

THE WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

2021-2022



ANNUAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This annual report highlights The Women's Institute's (WI) overall vision, goals and achievements during academic year 2021-22.

This report allows us to reflect upon what we have done well and helps us to identify areas for growth.

The Women's Institute will continue to grow and change as the world around us changes, and we will measure the success of our strategic initiatives at the end of each academic year to ensure we achieve the aspirations reflected in the Institute's vision and goals.



**Shelly
Calabrese,
Executive
Director**

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Margaret Olivia Slocum Sage founded Russell Sage College in 1916 as an institution dedicated to giving women access to higher education. The college continues the commitment to social mobility and educating underrepresented populations.

The Women's Institute at Russell Sage College promotes a vision of feminism that challenges structural inequalities and advocates for equity and equality for all.

The Institute will serve as a voice that addresses the societal challenges affecting our local, national and global communities and will inspire positive social change through acts of service.

ATTRACTING A NEW GENERATION OF LEADERS

The current generation of students (Gen Z) is the most diverse generation in modern American history, and its members value inclusion across race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity.

Members of Gen Z are passionate about advocating for social change and helped move youth activism into the spotlight through the power of social media to draw attention to a specific cause or an issue.

Russell Sage College has a history of helping students find their distinctive voices and feel empowered to make a difference in the world.

The Institute builds on that foundation through social justice education and related service-learning activities that allow students to develop the civic knowledge and skills that will further prepare them for a role as agents of social change.

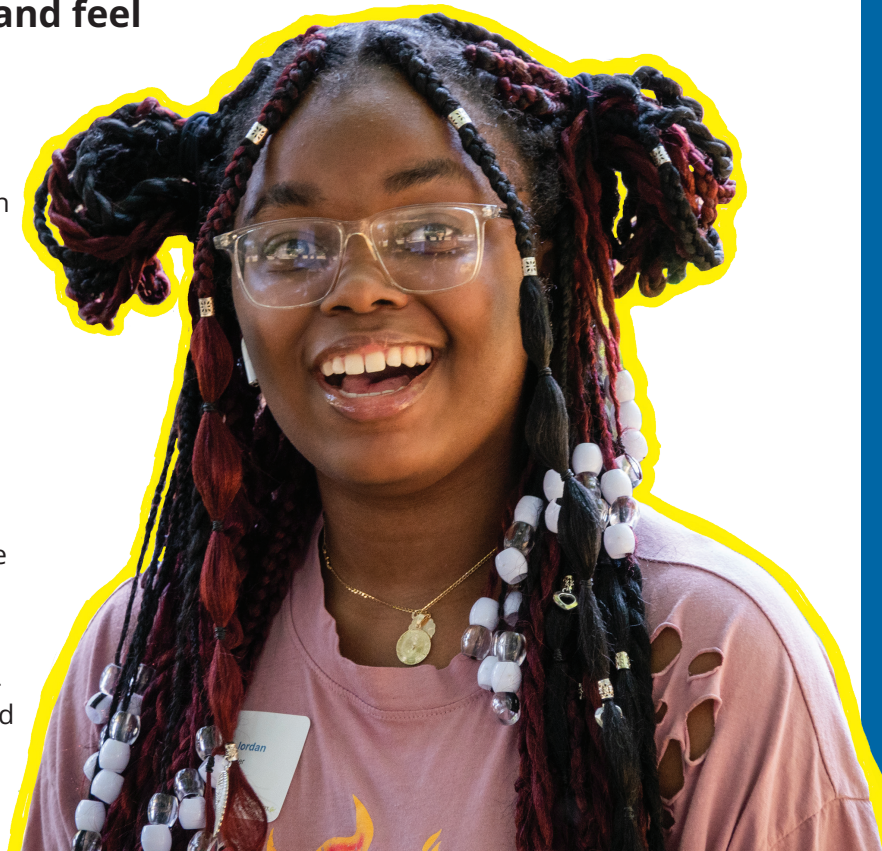
The Institute will serve as a resource center for both campus and community, offering programs and service-learning opportunities focused on women's and social justice issues.

