

Wellesley Centers for Women

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A world that is good for women is good for everyone.

THE SEARCH

The Wellesley Centers for Women (WCW), one of the largest academic women- and gender-focused research and action institutes in the United States, seeks an innovative, passionate, and strategic leader as its next Executive Director (ED). Embedded within Wellesley College, widely regarded as the world's leading women's college, WCW has a 50-year legacy of generating bold, audacious research and action programs that produce real-world impact for women and girls worldwide. Its next ED will eagerly invest in WCW's dedicated community of researchers and actively seek research opportunities with current Wellesley faculty. They will enthusiastically partner with faculty, researchers, and staff as an important member of the newly established Susan L. Wagner '82 Centers for Wellesley in the World, in service to WCW's mission to shape a better world for women across the lifespan through high-quality research, theory, and action.

Founded in 1974 as part of the broader women's movement, WCW was established on the premise that women's and girls' advancement could be accelerated by applying rigorous social scientific methods to issues of women's empowerment and gender equality. Through a lens now decidedly intersectional and attuned to ever-evolving contemporary issues, WCW conducts groundbreaking interdisciplinary studies on a broad range of social issues, including education, child care, and out-of-school time; mental health and depression prevention; youth and adolescent development and the impact of social media; gender-based violence; and economic security, the gender pay gap, and the impact of motherhood on women's advancement.

WCW's ED leads a team including an associate director, 13 research scientists and project directors, 21 research staff, and seven administrative staff, and is supported by a dedicated Council of Advisors. The Centers' FY2025 operating budget was \$6.9 million, and it benefits from an endowment of \$70.2 million. The ED will report to Wellesley College Provost Dr. Courtney Coile and will ensure that WCW's research, operations, and outreach strategies work harmoniously to sustain and amplify its impact and visibility, as well as the College's mission.

One of WCW's unifying beliefs is that research is not meant to sit on a shelf; rather, it should be shared widely to drive meaningful progress for women and girls, across the lifespan, everywhere. In keeping with this philosophy, WCW became a part of the Wagner Centers for Wellesley in the World, established by the College in 2025. WCW joined the Madeline Korbel Albright Institute and the Hillary Rodham Clinton Center for Citizenship, Leadership, and Democracy under the umbrella of the new Wagner Centers, whose objective is to elevate the College's role as a hub and catalyst for research and global solutions, especially on critical issues related to women, democracy, and gender equity.

WCW requires a creative, deft, and consultative ED who will embrace their role as an intellectual steward, uphold the highest standards of integrity, independence, and scholarly rigor, and push WCW to new heights, advancing its mission to improve the lives of women and girls. The ED will be an effective external representative, articulating and championing the practical applications and outcomes of WCW's research, expanding the Centers' resources, and enriching its scholarly community. They will be an effective leader within the College, serving as a liaison with partners across the Wagner Centers and academic departments, and working cooperatively with the Provost and President, Dr. Paula Johnson, to ensure synergy and mutual points of connection between WCW and the College. The preferred candidate will hold a PhD or other relevant terminal degree and demonstrate a significant record of scholarship and publications related to women and gender. They will also bring considerable experience as an administrator and an attentive leader of people, with a history of promoting a culture of inclusivity, respect, and collaboration.

WELLESLEY COLLEGE

Founded in 1870, [Wellesley College](https://wellesley-college.files.svdcn.com/production/strategicplan2021.pdf) is one of the most academically rigorous institutions of higher education in the United States. A Wellesley education is an experience of intellectual discovery leading to lifelong empowerment. It is also an intervention in the world—a loud statement about valuing the capacities and concerns of all students, and about the potential of women's education and leadership to unlock brighter futures for everyone. Today, Wellesley has an undergraduate enrollment of approximately 2,300 students from all over the world. To learn more about the College's current strategic plan, please visit: <https://wellesley-college.files.svdcn.com/production/strategicplan2021.pdf>.

