



LEADERSHIP

By Jennifer Gish

BOLD Women's Leadership Network Scholars

The College of Saint Rose recently named its inaugural class of BOLD Women's Leadership Network Scholars, seven students who represent a variety of experiences and academic interests.

Last spring, Dr. Carolyn J. Stefanco, president of Saint Rose, was awarded a \$100,000 Helen Gurley Brown Genius Grant, and Saint Rose was invited to join the BOLD Women's Leadership Network by the Pussycat Foundation. The \$1 million in BOLD Women's Leadership Network funding to Saint Rose will empower a diverse group of BOLD Scholars—young women leaders enrolled at a select group of institutions of higher education to address important issues in their communities.

"I am so grateful for the opportunity that these funds will provide to support leadership development and our students," Stefanco said after the grant and invitation to join BOLD was announced. "It is a tremendous honor for me,



and for The College of Saint Rose. As a scholar of women's history and leadership, I know that we still have a long way to go for women to realize our potential. That knowledge, coupled with my own role as the first permanent woman lay president at Saint Rose, fuels my passion to continue the progress of those bold women who have gone before us, including Helen Gurley Brown. My focus as a faculty member, and now as a college president, has always been on students from all backgrounds and experiences.

The mission of BOLD is to encourage and mentor our female students to step forward as the next generation of leaders and problem-solvers. I am extraordinarily gratified to be recognized with a Genius Grant, to have Saint Rose be part of the BOLD effort to develop powerful women leaders, and to guide this initiative at Saint Rose."

The seven BOLD Scholars at Saint Rose, women who are all in their junior year, are: Nia Brown, of Newburgh, New York, a biology

major and women's soccer player; Essence Cox, of New Paltz, New York, a social work major, intercultural ambassador of ALANA is Leadership, orientation leader, and peer mentor; Marissa Isabella, of Lincoln, Rhode Island, an accounting major and member of both the women's golf team and the Student Athlete Advisory Council; Hellen Jumo, of Zimbabwe, a chemistry major and international student orientation leader; Belinda Ligotino, of Ellenville, New York, a music industry major,



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head of the Rose Record Label, and manager of the band, Hasty Page; Arianna Paul, of Albany, New York, a communications major, Colleges Against Cancer Advocacy chair, and Better Together co-president; and Janay Salter, of Harlem, New York, a childhood education/special education major, member of the Black Student Union executive board, and after school teacher at Refugee and Immigrant Support Services of Emmaus and the Boys and Girls Club of Albany.

The women will live together through their graduation in May of 2020 as they develop their leadership skills, work to address issues they have prioritized, receive mentoring from women professionals, and learn from President Stefanco's research and experiences.

Visionary Leadership

The letter announcing the Genius Grant noted President Stefanco's "visionary leadership" and clear focus on efforts to ensure student success: "Your passion and tireless efforts to raise awareness around the struggles college students face, especially first-generation students, is inspiring and transformative.

We are equally impressed with your dedication to ensuring that Saint Rose keeps up to date with our increasingly global and interconnected world, which has already resulted in several partnerships with institutions abroad and the creation of a new Center for International Programs.

Your professional career has taken you across the country, and we firmly believe that you understand the unique challenges faced by different segments of our country when it comes to accessing higher education."

80 Bold Scholars

In the past two years, the foundation has identified 80 BOLD scholars, a diverse group of female students who are working on developing projects to transform their campuses. The initiative envisions collaboration across institutions of higher education to address issues on their campuses, particularly those related to leadership development. Including Saint Rose, the BOLD Women's Leadership Network currently operates at six colleges and universities: Ithaca College; Middlebury College; Colby-Sawyer College; the University of Connecticut; and Rutgers University–Newark. Each partner institution is led by a woman president, who has demonstrated commitment to diversity and inclusion throughout her career.

"Carolyn has boldly led Saint Rose forward since her arrival in 2014," said Sister Mary Anne Heenan, chair of the Saint Rose Board of Trustees. "The College of Saint Rose was founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, women who also understood what it meant to lift up others who were not given equal opportunity and to fulfill the needs they saw around them.

They founded the College, providing access to private higher education for women, in the same year that women throughout the nation were granted the right to vote. They offered night classes to veterans returning home from World War II because they recognized a need to help them transition back to civilian

life. The role Carolyn and the College will now play in the BOLD Women's Leadership Network allows the mission of the Sisters to lift up the dear neighbor to continue at Saint Rose."

A Division of Student Success

Stefanco is the 11th president of The College of Saint Rose. As a first-generation college student herself, she is particularly passionate about how higher education can transform the lives of students and their family members.

One of Stefanco's first decisions was to create a division of Student Success focusing on the College's goals of increasing retention and graduation rates, and enabling students to achieve their personal and professional goals.

This new division has established a mentoring program for first-generation students, and implemented a new summer orientation program for beginning students. In Fall 2017, the College enrolled its most diverse first-year class in history, with 50 percent students of color.

A Resurgence of Giving

Stefanco has also led a resurgence of giving to Saint Rose. In the 2017 fiscal year, Saint Rose marked its largest annual fundraising total in 15 years. The majority of recent gifts fund scholarships, supporting the college's mission of serving all those who will flourish at Saint Rose regardless of financial means.

Stefanco joined Saint Rose after serving as vice president for academic affairs at Agnes Scott College in Atlanta, Georgia; as the founding dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at California State University, Stanislaus; and after a long career as a tenured professor of history at California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly), where she held numerous leadership positions. She earned a Ph.D. in history from Duke University, a master's degree in women's history from Binghamton University, and a bachelor's degree in history and a women's studies certificate from the University of Colorado at Boulder.

She was a Senior Fulbright Scholar to the University of Zagreb in Croatia, and now is a Trustee of the American University in Bulgaria, and a board member of the International Leadership Association. In the Capital Region of New York, she is a director of Albany Medical Center, an executive board member of Hearst's Women@Work, and a member of the board of directors for the Center for Economic Growth, where she chairs the work group on Interactive Technology.

She is a leader in higher education organizations, such as the Council of Independent Colleges, and the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. Her research focuses on women and leadership, and she speaks and writes regularly about a variety of educational issues.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Jennifer Gish is the assistant vice president for marketing and communications at The College of Saint Rose and previously worked as a nationally award-winning journalist.



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