



WOMEN + GIRLS RESEARCH ALLIANCE 2023 IMPACT REPORT

PREPARED BY DR. MICHELLE MEGGS



WOMEN + GIRLS
RESEARCH ALLIANCE

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Message from the Executive Director



In three years the Women + Girls Research Alliance (W+GRA) has experienced many successes. From fostering important relationships with community partners and non-profit organizations, to curating an online Community Resource Network with more than 60 community-based organizations, to securing a \$15,000 grant from the Ms. Foundation, to hosting a successful *Taking Space Without Apology: A Women and Girls Leadership Café* in 2022, to co-hosting the inaugural *2023 Charlotte Black Families Summit*, the W+GRA has taken on challenges and met each opportunity to achieve.

However, we will not rest on our laurels for there is much more work to be done. We remain committed to the call to produce innovative solutions to systemic challenges that impede the well-being of women and girls. In 2023-2024 we will host our second *Leadership Café* and our *2024 Women's Summit*, award five W+GRA Faculty Research Seed Grants, and host our online Research and Practice Discussion Series.

The W+GRA remains committed now more than ever to highlight the socio-economic, educational, political, and health related concerns impacting women and girls. We will have the tough, necessary conversations and be champions for an equitable future for *all* women and girls in the Charlotte Metropolitan area. We invite you to partner with us as we continue to do this important work.

Michelle Meggs

DR. MICHELLE MEGGS

Executive Director

Women + Girls Research Alliance Commission Study

Executive Summary

Women + Girls Research Alliance (W+GRA) convened a *Leadership Café* in October 2022 to better understand the issues faced by women and girls in the greater Charlotte metro area. Participants, included UNC Charlotte faculty, community leaders, and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) students, who were invited to participate in small, facilitated conversations around issues impacting the lives of women and girls.

The Café revealed that for many who live in the city and surrounding areas, wages have not kept up with the cost of living, and basic necessities such as housing, childcare, food, and transportation are becoming harder to afford. In addition to these larger Charlotte area issues of affordability, this study finds that women and girls in Charlotte (particularly those of color) experience additional challenges related to exclusion and inequity. These include discrimination in the workplace and healthcare systems, lack of social capital, and structural, or organizational barriers that prevent women from obtaining and maintaining living wage jobs.

To thrive in the greater Charlotte metro area, women and girls need greater access to living wage jobs, mental health services, and social support. Girls, specifically, need to feel safer at school. Café participants were unanimous in their desire to develop safe spaces and networks where women and girls can receive social support, much like the Café itself. These spaces allow women and girls to build confidence, express vulnerability, develop relationships, and create opportunities for mentoring.

Women + Girls Research Alliance Commission Study

Executive Summary

In conclusion, the research team recommends that W+GRA consider the following criteria to inform its research agenda, including the 2023-24 Seed Grant Funding.

- Research that explores barriers or facilitators to economic mobility among women and girls.
- Research that explores mental health and social support among women and girls, including research relating to mental health and school safety.
- All research should be conducted with a racial equity lens. Racial equity should be reflected in all stages of the project, including in the study design, data analysis, and interpretation of findings.

Process Evaluation

Although not written into the formal scope of work, Charlotte Urban Institute determined that a process evaluation was needed for the inaugural W+GRA Leadership Café. The research team identified areas that worked well and areas of improvement. Areas of the Café that worked well included:

- Warm, welcoming atmosphere
- High level of participation
- Participants' general adherence to Café instructions
- Participants' general satisfaction and positive feedback

The process evaluation also reveals some areas of improvement. These include:

- A need to clarify the role of table hosts
- Alternative methods to create more actionable outcomes
- Alternative methods to capture student perspectives

W+GRA ADVISORY BOARD



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WOMEN + GIRLS
RESEARCH ALLIANCE

The Women + Girls Research Alliance is committed to improving the lives of women and girls in the greater Charlotte metropolitan area by facilitating partnerships among researchers, community leaders, and civic investors that produce transformative outcomes.

As an affiliate of UNC Charlotte's urbanCORE, W+GRA leverages its unique connection to the University and the community to implement three strategies that produce innovative solutions to systemic challenges that impede the well-being of women and girls.

First, We Mobilize



W+GRA encourages engaged research focused on issues related to the economic, social and physical well-being of women and girls. We encourage co-production among researchers, community residents, and practitioners. Our competitive **Seed Grant** program supports emerging scholarship from UNC Charlotte faculty that expands and elevates the voices of all women and girls in academic research.

