

2018 Women's Leadership Conference  
Responding to the Call: Leading in Times of Change  
By Valeria G., Class of 2020

On September 15, 2018 I had the opportunity of attending the 2018 Women's Leadership Conference at Mount St. Mary's university thanks to my mentor Terryl Martin and Partnership Scholars Program. The environment at this event was very empowering and growth oriented. I was able to attend various presentations from successful women.

As someone who is very passionate about leadership, I was so excited when my mentor presented the idea of a leadership conference. As a female leader in my community I have found that it can become difficult to find a healthy balance between self-care and my responsibilities. In the session, *The Connection Between Self-Care and Leadership* a panel of successful women discussed the importance of taking time for yourself so that you can be your best self as a leader. They provided a vivid example of how as women we often burn the candle on both ends and we find ourselves running on fumes just because so much is expected of us. The insight I gained was to align my actions with my beliefs, and claim small victories.

I liked that the conference acknowledged the need for intersectionality and equity. For example, in the session *The Women's Code: The ROI of Leadership balance*, the speaker discussed the need of equity in workspaces. She presented statistics that proved that equitable workplaces are more successful. Equity isn't the same as equality. Equality means that everyone gets the exact same thing, but equity means that everyone gets what is necessary so that their needs are met. Intersectionality refers to the diversity among race, education, ethnicity, class, etc affects things like feminism. In order to advocate for women's rights some of us have to acknowledge that their experience as a woman may be different because of their class, ethnicity, age, education.

It's difficult to sum up this experience in only 200 words. In fact, I have already surpassed the word limit but this experience motivated me to continue pursuing leadership roles despite the obstacles that one may face, and it reminded me of the importance of finding a balance and practicing self care. I felt supported and empowered and it's something that I will share with the student government and equity club at my school.