Building on our disciplinary strengths in health sciences, education, business management, law and society, and the arts, the Institute is poised to address a multitude of issues ranging from health care disparities; food and housing

insecurity; refugee resettlement; workplace equality and diversity; socioeconomics; gender inequality in the arts; and politics and leadership.

The Institute will closely partner with the director of Service Learning; the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; and the co-chairs of Thrive @ Russell Sage to develop exciting and relevant programming.

We envision the Institute as ever-evolving and ready to focus on critical issues that are important to today's students and have long-term impact.



The Women's Institute will have a positive effect on recruiting and retaining students by:

- Highlighting the Russell Sage commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion
- Enhancing the visibility of Russell Sage through positive publicity
- Including high school students in programming and activities where appropriate
- Connecting students in the core curriculum with real-life community issues and service-learning opportunities
- Offering scholarships to students whose interests and talents qualify them to be Women's Institute ambassadors
- Providing venues for the presentation of graduate and upper-level undergraduate research
- Offering academic tracks that include Women's Institute recognition
- Supporting career development and leadership skills

GOALS

REPUTATION

To attain within five years a national reputation and within 10 years an international reputation for developing agents of social change (changemakers and facilitators), who know how to advance equity and inclusion for women, girls and other underserved and under-represented groups.

THINK TANK

To create an onsite and virtual “think tank” that draws outstanding students (undergraduate, graduate and continuing) from RSC and other colleges and universities, high school students, alumni/ae, faculty, researchers, thinkers, corporate and nonprofit leaders, public policy-makers, members of the media, etc.

SOLUTIONS

To become an Institute that actively pursues measurable real-world solutions to address issues of equity and inclusivity through a multidisciplinary approach. The WI’s success will be measured by its ability to engage, convene, and facilitate discussions, educational opportunities, research projects, and communication channels that generate the right questions to ask, explore a variety of solutions, and develop courses of action that will have the most significant impact on social justice.

ENDOWMENT

The Women’s Institute will build a budget model that recovers all its costs (except for rent, utilities and some other college-related and -provided costs) through grants, gifts and donations at events — the first of its kind at Sage. The WI will also strive to raise within five to 10 years an endowment to support much of its salaries, benefits, stipends, speakers’ fees, expenses, communication and programs.



INITIATIVES



The Women's Institute will develop an annual set of initiatives that will define the evolution of its role as a Think Tank. Some will be ongoing programs and activities that have demonstrated positive outcomes, and some will be new additions or redesigns to replace less successful undertakings.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

The Women's Institute will infuse its mission and vision into the college's undergraduate and graduate programs, through a variety of strategies, including:

- A minor or concentration in courses related to issues of women and gender
- An alternative academic affiliation for students doing capstone research in fields related to women and gender equity and social and racial justice
- A research conference and awards for best research in women's and social equity issues
- Programming related to the Core Curriculum, particularly Intercultural Studies and Service Learning
- Collaboration with the Center for Teaching and Learning on inclusive pedagogy
- Connections between courses and key initiatives
- The Student Ambassador Program

PROGRAMMING

The WI will continue to develop programming focusing on societal issues related to women, gender equity and racial and social justice.

AFFILIATE SCHOLARS

WI will appoint one to two Visiting Affiliate Scholars per year supported by a stipend. Individuals will be drawn from influential figures with a national or international reputation in academia, research, political life, business, social science, media and the arts, whose accomplishments provide evidence of a commitment to the advancement of social equity and inclusivity.

THINK TANK

A Women's Institute Think Tank will be developed, with the goal of creating a body of experts to meet regularly (two to three times per year) to discuss issues that affect equity and inclusivity, evaluate strategies for addressing these issues, develop policy and white papers for targeted circulation and identify potential participants in The Women's Institute's educational, research and outreach programs.

