

NEW Leadership™ Alumnae Survey Key Findings

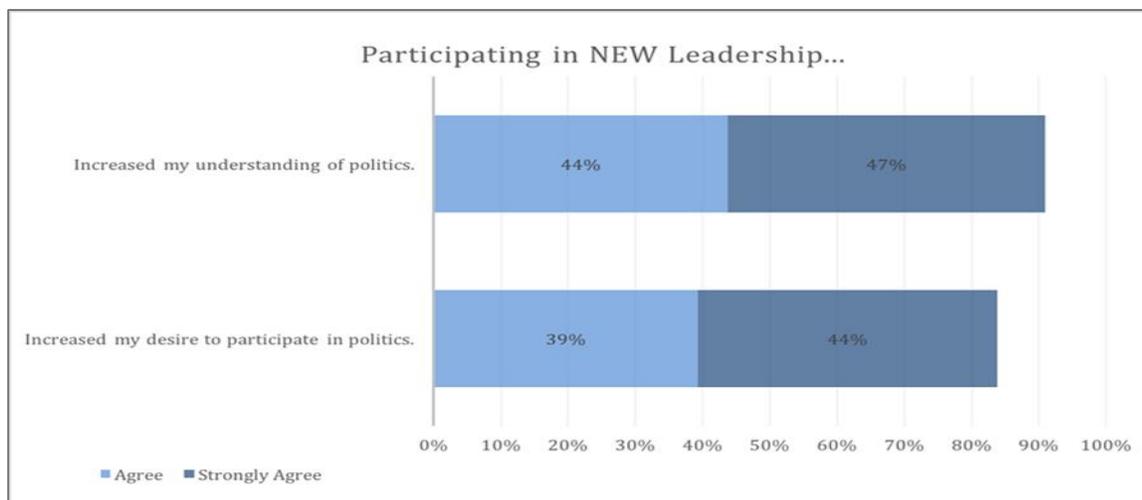
The Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) created NEW Leadership™ in 1991 to teach college women the value of civic engagement and the importance of having women in positions of political leadership. The NEW Leadership™ National Network includes colleges and universities across the country that have established statewide or regional NEW Leadership™ programs on their campuses.

In order to assess the impact of NEW Leadership™ and evaluate its success in meeting the stated program goals, we conducted a survey of NEW Leadership™ program alumnae. Responses included alumnae from eighteen NEW Leadership™ programs from 2000 – 2015.

Increased Interest in Politics

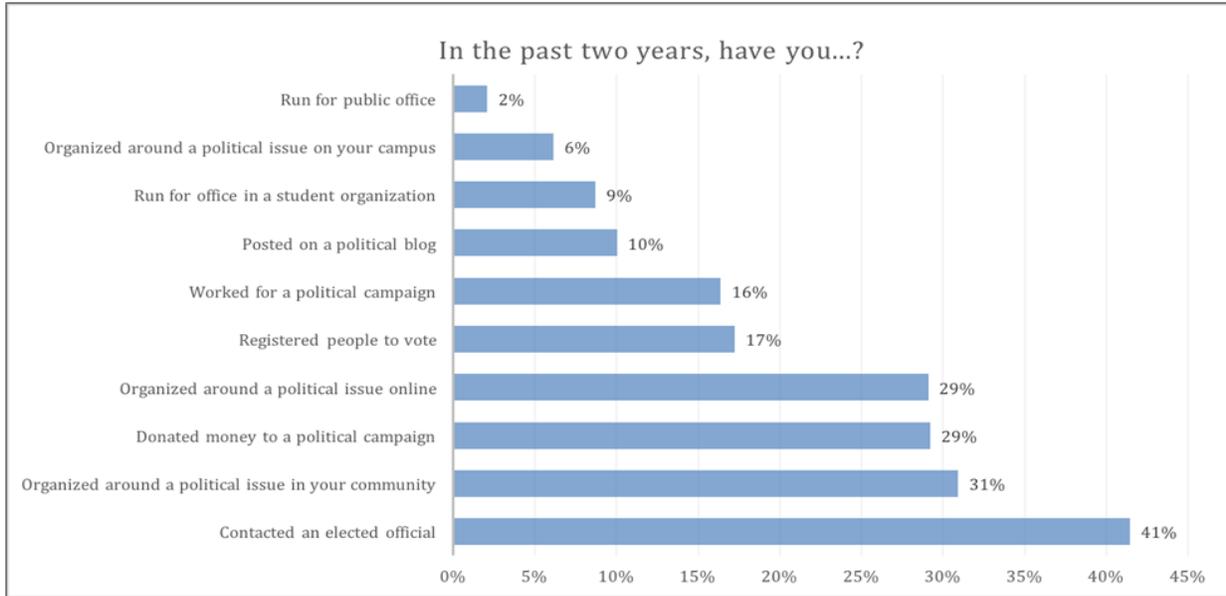
The survey results confirm that NEW Leadership™ has been successful in inspiring the vast majority of alumnae to participate in politics, educating them about the political process and increasing their overall confidence and leadership skills.

