



THE
WOMEN'S
INSTITUTE

RS RUSSELL SAGE COLLEGE

2022-2023

ANNUAL REPORT



CONTENTS

On-Campus Activities:

On Wednesdays, We Meet in Frear House: Reflections on the Academic Year from Faculty Director Michelle Napierki-Prancl	4
Student Ambassador-Led Donation Drives Benefit Women in Need	7
Women’s Institute Awards Grant to Sage Students’ Class Project.....	8
Celebrating Student-Ambassadors in the Class of 2023	9

Recognition for Women’s Institute People and Events:

Shelly Calabrese Speaking Engagements	10
Michelle Napierski Prancl Wins Beatty Award.....	10
Affiliate Scholar Contributes to Refugee Awareness Efforts	11
Signature Events Draw Audiences, Media Attention.....	12

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Be. A Voice

Know. Your Value

Do. Something to Make a Difference



Women have always been at the forefront of change. From the suffragists who won the right to vote to civil rights activists who served as voices and leaders of grassroots movements, women fight for what they believe in to make the world a better place. Today, women are still leading the charge and affecting change in a myriad of ways. The Women's Institute is proud to serve as a space that recognizes and celebrates the accomplishments of women who are making a difference, and provides opportunities for students to become the next generation of change-makers.

This past year, the Institute featured programs highlighting extraordinary women who are making a difference in human rights, women's health care, peacebuilding, and countering extremism. Additionally, our student ambassadors made a huge difference in our local community with numerous donation drives and volunteer hours spent helping local non-profit organizations that support women and underserved populations.

This annual report highlights how we worked to inspire social change through educational programs and acts of service during the 2022-2023 academic year. It 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.



VISION AND MISSION

The Women's Institute at RSC: *Inspiring Social Change through Acts of Service*

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 serves as a voice which addresses the societal challenges that affect our local, national, and global communities, and inspires positive social change through acts of service.

The Women's Institute mission includes programming, showcasing women's accomplishments, and providing support for the next generation of feminist leaders. One creative way we do this is through The Women's Institute's Student Ambassadorship. Student Ambassadors collaborate with the faculty and staff on events and programming, serve as campus leaders who provide support for organized activities and co-curricular programs, and pursue completion of the Women's Studies minor or courses in Women's Studies.





On Wednesdays, We Meet in Frear House

Reflections on the 2022-2023 Academic Year

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

I am extremely proud of the work done by the 2022-2023 cohort of Women's Institute student ambassadors. The images throughout are just a highlight reel of the events and programs they helped to put on this year. You can see that we packed the academic calendar with a variety of events from *LunaFest* to *I Support the Girls* bra drive.



We were very fortunate to have several returning ambassadors join us for either the full or half year including Noora Ahmed, Hayden Crandall, Eden Kuri, Catherine Lee and Delicia Thomas. In addition, we welcomed five new ambassadors: Jenny Bryan, Lauren Bush, Allaina Escano, Ryann Hotaling, and Susan Ramkissoon. Kiara Maher also returned as our Graduate Assistant this year.

Each of the ambassadors took leadership of their own passion project(s) with a primary focus on the campus community and implemented it over the course of the year — this included a menstrual product drive, dedicating a new peace pole on the Albany campus, and beginning the work of creating a support group for students experiencing relationship abuse. The ambassadors also played a vital role in supporting the programs the Women's Institute produces for a global audience, such as Kate Moore's Women's History Month lecture about her book, *The Woman They Could Not Silence*. Ambassador Lauren Bush took on the task of writing and presenting a fantastic introduction of Kate Moore, to which the author complimented her as well. We were also impressed that Lauren was able to pivot quickly when the threat of a Nor'easter turned the in-person lecture into a virtual one.



If you ever watched the film *Mean Girls*, you are probably familiar with the phrase: *On Wednesdays, we wear pink*. Well, at Russell Sage, *On Wednesdays, we meet in Frear House!* Our Wednesday meetings in Frear have become vital to the success of the ambassador program. Each week, sometimes even while sharing a slice of pizza, we gather around the dining room table to workshop ideas, problem solve, collaborate, and get to know one another. As you can see from the calendar of events, so much can be accomplished when a group of ambitious students gathers around a table. The ambassadors look forward to these weekly gatherings. In fact, they have insisted that the future success of the ambassador program is contingent on attendance at the Wednesday meetings. For the record, I agree 100%. In addition to being a very effective way to ensure events are planned and details ironed out, ambassadors have described these meetings as creating a sense of community and family within their cohort. We learn so much about each other during these meetings too — from personal struggles and personal victories to who likes pesto mayo on their french fries. The relationships grow and develop quite organically simply by spending

On-Campus Activities



time together and the ambassadors look to support one another whether it be to help with a Women's Institute project, personal challenge, or academic question. Several ambassadors speak of the close friendships they have developed with other ambassadors in their cohort, who they may have never met otherwise.



