

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2020-2021

┌ WOMEN'S ┐  
ALLIANCE  
└ NETWORK ┘

AT ROWAN UNIVERSITY

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



The impact of the monumental events of this past year reached far and wide. For many, this year presented a time of great change, and perhaps great opportunity.

This year, the Women's Alliance Network (WAN) was proud to present programming centered on the theme of "Thriving Through Change". As Chair, I am proud of the enormous contributions of our Board to plan and deliver dynamic, engaging professional development at Rowan University.

Our focus this year was to provide a time and space for growth, development and introspection. The WAN Board worked diligently to develop content that was inclusive, speaking to our wide audience of Rowan faculty, staff and students - and the wider Southern New Jersey community. Our events this year were delivered virtually, and included eight powerful presentations with topics ranging from leadership to networking to personal and professional resilience. Our Board worked diligently to think of new and exciting ways to enhance our virtual programming, resulting in better accessibility of our programming and higher attendance from our audiences.

WAN is continually grateful for the support and leadership of President Ali Houshmand and his steadfast commitment to our work. We are thankful for the President's encouragement of our mission to create an educational, social, professional, and political climate in which voices and values of women in all their diversity and richness are heard and included.

We are also grateful to our corporate sponsor TD Bank, for the continued support of our mission and programming. Without this support, the high-quality programming we provide would not be possible.

A sincere thank you to our guest speakers and attendees. We are humbled by your energy and inspired by your feedback. Thank you for helping make the WAN a stronger organization.

Finally- my most sincere thanks to the WAN Board. Your tireless efforts continue to amaze me, and I am thankful for the honor of working with you.

I hope you enjoy this look back on the year 2020-2021, and a brief preview of what is to come in 2021-2022. For updates and news, check out our website! We are so excited for this amazing year to come.

*Chrissy Beswick*

Director of Planning, Program Development and Special Projects, Rowan University School of Osteopathic Medicine

Institutional Representative &  
Women's Alliance Network Advisory Board Chair

# Our Commitment

WAN is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion.

In 2020, we engaged in conversations with members of the University's Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) to explore ways to be more intentional in our language and programming. We are so grateful for the advice and input of this team in helping us to develop new ways to communicate to our audience and demonstrate our commitment to DEI at Rowan University.

The Women's Alliance Network at Rowan University is committed to providing professional development for all, with a focus on developing content for, and by, female-identifying individuals.

Our event programming is open to all, regardless of gender identity or expression.

# Check it out!

Be on the lookout for our schedule of programming! We plan to offer a blend of virtual events, and in-person programming.

Until then, check out our website at [sites.rowan.edu/wan/](https://sites.rowan.edu/wan/) where you can view recordings of all our prior virtual events.

This year we were glad to be able to provide not only complete virtual programming, but to create a resource for our audience to view events after their conclusion! Visit <https://sites.rowan.edu/wan/pastevents> for an archive of our events and to replay these terrific conversations.

We encourage you to invite your colleagues to our events! Help us spread the word and continue our mission. Our events are open to everyone.

As always, feel free to reach out to any member of the Advisory Board with questions, suggestions, or comments! We would love to hear from you.

# YEAR IN REVIEW

The Women's Alliance Network at Rowan University is honored to continue its mission of developing women at Rowan University and throughout the state, through mentorship, support and development. Our 2020-21 programming was designed to expand our professional development opportunities beyond the realm of higher education. This year, our Board created dynamic virtual programming to respond to our changing times.

---

## Keeping Your Network Active

*Presenter:*

### **June DePonte Sernak**

Dean of Lifelong Learning, Rowan College at Burlington County

Focusing on sustaining a professional network during a time of transition, guest speaker and networking expert June DePonte Sernak provided an instructional workshop on how to nurture and grow a professional network!

## Engaging with Students - Tips for Faculty

*Presenter:*

### **Dr. Natalie Kautz**

Assistant Director of the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

This event featured Dr. Natalie Kautz and provided useful strategies and tips on enhancing remote instruction during this new challenging and ever-changing educational landscape. Faculty members and staff learned ways to create a supportive on-line environment for students.

## TD Bank Financial Workshop

*Presenters:*

### **Adam Bracy**

Vice President, Relationship Manager Private Client Group

### **Rachel Seaman**

Vice President and Store Manager

Corporate sponsor TD Bank presented financial management and planning tips, applicable to all stages of life and for changing needs. This presentation covered strategies to be financially resilient during a time of economic uncertainty.

## Health and Wellness for Productivity

*Presenters:*

### **Laurie Dwyer**

Senior Academic Advisory, Department of Health and Exercise Science

### **Melissa Eaton, M.A.**

Registered Dietitian Nutritionist

### **Dr. Charisse Breeden-Balaam**

Founder, CEO of the Road to HOOD

This engaging panel discussion highlighted the key benefits of optimal health and wellness. Now more than ever, focusing on health—inside and out—is essential for personal and professional growth.

