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Women Entrepreneurs at Yale (WE@Yale) Initiative Launched with Tsai Center for Innovative Thinking at Yale

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The newly formed [Women Entrepreneurs at Yale \(WE@Yale\)](#) Initiative, led by Cassandra Walker-Harvey and Jennifer McFadden, aims to unite female leaders within the Yale community around discussions of innovation within their diverse fields of work and study. The initiative — part of the [Tsai Center for Innovative Thinking at Yale](#) — is a way to formalize the collective efforts of Yale's female leaders, to engage with a broader set of stakeholders from across Yale, and to continue creating a more entrepreneurial community of women innovators at Yale.

Walker-Harvey said that when all four winners of last year's Startup Yale event were women, she realized that there was momentum to take Yale's current programs for female entrepreneurship "to the next level." Diversity is a priority for Tsai CITY, and WE@Yale's alignment with this effort enables the program to receive as much funding as it needs from the Center.

"Tsai CITY is well-funded and this is a priority, so when it comes to sponsoring events or bringing in speakers from outside Connecticut, we have been able to increase the diversity of women we can bring in," said Walker-Harvey. She added that WE@Yale's mission is integrated with that of Tsai CITY, which is to shift what entrepreneurship looks like on campus and beyond. The organization strives to help people who may not feel like a part of a startup ecosystem — particularly LGBT students, students in the arts, first generation students and low-income students — realize their potential within entrepreneurship.

As an SOM lecturer who teaches practical courses on entrepreneurship, McFadden has used her research on women in technology to help the philosophy behind WE@Yale flourish in Yale's classroom settings. She emphasized the importance of gender balance

in classes and diverse voices represented on panels, among other strategic approaches to improving issues like institutional bias. The Yale School of Management's program on entrepreneurship is a sponsor of the WE@Yale program.

Next year, the WE@Yale team looks forward to launching its own website with a directory of resources for students across Yale's campus, building an advisory board, identifying coaches and mentors from various backgrounds who can help advise students on new ventures, and connecting with other universities to share best practices. In addition, it will continue the [Yale Women Innovator discussion series](#) and bring interesting speakers to campus each week, partnering with another women's group for all of its events. Lastly, WE@Yale will focus on planning larger scale events and conferences to engage further in female entrepreneurship. "We've hired a total of four students to form a team that works on this initiative, which has enabled us to do so much more and benefit from different perspectives," said Walker-Harvey.


"We are in an incredibly privileged position and have the ability to impact the next generation of female leaders," said McFadden. She added that she would like to encourage as many women as possible to explore courses in the STEM fields and engage in the entrepreneurial process, and said that graduating a set of women with technical skills from Yale has a systemic effect in the workplace.

"Things are moving slower than we hoped, but this has been more of an organizing semester, especially with Tsai CITY getting off the ground," said Walker-Harvey. "I'm excited for next semester, when we'll be able to take things up a level."

To keep abreast of WE@Yale and Tsai CITY news, sign up for their newsletter [here](#).

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