Initiative

Entered five-year partnership commitment with the University of North Florida's Coggin College of Business financial planning program to provide student sponsorships, curate internship placement for female students and sponsor female student teams to compete in the Financial Planning Association's Financial Planning Competition.

Build New Partnerships

Created new alliances with universities across the country to inform our strategic planning process in order to build and deliver impact on campuses to reach potential future female financial advisors. Grew our network of collaborators within the finance industry to identify opportunities for partnership on future initiatives to advance our mission.

Elevate Profile of WLA

Significantly expanded WLA's online presence and engagement by creating substantive content including our Her Path initiative, featuring stories, blogs and videos of women who have taken diverse paths to a career in financial advising. Partnered with education institutions to provide newsletter features promoting the career path of financial advising career path for women.

Enhance Reach and Impact of Programs

Began the process of scaling our mentorship programming by increasing our 2022-23 program cohort size and diversity. Established the framework for a community of WLA ambassadors to optimize the energy and talents of the more than 100 women who have participated in the WLA mentorship program.

Enhance Board Governance Structure

Formed and engaged key board committees, formalized individual board commitments, established board recruitment process, created board leadership succession process, recruited and onboarded three new WLA board members and created advisory board charter in preparation for 2023 recruitment.

Mentor Program 2022-2023



The Mentor Leadership Program matches early-career female financial advisors with established, successful female advisors for a six-month mentorship period. The mentees have the opportunity, through one-on-one sessions, to learn through the experiences of their mentors. Many of our mentees go on to grow their businesses, and some of them are now becoming mentors themselves. It is a full-circle program where women help empower other women to thrive, and then pay it forward as they reach new levels of confidence and success.



In October 2022, we launched our fifth cohort of the WLA Mentor Program with mentors and mentees meeting in person at the Raymond James Women's Symposium in Tampa, Florida, for a launch and training session with our mentor program facilitator, Connie Deianni of Corepoint.

This year, we matched 15 mentees to 15 mentors and began to expand the program to include participants from multiple broker-dealers — a goal the WLA has had since we first established this program. Also a first for us this year: past WLA mentees are now serving as mentors! Jamey Hendricks, Annie Vliegenthart and Melissa Dyer are all paying forward the success that they have built since their time as WLA mentees by providing mentorship to our 2022-23 cohort. Seeing this program come full circle is evidence of its success and of the power of building a community where women help other women to thrive. We love it!

We were also grateful to have five of WLA's previous mentors return for another year of mentoring. These mentors have shared their experiences, their perspectives and their networks, provided insight into business operations, helped to build confidence and developed friendships.

Mentor Program 2022-2023

Over a six-month period, all 30 of these incredible women engaged in bi-monthly sessions centered around the mentee's goals. As they established bonds with each other, they also provided and gained valuable support as women who are looking for new ways to enrich clients' lives while building successful practices and fulfilling lives for themselves.

During WLA monthly collaborative sessions, we heard about how the accountability of the mentorship calls and the experienced views from mentors helped to increase mentee confidence and direct the future path of rising stars within the financial advisor community. Mentors reported that the fresh perspective from their mentees helped them, too, in developing new strategies or re-establishing successful habits for their own practices. Both groups of women realized they're not in this alone; they have a network to lean on for advice and support.

This year, the WLA introduced a monthly virtual Mentee Gathering to provide additional opportunities for mentees to share best practices and ideas with one another as early-career FAs. These gatherings have become an enjoyable networking space where mentees share experiences and brainstorm solutions together.

As the WLA mentorship community continues to grow, we are committed to tapping into the energy and connection that is being built to expand our impact, helping more women to discover the career of financial advising and providing meaningful support to help them succeed on their path.



University Partnerships



University of North Florida

The Women's Leadership Alliance has partnered with the University of North Florida, providing funding support to its Coggin College of Business financial planning program. The fruits of the gift will be visible on multiple levels in those programs.

A portion of the gift will support scholarships and will be awarded to students seeking a career in financial planning. The WLA gift also establishes the Sally Law Financial Planning Fund, named in memory of one of WLA's benefactors and members.

The WLA's new partnership with the University of North Florida features three key components: sponsorship, student financial planning competition and curated internship placements. This partnership is made possible through the collaboration between WLA, UNF Professor Ronald M. Heymann and Mary Carter (ChFC®, CFP®).

Sponsorship

Each year of this partnership, five UNF students who meet the WLA criteria will receive \$2,000 in sponsorship designed to cover tuition and fees for CFP® coursework.

Financial Competition

The WLA is proudly sponsoring a UNF team for the Financial Planning Challenge (FPC), a competition for undergraduate degree programs registered with the CFP Board. The objective of FPC is to promote the profession of financial planning as a vibrant community and viable career choice. The event will engage students in a holistic financial planning learning experience and expand awareness of the professional community and organizations that support the profession.