2023-2024 W+GRA SEED GRANTS

Five Seed Grants, of up to \$5,000 each, will be awarded to researchers during the 2023-2024 academic year. The primary focus of this year's grants are:

POVERTY

ECONOMIC MOBILITY

Second, We Equip

W+GRA champions partnerships with a growing network of grassroots and established organizations devoted to issues related to women and girls to build their knowledge and organizational capacity. One example is our work with a local organization to provide an evaluation plan focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion.



BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

- In partnership with the Urban Institute, completed the 2020-2021 Phase II of the Girl Scouts Hornets' Nest Logic Model and Evaluation Plan.
- Completed redesigning the EmpoweHERment educational curriculum that aligns with a social justice model (2023).

PARTNERSHIPS

- Women's Inter-cultural Exchange
- She Built This City
- EmpoweHERment
- Girls Scouts Hornets' Nest Council



WOMEN + GIRLS
RESEARCH ALLIANCE

The W+GRA hosts gatherings, convenings, and conversations with faculty, local experts, and community scholars to discuss what is happening with women and girls globally, nationally, and locally to devise possible solutions to systemic issues.

The W+GRA encourages active, data-driven partnerships that lead to improved outcomes and best practices for women and girls well-being and empowerment.

Third, We Convene



Since 2008, the W+GRA has hosted gatherings and conversations with experts and scholars.

- Through events like the **Taking Space Without Apology Leadership Café** hosted in October 2022, we encourage active, data-driven partnerships that lead to improved outcomes for women and girls.
- In April 2023, W+GRA hosted the **Charlotte Black Families Summit** to facilitate community conversations in wellness, education, policy, and housing affecting black families. W+GRA also joined the American Medical Women's Association at UNC Charlotte for an informal talk advocating for the end of **Period Poverty**.

PERIOD POVERTY DISCUSSION EVENT
APRIL 11TH, 2023
3PM - 5PM
STUN 340CF

Join us for an informal talk about Period Poverty and how we are advocating to eliminate it at UNC Charlotte!

Food & Drinks will be served!

Dr. Michelle Meggs
W+GRA Exec. Director

Tchernavia Montgomery
Care Ring Exec. Director

Krishna Majithia
PPC Co-Founder

Kamaria Weatherspoon
AMWA President

Elizabeth Hall
AMWA VP

2023 CHARLOTTE BLACK FAMILIES SUMMIT: COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS IN ACTION

Thursday, April 27, 2023
9:30 am - 5:00 pm
The Dubois Center
UNC Charlotte Center City
320 E. 9th Street, Charlotte, NC

Families and Community Partners are invited to participate in conversations on Wellness, Education, Policy, Housing, and more!

Registration is FREE!
Breakfast and lunch will be provided!
The first 100 registrants will receive a special gift!

Register online at:
<https://forms.gle/WNGMFrVq9zc22b08>

CHARLOTTE
WOMEN-ONLY RESOURCES
ALLIANCE
CHARLOTTE

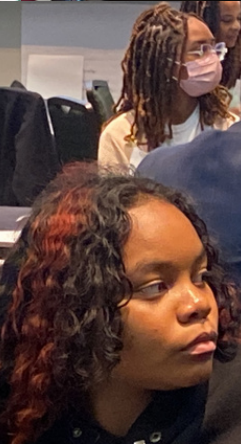
Questions? Email Dr. Kendra Jason
kjason@unc.edu

**TAKING SPACE WITHOUT APOLOGY
A WOMEN & GIRLS LEADERSHIP CAFE**
A Community Dialogue Event

Please register by October 3, 2022
<http://tinyurl.com/Leadership-Cafe>

**OCTOBER 25, 2022
9 A.M. - 1 P.M.**

**UNC CHARLOTTE
BARNHARDT STUDENT
ACTIVITY CENTER SALONS**





urbanCORE is the hub of UNC Charlotte's engaged scholarship ecosystem. (CORE is an acronym for Community-Oriented Research and Engagement.) Our unit mobilizes, assesses, and advances efforts that connect the University's interdisciplinary, urban research resources to community assets in order to "co-produce transformative solutions to societal issues and challenges."



We thank you for your continued support and are looking forward to continuing our research.

Contact

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Women + Girls Research Alliance

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