

THE TOOL KIT

Starting A Male Ally Group



You may have heard about a growing movement on business school campuses in which men are working in partnership with their female peers to support gender equity.

You might be curious to know more and have questions like:

- **Why** do women business school students - who are bright and successful - need male allies anyway?, or
- **What** does gender equity have to do with business?, or
- **How** does gender equity benefit men?

You might wonder how does a man who supports gender equity – aka a male ally – behave and what does this look like in the business world? You may have read articles about gender challenges but find it hard to distinguish the media hype from the real issues. You may be certain you want to start a male ally group on your campus but you don't know where to begin.

In all these cases, you've come to the right place. We've developed a wealth of information to answer your questions, pique your interest, inspire your involvement, and guide your decision making. We've distilled this information into a toolkit that will be a key resource for understanding gender equality and how to make it more of a reality in your organization and in your life. You might be asking, "Who is this toolkit for?" The answer is there are many audiences.

THIS TOOLKIT IS

- **FOR MEN** who are considering starting a male ally group on campus and are interested in learning more about them.
- **FOR WOMEN** involved with women's leadership groups on campus who may be contemplating allowing men to become members or how to get men more involved in their work.
- **FOR ADMINISTRATORS AND FACULTY** who sponsor, support, and work with student groups including women in business and male allies.
- **FOR MEN IN ANY ROLE** – students, faculty, administrators – who want to understand what a male ally is and how he behaves.
- **A RESOURCE FOR MEN AND WOMEN** who want to learn about gender equality: why it's beneficial for organizations, men, women, and children, how gender norms are evolving, and how you can be part of this dynamic conversation.

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Get Equipped:

STARTING A MALE ALLY GROUP

You are interested in starting a male ally group on campus but you realize you need more information before moving forward. You want to better understand issues to consider such as how to actively engage men, what type of activities are successful, and how to effectively work with the Women in Business (WIB) club on your campus. You are curious about the experience of your business school peers at other universities who have walked this road. You want to learn about best practices, and as importantly, stumbling blocks.

We've spoken with leaders of the pioneering business school male ally groups across the country as well as their Women in Business (WIB) leadership peers. We've distilled their wisdom to create a rich source of information and guidance to support you on your journey. This Get Equipped section of the toolkit is organized into the following topics.

1 Why start a male ally group?

2 Laying the framework: important decisions to consider

- Identifying and structuring a leadership team
 - Creating a mission statement
 - Defining members
 - Collaborating with others
 - Getting men involved
 - Launch and outreach
 - Activities planning
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3 Roadmap for getting started

4 Advice from business school peers

5 Frequently asked questions

We congratulate you on joining a growing group of men who are changing the world by actively supporting gender equity on campus, in the workplace, and at home. That's what being a male ally is all about.

SCHOOLS SHARING INSIGHTS

- Columbia Business School, Manbassadors
- Duke (Fuqua), Male Ambassador Program
- Harvard Business School, Manbassadors
- Northwestern (Kellogg), Male Liaisons
- NYU (Stern)
- UCLA (Anderson), Manbassador Initiative
- University of Chicago (Booth)
- University of Michigan (Ross), MBW Allies
- University of Pennsylvania (Wharton), 22's
- Stanford Business School, WIMen



Male Members of Women in Business (WIB) Groups: One Avenue for Creating a Male Ally Chapter

One way in which women's leadership groups on campus seek to involve men is by welcoming them to become members. Male members can provide input and feedback, entice other men to attend programs and get involved, and help strengthen the impact of the group. But typically the men represent a small segment of the overall membership and the vast majority of the group's programming tends to be focused on its female members. Men becoming members is often an initial step on the road toward launching an independent group for men to support gender equality.

The benefit of a separate male ally group is in creating a far greater sense of ownership for the men involved. They are able to approach gender

equality from their uniquely male perspective. As an independent group, the male ally leaders determine the vision for their work including what and how they seek to drive change. They determine who best to sit on their leadership team and what type of programming would be most compelling as well as how best to get their male peers involved.

There is nothing wrong with engaging men as members of a women in business group and it is not unusual for business schools to do just that. But based on our research, we believe an independent male ally group, working in close partnership with their WIB peers, is a more effective model for engaging men and driving change with regard to **gender equality**.

Why Start A Male Ally Group?

Male ally leaders interviewed for this toolkit identified several compelling reasons why male ally groups should become a mainstay on business school campuses.

CREATING BETTER LEADERS

Business schools strive to prepare men and women to be future leaders. Students know that among the most central responsibilities of a leader is managing and motivating people. In a business environment with a dramatically changing workforce, understanding gender has become fundamental. Whether helping to better manage diverse teams, locating specialized skill sets, or identifying future leaders, leaders with competency in managing gender issues will have the advantage.

INVITING MEN TO PAY ATTENTION

Male ally groups help to draw men in and get them involved. A men's ally group sends a signal to male business school students that this group is something for you. The goal is to help men feel comfortable. You want to normalize the experience of being a male ally and of talking about gender, rather than it feeling strange. In the words of one male leader, you want men to simply think, "It's a guy thing." Male ally leaders imagined the opportunity to substantially change the gender dialogue if male ally chapters became commonplace on business school campuses.

ENABLING GREAT IMPACT BY JOINING WITH WOMEN LEADERS

Male ally groups enable women to partner with their male colleagues to have far greater impact. Working in conjunction with Women in Business (WIB) peers, male allies help to fill in the missing half of the gender equation. WIB groups on campus are strengthened by the existence of male ally groups. Without men's involvement, women face ALL the pressure to support gender equality efforts and men lack a voice in the gender conversation. Men giving voice to gender inequality provides power and credibility to their WIB peers and to all women on campus.