Internship Placement

Case Study - University and a Local Financial Advisor

The University of North Florida instructor Ronald M. Heymann, a CFP® himself, worked collaboratively with Founding WLA Board Member Mary Carter, a 30-year veteran in the advisory field, to create a successful internship program model. The internship program helps to place female financial advising students into firms committed to developing and advancing these women as they take their first professional steps on their financial advising path.

This program benefits both students and employers alike. Students gain vital hands-on experience while learning the ins and outs of the industry. And employers will have a ready workforce to prepare for succession as well as enlarge their practices.

We are exceptionally proud of this new partnership and look forward to increasing awareness among women of the financial advising career path and providing support along that path.

Meet Kaylee Smith



WLA's partnership with the UNF and Mary Carter Financial Services gave Kaylee Smith, a graduate of the University of North Florida, the opportunity to become WLA's first sponsored intern.

To hear more about Kaylee's opportunity and successes in a real-world education:

<https://rb.gy/cxsxaz>



Her Path



A significant part of the work of attracting more women in the field of financial advising involves dismantling old ideas about the finance industry and about amplifying the message about the diverse paths women can take to discover and thrive in the financial advising profession. The Her Path storytelling initiative is aimed at shifting the narrative by sharing the specific stories of women who are finding their way to careers as financial advisors. Many start out in other industries or with degrees in fields outside of business or finance. Her Path is changing the conversation. Here are a few of the stories we shared this year:



Ellenore Baker Stay-at-home mom discovered a financial advising career

Ellenore Baker, CFP®, went from career women to stay-at-home mom to highly successful financial advisor. Check out the story of this inspirational woman, who also happens to be the WLA's newest board member! Sep 2022



<https://rb.gy/snskzo>



Casey Sage Teacher-turned-financial advisor

Casey Sage was a high school English teacher for 18 years before becoming a financial advisor. She made the move because she was spending so much time in education and away from her family and determined that it was time for a job change in the next phase of her life. Read more about Casey's story here:



<https://rb.gy/knu3i9>



Crystal Alford-Cooper Mentorship advanced her financial advising path

Crystal Alford-Cooper, Vice President at Law and Associates, knows that financial advising can be a tough industry for women, and she feels that mentorship is a powerful tool in keeping women in these roles. Listen here to hear how Crystal's own journey was shaped by two incredible mentors.



<https://rb.gy/bltttu>



Strategic Planning 2023-26

Over the past few months, the WLA embarked on a new strategic planning process to support a path forward that will empower the WLA to focus and grow programs and to expand its reach and impact in 2023 and beyond.

The strategic planning committee, led by Kalita Blessing, Kimberlee Bouska, Andrea Schlapia, Laura Webb and Stephanie Gularte, with the input and support of the full WLA board of directors, committed to building a thoughtful plan that will empower the WLA to enhance the focus of our programs in order to expand our reach and deepen our impact in 2023 and beyond.

The complete plan will be presented for approval to the board of directors in April.



WLA Circle of Support



As a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization, the WLA deeply values our donors and supporters who help to advocate for and expand the impact of WLA's mission. Together we can succeed in engaging and empowering more women in the financial advisory profession.

The following Circle of Support includes contributions to the WLA during January 1, 2022, through December 31, 2022.

Visionary Level \$10,000+

Mary Carter, CFP®, ChFC®
Registered Principal, Branch Manager, Beachside Wealth Partners
Kalita Blessing, CFP®, CAP®, AEP®, CSRIC™
Senior Wealth Advisor, Mercer Advisors
Thomas & Mary James
Judith McGee, L.H.D., CFP®, ChFC®
Executive Vice President, Senior Lead Advisor, Mercer Advisors
Carl W Stuart
President, Investment Advisor

Empowering Level \$5,000 - \$9,999

Tastego Elwyn
President & CEO, Raymond James & Associates
Kathy Muldoon, CFP®
Senior Vice President, Carter Financial Management
Traci Richmond, JD, CDFA®, RICP®
Branch Manager, Financial Advisor, The Meakem Group
Mark & Susanna Robinson
Amber Seale, CFP®, CPA, CLU®, CDFA® & Dax Seale, CFP®, CEPA®, CLU®
Managing Directors, Seale Wealth Management of Raymond James
Margaret Starnier, CFP®
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Kimberlee Bouska, CFP®, CRPC®
Investment Management Consultant, Addison Avenue Investment Services
Dr. Pamela Grey
Advancing Mind Foundation
Sherri Stephens, President & CEO
Lead Wealth Advisor, Stephens Wealth Management Group

Supporting Level \$1,000 - \$2,499

Tracy Alm, CFP®
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Ellenore Baker, CFP®
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Melissa Dyer, CFP®, AEP®
Financial Advisor, Raymond James
Kathleen Miller, CFP®, CDFA®
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Danielle Page, CFP®
Managing Director, Senior Vice President Investments, The Page Group of Raymond James
Laura Webb, CFP®
President, Webb Investment Services, Inc.



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If you notice an error or omission on this list of supporters, please contact Tracy@womensleadalliance.org.