Frear House has become their second home on the Troy campus and the ambassadors have developed a real sense of ownership. This is important because as students, the ambassadors play a vital role in creating an inviting and energetic feminist community at Russell Sage and Frear House is the place where this happens. In addition to meeting among themselves, they also host a variety of programs to welcome students to Frear House, to connect students to one another, and to share the mission of the Women's Institute with the campus community.



As the Faculty Director, my most important task is to create connections between the Women's Institute and the curriculum. One of the ways this is done is through the requirement that ambassadors take a course in Women's Studies and/or make progress towards completing the minor in Women's Studies. This ensures students have a scholarly foundation in feminist studies to help inform the work they do as ambassadors. This year, three students

including two ambassadors completed a minor in Women's Studies by completing the capstone course *WST 405: Women's Studies Forum*. Because this class is a small seminar, we also meet in Frear House. After class, the students often stay, grab a cup of hot chocolate, and prep for their classes. They may even text a classmate and invite them to Frear to work on a group project or study for an exam together. One amazing outcome of this academic requirement is that Jenny Bryan, an ambassador and Nursing major, completed the minor in only two years! Her project "Seven Essential Books for Health Care Majors" is designed to provide the next generation of healthcare providers with critical reviews on books that address feminist issues in healthcare. The collection of the books showcased by Jenny is currently on display in the Shea Learning Center. Another ambassador, Ryann Hotaling, wrote her capstone paper "*Game of Thrones*, Domestic Violence, and the Symbolic Annihilation of Women" in order to provide an important feminist critique of a pop culture phenomenon and challenges fans of the franchise to think critically about the storylines and plot twists. Angel Palmatier, who was recognized at our end of the year academic celebration and senior farewell by the WI Ambassadors as an "honorary ambassador" wrote her paper on "Racial Disparities within Maternal Mortality." Not only does her project delve into the alarming statistics that show women of color are three times as likely as white women to die from pregnancy related causes, Angel also researched and created a pamphlet of community organizations trying to make a difference.



And so, on Wednesdays, and many other days of the week, Ambassadors call Frear House home... and we wouldn't want it any other way.



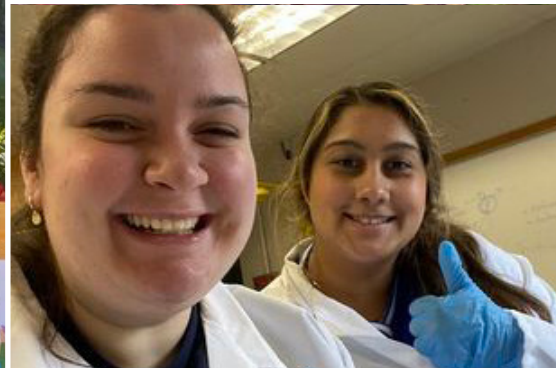
Ambassadors know that they will always be connected to Frear House and to the Women's Institute even after graduation. This year, our senior farewell honored six graduating seniors: Noora Ahmed '22, Lauren Bush '23, Hayden Crandall '22, Eden Kuri '23 Susan Ramkissoon '23 and Delicia Thomas '23. We also said farewell to Kiara Maher and wish her well as she completes her graduate internship next year.

Ambassadors know that once an ambassador, always an ambassador. We hope they will continue to be involved with the Women's Institute even after graduation. We were thrilled when Victoria McLean '22 returned for our Iota, Iota, Iota Honor Society induction. Shelly Calabrese and I are very appreciative of Susan Ramkissoon, an alumna of the ambassador program, who recently joined us on the committee to review applications for next year's ambassador positions. Susan dedicated a lot of her time on this important task and she provided invaluable insight and perspective with us and with the new ambassadors. Thus, it is with great excitement that I announce the 2023-2024 Cohort of WI Ambassadors. This cohort welcomes eight new and two returning ambassadors. It also includes two of our first graduate students who will serve as Women's Institute Ambassadors. I am looking forward to a great year ahead with these amazing students.

2023-2024 Cohort of WI Ambassadors

Jenny Bryan	Sauna Ferris
Lauren Bush	Leah Madore
Keagan DesJardins	Sophia Pearl
Merideth Diegel	Theadora Welch
Sydney Dohr	Danielle Williams

On-Campus Activities





Student Ambassador-Led Donation Drives Benefit Women in Need

The Women's Institute's 8 student ambassadors lead several donation drives during the academic year to benefit organizations that support women in need.