Significant majorities of respondents agreed with the statements, “NEW Leadership™ increased my understanding of politics,” and “NEW Leadership™ increased my desire to participate in politics.”



Political Participation

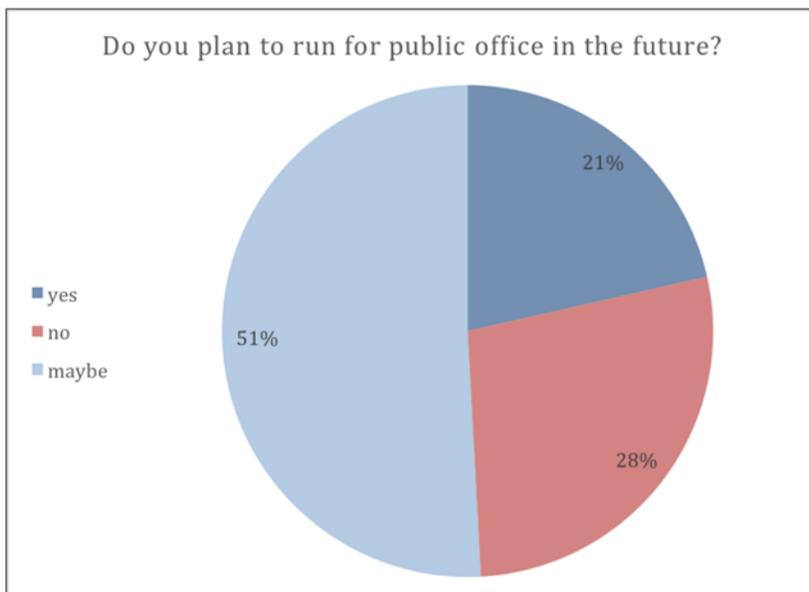
With increased confidence and information about the political process, many NEW Leadership™ alumnae have followed through on their increased interest in politics. Six in ten alumnae have engaged in at least one form of political participation besides voting in the past two years, including 41% who have contacted an elected official, 31% who have organized around a political issue in their community, and 29% who have donated to a political campaign.



Leadership and Confidence

Our survey data confirm that one of the program’s most transformative effects on participants is increasing their confidence in themselves and their own leadership abilities. Among the leadership abilities respondents said had improved most through participation in NEW Leadership™, over half (52%) chose confidence.

The increased confidence reported by alumnae also translates into high levels of political efficacy, with 86% of survey respondents agreeing with the statement, “I think that I could do as good a job in public office as most other people.” Not only do they think that they can do as good a job, a majority of respondents (72%) report that they are at least considering running for office.



