

A woman with dark hair, wearing a bright yellow blazer over a black top, stands with her arms crossed. She is positioned in the center of the frame against a dark blue background with a subtle geometric pattern and bokeh light effects. The text is overlaid on the lower portion of her image.

Women in Leadership: The Need for Innovation and Resilience



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The future of leadership looks much more female. After decades of women pushing against the glass ceiling that effectively blocks them from attaining the same pay, responsibilities and titles as men, more women are now represented in leadership positions than ever before. But while that is cause for celebration, the work is far from finished. Statistics show women still hold far fewer executive positions than men. Many women also find their work continues to go unrecognized and unrewarded, especially when compared to the treatment received by male colleagues who often are competitors for promotion into leadership.

In their mission to realize their leadership aspirations, women gain an edge by learning the knowledge and skills needed to become innovative, resilient and advocates for themselves and others.

Overcoming Barriers Into Leadership

Women continue to face a tougher climb up the organizational chart than men. They also continue to earn less than men for doing the same job (about 83 cents for every dollar earned by a man, according to the U.S. Census Bureau). Many still work in a company culture that values male over female leadership.

Women of color can face an even steeper climb. Many still find themselves on the receiving end of frequent microaggressions, disrespectful and “othering” behavior. In its recent [Women in the Workplace](#) study, consultants McKinsey & Company featured this issue prominently, writing that there is “a disconnect between companies’ growing commitment to racial equity and the lack of improvement we see in the day-to-day experiences of women of color.”

Some companies have initiated the cultural work needed to create a workplace where women feel valued. But women benefit by taking matters into their own hands and honing their skills, particularly in innovation and resilience. Innovation involves creating new and valuable products or services, but managers must first use a human-centered design to create an innovation culture. Resiliency is the ability to navigate difficulties and recover from setbacks.

Developing expertise in innovation and resiliency requires learning best practices in a variety of areas, including employee engagement, fostering collaboration, risk management, and promoting diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). Emory University focuses on giving women the skills they need for success in the [Women in Leadership: Driving Transformation Through Innovation and Resilience](#) online certificate program offered through Emory Continuing Education (ECE).

“Innovation is not the result of one or two things; it results from a combination of skills, factors, qualities and circumstances. This program addresses each area with clarity, practice and practicality not often seen in corporate training programs.”

– NANCY GREEN,

MBA, Principal Consultant in Human Performance Improvement; Emory Women in Leadership program instructor

Key Trends and Statistics in Leadership for Women

The need to get an edge on leadership skills is apparent when looking at the latest trends and statistics involving women and leadership. McKinsey reports that women’s representation has improved at all levels of the corporate pipeline, but “persistent gaps” remain. They include inequitable promotions that put people on the first step into management, and women of color losing ground in representation at all levels.

That initial step into management is sometimes called the “broken rung.” Because fewer women earn promotion into that first management level, it’s difficult for organizations to build a pipeline of female managers that reaches up to the senior level. It’s especially noticeable with women of color. Their representation drops 75% between entry level and C-suite level positions. They account for just 4% of C-suite executives, according to McKinsey.

Statistics paint a clear picture. Women are CEOs at just 44 Fortune 500 companies, or 8.8%. This disparity also is evident in the public sphere, according to a Pew Research Center [report](#). There are currently 24 women serving in the [U.S. Senate](#), and women make up 27.9% of the U.S. House of Representatives. At the state level, women hold 28.1% of state senate seats and 31.8% of state house or assembly seats. Of the 50 U.S. governors in 2021, nine were women. What’s more, the number of women governors, the top public executive position in a state, has never been higher than nine at any point in history.

Self-Advocacy For Women: Understanding Your Value

Despite the low leadership numbers for women, studies frequently show that women exhibit qualities that make them stronger leaders than men. For example, the McKinsey study found women put in extra work when compared to men in critical areas such as supporting team members and advancing DEI efforts. White women leaders are also more likely to act as allies to women of color.

The Harvard Business Review [argued](#) that men should emulate women when it comes to leadership, not the other way around. They recommend many leadership traits men could learn from women, including putting their employees ahead of themselves, providing transformational leadership that aligns employees with meaning and purpose, empathizing rather than commanding, elevating others and understanding their own limitations.

Given the culture of some organizations, women may struggle to realize their own value. That makes self-advocacy a key part of educating women who aspire to leadership positions. Lisa Mangel, an Enterprise Product Manager of Sales and Marketing Digital Transformation at the Boeing Company, [recently completed](#) the ECE Women in Leadership program and said self-advocacy is one of the most important facets of the program.