They started with a menstrual product drive to benefit the Mission of Schenectady at the beginning of the fall 2022 semester; followed by a bedding donation drive for the YWCA of the Greater Capital Region; a housewares drive for local refugee families; and a Toys for Tots drive in conjunction with the Ambassadors' holiday party. They invited guests to bring a toy to place under the Women's Institute tree.

In spring 2023, the ambassadors marked International Women's Day by collecting personal care items and bras for I Support the Girls, an organization that provides these items to homeless women. The student-ambassadors inspired campus participation with raffles and an online session with I Support the Girls founder Dana Marlowe — and collected more than 200 bras! In April, they hosted a baby shower to support Moms Start Here.



MORE STUDENT-ONLY EVENTS

In addition to public events, the Women's Institute frequently plans or partners on student-only events that highlight the college's commitment to DEI; connect the core curriculum with community issues and service opportunities; provide venues for presenting research; and build leadership skills. Highlights from the academic year included:

Fall Semester

- Welcome Back Ice Cream Social
- Involvement Fair
- Voter Registration Tabling
- NYCLU Workshops: Digital Privacy, Lobbying 101 and LGBTQIA+ Rights in School
- Trivia - Are you a Sexpert?
- Graphic Liberation Project at Opalka
- Sage Fest
- Refugee Workshop at Frear House
- Feminist Food for Thought - Salem Witch Trials
- Blanket-a-thon & Study Break

Spring Semester

- Welcome Back Hot Chocolate Event
- Meetings for Domestic Violence Support Group
- Personal Hygiene Drive
- Hot Cocoa Day
- Feminist Food for Thought
- Sugar Scrubs Self-Care Event
- Domestic Violence Awareness with Unity House
- Pizza & Perspectives - Women's Activism
- Women's Studies Interest Meeting
- Meet and Greet with author Kate Moore
- Pizza & Perspectives - Gender Roles in Latin America
- Earth Day Table
- Baby Shower with Nursing Club
- Women's Studies & Student-Ambassador Celebration
- Final Exams Sip and Study

Supported by Grant from The Women's Institute, Student-Produced, Albany-Themed Coloring Book Aims to Provide Sense of Belonging, Literacy Support for Refugee Families

The Egg. Nipper. Stewart's shops. For lifelong residents of Albany and Troy or college students who find a second home here, these familiar landmarks often invoke a smile.

A group of Russell Sage students hopes refugees who have resettled in New York's Capital District will also come to see these landmarks as symbols of a welcoming community.

They developed *I Belong in Albany*, a coloring book featuring iconic Albany places and things. Thanks to a grant from The Women's Institute at Russell Sage College, the students delivered 2,000 professionally printed copies of *I Belong in Albany* — with crayons — to local organizations that support refugees.

Their hope is that children who receive the coloring books will enjoy a creative activity while learning about their new home, leading to a sense of belonging.

The Sage students were enrolled in a fall 2022 section of *Innovating to Impact* led by Student Success Librarian Amy Pass. *Innovating to Impact* is a signature class in Sage's general education program that examines complex issues through an interdisciplinary lens and a service learning project.

The students behind *I Belong in Albany* included Art, Education, Nutrition, and Business majors. They worked together to decide the book's general direction, then in teams with responsibilities for fundraising, securing printing bids and more.

They also met with refugees and representatives from Literacy Volunteers of Rensselaer County and refugee support organizations for feedback and guidance, and signed up for service hours at the organizations.

I Belong in Albany features 26 illustrations by Art + Extended Media major Jada Ruiz '24. The illustrations are arranged alphabetically with simple text, letter guides and primary-ruled space where children can practice their handwriting.

“One of our goals at the Women’s Institute is to inspire social change through acts of service,” said Executive Director Shelly Calabrese. “In addition to hosting service activities for students, we are eager to support student-led initiatives like I Belong in Albany. I was impressed by the students’ creative and collaborative project and their professional funding proposal, and thrilled the Institute was able to support it.”



Celebrating Student-Ambassadors in the Class of 2023

Ambassadors Say Career Skills, Strong Friendships Were Highlights

In May, The Women’s Institute honored the Class of 2023’s Noora Ahmed, Lauren Bush, Hayden Crandall, Eden Kuri, Susan Ramkissoon, and Delicia Thomas with purple satin stoles to wear at graduation (Purple is one of the colors, along with white and gold, that the National Woman’s Party used during the women’s suffrage movement in the United States.)



