

Columbia deeply values its vibrant student community, the building of which begins at orientation when admitted students are assigned to [clusters of 65 to 70 fellow students](#) who take most of the first-year core classes together. During the first weeks of school, each cluster selects a cluster chair. Further strengthening the student community are the [more than 100 active student organizations](#) at Columbia Business School, ranging from cultural to professional to community service-oriented. Leadership positions within clusters and clubs offer hands-on management and networking opportunities for students as they interact with fellow students, administrators, faculty members, alumni, and practitioners.

You are running for either cluster chair or a club leadership position of your choosing. Compose your campaign speech.

I am very honored and excited to run for President at the Columbia Women in Business Club. I think it is amazing that women at Columbia have a supportive community to share experiences, develop strong connections with one another, with Columbia alumni, and with the business community at large. This practice is unprecedented in my country where some people still think that a "woman's hair is long and mind is short".

When I was at high school my dream was to work for government, but a male admissions advisor at the University that most Russian politicians had graduated from told my mother that I was not that college material and should continue my professional tennis career. However, I did enter that program and graduated with honors. I was so excited to have an opportunity to become a member of the Russian governmental service, that I spent my entire summer holidays working as an intern in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Unfortunately, I quickly came to the harsh realization that working for the government in the post-Soviet period did not meet many of my personal moral standards, and I was further disheartened by the misogynistic way in which women were treated. With my political aspirations completely deflated I realized a career in commerce would better suit me. While working in the financial services industry in Moscow, I became more and more aware of my inability as a woman to truly break through the glass ceiling. It simply was not a true meritocracy.

Nowadays organizations ranging from the United Nations to the OECD and the World Bank are paying more attention to women. Some European countries have already introduced quotas to get more of them on company boards and others my follow. However, in many emerging markets women remain second-class citizens, suffering many kinds of disadvantage. Over the last 40 years the proportion of women of working age who have paid jobs across the rich world has risen from 48% to 64% and the broad trend in most countries is upwards.

McKinsey recon that America's GDP is now about 25% higher than it would have been without women. A number of studies have shown that the presence of a critical mass of women in senior jobs is positively correlated with higher profits. McKinzey in 2007 studies over 230 public and private companies and found that those with significant

number of women in senior management did better on a range of criteria, including leadership, accountability and innovation, that were strongly associated with higher operating margins and market capitalization.

In parliaments across the world women on average hold just 20% of the seats, but the most egregious gap is still in the world of work. Women have made great strides in all kinds of careers, but still find it much harder than men to bag the most senior jobs. The most senior jobs remain exclusively male. Women make up just 3% of Fortune 500 CEOs. Across Europe the proportion of women on company boards averages around 10%. In America last year women made up less than 18% of senior managers and not even 8% of the highest earners. Among the Fortune 500 companies only about 15% of the most of senior managers and only 3% CEOs were women. Generally in American workforce, the higher the level, the fewer women are on it. And despite sheaves of equal pay legislation, women get paid less than men for comparable work. Across the OECD wage gap now reaches 18%.

Underusing women across spectrum of human activity is obviously wasteful. Their cognitive endowment is the same as men's, but because they have different interests and styles, they make for more diverse and more innovative workplaces. And since most countries' working populations are aging, women's talents will be needed even more in the future.

Of course the glass ceiling still exists, it is difficult, but not impossible to break through. To do so, all we need is determination, persistence and a winning strategy.

As president of the Columbia Women in Business Club I will primarily focus on mentorship and networking.

One of the most important reasons why men tend to rise higher than women is that most men have mentors and most women do not. Women have few female role models to look up to, so it takes a leap of imagination to picture themselves in charge. Promising young men are often guided by older colleagues, but there are few senior women who can do the same for younger female colleagues. I suggest expanding the mentoring networking base into more diverse industries dominated by female professionals and to include more women entrepreneurs. Generally, women are less willing to take risks to put their ideas out there and have them shot down. That's why learning from successful women entrepreneurs is so important.

Men also benefit from informal networks that often involve socializing after work and talking about sport. Women may not join these or find themselves excluded. Exclusion from informal networks stands as one of the top barriers to success for women at or near the top. Even women who conscientiously set out to build their network at work may face a real problem doing so since it is hard to build a network with just a few women at senior positions.

I think it is essential to create a strong network with other women's clubs in New York and develop a greater women's community. Men are naturally good at networking. Soccer and Basketball games bring together men from different backgrounds and clubs. Of course, we could learn how to play and may be even enjoy golf, but I think that expanding our community and reaching out to other women in business organizations in NY and surrounding areas would create an immense synergy effect.