

# School of Business People's United Centers Annual Report

July 2019–June 2020





## Message from Dean Matthew O'Connor



Our School of Business People's United Centers completed another productive year with initiatives that had a measurable impact on the various people and communities they serve. Consistent with their missions, each of them provided exciting, engaging and provocative activities and opportunities for students, faculty, alumni and friends of Quinnipiac University.

The People's United Center for Women & Business, under the guidance of professors Julia Fullick-Jagiela and Kiku Jones, continued its mission to build a broad community of support for women to achieve their personal and professional goals. Through conferences, retreats, luncheons, after-hours events, virtual events and social media, the center provided ongoing opportunities to learn, network, build relationships, be inspired and take positive steps toward personal and professional growth. In a short period of time, the center has become a critical hub for professionals, faculty, staff and students interested in developing and supporting women in business and in life.

Professor Fred McKinney, Carlton Highsmith Chair for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, has brought the People's United Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship regional and national recognition. He is a sought-after media source on such topics as the economy during COVID-19, challenges to Connecticut businesses, unemployment and consumer spending. The center's primary mission is to support student and faculty innovation and entrepreneurial activity at Quinnipiac. However, the center also connects the School of Business and the university to the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem in the region and country.

The center's community-based efforts provide important support, guidance and inspiration to the region's emerging entrepreneurs. Students look forward to the center's Ideation Incubator program, its annual Pitch Competition, and its menu of consulting services. Although its popular and informative Speaker Series was tapered this spring due to the pandemic, we are looking forward to a robust series during this academic year.

Sincerely,

*Matthew L. O'Connor*

Matthew L. O'Connor  
Dean, School of Business



# People's United Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship

## MISSION:

The People's United Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship supports the determination and goals of students and entrepreneurs at Quinnipiac. It is the ideal creative space to research and transform great ideas into viable business solutions with the potential to go to market.

## VISION:

Businessman, philanthropist and Quinnipiac trustee Carlton Highsmith believes the great equalizer in American society consists of equal parts education, innovation and entrepreneurship. Thanks to Highsmith's support of Quinnipiac's nationally recognized School of Business and our partnership with People's United Bank, we are able to fully realize that vision.

## CENTER WEBSITE:

[qu.edu/innovation](http://qu.edu/innovation)



▲ From left: Lt. Gov. Susan Bysiewicz; Jennifer Brown, then-interim executive vice president and provost; and Fred McKinney, director of the People's United Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship.

## Susan Bysiewicz opens Speaker Series

The annual People's United Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship Speaker Series kicked off with Connecticut Lt. Gov. Susan Bysiewicz on Feb. 4, 2020, and continued until mid-March, when COVID-19 intervened. The series features corporate innovators, entrepreneurs, Quinnipiac University alumni, public and private sector support organizations and experts who focus on financing entrepreneurial startups.

The goal of the series is to create a vibrant, entrepreneurial, on-campus community, provide inspiration for QU faculty, staff and students, and share information that can assist budding innovators in attaining their goals.

Bysiewicz urged the university community to find mentors throughout their lives and encouraged students to form professional relationships while still in college. She has been a champion for small and early-stage businesses since her days as the Connecticut secretary of state. She is passionate about the role small and early-stage businesses have on the state's economy.

**Several other leaders from various industries came to the center to share their unique experiences, among them:**

Michael Reynolds, *vice president of ideation & innovation strategy, Stanley Black & Decker*

David Lehman, *commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development*

Caroline Smith and Margaret Lee, *founders of Collab, a community-centered accelerator for Connecticut entrepreneurs and project builders*

Jeff Tengel, *president, People's United Bank*

**The center is inviting the remaining speakers to Quinnipiac in Spring 2021. They include:**

Will Ginsberg, *president and chief executive officer of the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven*

Blair Decker, *vice president of supply chain, materials and strategic sourcing, General Dynamics/Electric Boat*

Onyeka Obiocha, *managing director, Tsai Center for Innovative Thinking at Yale University*

George Llado, *chief information officer of Alexion Pharmaceuticals*

Garrett Sheehan, *president and CEO of the Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce*

Mary Howard, *program director at ABCT (Accelerator for Biosciences in Connecticut), and Donna Lecky, cofounder and CFO of HealthVenture and managing director of HealthVenture Capital*

## Food insecurity in Connecticut

In February, the center hosted Valarie Shultz-Wilson, former CEO of the Connecticut Food Bank, for a lecture on food insecurity in Connecticut. The food bank is committed to alleviating hunger in Connecticut by providing food resources, raising awareness of the challenges of hunger, and advocating for people who need help meeting basic needs. Students from several classes attended the standing-room-only event in the Entrepreneurial Center, and Shultz-Wilson challenged them to identify ways they can help relieve food insecurity in Hamden and surrounding towns.