The six are the second cohort of Women’s Institute student-ambassadors to graduate since the institute was established in 2020.

“My time as a Women’s Institute ambassador was an opportunity to step outside my comfort zone and take on planning donation drives, trivia nights, peace vigils, and various events for the Sage community,” said Hayden, who graduated with a Sociology and Psychology degree. She regularly draws on the event planning and communication skills she developed as a student-ambassador in her work as a therapeutic activities aide with veterans.

“Ambassadors gained transferable skills such as collaboration, using programs such as Canva, composing professional emails, event planning, and networking,” said Noora, who has accepted a position as a case aide at the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants and is pursuing a master’s degree in Counseling and Community Psychology at Russell Sage. “Hosting donation drives, building a sense of community through student events, and hosting events that garnered awareness of greater social issues provided me with great purpose and fulfillment. However, the connections that were forged and strengthened among ambassadors will have the longest and most significant impact on my life. My three best friends were Women’s Institute ambassadors.”

“The Women’s Institute has allowed me to make wonderful connections on and off campus that will be beneficial to my career as a graduate student, my career beyond college, and beneficial to building who I am as a person,” said Lauren, who is now the Women’s Institute’s graduate assistant, while she pursues a master’s degree at Russell Sage.





Michelle Napierski-Prancl Receives Award for Outstanding Faculty Research

Women's Institute Faculty Director and Professor of Sociology Michelle Napierski-Prancl, Ph.D., received Russell Sage's Susan Warren Beatty Faculty Award for superior creativity and success in research at the conclusion of the 2022-2023 academic year.

Napierski-Prancl's record of original, high quality research, her collaborative efforts and her mentoring activities helped her stand out for this honor.

She is the author of *Mothers Work: Confronting the Mommy Wars, Raising Children, and Working for Social Change* and contributing author and co-editor of *Persevering During the Pandemic: Stories of Resilience, Creativity and Connection*. In 2016, she published "Brandy, You're a Fine Name: Popular Music and the Naming of Infant Girls from 1965-1985" in the journal *Studies in Popular Culture*, and she continues to regularly field calls from journalists, bloggers, and podcasters asking her to weigh in on baby name trends.

Napierski Prancl is the coordinator of Capital District Feminist Studies Consortium, which advances interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration among the scholars, teachers and students in and around Albany, who are interested in feminist and gender studies. Several students she has mentored have presented at the consortium's annual conference, as well as at sociology conferences and the National Conference of Undergraduate Research.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SHELLY CALABRESE SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

September 2022:

Panelist, The Impact of Resettlement Campuses, Every Campus a Refuge 2022 Gathering at Guilford College, Greensboro, North Carolina

October 2022:

Schenectady Business and Professionals Women's Club, Schenectady New York

February 2023:

Russell Sage College Alumnae Association Fireside Chat, online

March 2023:

Panelist, Campus Compact Coalition Conversations: Refugee Resettlement and Integration, online



Affiliate Scholar Contributes to Refugee Awareness Efforts



Diya Abdo, founder of the Every Campus a Refuge initiative and author of *American Refuge: True Stories of the Refugee Experience*, was The Women's Institute's visiting affiliate scholar for the 2022-2023 academic year.

During the Institute's Refugee Awareness Week in October 2022, Abdo read from and signed copies of *American Refuge* on campus and at the Book House in Albany, and hosted a discussion of the film *Babylon: Journeys of Refugees* at Opalka Gallery.

She returned to Sage throughout the academic year to co-teach sections of Sage's general education courses that promote community involvement; present on refugee mental health through a trauma-informed, culturally sensitive lens for Psychology graduate programs; and act as a curatorial advisor to the Opalka Gallery on refugee and immigration-related programming, among other activities.



ECAR UPDATES

Executive Director Shelly Calabrese was quoted in "[Every Campus A Refuge: When University Becomes a Home](#)" on World Education News and Reviews, Aug. 17, 2022

Executive Director Shelly Calabrese, Russell Sage College Director of Service Learning & Community Engagement Ali Schaeffing, and Women's Institute student-ambassador Noora Ahmed attended the ECAR Gathering at Guilford College in September where Calabrese was also a contributing panelist. The three-day event included workshops and other activities for representatives from ECAR campuses to share best practices.

In May, Russell Sage and The Women's Institute's ECAR chapter welcomed its second ECAR guests, a family of 11 from the Democratic Republic of Congo, who lived temporarily on the Troy campus until the local resettlement agency identified permanent housing.