THE WELLESLEY CENTERS FOR WOMEN

History

In 1974, Wellesley College President Dr. Barbara W. Newell founded the Wellesley Center for Research on Women in Higher Education and the Professions with seed funding from the Carnegie Corporation, the Mellon Foundation, and the Ford Foundation. The Center quickly became a home for feminist social scientists to undertake intrepid research and action programs that they could not do elsewhere. Several years later, in 1981, the Stone Center for Developmental Services and Studies was founded through a generous grant from Grace W. and Robert S. Stone. Like the Center for Research on Women, the Stone

Center was defined by leading-edge inquiry; it was first led by Dr. Jean Baker Miller, author of the pioneering book *Toward a New Psychology of Women* and originator of Relational-Cultural Theory. The Center for Research on Women and the Stone Center united in 1995 to form the Wellesley Centers for Women, which remains an incubator for innovative exploration and research.

Research

Throughout its history, WCW has produced numerous trailblazing studies and publications. These include “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” How Schools Shortchange Girls, Shifting Boundaries: Lessons on Relationships for Students in Middle School, Critical Mass on Corporate Boards: Why Three or More Women Enhance Governance, and the expansive 18-year national effort, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development.

Today, WCW investigates critical social issues that impact the lives of women, girls, families, and communities. In addition to producing excellent, high-quality research, WCW believes that its findings must be disseminated and translated in ways that make them accessible to diverse audiences, including policymakers, funders, practitioners, advocates, activists, academics, thought leaders, decision-makers, the media, and communities everywhere. To that end, WCW has hosted numerous landmark conferences both at home and internationally, in India and Cape Verde. WCW also currently has an International Scholar-in-Residence program, with two scholars focusing on women’s and girls’ education, health, and role in peacebuilding. Additionally, the Centers’ [Research & Action Report](#) offers a window into WCW’s latest activities and initiatives.

The following are WCW’s current research and action projects:

- **Family, Sexuality, and Communication** investigates who teens talk to about sex, what they are talking about, and what effect those conversations have on their decision-making.
- **Justice and Gender-Based Violence** examines the causes and consequences of gender-based violence and the social, health, and justice system responses to violent crime and victimization.
- **Mental Health** focuses on developing evidence-based programs to improve mental health in adolescents and young adults, with a particular focus on girls and women.
- **[The National Institute on Out-of-School Time \(NIOST\)](#)** supports the healthy development of children, families, and communities, and advances the out-of-school time field through research, training, and evaluation and measurement tools.
- **Women in the Workplace** focuses on the gender wage gap, the “mommy track,” family leave and minimum wage policies, and immigrant entrepreneurship.
- **Work, Families, & Children** studies child development, early childcare and education, and school readiness, with a focus on policy implications.
- **[The Youth, Media, & Wellbeing Research Lab](#)** studies critical and timely issues related to youth, the media they use, particularly digital media and social media, and how it impacts their wellbeing.

Structure

Research Scientists and Project Directors

WCW is home to a vibrant interdisciplinary community of research scientists, scholars, and project directors who hold advanced degrees across the social sciences. While, as a matter of standard practice, WCW research scholars do not have faculty status at Wellesley College, several have developed collaborative relationships with College departments and faculty, and a few take on teaching responsibilities. WCW also engages undergraduates as research assistants, administrative assistants, and interns through the Class of 1967 Internship Program and other College internship opportunities. Researchers at WCW are generally expected to support their positions and projects via external grant funding.

Research and Administrative Staff

WCW's work is made possible through a dedicated team of research associates, research assistants, and program administrators. The core team of administrative staff supporting the Centers' functions includes the Chief of Staff and Director of External Relations, the Director of Grant and Contract Services, the Operations Manager, the Writer and Media Relations Manager, the Project Archivist, the Social Media Coordinator, and the Assistant to the Executive Director.

Financial Information

WCW's research and action activities are sustained by federal, state, and local government grants; awards from private foundations; the Centers' \$70.2 million endowment (managed by Wellesley College); contracts for evaluation research projects; and generous individual donors. WCW's endowment ensures that researchers have the flexibility to explore new areas of inquiry. In FY2025, WCW's revenue was \$6.9 million, of which 55 percent was derived from external program funds, 40 percent from endowment distribution, and five percent from gifts. WCW relies on the College for infrastructure, facilities, and governance support, as well as post-award grant management assistance.

Organizational Details

WCW is supported by its [Council of Advisors](#), a non-governing advisory board currently comprising 14 dynamic professionals who represent a broad range of expertise. Members are each change agents in their own right and help WCW strengthen its influence through their diverse perspectives, networks, and experiences. The Council is led by a Chair, includes Membership and Outreach subcommittees, and meets three times per year.