The first set of initiatives focus on two issues: "Female Refugees and Their Families" and "The Impact of Crises on Women, Girls and Other Marginalized Groups."



OUTCOMES

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION

The Women's Institute's reputation will be established through the quality and focus of its initiatives and the consistency with which those reinforce the commitment to creating opportunities for women and promoting gender equity, inspiring social change through action and reinforcing that equity for women is inextricably intertwined with equity for all.

Diya Abdo, Ph.D., Founder, Every Campus a Refuge



Adiba, left, and Fahim are the first Russell Sage College ECAR family.

Russell Sage College recognizes the opportunity institutions of higher education have to make a difference and inspire social change, and we have made a commitment to addressing the ongoing refugee humanitarian crisis.

Russell Sage became the first Every Campus a Refuge chapter in New York state in fall 2021. We began hosting our first ECAR family in April 2020. Fahim and Adiba are both educators from Afghanistan — where Fahim taught college-level computer science and Adiba taught elementary-school mathematics.

As an ECAR chapter, we support newcomers with their resettlement by providing safe housing; help with job searches; practicing English language skills, navigating U.S. health care and social services systems; and welcoming them into their new community.

WHAT IS EVERY CAMPUS A REFUGE?

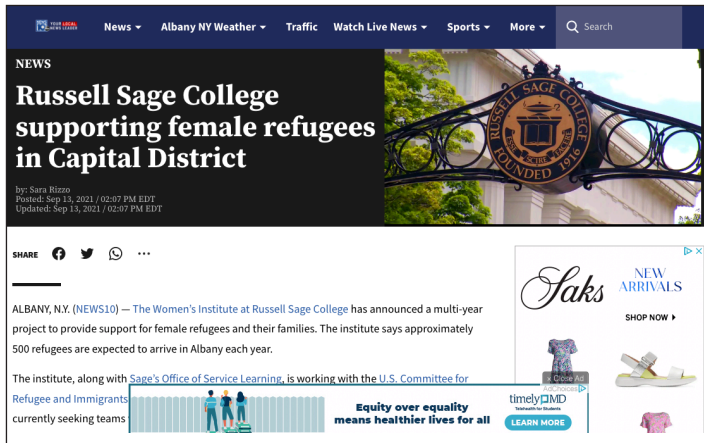
Every Campus A Refuge was founded by Diya Abdo at Guilford College in September 2015 to call on every college and university in the world to partner with local refugee resettlement agencies to house refugees on campus grounds and assist them in resettlement.

The idea is that university and college campuses have everything necessary — housing, food, care, skills — to take in refugees and support them as they begin their lives in their new homes.

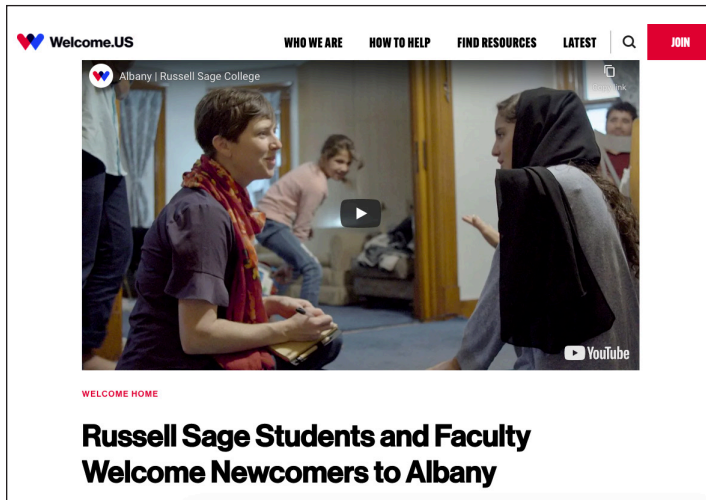
Every Campus A Refuge is now spreading, with campuses large and small heeding the call and actively hosting refugees.

The initiative has been recognized at the White House, United Nations and the Sixth Annual President's Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge Gathering.

