

2021 Fellowship Project Report
Rosa Hakim

Alumnae Panel – Women of GCNYC
Hosted of June 21st, 2021

How I chose my project?

I chose to pursue building upon the alumnae community at GCNYC because of my passion for empowering women in their professional endeavors and interest in how gender bias in the workplace can influence corporate culture, employee morale and business performance. I was intrigued by the opportunity to explore topics around professional development and career progression with a gender lens within the GCNYC community.

Development Process

My process began by meeting with Kerri Quinn, Director of Academic Engagement, and Michelle Gabriel, Director of Career Services and Strategic Partnerships to learn more about the GCNYC alumni community and to propose the idea of an alumnae panel. From this initial discussion, I discovered that there was a need from the school's perspective to better understand how to best engage the alumni community through strategic and tailored programming and communication. Therefore, a key focus of my project was to develop a survey to distribute to alumni which would first be shared at the alumnae panel and further circulated after the event. The second piece would be the event itself which would invite a group of alumnae to speak about their professional journeys including the impact of GCNYC on their careers and how being a woman has influenced their career experiences within their respective industries.

For the first objective of creating the survey, I met with the Director of Alumni Relations at Washington University, Suzanne Wagstaff, who Sharon connected me to after having a positive experience with Washington University's alumni outreach efforts. The goal of this meeting was to gather best practices for creating alumni engagement surveys and to leverage those insights in developing my survey for GCNYC alumni. Suzanne was very helpful in identifying themes that worked best in her own experience of trying to engage alumni and she ultimately shared a survey with me that was successful in gaging the types of programming alumni were interested in as well as the ideal times to host them at. Using this model survey, I created a survey for GCNYC - available [here](#). Beyond my meeting with Suzanne, I brought the insights she shared with me back to Kerri and also introduced them via email. This led to Suzanne and Kerri meeting which opened the doors for further collaboration and learning opportunities in the alumni engagement space.

For the second piece which was the alumnae event I hosted, I worked with Kerri and Michelle to bring together a panel of alumnae who would want to contribute to this discussion. The panelists we invited were [Mariza Scotch](#), [Alexandra Williams](#) and [Julie Mastrarrigo](#). Along with preparing a list of panel questions, I did some research on gender bias in the workplace and developed a short interactive poll based on this research to engage with participants before starting the panel. The goal of this research and section of the event was to bring to light the impact of gender bias not only in the workplace but also on the outcome of consumer products. This research revealed that teams lacking diversity lead to a biased research and development processes which can exclude minorities and result in products that are not useful and safe for everyone they reach. For example, because car safety relied on a crash dummy representing the average man for decades, women are 47% more likely to be seriously injured in a car crash.

Findings & Contributions

The first set of findings in my project are encompassed by the survey I created with respect to how to best engage alumni. I was able to provide a [survey template](#) that can be used in the future for GCNYC, informed by the best practices of a university that has demonstrated success with alumni engagement. The second set of findings was derived from the panel experience. Along with the research I described in the prior section, I learned a lot from the panel discussion. One key takeaway from the panel for me was learning that disruptive innovation that leads to meaningful change requires gaining the courage to unlearn systems that we have become accustomed to. A second takeaway from the gender perspective that was a new insight to me was to think about reframing the discussion about gender bias in the workplace to account for potential positive effects of being a woman in the workplace. For example, one panelist shared a story about how she gained the support of traveling with her newborn child from a supervisor and how that empowered her to ask for what she wants and needs in her career. This opened my eyes to the fact that being a woman in the workplace can actually have key benefits and positive influences. I also realized that it's important to be careful when considering our own preconceived notions and biases about how we may be treated in the workplace based on a characteristic of our identities.

Finally, I shared a video with Kerri which includes clips from the panel that summarize what I thought were the key takeaways of the session which will be featured on the GCNYC website.

Future Directions & Open Questions

I believe the school can leverage the first piece of my project by promoting the survey and gathering more responses in order to derive meaningful findings on the types of events that are in highest demand by the alumni community. I also think that having a themed event was successful in that it brought together people who would be interested to hear about the role of gender in the workplace. Therefore, I would suggest that the school pursues other events that have a unique lens such as this as it can lead to meaningful discussions and highlight common threads across the university that may have not been tapped into before.

Personally, I plan to use my findings from the panel to explore careers that lie at the intersection of diversity & inclusion in the workplace, corporate social responsibility, and ESG.

Alumnae Panel: Women of GCNYC

Date + Time: Monday, June 21st from 5-6pm EST

Event Summary: Join us for an evening of dynamic conversation with GCNYC alumnae Arissa Agnant, Mariza Scotch, Alexandra Williams and Julie Mastrarrigo. The event will be hosted by Rosa Hakim, who is currently a fellow with GCNYC'S Center for Social Impact & Innovation. GCNYC alumnae will share how they leveraged their education and experience with GCNYC to further meaningful careers and engage in impactful work. They will also speak about how identifying as a woman in their respective industry has impacted their career experience.

Survey: We encourage GCNYC alumni members including panelists and audience participants to take this [survey](#) so that we can continue to improve the ways in which we engage with our community. Your insight is essential to helping our community continue to grow.

Event Structure + Timeline:

Time	Description
5-5:10pm	Introduction to event - Rosa launches zoom polls to audience reveal some interesting facts about women in the workplace
5:10-5:45pm	Rosa introduces and moderates the panel
5:45-5:55pm	Open up to Q&A from the audience
5:55-6pm	Participants are encouraged to fill out the survey if they haven't already in their last 5 minutes

Questions for Panelists:

- Can you tell me about your background and what led you to attend GCNYC?
- How did your experience at GCNYC influence your career and where you are today?
- Can you share a defining moment in your career that has led you to where you currently are?
- What are some of the challenges, if any, that you have faced as a woman in your industry or workplace?
- Can you share your thoughts on how women can advocate for themselves when faced with unequal treatment relative to their male counterparts?
- How do you believe male allies can make the workplace a safer and more inclusive place for women?
- How do you think women can support one another in the workplace and help pave the way for other women to rise to positions of leadership within their companies or organizations?
- What is your vision for promoting the common good, from the lens of your career and the industry you work in?
- Rapid Fire
 - Favorite course you took at GCNYC
 - Your thesis topic
 - One of the most inspiring/influential women you know