Signature Events Draw Audiences, Media Attention

During the 2022-2023 academic year, The Women’s Institute continued to evolve as a locus for “generating light rather than heat” and inspiring nuanced and informed approaches to societal issues related to women, gender equity, and racial and social justice.

The institute hosted nearly 1,500 guests over multiple public events (its original goal was three signature events.) Ninety-four percent of guests gave the events a ranking of “Excellent to Good” on post-program surveys.

SEPTEMBER 2022

- **Reproductive Rights in Post-Roe America: a virtual panel discussion**

“This [Post-Roe] was definitely the best webinar I have attended since being a student at Sage for four years. It was a great topic with speakers/presenters who knew the topic inside and out!”

“I really liked the focus on the realities of post-Roe America and the emphasis on individuals speaking from expertise not just political opinion.”

OCTOBER 2022

- **Lunafest: a traveling film festival featuring films by and about women, Albany campus**

[‘LUNAFEST’ film festival coming to Russell Sage, WTEN, Oct. 10, 2022](#)

- **Refugee Awareness Week: a week of events on both campuses to raise awareness about the worldwide refugee crisis, including a screening and panel discussion of the film *Babylon: Journey of Refugees*; and book discussions and signings with Diya Abdo, author of *American Refugee: True Stories of the Refugee Experience*.**

“[Diya Abdo] is so motivating, making me want to take action immediately. Diya should actually teach a master class in public speaking and delivering a call to action.”

[Listen to Diya Abdo and Shelly Calabrese on the Sanctuary for Independent Media’ Sanctuary Radio.](#)

NOVEMBER 2022

- **Events with author Rachel E. Gross and artist Armando Veve, creators of *Vagina Obscura: An Anatomical Voyage*, Troy and Albany campuses**

“[Rachel Gross] was an excellent presentation balancing a lot of scientific and historical information within a layperson’s context and understanding. I also liked the sensitivity to those who don’t identify as binary. More on this whole topic is needed to educate women about their bodies and about the political and advocacy implications.”

[Meet the Creators of “Vagina Obscura: An Anatomical Voyage” at Russell Sage College, Hudson Valley Writers Guild website and enews, Nov. 7, 2022](#)



LOOKING AHEAD:

Rachel E. Gross will be the Institute’s 2023-2024 affiliate scholar, and return to the Sage campuses throughout the academic year to lead programming focused on gender bias in medicine.



MARCH 2023

- **Women's History Month event with Kate Moore, author of *The Woman They Could Not Silence*, online**

"...Kate Moore's virtual lecture was absolutely educational, informative, and overall amazing. The book she wrote inspired and amazed me ..."

"[Kate Moore's] reading and accompanying talk drew in those who hadn't read her book and those who had. It was enthralling! Perfect!!!"



- **Speaker Masih Alinejad, a Time Magazine 2023 Woman of the Year, Iranian-American journalist, author, and women's rights activist, Troy campus**

"Masih Alinejad's presentation was one of the best presentations I have ever attended in my two years of studying here at Sage."

"Finally an event [Masih Alinejad] that celebrates abused women and speaks to how money, Hollywood stars and politics really hinder emancipation of women in Iran and Afghanistan."

[51% #1760: Woman, Life, Freedom](#), WAMC, April 13, 2023

[Plan ahead: Events coming up in the Capital Region](#) (Masih Alinejad), Times Union, March 17, 2023

[Iranian-American Journalist Masih Alinejad, Author of "The Wind in My Hair," at Russell Sage College](#), Hudson Valley Writers Guild website and enews, Feb. 28, 2023



COMMUNITY EVENTS

The Women's Institute is proud of its recent partnerships with local organizations with similar goals.

October 2022

Capital Region Women's Networking Event cosponsored with the Academy of the Holy Names



May 2023

Every Campus a Refuge "Creating Inclusive Communities Together: Transforming Higher Through Refugee Integration" workshop, with representatives from HVCC; UAlbany; Siena



Russell Sage College Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Vision Statement

Russell Sage College embraces diversity, equity and inclusion as essential components of a rich intellectual and cultural environment in which all members are given the opportunity to reach their full potential as active participants in our local and global society.

We realize that the work of diversity, equity and inclusion is an evolution that moves us toward our aspirations of a culturally inclusive community. The understanding we gain, as we continually assess our institution, will create informed and intentional transformation.

Russell Sage College is committed to developing policies and programs to create a campus that supports an optimal learning and working environment for all students, alumnae/i, faculty, administrators and staff.

Our DEI vision statement is our commitment and aspiration to a more just and equitable community for all RSC constituents. The Russell Sage College Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Strategic Plan will be our protocol to achieve this.