“My most valuable takeaway [from the program] was that I can be – and am! – a great leader: I have the tools, the experience and the commitment. I used what I learned in the self-advocacy lesson to apply for, and be offered, my first executive role.” - Lisa Mangel



Self-advocacy can also be challenging for women of color. Toni Jermia, who works as an Assistant Director for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, called the program’s self-advocacy module “impactful.”



“As a Black woman in a society that overall doesn’t value or acknowledge the contributions of your ancestors and yourself, I struggle a great deal with advocating for myself and the need for it is even more necessary based on my identity. I plan to review and implement that in my life.” - Toni Jermia

Skills Women Leaders Bring to the Table

A recent [report](#) on women in leadership from KPMG included a survey of women executives and their perspective on a host of issues where innovation and new approaches are needed. The report provides insights into the current thinking among women in leadership. Key findings include:

82%

believe business leaders must be trusted and provide stability more than ever in today’s landscape

74%

said building and maintaining a strong culture of diversity, equity and inclusion is the new focus in their talent acquisition and retention strategy

87%

said mental health and burnout are predominant considerations when balancing business goals and a team’s best interests

How can leaders better focus on these important issues? Soumaya Khalifa, MBA, an instructor in the Emory Women in Leadership certificate program, explained some essential skills that can help women succeed in DEI, engaging employees and addressing their needs, and providing stability.



Self-awareness



Good listening skills



Awareness of others



The ability to see things through different lenses



Empathy

According to Khalifa, her module, *Innovating Across Culture*, emphasizes cultural awareness of self and others and on developing a game plan to leverage cultural differences to drive innovation.



“The program brings to light many aspects of what might make or hinder innovation mindset. It allows participants to self-explore and reflect to build a culture of innovation.” - Soumaya Khalifa

Innovation depends on an understanding of human-centered design. Women leaders can grow a culture of innovation through understanding design thinking and applying its principles to their work.

“Great leaders are human-centered,” said Quinn O’Briant, MFA, MLA, instructor of the *Growing a Culture of Innovation* module for the Emory Women in Leadership program. “They listen, stay curious, explore options, and embrace change. These qualities are balanced with an ability to be organized and methodical even when a lot is happening all at once.”

In her lessons, O’Briant teaches professionals how to cultivate entrepreneurial mindsets among employees, the strategies for working across silos, and best practices for managing risk and failure. Participants also collaborate in live sessions to apply what they’ve learned to real-life situations they currently face.

The Importance of Resilience for Women Leaders

Innovation in the workplace, including DEI efforts and changing corporate culture, are the result of many different skills. Of all the skills women need to overcome the roadblocks to making these changes, resilience ranks at the top.

Resilience requires building the skills that allow leaders to overcome challenges and setbacks. To help others build those skills, leaders need to understand how to get in touch with the concerns of employees. Katie Karppala, an executive coach and consultant, teaches professional women about resiliency in the Women in Leadership program. In her module, Leading with Resilience, participants will learn the qualities, attributes, and skills that make resilient leaders, as well as their impact on teams, organizations, and culture.



“In our modern time, effective leaders are in tune with their people.”

- Katie Karppala

“This means that they are building upon their emotional intelligence skills and resiliency skills. They are also open to learning new things and information, as well as being open to different points of view. They recognize that growth is a lifelong process. A great leader will model this for their people.”

Resiliency has become even more important in recent years as the global pandemic, inflation and job instability have led to more job-related stress. “Since the pandemic, it has become even more apparent to me how important resiliency is,” Karppala said. “I’ve seen more burn out in this pandemic with leaders than ever before. I am excited to be able to share these tools with [participants], so that they can proactively create more resiliency in their own lives.”



Prepare to Move Into a Higher Tier of Leadership

While gains have been made, statistics show women continue to face a tougher climb to the top than men. To increase their odds of success, women can benefit from an online program designed specifically to help them achieve their leadership goals, including making themselves more valuable, networking with other women leaders, understanding their potential and seeking a diverse base of mentors and professional colleagues.

Meet the Instructors

The Women in Leadership program features five subject matter experts who each teach one module focused on a theme central to leadership. Together, the modules give current managers the skills, tools, and knowledge to drive positive transformation and build presence and influence within their organization.



Growing a culture of innovation: Taught by Quinn O'Briant, MFA, MLA, public speaker, expert in creativity and innovation, and VP & Lead AI Conversation Designer for Bank of America

“The Growing a Culture of Innovation module focuses on practical ways to do innovative work in an organization. Participants learn how to apply tools such as Human-Centered Design to everyday challenges and how to inspire those they manage to embrace an entrepreneurial spirit.”