▲ Fred McKinney welcomes guests to the re-opening of the People's United Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship.

## Fred McKinney shares insights with news media

As the U.S. transitioned from economic prosperity to economic uncertainty over the first half of 2020, Fred McKinney, PhD, director of the People's United Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship, provided leadership and guidance for Connecticut's business community grappling with the impact of COVID-19.

McKinney, the Carlton Highsmith Chair for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, shared valuable insights with several media outlets on the challenges faced by Connecticut's businesses and his views on unemployment, the CARES Act and consumer spending. He recently was invited to join the New Haven Innovation Collaborative's board.

"You can have loans and you can even have employees brought back, but without customers, you don't have a business," McKinney told WFSB Channel 3 in April.

As a panelist for a webinar titled "Life After COVID-19," hosted by Hearst Connecticut Media in May, McKinney warned about shrinking revenues and increasing costs in Connecticut's towns and advocated regional partnerships for fire, police and public works services. He also addressed the re-opening of malls in Connecticut for News 12, WFSB Channel 3 and NBC Connecticut News, saying: "I don't think that leisurely shopping is going to be back until people are comfortable being around others without masks."

In June, he shifted gears to weigh in on Quaker Oats' decision to remove the logo of its controversial Aunt Jemima maple syrup brand, saying that the image long perpetuated unfortunate and troubling stereotypes. He also participated in a

roundtable discussion streamed on YouTube and hosted by the L3 Agency that focused on the state of Black businesses today.

"These ethnic stereotypes and caricatures really have no role in 21st-century America," he told NBC Connecticut News. "We must move on."

For McKinney, moving on from an unprecedented public health crisis, social unrest and rapidly changing business paradigms will require adopting the mindset of some of America's most successful entrepreneurs. Instead of failures and obstacles, he and they see opportunities to learn, grow and pivot. "No good crisis should go to waste," he said.

McKinney praised one of those iconic entrepreneurs—longtime Walt Disney Company CEO Bob Iger—in an article that appeared on the Fox Business website in February.

He described Iger as a "consummate entrepreneurial CEO unafraid to take calculated risks" and as someone who knows "there is no safety, particularly in disruptive markets, in staying put."





▲ Andrew Pizzi '19, left, and Mike Cusano '14, right, accept a \$3,000 check from Fred McKinney, director of the People's United Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship, for their CrowdPlay app.

## New initiatives for Pitch Competition

Plans are underway for the annual Pitch Competition, which will be held during the Spring 2021 semester. The Spring 2020 competition was canceled because of the pandemic. In the lead-up to next year's contest, the People's United Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship will offer additional support to QU students with an orientation session to give student entrepreneurs an opportunity to receive valuable feedback from advisers and business mentors from SCORE. As a resource partner of the U.S. Small Business Administration, SCORE has helped more than 11 million entrepreneurs through mentoring, workshops and educational resources since 1964.

Students who are considering participating in the Spring 2021 Pitch Competition can use the orientation session as a place to hone their business ideas, communication skills, and develop their value proposition based on the feedback provided. In Fall 2019, the center offered workshops each Wednesday throughout the semester to give students and faculty entrepreneurs a forum to discuss their projects and receive supportive feedback from other entrepreneurs and experts as they prepared their pitches.

During the previous year, the Pitch Competition had 62 participants who competed for cash prizes to get their business ideas off the ground. The center and People's United Bank awarded a total of \$5,000 including the grand prize of \$3,000 to three Quinnipiac students judged to have the best pitch based on concept, market analysis, competition and revenue model. CrowdPlay, a free application for iOS devices, was chosen to receive that grand prize. Designed by Mike Cusano '14, Dan Picone '19, and Andrew Pizzi '19, the app engages fans via their smart phones during sporting events by having them compete against each other for prizes.

## McKinney visits innovation center at Shelton school

Fred McKinney, PhD, toured Shelton Middle School's innovation center in October. After the tour, he shared his thoughts on teaching prospective entrepreneurs with administrators and teachers as well as Miguel Cardona, EdD, Connecticut commissioner of education, and Christopher Clouet, PhD, former superintendent of Shelton Schools and now a special adviser to Cardona. The Shelton School District is interested in connecting Shelton middle school entrepreneurs with QU entrepreneurship majors.