Since 2001, WCW has held NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) Special Consultative Status with the United Nations' Economic and Social Council, which allows the Centers to designate official representatives to a wide range of UN meetings, including the UN's Commission on the Status of Women.

Wellesley in the World

In line with its mission to provide “an excellent liberal arts education for women who will make a difference in the world,” Wellesley College launched the [“Wellesley In The World”](#) Initiative in 2025 to highlight and amplify the impact of the College’s students, faculty, researchers, and alumnae worldwide. At the core of the Initiative is the creation of the Wagner Centers for Wellesley in the World, which unites the Albright Institute for Global Affairs, the Clinton Center for Citizenship, Leadership, and Democracy, and WCW. The new configuration will support the generation and dissemination of scholarship, foster the creation of externally facing partnerships and programming, produce innovative educational programs and research opportunities for students, and contribute to a vibrant research community on campus that spans departments and disciplines.

LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

After nearly 13 years as WCW’s Executive Director, Dr. Layli Maparyan departed the Centers in February 2025 to assume the presidency of the University of Liberia in Monrovia, Liberia. Under Dr. Maparyan’s leadership, WCW attracted new researchers and project directors, diversifying the Centers’ staff, significantly expanding its global reach and international identity, and generating \$75 million in revenue, including \$10 million in gifts and over \$45 million in grants and contracts. Throughout her time as ED, Dr. Maparyan worked assiduously to bring WCW and the College closer together, most recently by successfully shepherding WCW through a reorganization and move to the heart of the Wellesley College campus. The next Executive Director will join an institute with an excellent foundation upon which to build towards a new era of impact and influence.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In partnership with researchers, staff, advisory council members, and partners across the College, the Executive Director will:

Enhance WCW’s impact on the lives of women and girls through strategic visioning, deft implementation, and thoughtful collaboration.

The ED will steward the creation and execution of WCW’s vision and strategy, proactively setting goals and ensuring alignment with the Centers’ mission and capacities, and ensuring it remains a trailblazer in research on women and gender. The strategy will provide WCW with a roadmap while allowing it the organizational flexibility to evolve in response to external trends and pursue emerging intellectual developments, financial goals, and transformational opportunities.

The ED will further integrate the Centers into the fabric of Wellesley College, a process that has recently been aided by WCW’s relocation from its historic off-campus location to the newly refurbished Simpson Cottage on the College’s main campus. This coalesces with the recent establishment of the Wagner Centers, comprising three centers, of which WCW is the oldest and largest. WCW’s ED will partner with

their peer center directors and other College partners to crystallize a shared identity and strategy for the Wagner Centers as they mature. The ED will also strengthen ties with academic departments whose faculty have overlapping interests with WCW researchers and will ensure that the relationship between WCW and the larger College is strong and mutually beneficial.

Uphold WCW as a preeminent developer of cutting-edge research, theory, and action programs.

It is the ED's responsibility to maintain the integrity and expansiveness of WCW's research portfolio, recruit and retain an excellent, diverse group of researchers (often more challenging under a soft-money model), and work closely with researchers to explore innovative, boundary-pushing areas of inquiry. The ED is expected to bring their unique scholarly point of view to WCW while encouraging independent creative activities and entrepreneurship among investigators. Research will remain rigorous, innovative, relevant, accessible, and inclusive.

Broaden the appreciation and visibility of WCW's research and expand its impact.

The ED is WCW's primary external spokesperson, representing the institute at events, conferences, with the media, and others. The ED will communicate and disseminate what WCW is and does to key partners across various arenas and will amplify the Centers' work with decision-makers of all kinds so that they can make informed investments in the policies, programs, and practices that will lead to transformational outcomes for women, girls, and families everywhere, as well as society at large.

Ensure the health and sustainability of WCW through skilled revenue generation, effective fiscal management, and diligent operational oversight.

While individual researchers at WCW are obligated to solicit their own grant funding, it is a primary responsibility of the ED to set researchers up for success and cultivate a stable funding environment for WCW as a whole. This will be accomplished through the responsible utilization of existing resources, including the endowment and fund balance, supporting proposals and applications for foundations and government grants, and soliciting private donations when appropriate. The ED will also partner with WCW and College staff to oversee the Centers' budget, engage in financial planning and reporting, and ensure that WCW's unique identity and operational needs are appreciated. The ED will collaborate with key administrative departments in the College to facilitate the efficiency and accountability of WCW's operations, given that certain functions, such as human resources, development, and IT, are centralized.