## Thriving as a Professional: Rowan Thrive Panel Discussion

*Presenters:*

**Brittany Auleta, M.A.**

Coordinator of Healthy Campus Initiatives, Rowan University

**Linda Brecher, D.O.**

Physician Rheumatologist & Chief of Rheumatology, RowanSOM

**Kevin George, M.E.S.**

Director of Campus Recreation, Rowan University

**Katie Huber, MS.Ed**

Assistant Director for Fitness & Wellness, Rowan University

**Joanne Kaiser-Smith, D.O.**

Associate Dean of Graduate Medical Education, RowanSOM

**Charlie Kuski, Ed.M.**

Coordinator for Leadership Programs, Rowan University

**Melissa Ulmer, M.A.**

Assistant Director for Marketing & Student Programs, Rowan University

This inspirational panel of health and well-being thought leaders discussed how to keep one's self and career balanced throughout challenging times. These speakers provided practical advice on navigating troubling times.

*Featured Event*

## WAN Leadership Talks

**Tabbatha Dobbins, Ph.D.**

Professor, Interim Vice President for Research, Dean of the Graduate School

**Roxie Patton, M.A.**

Director of Social Justice, Inclusion, and Conflict Resolution

**Rory McElwee, Ed.D.**

Vice President for Student Affairs

**Annette Reboli, M.D.**

Dean of Cooper Medical School of Rowan University

**Penny McPherson-Myers, Ed.D.**

Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

**Melissa Wheatcroft, J.D.**

General Counsel, Rowan University

This TED Talk style, inspirational presentation by leaders at Rowan University focused on women in leadership and stories of professional perseverance.

# Sharing our Success

WAN's 2020-2021 programming was designed to highlight resiliency during challenging times. There is no doubt that this was a difficult year, professionally and personally. We are proud of the many ways individuals from the Rowan University community used this year to lift themselves, and others. Below are a few highlights from our Board about their personal and professional success to inspire you!

**Zeynep Isik-Ercan, Ph.D.**

*I was honored with the 2020 Excellence in Engagement Award at Rowan University and elected as President-elect by National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (2021-2023).*

**Amanda Coltri, M.S.L.**

*After attending the WAN Financial Workshop and changing some of my financial habits, I was able to build up three months' salary in my savings for the first time in my life! I also passed my Educational Leadership Benchmark Exam and officially became an Ed.D. candidate.*

**Stacey Leftwich, Ph.D.**

*This year I was appointed Incoming President for the New Jersey Association for Colleges of Teacher Education. I also recently began teaching cooking classes for aspiring home cooks.*

**Yahaira Marquez, Ph.D.**

*My personal WIN this year was to be able to attend remote learning kindergarten and third grade with my boys. Having to juggle clinical and academic responsibilities at work and make it through remote schooling with my children was remarkable. I am very appreciative of the teachers that served our family this year!*

## News!

**“Re-Connect, Re-Focus, Re-Charge”**

The Rowan University Women's Alliance Network (WAN) is excited to announce our 2021-2022 programming! Our events feature dynamic and inspiring speakers, and are designed to help you “Re-Connect, Re-Focus, Re-Charge” your life and your profession.

# farewell and best wishes

The Women's Alliance Network would like to thank our past Board Members for their hard work, dedication and commitment to the mission of WAN. We are grateful for their contributions and thank them for making WAN a stronger group!



**Christina Davidson-Tucci**



**Laurie Dwyer**



**Dawn Singleton**



**Jeanette Thomas-Jones**

## Welcome to our new board members!

Our Board was honored to receive a large number of nominations and submissions for open positions this year! We are so glad to welcome the new Board members to the Women's Alliance Network and excited for the amazing contributions they will make.

Cristina Fink, Ph.D.

Associate Athletic Director for Student-Athlete Welfare

Janet DePersia

Program Assistant, Office of the Bursar

Cassandra Geary

Associate Director of Corporate & Foundation Relations

Beth Gorman, J.D.

Assistant General Counsel

Yahaira Marquez, Ph.D.

Faculty Instructor, RowanSOM-CARES

Leslie Mignot

Adjust Professor & Academic Advisor, OASIS

Erica Watson-Brown, M.A.Ed.

Lecturer, Interdisciplinary and Inclusive Education

# Highlights & Feedback

“My mentor was insightful and encouraging in all of our interactions and it was a true pleasure working with her. It was a rewarding experience!”

# 98%

of respondents  
rated our events & speakers as

# Excellent

“It was really nice and helpful hearing about the different ways professionals and healthcare providers made sure they looked after themselves during these difficult times.”

“There was a lot of great information and resources. I thought the speaker was very engaging.”

“The WAN program Wednesday, May 26th I thought was excellent. Thank you for your work in bringing us this program, and for your leadership in our smaller breakout session. “

On average **145**

# people registered

for each event this year!

“Fabulous speaker! She provided valuable information that I can directly apply in my personal networking and self-branding.”