OUTCOMES



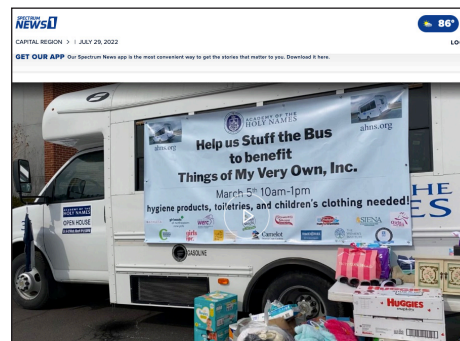
Sept. 13, 2021: News Channel 10



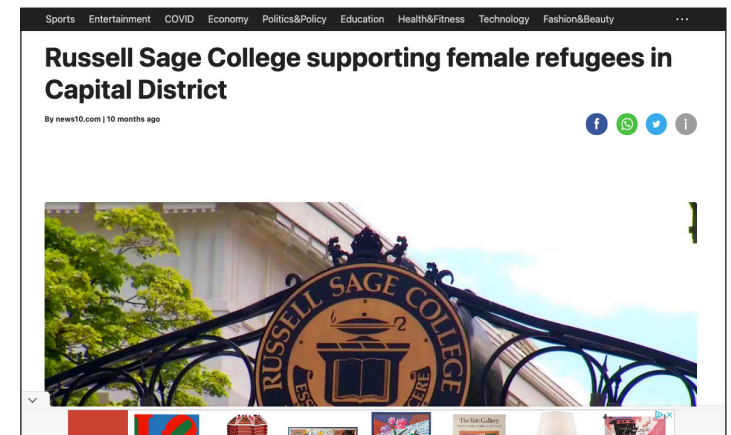
Feb. 8, 2022: Welcome.US

Our efforts are being recognized through some earned media attention and have also been included in a national humanitarian rights campaign as a result.

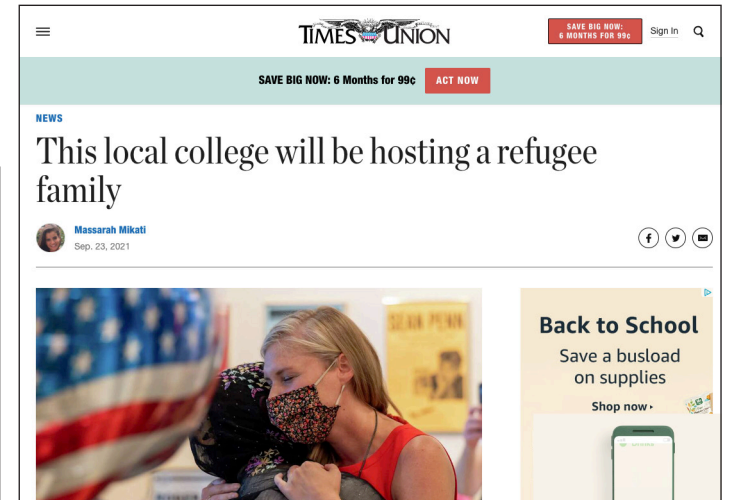
We are equally committed to supporting local non-profit organizations and were invited to join several other women's organization in a donation drive to benefit **Things of My Very Own**, a local nonprofit that provides services to children in crisis.



March 5, 2022: Spectrum News



Sept. 13, 2021: Daily Advert



Sept. 23, 2021: Times Union



OUTCOMES

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

The Women's Institute Executive Director was invited to speak at several organizations this past year, including:

- New York State Bureau of Refugee Services at a statewide quarterly meeting
- U.S. Department of Education panel on Refugee Resettlement and Higher Ed
- Zonta International
- Schenectady Business and Professional Women's Club

ACCESSIBLE THINK TANK

The Women's Institute held a summer planning session with a cross-section of RSC faculty/staff to discuss academic year 2022-23 areas of focus and how to best integrate programming into the curriculum. As a result, we will focus on **Constitutional rights; gender bias in health and well-being; advocacy through the arts; higher ed's role in refugee resettlement.**

LEADERSHIP FOR PROBLEM-SOLVING

The Women's Institute partners closely with the Office of Service Learning to develop opportunities for students to make a difference.

