COHORT MODEL

The cohort model of WLI brings a group of professional, mid-career women together from both inside and outside of UM. They come from various backgrounds and collaborate to better their leadership skills and create a strong and empowering network of women. This model enables lasting connections and provides a trustworthy and meaningful outlet for open conversations about workplace inequalities and the power of strong women leaders.

ABOUT WLI

The Women’s Leadership Initiative (WLI) is an expression of the University of Montana’s commitment to gender equity in leadership and effort to build empowering institutions that improve opportunities for women. Founded in 2015, the initiative uses a cohort model to build the leadership capacity of faculty, administrators, and staff from both inside and outside the university.

WLI cohort members participate in leadership trainings; spend dedicated time with campus, community, and state leaders; and lead community events to build awareness of the cultural factors that both impede and enhance women’s advancement in leadership.

PURPOSE

- Establish a culture of support – across genders – for women’s advancement, retention, and recruitment.
- Enhance the capacity of faculty, administrators, and staff to develop skills and knowledge for positions of leadership.
- Foster a network to champion the importance of gender diversity in leadership.
- Create awareness about historical, cultural, and societal norms that impact women’s advancement.
- Build bridges for women leaders across organizations.

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https://www.umt.edu/womens-leadership-initiative/
WLI helps cohort members to identify their strengths and build their confidence as leaders, gain relationships and support from being a part of a cohort, and carve out time to do the self-reflective work necessary to advance their goals and vision. Cohort members reflect on their time in WLI with gratitude:

"I've learned to be an unapologetic champion for what I believe in. And I've learned that initiatives succeed not because we use sophisticated language, appear fully in control, or provide a flood of relevant data. Rather, often initiatives succeed when we manage to move people by being authentic with each other and by exuding confidence in what we believe matters."
- Kelly Webster, 2015-2016 WLI fellow

The strength of the cohort model stands out in my mind as a powerful tool. I regularly touch base with the other women from my cohort to brainstorm and solicit feedback. We built a strong sense of trust and accountability. We continue to challenge and support one another to grow and stretch professionally.
- Maria Mangold, 2015-2016 WLI fellow

"WLI has given me the tools to determine my own style of leading and developing my team and given me the courage and confidence to show up authentically as a leader."
- Jenn Bell, 2019-2020 WLI fellow

"The greatest gift from WLI is the power of a cohort of colleagues who are supporting you and looking out for opportunities for you. This kind of networking is invaluable."
- Amy Kinch, 2019-2020 WLI fellow

"I have approached my work with a new determination and clarity that I didn’t have before."
- Eva Rocke, 2020-2021 WLI fellow

Applications for the 2021-2022 Women’s Leadership Initiative Cohort will be accepted through June 1, 2021. Please visit the ‘Apply’ tab on the WLI website for specific application criteria and a submission form.

A new cohort of mid-career employees at UM and Clearwater Credit Union will be selected by July 1, 2021 to convene late August 2021 through early May 2022.

WLI is looking for supporters for the 2021-2022 year. Contributions of $3,000 will help to sponsor one cohort member.

Please reach out to the UM Foundation, umfoundation@supportum.org, if you are interested in becoming a supporter.