HIGHLIGHTING AND FRAMING GENDER ISSUES

Male allies play an important role in messaging. They help to illuminate gender issues for those who wonder if there are any. They provide the broader context so that men don't see gender equality as a zero sum game that disadvantages them. Male allies help to frame gender issues and provide background so men understand how gender equality benefits them directly, including things like better health and higher marital satisfaction based on **research**. That's certainly good for men to know.

SUPPORTING BETTER DECISION MAKING

Business schools are uniquely suited for the creation of male ally groups and a focus on gender. Based on input from male allies and women leaders on campus, business school is a place where students see themselves as equal. They believe this sense of equality will weaken as they return to the workforce and the gendered norms that continue to define many organizations. Students perceive business school as providing a safe space for challenging and candid conversations around gender, bias and privilege. Typically business school students are at the age where career and family decisions are on the horizon, if not already present. Business school provides an exploratory space for students to contemplate and learn from the complexities of gender so they are better equipped to make decisions – about career and family - in the future. And to more effectively manage the work-life issues that arise for their future employees.

Laying the Framework: Important Decisions to Consider

Identifying and Structuring a Leadership Team

There are several elements to consider in establishing a leadership team for your male ally group. Read on to learn how to set the group up for success.

THE WOMEN IN BUSINESS (WIB) PARTNERSHIP

The close relationship between male ally groups and their Women in Business (WIB) peers on campus is foundational to the **leadership structure**. The male ally groups function as an initiative, a committee, or a partner organization to WIB clubs and typically work very closely with them. The usual process requires submission of a proposal to student government which enables the male ally group to be structurally linked to WIB. In addition to thought leadership, the great majority of WIB groups provide funding for their male ally partners which they raise through sponsorships from major employers. In our research, a far less common funding model is through club dues and student fees allocated to the male ally group.

Inviting the senior leaders of the male ally group to sit on the WIB's executive team is a best practice. This model helps to ensure extensive communication and deep understanding of the priorities and activities of the partner group. In addition, male ally groups benefit from identifying a staff or faculty sponsor who can act as a sounding board, create a link to the university and importantly oversee leadership transitions between classes.



It is a best practice to include members of the male ally leadership on the WIB board.

IDENTIFYING LEADERS

A school-wide email is a good place to start communicating that you are seeking nominations for the leadership team of a male ally group. Men may self-nominate, but it's often necessary to reach out proactively to widen the pool. A clever technique is having women nominate male classmates they deem to be strong candidates. The men are subsequently notified they've been identified by a female classmate to consider this leadership role. It's true, flattery is a

powerful thing and this approach is highly effective. It helps to ensure quality of the nominees and encourages buy-in from men, whether or not they end up as a leader of the group. While the clear exception in our research, women may also be the co-leader of a male ally group in partnership with a male peer on campus. Another place to look for nominees are leadership groups on campus such as students working with first years to support them through the transition to business school.

Typically nominees complete a short application which includes demographic information, interest in gender issues, a future vision for the group and availability. In some cases, a brief interview follows. Armed with a slate of candidates, the existing leaders of the male ally group – or other decision makers during the first year of operation - choose the leadership team.

Note: In the first year, WIB leaders may take a less formal approach, forgo a nomination process, and reach out to a small group of men directly to form the inaugural leadership team.

Succession planning is a critical consideration for male ally groups – and all student groups - given the constant turnover of leaders due to the two-year business school cycle. Male ally leaders are always looking to identify new leaders from the first year class so they can mentor them for the longest window possible before the first years assume primary leadership, usually early in second semester of their first year. The early weeks of school, when first year students are evaluating their interests and commitments, is a prime time for male ally leaders to reach out. Having an ongoing pipeline of new male allies from each business school class is vital for the longevity of the group.

CHARACTERISTICS OF LEADERS

Having the right leaders at the helm is an important success factor for a male ally group. He should be someone who cares about gender issues, is open-minded, and is involved for the "right reasons" such as wanting to support gender equality, rather than wanting to hang out with smart, pretty women (although that is a side benefit). One male ally leader summed up the important characteristics as commitment, passion, and vision.

It is a best practice to seek men who are well regarded broadly by the business school community for the key leadership role(s) of the male ally group.



Strong candidates are well regarded and seen as a leader by their classmates. An important criteria is that the person has bandwidth in their schedule. Given the complexity and sensitivity of gender issues, identifying leaders who are highly regarded on campus really matters, especially in the first year of launching the group.

As the leadership team grows, it is powerful to consider the diversity of the group. Is the leadership team well represented geographically, by industry, by race/ ethnicity, and by sexual orientation? This diversity invites male students to feel this group is about me too, whether I'm an athlete, or gay, or from a country outside the U.S., or want to work in non-profit after business school. The goal is for the leadership team to represent and be a touch point for many different subgroups within the business school community.

STRUCTURE OF THE TEAM

Structurally there are many ways to effectively design the leadership team rather than one best way. But below are two structural issues to consider as you construct your leadership team.

The power of co-chairs

Utilizing a co-chair model for the most senior leaders of the male ally group is a best practice. The leaders, who go by a variety of names - vice presidents, directors, and chief of staffs to name a few - are able to support and back up one another while juggling many commitments. In mentoring first year students, the leaders are able to provide two different styles and approaches to the job.



It is a best practice to have co-chairs (rather than a single chair) for the leadership of the male ally group.