Invest in WCW's passionate and hardworking group of researchers and staff, engage its committed council of advisors, and expand mutual understanding, belonging, and community.

The ED will work closely with researchers, providing intellectual leadership and guidance, fostering a positive and productive work environment, supervising performance, and mentoring and cultivating researchers at various career stages. The ED is also responsible for managing a dedicated community of administrative and research assistance staff, investing in their development, advancement, and well-being, and ensuring they have the necessary resources, support, and agency to flourish. The ED will

collaborate with the council of advisors, engaging them as strategic thought partners and ambassadors, and providing them with information and support. The ED will ensure that researchers, staff, and council members represent a diverse range of identities, experiences, and perspectives.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

While no individual will possess every quality, the successful candidate will bring many of the following qualifications, professional experiences, and personal attributes:

- Experience as a distinguished social scientist whose research, regardless of discipline, incorporates issues related to women, gender, and social change. A deep understanding of the history, context, and nuance of gender equality and human wellbeing, and a sense of urgency about advancing these priorities through high-quality research that can drive meaningful progress.
- Demonstrated success in an organizational leadership position, preferably in higher education or an independent research institution, that approaches the magnitude and complexity of the intellectual and administrative responsibilities of the WCW ED role.
- Experience with strategic planning and successfully orienting an organization to thrive in a continuously evolving social, economic, and policy environment. Expertise in translating a vision and strategy into a practical plan with concrete implementation methods and measures of anticipated outcomes.
- Experience operating within a soft-money-funded environment, converting creative ideas into successful projects through proposal development, and supporting the research activity of other scholars.
- Demonstrated ability to thrive in a collaborative environment with a shared sense of leadership. Excellent relationship-building skills and the capacity to lead via influence as well as direction.
- Familiarity with and commitment to recruiting, inspiring, and nurturing the development of a cohort of skilled, dedicated, and diverse researchers and staff, and success in fostering a healthy, dynamic, inclusive, welcoming, and equitable work environment.
- Evidence of building and sustaining fruitful partnerships and networks with various external constituencies.
- Experience applying for and receiving federal and private foundation funding to support research. Broad knowledge of government funding mechanisms, methods of revenue diversification, and fundraising strategies with foundations and individual donors.
- A track record of proficient financial oversight, including budgeting, planning, and reporting. Strong knowledge of grants and grant compliance.
- Exceptional communication skills, including public speaking and interpersonal skills, to persuasively convey the urgency and value of WCW's mission to various audiences. Capability to clearly communicate the results of scholarly research to both academic and non-academic audiences.

- Experience working with an advisory council/board or analogous expertise.
- A PhD or other terminal degree in an academic discipline related to WCW's key areas of work and a record of publication, including books, chapters, and/or peer-reviewed journal papers.

EMPLOYMENT DETAILS

Salary Range: \$200,000-\$230,000. Benefits information is available upon request.

Location and Commitment: The ED must reside within a daily commuting distance of WCW's offices on the Wellesley College campus in Wellesley, MA. This role requires consistent presence at the College, as well as regular travel.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Nominations, inquiries, and applications, including CVs with cover letters responding to the opportunities and challenges outlined above, should be submitted to the search team via the link below. Screening of applications will begin immediately and continue until the search process is completed. If you require reasonable accommodation to complete an application, interview, or otherwise participate in the candidate selection process, please contact Harley Bartles at hbartles@imsearch.com.

Rebecca Swartz, Tatiana Oberkoetter, and Harley Bartles
Isaacson, Miller

[Wellesley Centers for Women Executive Director Search](#)

At Wellesley, we embrace and honor difference and diversity. We believe the best ideas—the best solutions—draw on a range of voices, perspectives, and experiences. As a college, and as a community, we are dedicated to assuring that all members of the Wellesley community have an equal opportunity to flourish.

Wellesley College is an Equal Opportunity Employer and prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals in hiring and advancement based on any legally protected status. Candidates who believe they can contribute to the College community are encouraged to apply.

It is unlawful in Massachusetts to require or administer a lie detector test as a condition of employment or continued employment. An employer who violates this law shall be subject to criminal penalties and civil liability.

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