This year, **students developed an Intercultural Café, held every Monday throughout the academic year through the summer**, where

FUNDRAISING GOAL

The Women's Institute exceeded its fundraising goal, coming in **144%** of projection. (Goal: \$181,000; total raised \$261,000)

new English-language learners come to practice their language skills and learn about American civics.

Students led several donation drives throughout the year to support refugee families, including a special initiative to support single refugee mothers, as well as a local nonprofit organization for children in crisis.

AFFILIATE SCHOLAR

We welcomed our inaugural visiting affiliate scholar, Federiga Bindi, Ph.D. Bindi is director of the Foreign Policy Initiative at the Institute for Women's Policy Research in Washington, D.C., where she leads research networks on women's leadership and on internationalization of higher education.

Bindi delivered a public lecture, several classroom visits and workshops and collaborated on an international women's leadership conference during her tenure.



>>>>PROGRAMMING

THE SOCIAL, ETHICAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF SENATE BILL 8

Panelists Rajani Bhatia, associate professor of Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies at the University at Albany; Lisa Campo-Engelstein, director for the Institute for Bioethics & Health Humanities at the University of Texas Medical Branch; and Claire Horner, assistant professor at Baylor College of Medicine and a clinical ethicist at Baylor St. Luke's Medical Center, explored the social, ethical and legal implications of Senate Bill 8 (Texas Abortion Law).

THE COURAGE TO ADVANCE

Authors Bonnie Hagemann, Lisa Pent, and members of WomenExecs on Boards led an inspirational virtual discussion on how the world's leading women in business have overcome great obstacles on their path to success.

THE LIGHT OF DAYS: WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH GUEST LECTURE

Author Judy Batalion lectured on her highly acclaimed book, *The Light of Days*. One of the most important stories of World War II, already optioned by Steven Spielberg for a major motion picture, is a searing history that brings to light the extraordinary accomplishments of brave Jewish women who became resistance fighters.

The Light of Days
Author Judy Batalion



SATISFACTION

The Institute has employed satisfaction surveys following each of its program offerings to assess quality and to obtain feedback for ongoing programming.

Survey questions ask participants to rate the event, the speakers' content and style, and, to calibrate the extent of outreach, one's affiliation to RSC (alumna/us, student, faculty/staff, friend). Analysis of this data will inform goal setting relating to size and diversity of audiences.

Total attendees: 602

21-22 Satisfaction Survey

Goal: 80% audience satisfaction (good to excellent)
Results: 98% audience satisfaction overall

- 82.8% excellent
- 15.56% good

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

THE COURAGE TO ADVANCE

"This is the first event I have attended. These women are amazing! Thank you for bringing them to us."

THE SOCIAL, ETHICAL & LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF SENATE BILL 8

"The presentations on this emotional and volatile topic were straightforward and fact-driven, providing intellectual rather than emotional information that helped put this topic into perspective."

"Thank you for this event. It was interesting and compelling."

"Absolutely on target for this time in history."

THE LIGHT OF DAYS

"This presentation was one of the very best I've ever attended by anyone. Judy Batalion gifted in all respects. I particularly appreciated her wit, warmth and genuine enthusiasm about a topic that could be such a 'downer.' I hadn't read the book before hearing her speak, but I certainly will now. Difficult to believe that she probably gives a lot of speeches and interacts in a lot of public appearances, because she presents as though

this was the first time she'd talked about her book. I loved it!"

"Thank you so much for the privilege to hear her speak and for promoting the voices of strong female leaders."

"Students in my class said it was the best presentation they had been to."