A male ally in every section (or cohort)

It is optimal to have representation of the male ally leadership team in every section, or as many as possible. The section representatives provide visibility, help with outreach, and act as an ongoing reminder of the ally group. Some business schools have moved away from requiring a male ally leader in every section, focusing instead on identifying the strongest leadership team overall. But the hope remains that the leaders will span as many sections as possible, if not all.

Creating a Mission Statement

Developing a mission statement is an important foundation building step. Without one, the group can lack clarity of purpose and it is easy for the male ally leaders to feel unanchored. The process of creating a mission

statement requires the leaders to articulate the big-picture purpose of their group. The mission functions as an umbrella under which activity planning and execution fall. It enables the specific goals and events to change from year to year while retaining a long-term compass. Perhaps most importantly, a mission statement helps ally leaders to focus among so many possibilities. For external audiences, a mission statement provides clarification about who the group is and what it hopes to accomplish.

EXAMPLES OF MISSION STATEMENTS

- To actively engage male students and partners at the business school in a productive, ongoing conversation about gender issues.
- To involve male students in the Women in Business (WIB) leadership group.

- We aim to develop male allies to the female members of the business school community by creating events centered around gender issues, and by supporting initiatives of the Women in Business (WIB) leadership group.
- We aim to raise awareness about the implicit challenges that women face in business, both at business school and in the professional world, enabling responsiveness and attentiveness to those challenges.
- We aim to consistently assess and improve the gender dynamics – socially, academically and professionally – at the business school, through data based research.

- To decrease gender disparities and change thought processes that lead to them by encouraging awareness, dialogue, and action on the part of men within the business school community.

- Educate the men at the business school on gender issues in the workplace
- Engage male allies in action-oriented conversations pertaining to gender issues
- Empower all business school students to champion gender equity in their post-MBA careers

Defining Members

A key decision for any male ally group is what qualifies someone as a member. In addition to defining qualifications for membership, group leaders need to clarify the process for becoming a member. There are several models to consider. All of them assume the existence of a highly engaged core group of men who play a leadership role. Some male ally groups evolve from one membership structure to another through time, typically as a means to expand their reach.

In the first scenario, a core leadership team of typically 10 to 25 men, which directs and implements the activities of the group, comprises the full membership. The objective of this model is for ALL male allies to be highly engaged and deeply involved.

In the second scenario, a core leadership team is complemented by a larger group of men who must sign a pledge, in order to become members, that outlines their commitment to the ideals of the group. The objective of this model is to enable a broader group of men to get involved while requiring some level of commitment through the pledge.

In the third scenario, the core leadership group is complemented by a far larger group of men who simply sign up on line to become a member. The objective of this model is to encourage the highest level of participation possible by limiting barriers to entry and by allowing each man to define for himself what it means to be a male ally.

As you would expect, the percentage of men engaged in male ally groups varies greatly depending on the membership model in place. In situations where a small number of men are highly involved in directing and executing the activities of the group, approximately 5% of men identify as male allies. Conversely, when being a member requires signing up, and may or may not translate into active involvement, the percent of male allies increases substantially to 35% or 40%. Male ally groups will sometimes operate under the first model with a close knit group of male leaders launching and running the group in the first years and subsequently expanding to encompass a much broader group of members through time.

We've heard arguments for quality over quantity with the goal of deeply invested male allies as visible change agents. Some male ally groups believe they can have the greatest impact by best serving the most highly engaged men regarding gender equality. Conversely, we've heard arguments for a broad reach whereby men regularly walking around campus with their male advocate t-shirts provide a constant reminder of the importance of gender equality. The right answer for your school may change through time and depends on what you are trying to accomplish.

Collaborating with Others

Male ally groups can leverage their impact by collaborating with others at business school, and beyond.

WOMEN IN BUSINESS

The close partnership with the Women in Business (WIB) group on campus is essential. In addition to providing funding, their WIB peers act as thought partners supplying a female perspective. Men and women working closely together to support gender equality provides experiential learning on how gender issues manifest, and how to address them. All benefit.



It is a best practice for the male ally leadership to work in close partnership with the WIB leaders.

FACULTY

Connections with faculty on campus typically come about when male ally leaders reach out, often to professors whose field of expertise has a natural link to gender issues. Male allies seek to identify faculty members who believe in what the group is doing and are passionate about the issues. Professors sit on panels, vet ideas, facilitate discussions, suggest speakers, and seek input on course curriculum. Faculty function as a resource and can be an important source of support for male ally groups. In most cases these relationships develop informally.

ADMINISTRATION

While some male ally groups have formal relationships with school administration, others seek out sponsors or champions more informally. Whether formal or informal, administrative support often plays a key role in helping male ally groups with myriad needs such as problem solving around identifying speakers, making connections across the university and managing facilities' requests. Many business school deans see male ally groups as highly innovative and are strong advocates, getting directly involved in events and activities. One interviewee described the administrative support at his university as, "They want to see us succeed." Members of the administration from functions such as student life or admissions, tend to be prime candidates for working closely with male ally group on campus.

OTHER CLUBS

Co-sponsoring activities with other clubs on campus enable male ally groups to extend their reach and to involve men who might not know about, or naturally participate in, their events. For example, working with:

- the finance club on campus to



It is a best practice for male ally groups to collaborate with other students groups on campus in hosting events and activities.

- discuss gender issues in venture capital or
- the international club to discuss dual-career approaches in different parts of the world or
- the negotiations club to explore the effect of gender on negotiation styles or
- the business of sports club to look at the current state, opportunities and challenges for women.