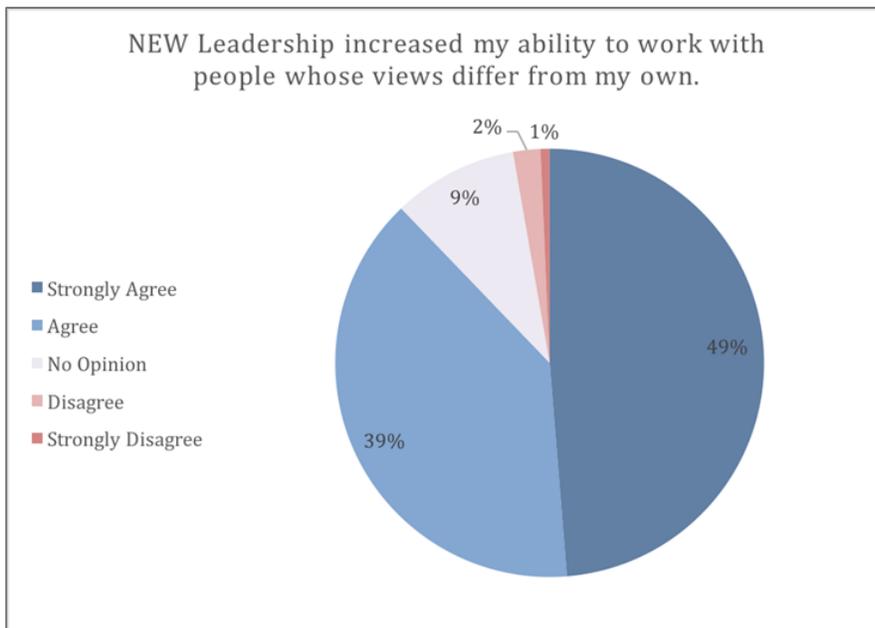
The Importance of Role Models

Student interaction with and access to political women from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences is a critical component of the NEW Leadership™ program’s success. The women leaders who participate as faculty and speakers at NEW Leadership™ are important role models and often become part of political and professional networks that our alumnae develop. Our survey results demonstrate the lasting impact of these connections. Following their participation in NEW Leadership™ 59% of respondents have been in contact with faculty in residence (called “practitioners in residence” in some programs). These professionals have provided career advice, employment opportunities, and letters of recommendation, among other forms of assistance.

Leadership in a Diverse Nation

As the political and economic differences within our country become fodder for headlines and cause for gridlock in our nation’s capital, results from our survey show that NEW Leadership™ is developing a generation of leaders who recognize the need for cooperation and working across differences. During NEW Leadership™ participants get to know and work with women from different racial, religious, educational backgrounds and political viewpoints. The survey included NEW Leadership™ participants from 18 programs across the country, and nearly half (45%) of the respondents are women of color.

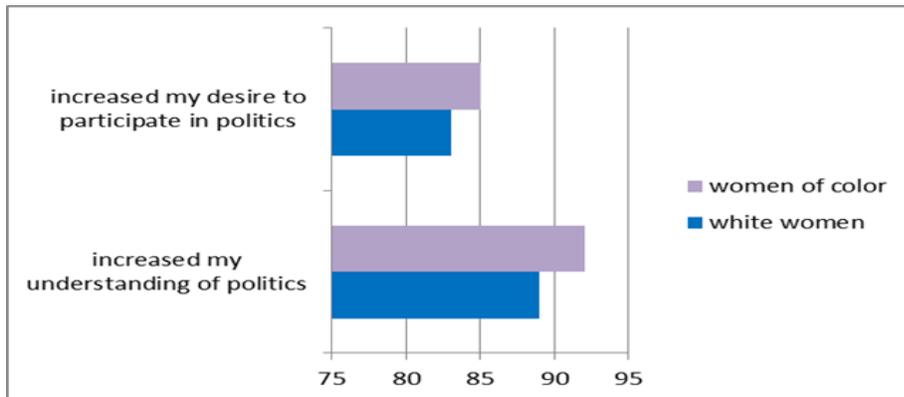
A large majority of all respondents (88%) agreed with the statement, “Participating in NEW Leadership™ increased my ability to work with people whose views differ from my own.”