VISITING AFFILIATE SCHOLAR LECTURE

"Global Peace: The European Way?" was a dynamic discussion on the EU's role in promoting international peace and security featuring Dr. Federiga Bindi, The Women's Institute inaugural affiliate scholar.

Federiga Bindi, Ph.D.,
Affiliate Scholar



CO-SPONSORED EVENTS

The Women's Institute co-sponsored several events throughout the year:

- Author Reyna Grande visited campus to talk about her book, *The Distance Between Us* (with RSC Dean's office).
- "Future Visions: Mapping a Post-Pandemic World" panel organized for the annual Capital District Feminist Studies conference (with Siena College).
- International Women's Leadership conference held on the Russell Sage College Troy campus. Highlights included a panel discussion with leading political scientist Pippa Norris and a keynote address by Marjorie Margolies, the first woman elected to Congress from Pennsylvania and the first unmarried U.S. citizen to adopt a child internationally. Margolies is also the founding president of Women's Campaign International, a group that provides advocacy training for women throughout the world (with the Institute for Women's Policy Research).

ALUMNAE AND CHAPTER EVENTS

The Women's Institute is committed to honoring Russell Sage College's legacy as a women's college and will continue to meet with RSC alumnae groups annually to provide updates and stay connected. This past year The Women's Institute, including student ambassador representatives, attended several RSC alumnae events:

- RSCAA fall board meeting
- NYC alumnae luncheon
- Northern California Alumnae Chapter virtual event
- Southern Connecticut Alumnae Chapter luncheon
- Alumnae Reunion Weekend

ACADEMICS

REFLECTIONS ON 2021-22

This academic year was an active and engaging time for the Women's Institute and the WI Ambassadors played a key role in its success. The ambassadors met weekly with Kiara Mahar, Graduate Assistant to the Women's Institute, and myself, the Faculty Director of the Women's Institute to discuss programming and planning. I am very proud of the work done by the 2021-22 cohort of ambassadors: Noora Ahmed, Hayden Crandall, Isabelle Cruz, Eden Kuri, Catherine Lee, Victoria McLean and Delicia Thomas.

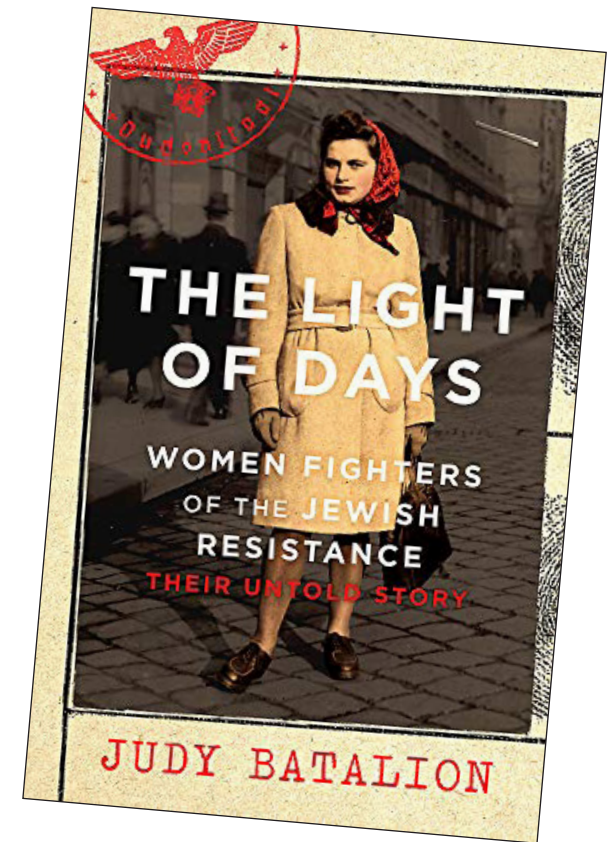
Michelle Napierski-Pranci, PhD, Faculty Director of The Women's Institute



This past year, the work of the ambassadors met three primary objectives. Together, they worked on programs and events related to the curriculum and the interests of the academic community, they played a supporting role in helping The Women's Institute provide programming for its global audience, and they worked to create a vibrant feminist community for students on campus. In more than one instance, these objectives and outcomes overlapped, illustrating the multilayered and collaborative approach that Shelly Calabrese, the executive director of The Women's Institute, and I take to programming.