Co-sponsorship is a means to bridge the interests of multiple groups for the benefit of all involved.

Developing a community of male allies across business school campuses is at a very early stage but a likely trend for the future. Many men in ally groups perceive themselves as part of a larger global movement focused on eliminating gender norms and biases that artificially constrain women, and men.

Getting Men Involved

One of the biggest challenges in accelerating progress on gender equity is getting men actively involved in the gender conversation. Male allies strive to make being part of the group a desirable experience: an honor, informative, fun, and cool. Male ally groups use a variety of strategies to welcome men and make them feel like they belong.

They host events where everyone is asked to bring a male friend. They co-sponsor events with other clubs on campus as a means to increase their visibility and expand their reach. The leaders of male ally groups reach out to people in their networks to invite them to give a male ally event a try. Men are sometimes allowed to introduce the ally group and to sign up new members in select classes. In all their efforts, the overarching goal of male ally leaders is to make the group feel both relatable and accessible to the men on campus.

WHY MEN GET INVOLVED

In thinking about how to get men involved, it's helpful to understand what motivates the men who are already involved as male ally leaders. This is what we heard.

Impact on women in their lives

Men hear from important women in their lives - their wives or girlfriends, their friends, even their mothers - about the unique barriers women face in the workplace. Seeing how these inequities affect important people men care about motivates them to want to get involved.

Talented female managers and leaders

Men have experienced strong women managers and leaders in their careers before business school. They speak passionately with descriptions such as "the best leader ever" and "my favorite manager of all time" in describing women who have made a difference in their professional lives. They want to ensure that needless obstacles don't hold women back who are - or could be - talented future managers and leaders.

Observation of inequities

When men directly observe in their workplaces the unique professional challenges that women face, this knowledge drives them to want to engage. Men may notice these problematic norms at an employer where there's a clear disconnect between progressive messaging and actual behavior or in a new employer whose work culture pales in comparison to the former employer that prioritized gender diversity. Men may observe these challenges as managers themselves when they see the differing experiences of their male and female subordinates. Men working globally in countries where women have fewer freedoms see the clear privileges of being male.

Competency of modern leadership

Business schools emphasize the importance of developing a global consciousness to operate effectively as a business leader today. Similarly, men define gender awareness and competence as a core element of being a 21st century leader. Male allies seek to have the understanding and skills to successfully manage women and to be successfully managed by women. Given the important role women play in the workforce currently - and likely to a greater extent in the future - the drive to possess gender intelligence is a motivator for men to engage.

Ideas for newsletters/ emails to subscribe to:

- Forte Foundation *SmartBrief* (monthly)
- *Glass Hammer Smart Women in Numbers* (weekly newsletter)
- MARC
- Representation Project (weekly emails)
- *McKinsey Quarterly* (lot of focus on human capital issues)
- Kennedy School Women and Public Policy Program (WAPPP)
- Good Men Project (weekly updates)

Impact on them as a man

Men support gender equity because they perceive it as directly connected to decisions and potential choices in their lives. Male allies no longer see work-life choices as a women's issue but rather as a family issue. They wonder:

- What kinds of professional tradeoffs will I need to make?
- What kind of father can I be vis a vis my career?
- What kind of professional options will be open to me?
- Can I and my partner create the life we envision?
- How can I best support my wife's or partner's career aspirations?

A strong motivator for men to engage is the concern that their daughters' aspirations will be constrained by gender inequities.

Drive for social justice

Male allies indicate that utilizing the full talent of women is not just the smart thing to do from a business perspective but also the right thing to do from a justice perspective. They characterize inequalities in the workplace as a human rights issue. From this frame, men feel moved to make a difference by supporting gender equity in business, and in the world.

Below is a list of terrific resources to help strengthen your gender intelligence. Most provide weekly updates with key news and information. You can easily sign up on-line.

- Forte Foundation *SmartBrief* (monthly)
- MARC-to-Go weekly (Catalyst)
- McKinsey Quarterly (McKinsey)
- The Broadsheet Daily (Fortune)
- The Good Men Project *Friends and Fans* email (weekly)
- The Glass Hammer weekly newsletter
- The Representation Project *Weekly Action*

Launch and Outreach

Male ally groups start in one of two ways. Men voice their desire to be part of the gender conversation and reach out to the Women in Business (WIB) group on campus. Alternatively, the WIB group determines engaging men is a strategic priority and they reach out to their male peers. The combination of receptivity and a desire to get involved is what fuels the launch of a male ally group.

LAUNCHING A MALE ALLY GROUP

A first step in creating a male ally group is giving it a name. The words used – ally, liaison, advocate,

ambassador – denote a sense of partnership with women. Some groups take the creativity a step further and use the name as a message such as the 22's highlighting the gender wage gap. The goal is a name that will resonate on your campus.

Hosting an exploratory event with men and women in attendance is an effective way for a WIB group to share initial ideas on launching a male ally group and to seek input. Armed with information – and in partnership with male ally leaders, you can shape the initial messaging and formally announce the group. Follow the announcement with a launch event where members of the business school community can get information and find out more about the group. Male ally groups utilize a range of marketing materials to build their brands. T-shirts have proven a powerful way for men to share the gender equality message, evoke conversation, and provide a visible symbol of being an ally.

STAYING IN TOUCH

The primary tool for staying in touch with the male ally community is an email newsletter. The frequency varies but the weekly format has been found to be highly effective. The newsletter provides a forum to announce upcoming events for the ally group as well as select WIB events. Provocative news articles on gender-related topics and articles written by male allies and their WIB counterparts are typical newsletter sections.