Innovating across culture: Taught by Soumaya Khalifa, MBA, President and CEO of Khalifa Consulting



Driving engagement: Taught by Nancy Green, MBA, Principal Consultant, Human Performance Improvement

“Engagement is the holy grail for organizations. It is literally the measurement that drives every other measurement an organization might care about, from profitability to innovation, to customer satisfaction. This module unpacks engagement into discrete components that leaders can address to move the needle in the right direction.” - Nancy Green



Leading with resilience: Taught by Katie Karppala, MSOL, PCC, BCC, founder of Authentic Dimensions Consulting



Advocating for yourself: Taught by Sarah D. Carlson, JD, Founder and CEO of Miracles Incorporated



“I believe the most critical skill a leader can possess is that of self-advocacy – and it is a skill that is rarely taught. In essence, how do we claim the full potential of who we are as unique individuals to make the most impact in our organizations and the world? These are the questions I help people answer with the components of effective self-advocacy, including self-awareness, self-ownership, self-articulation, and self-belief.” - Sarah D. Carlson

Once a week (one for every module), the instructor will also hold a two-hour live, virtual class session that will cover the lessons from that week's module. These sessions provide participants with real-time feedback and encourage peer-to-peer learning and practical application of the material.

"The live sessions are special because it's a time to really connect with your counterparts, your instructors, and with the material," Carlson added. "You get a chance to digest what you're learning, put it into play, and get guidance from some of the best in the business. It's also a safe space to discuss real challenges and real opportunities and to be supported by experts and women who are experiencing similar things."

Program Outcomes

Upon their successful completion of the Women in Leadership program, participants should expect to be able to:

- Describe why innovation is important and list instances of successful innovation inside and outside their organization
- Identify collaboration strategies in their organization
- Define keys to developing an entrepreneurial mindset
- Develop an initial plan to encourage risk while mitigating associated challenges
- Explore cultural differences and similarities and how culture impacts communication, innovation, and team leadership
- Develop a strategy of inclusiveness through an understanding of cultural impacts
- Explore how multiculturalism improves innovation when managed effectively
- Distinguish between resilient and non-resilient leaders, design a custom resiliency plan, and implement resiliency for innovation

Reba Joyner, a principal of a TK-12 Charter School, said her most valuable program takeaway was not contained in a single module or topic.

“It was truly the totality of every class session, every homework assignment, every video presentation, and every class reflection that summed up a miraculous experience of resiliency, innovation, advocacy, culture, and engagement that rebuilt my inner being to such a deeper strength,” said Joyner.

Participant Feedback

Another benefit the Women in Leadership program offers is the ability to connect with women in similar positions of leadership. The five-week program is designed for current women managers from all industries who are ready to take the next step in their careers, learn best practices for developing a collaborative culture of innovation, and become more effective advocates for themselves and team members.



Chandra Tuggle, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Alumni Relations at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center, enrolled in the program because she “wanted to hear and learn from women from different industries across the country. I was interested in honing my strengths in leadership as well as learning new skills to help me become a better leader.”

She said the program exceeded her expectations, partly because of her classmates. “I really enjoyed all of the readings, the live sessions, and the discussion board conversations,” Tuggle said. “It was interesting to learn the different ways we all approach leadership, and I was able to come away with some new ideas on how to be a better leader for my team.”

“Great leaders are lifelong learners (innovators) who are always looking for ways to improve themselves for the betterment of their team,” she added.

Lisa Mangel also praised the cohort element of the program.



“We built relationships over the [course of the program], and it was a fun and rewarding experience. I enjoyed getting to hear and learn from women outside of my industry and technical area, with different circumstances and backgrounds.”

As one of the first participants to complete the Women in Leadership program, [Robin Ann Barnette, CLC, CA, E-RTY 500](#), summed up her online classroom experience this way:



“The instructors and all my fellow classmates with their complete dedication and 100% commitment to being the best leaders for their teams really brought it all home for me. Every instructor, every topic, and every discussion were so authentic and filled with such dedication and grace. This was an amazingly powerful course that I believe every woman would benefit from.”

Barnette, the founder of Diversity Inspired Inclusive Sales and Marketing, a woman and minority-owned consulting agency, spoke about the impact the Women in Leadership program had on her life.

“I came to the program after a horrible workplace abuse and bullying experience that rocked me to my core. I made a promise to myself to become the leader that I wished I had. The instructors and [my classmates] all care so much for their direct reports, being of service, and living a life of purpose. ...I was so inspired.”

“The Women in Leadership program changed the direction of my life,” she said.

For more information about Emory’s online Women in Leadership program, including pricing, start dates, tuition reduction eligibility, registration and more, visit the [Women in Leadership: Driving Transformation Through Innovation and Resilience](#) program page or call **844-701-6100** to speak with a representative.





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