CURRICULUM AND ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

The most important task of the faculty director is to create connections between The Women's Institute and the curriculum. As an academic, I serve a necessary role in determining content, scholarly



expertise, and topics of concern to college students. The Women's Institute Ambassadors help me to do this, sometimes combining their role as ambassadors with being students in a class or academic program. One of the requirements of the ambassador scholarship is that students take a course in women's studies and/or make progress toward completing the minor in women's studies. As a result, two ambassadors were enrolled in my WST 209: Gender, Feminism and Society class, and they, along with their classmates, read and presented a paper on Judy Batalion's book, *The Light of Days: The Untold Story of Women Resistance Fighters in Hitler's Ghettos*. This prepared the ambassadors as well as their classmates for the Women's History Month

▶▶▶ ACADEMICS

Convocation Lecture on March 28, 2022. The students asked informed questions about Judy Batalion's research during her lecture and helped to create a thought-provoking academic atmosphere during the Q&A. Similarly, three ambassadors working toward a degree in psychology served as ideal hosts and representatives of the Women's Institute for an event that brought the American Psychological Association's "I Am Psyched" national tour (an exhibit that focuses on women of color in psychology) to campus.

There were several individual academic highlights for students and faculty this year as well. Several Russell Sage College faculty and students (including ambassadors) attended and/or presented their research at the Capital District Feminist Studies Consortium 10th annual conference — this year hosted by Siena College.

Additionally, 11 students, including three ambassadors, were inducted into the newly established Epsilon Upsilon Chapter of Iota, Iota, Iota honor society in Women's Studies at Russell Sage College, and The Women's Institute proudly bestowed purple graduation stoles upon the Class of 2022 WI Ambassadors.

Other events related to curriculum and academic community that involved the WI Ambassadors include Founder's Convocation; The Hoffman Lecture in Sociology & Social Policy: "Global Peace: The European Way?"; International Day of Peace; Pizza & Perspectives: Afghanistan; Pizza & Perspectives: Ukraine; and WMHT's "The Future of Work."

SUPPORT FOR WOMEN'S INSTITUTE GLOBAL AUDIENCE

The Women's Institute employs a unique structure that utilizes the expertise of both a faculty director and an executive director, which results in many rewarding collaborations.

We have different approaches, and different audiences, but a shared vision and commitment to The Women's Institute. There are several examples where our work overlaps with positive outcomes. In some cases, Shelly Calabrese will suggest an idea,

such as a paint 'n sip bubble tea event which is directed toward a student audience and relates to the goal of building a feminist community on campus. But more often her suggestions point to helping The Women's Institute reach an outward-facing audience.

This is often done through the ambassadors' participation in social media campaigns, such as UN Women's "Orange the World" campaign, in which ambassadors created photo and video posts during the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence.



Women's Institute Student Ambassadors Catherine Lee, left, and Delicia Thomas

▶▶▶ ACADEMICS

Most notably, the ambassadors have played a supporting role in helping the executive director with her mission to help women refugees in our community. This includes organizing a collection of personal care items for refugee families, helping with a donation drive for housewares and furniture to furnish an apartment for Every Campus a Refuge, and meeting with a filmmaker documenting this work. Three ambassadors are also actively involved in the weekly Intercultural Café meetings.

Other events in which the ambassadors played a role in supporting the Women's Institute's public programming include: attending "The Social, Ethical, and Legal Aspects of Texas Senate Bill 8" panel; creating an International Women's Day Social Media video post; and participating in "Stuff the Bus" for Things of My Very Own.