A terrific marketing avenue is connecting the male ally group to a case or class discussion that addresses gender issues. One group, at the conclusion of a case study discussion involving gender, was allowed to introduce their male ally group and sign up new members on the spot during class.



It is a best practice in laying the groundwork for a male ally group to host an event for women and men so as to seek input and vet initial ideas.

Event Planning

Participation in events provides a platform for dialogue and learning about gender, both primary goals of male ally groups. With regard to event planning, these groups fall along a continuum ranging from a small number of signature events across the school year to a steady stream of activities every few weeks. Fewer primary events argues for quality over quantity given the time constraints of male ally leaders and business school students, while a consistent stream argues for the power of momentum. Both approaches have met with success.

THE WOMEN IN BUSINESS (WIB) PARTNERSHIP

The partnership with the WIB group is apparent in event planning. While male ally groups plan a portfolio of events that fall exclusively under their umbrella, they strategically host events during key dates on the WIB calendar such as the annual week-long women's leadership conference. WIB leaders host many events targeted at women but they also seek input from their male ally partners to design events that would appeal to men.

Events run the gamut from formal dinners to happy hours to professional panels. Below are highlights of the types of events sponsored by male ally groups.

Small group dinners

Small group dinners provide a platform for the type of frank conversations about gender that male ally groups seek to engender. Groups of six to twelve provide ample opportunity for all participants to talk while simultaneously supporting a diversity of perspectives. With background reading and/or a discussion prompt to get things started, the dinners allow men – and women – to ask the questions they might not want to raise in other settings or to share a provocative point of view. All should assume positive intent and see the dinner as a chance to share, listen and learn.



It is a best practice to employ small group co-ed dinners as a venue for supporting authentic and provocative conversations on gender equality.

Surveys

Surveys of students on campus that explore attitudes and experiences about gender can provide a jumping off point for learning and discussion. The survey results could be highlighted in an article for a campus publication or be the springboard for a discussion on gender that involves other business school stakeholders such as the faculty and admissions.

Informal pub nights

Easy to plan and all about conversation, pub nights have much to recommend them as a male ally event. Men are invited to wear their t-shirts and to bring another man – or men – to join the conversation.

Panels

Panel discussions are an excellent format for highlighting work-life choices and tradeoffs. Students are interested in exploring different models for managing the work-life juggle and they value hearing from both members of the couples. Work-life panels appeal to the many students contemplating how they will blend career and family in the future. They are also informative for the future leaders who will manage the work-life issues of their employees.

Collaboration events

Collaborating with other clubs can be a means to broaden the audience and can come in many forms. Male ally leaders collaborated in the design of a conference session, focused on actively engaging men in the workplace, for the WIB annual conference. A male ally group might partner with an international club on campus to explore gender issues globally or with a sports club to discuss how title IX improved gender equality by encouraging women's sports participation. An event jointly hosted by the finance club and the male ally group provides an opportunity to highlight the high rates of return enjoyed by women investors.

Collection

Male ally groups can support gender equality through activities such as collecting information that highlights women's strength and contribution. For example, male students could share how former women managers and colleagues influenced their thinking or how their mothers – or other important women in their lives – have shaped who they have become. Alternatively, a male ally group might reach out to male alumnae of the school to collect stories regarding the role of men as caretakers in children's lives. Through time, these vignettes provide a repository that spotlights changing norms.

Skill Building

In addition to providing education about gender issues and opportunities to engage in meaningful dialogue, male ally activities can enable men and women to practice new skills that they are learning. Using role plays to act out typical scenarios such as a man hearing his colleague comment, "She only got the promotion because she's a woman." provides an opportunity to practice different ways to respond. Skill building takes the learning a step further and gets men and women actively involved.

Curriculum design

A valuable role that male ally groups might play is providing input on curriculum design, using a gender equality lens, but at present this remains the exception. Typically gender related issues are addressed as a singular topic in a class, or series of classes, yet male allies see opportunities for learning by reflecting on how gender is relevant even when not the focus on the class. For instance, a leadership course in which small teams simulate running a company, and must within each team nominate the CEO, results in clearly gendered patterns emerge year after year. It argues for the importance of a gender lens in fully reaping the learnings of this class.

Inclusive leadership describes a style of leadership that recognizes the importance of diversity. Inclusive leadership courses help students understand the relevance of gender and equip them with the skills and knowledge to more effectively lead. [Click here for the syllabus of an inclusive leadership course.](#)

Roadmap to Build Foundation and Launch Male Ally Group

1 ASSESS THE INTEREST LEVEL IN STARTING A MALE ALLY GROUP

- Have men on campus been asking how to get involved with the Women in Business (WIB) group? Been feeling left out of gender discussions?
- Are the Women in Business (WIB) leaders wanting to find a way to partner with men on campus? To bring men into discussions about gender?
- **Plan an event** to seek input from men and women

2 SUBMIT THE NECESSARY PAPERWORK TO STUDENT GOVERNMENT TO FORMALIZE THE MALE ALLY GROUP

- This administrative step enables the creation of the group.

3 IDENTIFY MEN TO ACT AS INAUGURAL LEADERS FOR THE MALE ALLY GROUP

- Think of men who are well regarded on campus and care about gender issues. Get input from other women in your network.
- Identifying strong male leaders to help launch the male ally group is an important decision and step in the process.

4 REACH OUT TO SELECT FACULTY MEMBERS TO INTRODUCE THE CONCEPT AND GET THEIR FEEDBACK

- Who teaches a course or does research that is naturally connected to the topic (i.e. leadership, organizational behavior, gender and organizations)?
- Who teaches a course or does research more tangentially related but whose research might relate to gender equality issues (e.g. behavioral economics, change management, innovation)?
- What professors would make good thought partners for the male ally group?

