

CAMPUS RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT:

Women's Business Leadership Center



PHOTO COURTESY OF A-STATE WOMEN'S BUSINESS LEADERSHIP CENTER FACEBOOK PAGE



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WBLC members tabling in the Reng Student Union for the Cards for Caring community project. The WBLC collected and delivered 332 cards to the South Wind Heights Retirement Home.

WBLC members Feb. 16 in New York at the Fast Track to Finance Conference, hosted by the Forté Foundation.

JERRY DON BURTON

NEWS EDITOR

The Women's Business Leadership Center (WBLC) seeks to guide women toward their professional careers by providing opportunities and enriching experiences. Patricia Johnston, WBLC executive director, said the most substantial service the center provides is delivering a support system for women. "It's elevating women and girls in Arkansas and beyond," Johnston said. "Particularly in our university but also high schools and junior highs throughout the state, wherever we can help." Johnston said the WBLC helps women by forming mentor groups, creating student-led projects and

organizing outreach programs. In addition, the WBLC operates two semester-long programs, Step Up in the fall and Reach Back in the spring. About 50 students and 50 professional mentors form mentor groups for the Step Up program. In this program, small groups of students and mentors meet and discuss academics, life and career opportunities to set students up for success. For Reach Back, WBLC members create projects to support women and the campus overall. Johnston said the WBLC is working on projects to support the food bank, give flowers to women for Women's History Month, and speak at high schools. The WBLC partners with organizations both on and off campus for outreach and

networking. Partnerships include FedEx Women in Leadership, Girl Scouts of the United States of America, Women's Foundation of Arkansas, Scarlet to Black and the Forté Foundation. Kathy Loyd, WBLC founder, said she created the center following discussions after speaking at the 2016 Women's Leadership Conference. "The key component was establishing a mentor program so there would be professional women working with the students to encourage, guide and support their journey through the university as well as once they graduate," Loyd said. Loyd moved from North Carolina to help develop the WBLC and officially launched the center in 2017. Zoreonta Moore, a senior

business administration major from Charleston, Missouri, said the WBLC has taught her professionalism and how to navigate her career. Moore said she joined the WBLC because it caters to the community and the women in it. "Being part of the WBLC gives you a family away from home," Moore said. "The mentors are very professional, caring and sincere." Himani Vidhani, a graduate student from India studying applied digital technology, said she has been involved in the WBLC for almost two years. She joined the WBLC following a recommendation to join from her adviser. "(The WBLC) helps women learn how things work in the corporate world and even helps them grow in their personal

life," Vidhani said. "For me, as an international student, they have really helped me build up my confidence." Students from all majors can join the WBLC. Johnston said some students have received jobs and reported higher pay thanks to the skills they learned as members of the WBLC. "I think everybody who goes through the program can report greater confidence and that is huge," Johnston said. "I've had students who freshmen year won't even look at me and by senior year they're president of a club or speaking in public." Students interested in joining the WBLC can fill out an application on the Women's Business Leadership Center page on the A-State website. The WBLC began accepting applications in March

and will continue accepting applications through April. New hires will work as leadership interns. Men or students who want less involvement but still want to help will be hired as ambassadors. Positions in the WBLC are unpaid. Moore said she plans to give back to the WBLC after she graduates. "Once I get to where I'm headed, I plan to give back the same way that the mentors gave to me through scholarships, advice and giving the raw, uncut version of who I am and how I became who I plan to be," Moore said. The WBLC office is in Room 115 in the Neil Griffin College of Business. The organization can be contacted at wblc@astate.edu.

Meet the student mothers of Arkansas State University

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She looks like all the other students; she goes to class, grabs lunch at the Reng Student Union and studies hard for her upcoming exams. But when she gets home, she's not just a college student: she is also a mom. For students Megan Brown, Heather Scudder and Teresa Miller, this is their reality. According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, a 2018 study showed nearly 10% of undergraduate students in the United States are single mothers. "It's going to be difficult, but just remember the end goal is to better your family and their lives, but also to make yourself proud," Brown said. **Megan Brown:** Brown, a non-traditional student majoring in radiologic sciences from Brookland, decided to apply for the radiology program at A-State when she began her pregnancy. She said she knew if she wanted a great career, she would have to work hard to

get a better life for her family. "When I got pregnant, I knew I wanted to have a great career that my baby boy would one day think is cool enough that he would want to do the same," Brown said. "I don't want my baby to grow up not getting to go places or get a car when he turns 16. I want to be able to give him everything. That is why I went back to school." Brown said she feels "mom guilt" when she has to do homework or spend time away from home to attend class. "It has been difficult to get home and want to do homework or study because you don't want to miss a single moment with your baby, but you also want to succeed in school. It is definitely not easy," Brown said. **Heather Scudder:** Heather Scudder, a non-traditional student majoring in instrumental music education from Paragould, said she does not encounter any stereotypes about being a student mom. "I think it's because most people don't know I am a mom at first. I blend into the music program pretty well," Scudder said. "It's not as straight cut



PHOTO COURTESY OF MEGAN BROWN

Megan Brown with her child, whose face has been blurred for privacy.



Photo by Shelby Russom | Staff Photographer

Heather Scudder and her child.



PHOTO COURTESY OF TERESA MILLER

Teresa Miller and her child.

and dry as a lot of others." Scudder said she benefits from the Wilson Counseling Center. "They have these rooms, and I come in and cry for 30 minutes because everything's been overwhelming after you have a kid and sometimes that doesn't go away. It kind of builds on to the anxiety you're already carrying, so having somewhere I

can go and just sit in silence and breathe helps," Scudder said. "That's been helpful in kind of navigating the mom's guilt of not being there all the time anymore, but how do I also move my future forward for him?" Scudder said although it's sometimes tricky, it's worth it for other student moms to pursue a higher education.

"It's not just your future, it's also your child and your family's future," Scudder said. "Whatever your situation looks like, you will be modeling for them." **Teresa Miller:** Teresa Miller, a senior majoring in radiologic sciences from West Memphis, Arkansas, transferred to A-State from the University of Memphis after

her sudden pregnancy in 2019. Miller said the pregnancy put her in a "limbo" state and she didn't know what to do next. Miller chose A-State because it was close to her hometown, she had mutual high school friends attending and she was interested in the radiology program. Since her transfer, Miller said her most significant challenge in the first semester was feeling left out, especially since she began at A-State when her son was three months old. "I had friends that were going to parties and events and I couldn't do that," Miller said. "I wasn't able to make those kinds of connections, but since then, I feel like I had more free time and really made those college connections." Miller wants other student mothers not to feel discouraged because of the many supportive people and resources at A-State. "No matter what, no matter how hard it is, at the end of the day, you want to get the degree," Miller said. "You want to support your child because you have a little person looking up to you, and what you do matters for their future."