

# **Governor's Council on Women and Girls**

## **Leadership Subcommittee**

### **Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday, December 18, 2024 3:00 pm - 4:00 pm**

### **Microsoft TEAMS Meeting**

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#### **I. Call to Order**

The Lt. Governor called the meeting to order at 3:00pm and shared the Leadership Subcommittee mission statement.

#### **II. Presentation: Million Women Mentors Platform, Colleen L. Bielitz, Ph.D., Associate Vice President of Strategic Initiatives and Outreach, SCSU**

Colleen L. Bielitz provided an overview of Million Women Mentors' mission, achievements, and new website. Million Women Mentors operates in 40 states and focuses on encouraging girls and women to pursue and persist in STEM careers. Connecticut's chapter, led by the Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz as state chair, has been particularly successful due to strong volunteer leadership and statewide collaboration.

Bielitz emphasized that Million Women Mentors is not a nonprofit but a volunteer-driven network that aggregates, amplifies, and advances STEM-related activities for women and girls. Connecticut is currently the featured state on the national website, reflecting its leadership in the initiative.

In summer 2024, Connecticut launched its own Million Women Mentors website, which currently features 75 mentors across the state, with high concentrations in Hartford and New Haven. The site includes features such as an interactive mentor map, job postings, event listings, data tracking, and the ability to form affinity groups. Highlighted events include the AI and K-12 Education Certificate Program, the STEM Career Showcase, the Lieutenant Governor's Computing Challenge, and programs hosted by Wallingford Parks & Rec.

Colleen L. Bielitz also shared updates on recent and upcoming initiatives for Million Women Mentors Connecticut, noting that the website and program have only been active for four months. She credited volunteer Allison Buber for her support in outreach efforts. As programming expands, the "Pathways to STEM" initiative will highlight multiple entry points into STEM careers, including manufacturing and technical certifications.

This year, instead of one central event, multiple events will be held across the state in partnership with institutions like the Connecticut Science Center, Maritime Aquarium in Norwalk, Mystic Aquarium, and Peabody Museum in New Haven. The 2025 kickoff will take place at the Connecticut Science Center in January, following last year's successful event that drew over 350 families.

Million Women Mentors will also continue to amplify events like STEM Goes Red, hosted at institutions such as Southern Connecticut State University, and Colleen confirmed her participation in XR Tech again this year.

Finally, plans are underway for the 4th Annual Stand Up for STEM event, scheduled for March 20, 2025, which will include a day of STEM mentoring and culminate in an awards ceremony from 4–6 PM. The event will once again partner with the Connecticut Science Center

### **III. Presentation: P4P Profit and Loss Accelerator Program, Nadine Bullock-Pottinga, CEO Paradigm for Parity**

Nadine from Paradigm for Parity (P4P) gave a detailed presentation on the organization's mission and leadership development efforts, especially its Profit and Loss (P&L) Leadership Accelerator Program. She began by acknowledging Connecticut's leadership in the coalition, with 16 member companies, ranking 3rd nationally and 1st for Fortune 500 participation.

She explained that Paradigm for Parity, a 501(c)(3) founded in 2015 by 47 women CEOs, aims to achieve gender and racial equity at all levels of organizations by not only empowering women, but also transforming workplace cultures that hinder their advancement. Since its inception in 2016 with 27 members, P4P has grown to over 150 companies, representing 6.5 million employees across 28 industries.

The organization's work is guided by a five-point action plan:

1. Eliminate unconscious bias in leadership,
2. Increase women in senior operating roles,
3. Set measurable goals and be accountable,
4. Base career progress on performance, not presence,
5. Establish sponsorships and mentorships.

Nadine highlighted that many companies use these strategies flexibly, based on their unique stage in the equity journey.

She emphasized the need to increase the number of women in P&L or “line” roles, which are essential stepping-stones to C-suite leadership. Citing data from McKinsey's 2024 *Women in the Workplace* report, she noted no meaningful progress in this area since 2019—underscoring the need for targeted interventions like the P&L Leadership Accelerator Program.

The six-month accelerator program:

- Uses virtual business simulations to teach financial and operational decision-making;
- Includes executive coaching tailored to each participant's leadership goals;
- Matches each woman with an internal sponsor trained to support her advancement;
- Fosters a strong peer network, with many participants helping each other secure promotions.

The program is open to both coalition and non-coalition members and is especially geared toward early-career women (5–10 years of experience) on the verge of stepping into leadership roles. Nadine concluded by sharing that 10–25% of participants report promotions or expanded responsibilities within six months of completing the program. She offered to share a video with more information and invited questions from attendees.

#### **IV. Public Comment Period**

There were no public comments.

#### **V. Updates and Announcements**

- i. In October 2024, the Leadership Subcommittee hosted a virtual panel on domestic violence Awareness Month with their partner, the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- ii. On November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024, in honor of Native American Heritage Month, the Leadership Subcommittee hosted a woman in leadership panel at the University of Connecticut Law School, “Empowering Indigenous Women Leaders”

#### **VI. Adjourn**

The Lt. Governor adjourned the meeting at 3:42pm.