5 REACH OUT TO THE ADMINISTRATION TO SHARE YOUR IDEAS AND GET THEIR INPUT

- Meet with the Dean to gauge her or his level of interest and support.
- Think about who in administration could be a resource and liaison for the group. Some natural candidates might be career placement, student services or admissions.

6 DECIDE ON A NAME FOR THE GROUP

- Do you want the name to be catchy, descriptive, short, an acronym?
- Some existing groups include Male Advocates, Male Liaisons, and Male Ambassadors.

7 DEVELOP A MISSION STATEMENT

- What is the overall purpose of the group?
- What impact are you hoping to have?
- What change are you trying to catalyze?

8 DETERMINE WHAT IT MEANS TO BECOME A MEMBER

- Are there requirements to become a member such as signing a pledge?
- What is the process for becoming a member?
- Is there any way that members are recognized such as through a button or t-shirt?

9 PLAN A LAUNCH EVENT TO INTRODUCE THE MALE ALLY GROUP TO THE CAMPUS

- What would be inviting, fun, stimulate curiosity?
- Invite women and men.
- Have a way for men who are interested to become members.
- Plan for any marketing materials you want available.

Advice for Starting and Managing a Male Ally Group

Based on what went well - and what did not - male ally veterans and their female peers shared advice for business schools considering launching a male ally group.

MEN MUST DRIVE THE FORMATION OF THE GROUP

Men must be deeply involved from the beginning stage of launching a male ally group. While the group will work in close partnership with their WIB peers, it's imperative that men are creating and managing the group. Because men's ally groups are closely aligned with their WIB partners, having men be visibly in charge helps to reinforce their autonomy.

BE THOUGHTFUL IN CHOOSING LEADERS

The leaders of male ally groups play many important roles: as the visible faces of the group, as representatives of gender equality, as partners to WIB peers, as liaisons to the business school, as campus leaders. Given the complexity and at times controversial nature of gender, identifying well-regarded, credible, genuinely supportive leaders is important. Especially in the beginning when the group is just launching, you want to be conscious and careful to whom you entrust this leadership role.

DEVELOP A MISSION STATEMENT FROM THE OUTSET

You should craft a mission statement as a foundational step in developing a male ally group, even before it is formally launched. We recommend developing the mission statement in conjunction with the Women in Business (WIB) leaders. The mission statement clarifies the purpose of the group and provides a compass for the male ally leadership team as well as for external audiences. It is a touchstone that helps the leaders align the many decisions they will make with the larger purpose of the group. Below is an example of the mission statement for a male ally group. You can find other examples in the section **Creating a Mission Statement**.

To decrease gender disparities and change thought processes that lead to them by encouraging awareness, dialogue, and action on the part of men within the

business school community.

BE VISIBLE EARLY AND OFTEN

The greatest challenge of male ally groups, and likely any club on campus, is to capture people's attention amidst so many competing interests. Think of it as a battle for mindshare. As a newly forming male ally group, you want to be visible early and often. In the first few months, most 1st year students are sorting out what interests them and where they want to spend their time and energy outside of academics. This is a critical window to focus on outreach. Treat the club fair in the beginning of the year as a key opportunity to introduce the male ally group.

THINK ABOUT TIMING AND PLAN AHEAD

Given that key members of the leadership team will turn over every year, you need to be proactive and plan backwards from when you want things to happen. It is important to get 1st year men involved as potential leaders during the first semester so they can start learning the ropes. The emerging leaders usually take the reins early in the second semester of their 1st year. Planning during the spring semester or over the summer is critical so the group can hit the ground running early in the fall.

DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS WITH FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATION

Creating linkages to the administration at the business school helps to anchor the male ally group and support continuity through ongoing changes in leadership. Often connections with the administration happen informally through time but proactively developing those relationships, from the outset, helps the male ally groups to be most effective. Reaching out to business school faculty provides another connection that can support the mission and activities of the group. Developing these relationships also positions the male ally leaders as potential advisors and resources regarding diversity and gender issues for the school community.

In the words of one male ally leader, "A best practice should be to include faculty and administration in the discussion early. We found the relationships we developed have been very helpful."



It is a best practice to engage in the process of developing a mission statement to clarify thinking on the purpose and focus of the male ally group.



It is a best practice to proactively build relationships with both the faculty and administration and to engage them in support of the male ally group.

MESSAGING IS IMPORTANT

Male ally groups seek to engender discussion about gender issues and to be part of the solution in addressing gender inequities. Yet gender can be a loaded topic, replete with highly charged terms such as feminism and even gender equality. You don't want to shut down conversation yet you want to stay true to the goals of the ally group. The best approach is to take the pulse at your business school to assess sensitivity to particular terms and then use that intelligence as you develop your messaging. Through time, as the group does its work, it may well be that high-emotion words lose their charge.

INVOLVE MEN PURPOSEFULLY

It is not uncommon for male allies to be invited to activities hosted by the WIB club on campus. The allies often participate in the events thinking, "I'm not really sure why I am here." A more productive approach is for the WIB leaders to provide background and inform the male allies why they have been invited and, more importantly, what their role is. With greater clarity, the men can be far more effective and the women at the event understand their involvement.



It is a best practice for male allies to ensure they understand their purpose and role in participating in WIB events.