FEMINIST CAMPUS COMMUNITY

As students, the ambassadors play a vital role in creating an inviting and energetic feminist community on campus. They host a variety of programs to welcome students to Frear House, to connect students to one another, and share the mission of the Women's Institute with the campus community. For example, in recognition



Women's Institute Student Ambassadors collected personal care items for several donation drives throughout the year.

of the importance of the bonds formed by female friendships, the ambassadors hosted a hybrid Galentine's Day event with both virtual and in-person components as a way to nurture friendships. Similarly, they also hosted a Friendsgiving dinner in Frear House in November that brought students together for festive food and party games.

Throughout the course of the year, the ambassadors also host several "Feminist Food for Thought" events that encourage critical thought and discussion on a variety of

feminist topics. In some cases, "Feminist Food for Thought" focuses on a specific theme such as the discussion of witches in October but other times the dialogue emerges more organically as students share a recipe and open conversation.

During final exams, the ambassadors offered a study break for students that also served as a community service opportunity with a "Blanket-a-thon." Students set their books aside in order to weave together fleece blankets to donate to children in need.

The ambassadors also used social media to help create community and during Women's History Month, they created a "writing women back into history" social media campaign using "polaroid" photos and quotes from women at Russell Sage. They asked women; what would the title of your (memoir, biography....) book be and why? They asked students, faculty, Sodexo employees, alumnae, staff and others to share their stories — some were funny, others more poignant, and each allowed us to get to know a member of the Russell Sage College community more personally.

Other events offered by the ambassadors to create community include a holiday toy drive for Toys for Tots; Welcome Back "Equal-tea"; and A Candlelight Peace Vigil for Ukraine.

▶▶▶ AMBASSADORS

NOORA AHMED

"Over the past year, I feel that I have further developed my leadership skills as a Women's Institute Ambassador. Setting up a donation drive for Things of Our Very Own and organizing a vigil for the people of Ukraine has opened my eyes to the importance of collaboration, determination and ambition. My communication skills have flourished and I have strengthened my relationship with other ambassadors, faculty, and staff at Russell Sage. The Women's Institute has afforded me incredible opportunities to express myself and host events that are engaging for students as well as the community."



**Women's
Institute
Student
Ambassador
Noora Ahmed**

HAYDEN CRANDALL

"I joined The Women's Institute not knowing how it would help me find my place at Russell Sage. As a student ambassador, I have had opportunities to develop leadership and teamwork skills and be involved in honoring the all-women legacy of Russell Sage College. I was encouraged to get out of my comfort zone and successfully take on projects that seemed impossible from the start. The Women's Institute is a hidden gem of the Sage community. Being a part of it makes me feel accepted, valued and empowered to get involved and hopefully inspire others to use their voice and discover their passions. While individual voices are powerful on their own, The Women's Institute highlights the strength of voices uniting over a shared passion. I have built lifelong connections with people who cheer for my accomplishments and push me to keep working toward my goals."

ISABELLA CRUZ

"Being a Women's Institute student ambassador means giving women the opportunity to do amazing things. It means creating an environment where they can speak and be heard. It means allowing women to be leaders and make their ideas come to life. I was given the opportunity to be a leader, collaborate with a team, strengthen my social skills, and give back to my community. The relationships I have built will have an impact on my life forever, and it has been a wonderful experience being a Women's Institute Ambassador."



**Women's
Institute
Student
Ambassadors
Isabelle Cruz,
left, and
Victoria McLean**

EDEN KURI

"My time as a Women's Institute Ambassador has been life-changing and incredibly empowering. It has given me a myriad of skills and has given me access to meet and collaborate with not only incredible peers, but also fellow feminists that came before us. As Women's Institute Ambassadors, we not only plan and participate in events that uplift our community, but we also plan and collaborate on events that uplift each other. We all work as a cohesive team; building off of one another's ideas that not only push us as feminists but also pave the way for the feminists of tomorrow. I am very proud to call myself a Russell Sage Women's Institute Ambassador, and have loved every moment of this experience!"



RS RUSSELL SAGE COLLEGE
THE WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