The importance of learning how to work with a diverse group was also reflected in the open ended responses: “*The best thing I got from NEW Leadership™ was listening to so many success stories from women of virtually all backgrounds.*”

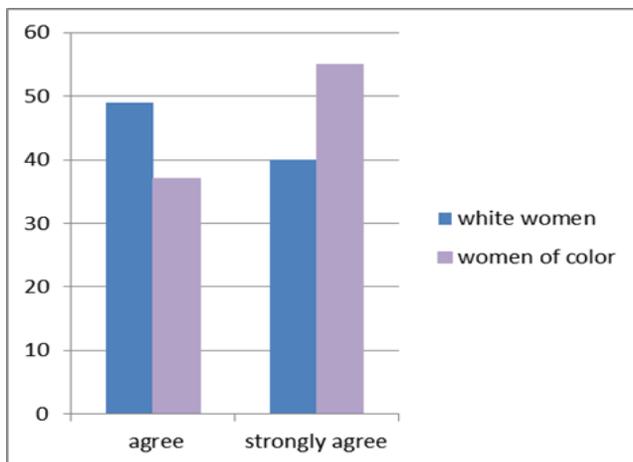
NEW Leadership™ encourages women from under-represented groups to see themselves as leaders. Meeting speakers and workshop leaders who represent diverse political perspectives and life experiences shows students that politics is not just for the privileged.

Research has shown that young women of color are less likely to participate in a range of political activities than their white peers. The results of our alumnae survey suggest that NEW Leadership™ is helping to close this gap.

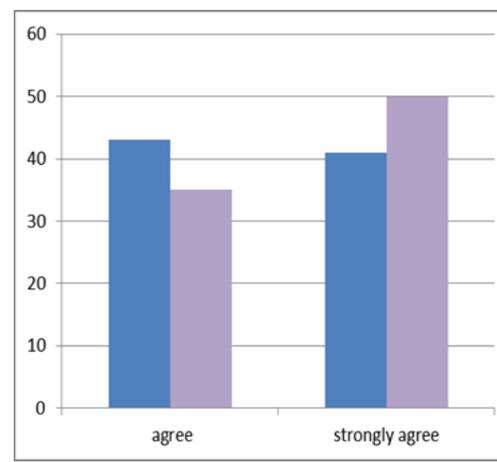


A majority of all respondents agreed with the statements, “NEW Leadership™ increased my understanding of politics,” and “NEW Leadership™ increased my desire to participate in politics.” In both cases, a larger proportion of women of color agreed with these statement than white women.

The positive impact of NEW Leadership™ on women of color is even more compelling when we separate the “agree” from “strongly agree” responses. When asked about increased understanding of politics, more women of color said strongly agree (55%) than agree (38%), while white women were more likely to agree (48%) than strongly agree (40%).



Increased my understanding of politics



Increased my desire to participate in politics

When it comes to increased desire to participate in politics, white respondents were almost equally likely to respond agree as strongly agree, while 50% of women of color said strongly agree and 30% said agree.

Young women of color are less likely to participate in a number of political activities and are more likely to feel alienated from the political system than their white counterparts. NEW Leadership™ offers these women a view of politics and government that is inclusive, introduces them to women leaders who look like them, and instills in them confidence to believe that they can make their voices heard. The results of this alumnae survey indicate that NEW Leadership™ has been successful in encouraging women from under-represented populations to become more involved.

Looking Toward the Future

The results of the NEW Leadership™ alumnae survey confirm that NEW Leadership™ is an effective program for inspiring and educating college women for political leadership. American women are 52% of the population and have a wide range of backgrounds, life experiences and ideas about politics. At NEW Leadership™ college women are exposed to a diverse group of women leaders and encouraged by peers and mentors to become engaged in the political process.

Research shows that women often need to be encouraged to run for office, whereas men are more likely to say that the decision to run was entirely their idea. The significant increase in self-confidence and political efficacy reported by NEW Leadership™ alumnae can serve to counter the discouragement women often encounter when striving for leadership positions. NEW Leadership™ particularly encourages women from at-risk populations and those whose perspectives have been largely absent in political leadership to become politically engaged.

The majority of NEW Leadership™ alumnae are still relatively young (80% of the respondents were under the age of 35), so it may be a while before we see the full effect of the program reflected in our elected political leaders. Nevertheless, as NEW Leadership™ alumnae come to understand the important role that politics plays in their lives and in their communities they are less likely to view themselves as outsiders to the political realm.

**** Methodological note: The survey was conducted online through *Qualtrics* between November 11, 2015 and February 29, 2016 with 818 NEW Leadership™ alumnae. Respondents had participated in one of eighteen NEW Leadership™ programs between 2000 and 2015.

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