GETTING THINGS DONE

The reality is male ally groups rely on volunteers who have very full, at times overflowing plates. Remembering that context and planning for it can help. For instance, you may develop a calendar of events at the beginning of the year and feel discouraged as you look back and see that several did not go forward as planned. Instead of assigning responsibilities based on what the calendar or plan says, a better strategy is seeing who has the energy and passion for specific events and allocating responsibilities based on those interests. Another strategy is to identify a larger leadership group so as to expand bandwidth and ensure redundancy. Clearly, it's vital to have a core group of leaders who are committed self-starters and will push hard when needed but that level of commitment is not required of the whole leadership team. When you are in the thick of trying to make everything happen, it's helpful to remember that retaining the spirit of the group and making it a positive experience for those involved is as important as

getting it all done.

BE FLEXIBLE

The leadership pipeline is ever changing based on the two-year business school cycle. As a result, male ally leaders – and their female colleagues – must remain flexible as processes, structures and approaches shift. While previously male ally representatives were in every section, the design of the leadership structure has changed and that is no longer the case. Or previously male ally leaders were non-voting members of the WIB executive team while now they are able to vote. The point is leaders are best served by not becoming overly attached to any one way of operating.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO MAKE A MISTAKE

Male ally leaders are pioneers as they seek to engage in exploring and addressing gender inequalities. Missteps are not uncommon but the goal is to learn and continue moving forward. One group launched without the support and involvement of the women in business leaders on campus. Sensing the disconnect, they hit the pause button and worked with their female peers to co-brand and work as partners rather than in separate spheres. The WIB leaders at another business school learned a former male ally group faded out due to lack of leadership and active involvement. These women leaders began planning how to identify and work with male leaders to lay a foundation for a new male ally group which would remain closely connected to their work. The silver lining of the two-year business school cycle is the opportunity to create anew and build connections with incoming students.

BROADEN THE REACH

After the male ally group has been operating for a year or two, there will typically be a core group of engaged, active individuals. The challenge becomes how to broaden the reach. You can informally gather data from men on campus to see what type of activities or events interest them and plan accordingly. Or have the leadership team brainstorm a series of creative events and test them out. Co-sponsoring events with other clubs on campus is also a promising strategy. The aim is to reach out and engage the men on campus who've had little or no direct experience with the male ally group.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q DOESN'T HAVING A MALE ALLY GROUP DILUTE THE VALUE OF THE WOMEN IN BUSINESS (WIB) CLUB?

A Some women worry that a club for men focused on gender issues will dilute the efforts of the WIB group on campus. They fear it will intrude into the community that's been built, weaken the value proposition of their women-only club, and siphon resources. They wonder, does this mean women can't have anything that is just about them?

Business schools with male ally groups have found just the opposite. By joining the gender conversation, men are assisting their women business school peers in amplifying their voices. Men's groups partner very closely with their WIB peers and both groups benefit from joint perspectives. It's important to understand that WIB groups continue to have select events and activities that are exclusively for their female membership and see their focus as serving the women on campus.

Q WHAT IS THE GOAL OF STARTING A MALE ALLY GROUP?

A While male ally groups may have multiple goals they seek to achieve, an overarching goal is to help normalize conversation and discussion on gender. They want to engage men and create a safe space for dialogue about gender including how gender norms and roles affect both women and men. They aim to create a critical mass of men at business school - who are talking about and learning about gender.

There is a rigorous body of **research** documenting the benefits of gender equality. Businesses with more women in leadership roles report better financial results. Men who have more involvement with their families are in better health and are more satisfied in their marriages. Women in professional jobs who are raising children report very high satisfaction with their lives. Children with the active involvement of their fathers do better academically and socially. Working mothers positively affect both boys and girls. As adults, women achieve more in their careers and men are more actively involved at home. Their involvement benefits both then individually and their children. Gender equality affects business, families, men, women and children. Men who have participated in male ally activities will increase their

gender competence and take all they have learned into their roles as future leaders, managers, husbands, and fathers.

Q HOW DO MEN REACT TO THE IDEA OF A MALE ALLY GROUP?

A Of course, there's a range of ways that men react. Many men make a joke to break the ice but tend to take the idea quite seriously and are open to discuss gender issues. Sometimes men may ask questions such as, "Does a male ally group mean you want to change men?" This can be a helpful jumping off point for a conversation that emphasizes the focus on mutual dialogue and learning. The most common responses are along the lines of, "I don't really understand what you mean by gender issues" or "Why do I need to pay attention to gender issues when I already have so much on my plate?" This is where a little education can help out. **The Get Educated** section of this toolkit has lots of information to share.

Q HOW DO WOMEN REACT TO THE IDEA OF A MALE ALLY GROUP?

A In some cases women reach out to their male peers about the idea of a male ally group but in many instances, the men are the ones doing the reaching out. There are many stories of men wanting to get involved, wondering how they can help, and contemplating asking the women's leadership group on campus about starting a male ally group. Not surprisingly, they feel a little nervous and are not sure what kind of reaction they'll receive. A consistent message from those who have started and led male ally groups was that the response of their female peers made all the difference. Described as extending an olive branch, the men who came forward were looking for signs that they would be welcomed and included. In our self selected universe of universities with male ally groups, the women were open, enthusiastic to the idea. And where they were not, well we hope a new set of women leaders will in time help set the stage for the creation of a male ally partner group.

Q WHAT SHOULD WE EXPECT YEAR ONE OF STARTING A MALE ALLY GROUP?

