

UMBrella

2022 Recipients



Click on the recipient's name to read about their scholarship experience.



Carin Cardella

Scholarship: ACUI Women's Leadership Institute



Paulette Harris-Gross

Scholarship: Professional Leadership Program for Women

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Carin Cardella



I received the UMBrella scholarship to attend the Women's Leadership Institute (WLI) in 2020 but deferred for COVID-19 closures and cancellations. Over the past two years, we have all experienced enormous stress and change. Personally, my work with police and emergency management meant working long hours on-campus during the pandemic and rarely taking time away. I don't often acknowledge it, but I'm exhausted. I know many others feel the same.

I was excited to learn I'd finally be able to attend WLI in December 2022. The Institute was unlike any conference I've ever attended. From the moment I walked in, I was welcomed and supported by hundreds of amazing, intelligent, vibrant women.

The conference focused on both professional and personal development. I didn't realize how much I needed this time away to connect with women from across the country, learn attainable leadership strategies, and decompress. In other conferences I've attended, I felt like I'm

constantly running between sessions while trying to keep up with work emails and network with other professionals. WLI offered built-in networking and group discussions. Attendees could provide real-time feedback about their experiences so everyone could contribute, rather than only the speakers. There was even reflection time set aside before lunch one day to go for a walk, journal, exercise, read, or talk with other attendees.

Some of my biggest take-aways from the conference were expressing gratitude and leading with heart. So often, the "soft skills" that are associated with women – compassion, empathy, emotional intelligence – are not seen as the skills needed to get ahead in the workplace. These are some of my best skills which I am proud to have. WLI reminded me that my future success is not despite these skills, but because of them. This focus of putting people first, serving others, and staying in one's purpose closely aligns with UMB's core values.

I already have a robust group-text group with some of the amazing women I met at WLI, and I look forward to putting these leadership lessons into practice. I encourage everyone to apply for WLI – it was an amazing experience like no other.

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Paulette Harris-Gross



I am so grateful for the UMBrella scholarship, which allowed me the opportunity to participate in the Dr. Nancy Grasmick Leadership Institute's seventh cohort of the Professional Leadership Program for Women at Towson University. The four-month program encompassed so much more than leadership skills.

We were led by facilitator Joanne Smikle, PhD, a leadership and coaching guru. She orchestrated thought-provoking and engaging activities to enhance our levels of self-awareness.

We identified our top strengths as a foundation for leadership rather than focusing on areas needing improvement. That was a new and energizing assessment. I had the chance to explore my purpose and my core values, and how I can use my influence to fuel my life and career aspirations. It was a transformational experience for me. This process helped unveil a pattern in my purpose — as throughout my 20-plus-year professional career in varying roles, I've supported, coordinated, or managed programming and projects that create opportunities

for marginalized and underrepresented groups including women, immigrants and refugees, economically disadvantaged families, and returning citizens. Similarly, I find ways of making contributions to specific social causes through giving of my personal time, monetary or creative donations. This common thread is etched in my career path and will always be an important part of my work and my life.

I connected with this group of 16 self-determined women from an array of fields, industries, and levels of leadership. Within this safe space, we shared personal stories of our insecurities, challenges, successes, and future goals. I learned a lot from hearing others tell their truths and found inspiration to tell mine as well.

What's best? We've kept in touch since completing the program in May 2022. From occasional social outings to regular chats on our GroupMe app, we're able to maintain that sense of encouragement, support, and humor that we developed in such a short period of time.

I feel even better equipped to lead and motivated to make more of a social impact. Thank you, UMBrella!

Paulette Harris-Gross, MS

Senior Community Program Specialist, Office of the President

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