A It's important to understand that male ally groups pick up momentum through time. The first year is a time to put in place the foundational elements such as identifying the leaders, creating a name, thinking about the mission of the group, and maybe having an event or two. It's easy to feel impatient and want to have everything up and running in the first year but that's not the way it generally works. Having realistic expectations for the start-up phase really helps. (Link to the Launch and Outreach section and the Roadmap.)

Q ARE MALE ALLY GROUPS FOCUSED ON WHAT'S WRONG WITH MEN? DOES FEMINISM OR GENDER EQUITY MEAN YOU HATE MEN?

A Male ally groups are NOT about what's wrong with men. They are about helping to make conversation on gender normal, typical, dare we say fun. Male ally groups strive to give men a forum for sharing their voices. In addition they hope to educate, to inspire, and at times to entertain. They want men to feel welcome and like they belong.

Male allies know based on a substantial body of data that gender equality is good for men and for business. These groups create a space for men and women to learn from one another and to jointly work toward greater gender equality at business school and in their lives beyond.

Q DO MALE ALLY GROUPS MEAN HAVING AWKWARD CONVERSATIONS?

A An important goal of a male ally group is to seed conversations, lots of conversations about gender issues. And some of those conversations will be the candid ones that may be a little awkward or uncomfortable but that is where important learning happens. Male allies strive to create a safe space for men where they feel they can ask any question, share their thoughts, and be their authentic selves. The gender conversation won't move forward if men and women can't have dialogue and learn from one another. This is exactly what the group is here to do. And by the way, there will be plenty of fun and light-hearted conversations as well.

Q WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO CREATE A SAFE SPACE FOR MEN TO TALK ABOUT GENDER ISSUES?

A Let men know you want and welcome their participation. Emphasize the male ally group prioritizes open dialogue. While the groups seek to educate and inspire, one of the most important roles they play is to listen. Let men know they are not expected to be an expert on gender or to have any specific background at all. The only requirement is to show respect for other viewpoints. And let them know positive intent is assumed when anyone – male or female – says something that might be misinterpreted. Remind men that their involvement is a powerful step in helping to normalize the gender conversation for all men. It comes down to having the conversation and building awareness.

Small group get-togethers with peers provide an optimal environment for creating a safe space. Communicate to men that the event is about open dialogue, providing the chance to both share and listen. Men should know there is no pressure to agree or have a specific point of view and that confidentiality is always a ground rule.

Q WHY WOULD A MAN GET INVOLVED WITH THE MALE ALLY GROUP IF THEY DON'T SEE ANY ISSUES FOR WOMEN IN BUSINESS?

A A man might believe there are no unique issues for women in business based on his prior professional experiences, but he's heard women friends talk about this phenomenon. He may be curious to know more about gender issues realizing its importance for him as a future manager and leader. He may just wonder what all the fuss is about and be eager to share his perspective. In any case, having him join the conversation is a win.

Q HOW CAN MALE ALLIES WORK MOST PRODUCTIVELY WITH THEIR FEMALE BUSINESS SCHOOL PEERS?

A Usually women are happy – even grateful – to have men actively involved in efforts to support gender equality. But entering the conversation with the right spirit goes a long way toward building strong, respectful relationships. What doesn't work is when men act as though we're the guys who have come to fix the problem. It strikes of the hero saving the maiden and

is not the right tone. In reality many women have been working tirelessly on gender equality issues for a long time.

A much better role is that men are part of the solution, working in collaboration with their female peers. Men don't have to be experts or even knowledgeable about gender equality issues. But they do need to be willing to listen and to learn. Think of it as working with EQ - aka emotional intelligence - whereby you strive to understand the other's point of view and to be empathetic in your interactions.

Given the global, often dispersed, highly diverse talent pool, more sophisticated skills are needed to lead. Men working with their female peers to support gender equality provides an opportunity for both men and women to hone their skills, strengthen their EQs and continue developing into balanced leaders who bring out the best in others.

Q SHOULD MEN FORM THEIR OWN GROUP ON CAMPUS SEPARATE FROM THE WOMEN IN BUSINESS (WIB) GROUP?

A Rather than operating completely independently, male ally groups are best served by the deep partnership they enjoy as an initiative of the WIB group on campus. There are many benefits. The male ally leaders work directly with women who care deeply about gender equality. The WIB club is typically one of the largest and most influential on business school campuses and the leaders can share both their experience and visibility with the emerging male ally group.

A major benefit for male ally groups is avoiding the need to fund raise and being able to focus on outreach and planning. Reaching out to corporate sponsors to raise money for a male ally group on campus could potentially be very challenging. Finally, the shared leadership of the two groups, the male allies and WIB leaders, enables them to stay informed about what the other is doing, to work closely as thought partners, and to directly experience gender dynamics – both the good and the bad - in their work together.

Q HOW CAN MEN TRANSLATE WHAT THEY EXPERIENCE AS A MALE ALLY INTO THE WORKFORCE?

A Understandably, men ponder what being a male ally will look like once they are back in the workforce.

A natural first step is to research what is in place to support gender diversity where you work. And to then get involved with those groups such as the women's affinity group or diversity network. You can explore if, as a man, you can become a member. Since they are still quite rare in the workplace, you may consider starting up a male ally group in your organization. We've already seen examples of male ally leaders do just that in their post MBA careers.

Whether or not you have a formal affiliation with a group supporting gender diversity, you can always practice male ally behaviors in your day-to-day professional life. That may look like asking why there are no women presenters at the company's upcoming client conference or pointing out when an idea a woman shared received no feedback yet was lauded as a great idea when a man in the group brought it up. Whether formal or informal, male allies will find many opportunities to put **gender supportive behaviors** into practice in the workplace.