## People's United Bank president touts economic resources in state

Members of the Quinnipiac community should become familiar with the many resources Connecticut offers to foster innovation and entrepreneurship, according to Jeff Tengal, president of People's United Bank.

Tengal visited campus in March to take part in the People's United Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship's Speaker Series. "Connecticut ranks as the fourth most innovative state in the United States — and the challenge is how to build on that," he said. He also pointed out that Connecticut is fifth in the nation in terms of advanced degrees with about 40% of residents holding such degrees.

Some 97% of businesses in Connecticut employ fewer than 500 people, Tengal said, adding that 50% of all Connecticut employees work for small businesses. "And small businesses are where much of our innovation starts. That's where banks come in. We can be a catalyst to help an idea take root," he said.

But innovation doesn't necessarily have to start in a room or a garage, Tengal noted, commenting that people can do innovative things in corporate settings through redesigns, efficiencies and improving the consumer experience. As an example, he said People's United Bank has worked to improve its loan application submission process so that applicants learn the status of their loan in just a couple of days.

People's also is working to expand into industries where it hasn't been involved before.

"Don't be constrained by conventional thinking and logic," Tengal stressed. "Come talk with us — our advice is free. Talk with us, and we'll tell you what we've seen."

Tengal shared two pieces of advice he gives to his children. "First, always have an opinion. Don't assume people don't want to hear what you have to say," he urged. "And, second, don't be afraid to network across your organization. Generally speaking, everyone likes to mentor young people and colleagues to facilitate their careers and think through ideas."

Founded in 1842, People's United Bank offers commercial and retail banking through a network of more than 400 retail locations in Connecticut, New York, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine, as well as wealth management and insurance solutions.

May 18, 2020, marked the two-year anniversary of the partnership between People's United Bank and the university. Tengal said the relationship "has wildly exceeded our expectations in terms of the collaboration and the partnership."

## Looking Forward

### ***QU Capital Summit***

The QU Capital Summit was to debut in April as part of the Speaker Series but was canceled due to the pandemic. It has been rescheduled for Spring 2021, and the original speakers will be invited back. On the marquee are several national leaders who support entrepreneurs through their work in early-stage capital markets, including: Rodney Sampson of O-Hub ([opportunityhub.co](https://opportunityhub.co)), an Atlanta-based company that supports urban technology entrepreneurs nationally; Bob Green, president and CEO of the National Association of Investment Companies ([naicpe.com](https://naicpe.com)), the trade organization of the largest minority-owned investment companies in the country; Anthony Price, author and founder of Loot Scout ([lootscout.com](https://lootscout.com)), which helps small businesses reach their potential; and Steve Grossman, president and CEO of the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City ([icic.org](https://icic.org)) and Inner City Capital Connections.

### ***Center joins iHaven***

In late 2019, the center joined iHaven, a collaboration of five New Haven-area colleges and universities. Besides Quinnipiac, members are Albertus Magnus, Gateway Community College, University of New Haven and Southern Connecticut State University. iHaven supports area college students interested in entrepreneurship by providing them with legal, financial and strategic advice. Because of our membership in iHaven, PUCI&E can support the participation of five student entrepreneurs in this unique opportunity.

A new cohort of students started in early February 2020, and the program is set to resume this fall. Students from the five universities are given access to office space in downtown New Haven at no cost as they work with and support other student entrepreneurs and learn from various finance, legal and strategic professionals.

# People's United Center for Women & Business

## MISSION:

To provide opportunities for women to achieve their professional goals and build a community of women and their allies who are committed to lifelong learning and who are eager to share. It includes the external community, students, alumni, faculty and staff.

## VISION:

The center provides programs designed to educate and inspire female professionals focused on achieving their personal best through lifelong learning. The center also facilitates connections and thereby builds and develops an engaged community where wisdom and experience are shared to educate, inspire and foster growth.

## CENTER WEBSITE:

[qu.edu/womenbusiness](http://qu.edu/womenbusiness)



▲ Diane Winston, left, was among several Connecticut female business leaders to speak with students during an October program.

## Panel discusses authentic leadership

To celebrate Women Entrepreneurship Week in October, People's United Center for Women & Business and the Women Presidents' Educational Organization joined forces to deliver a program featuring two successful Connecticut female business leaders who discussed authentic leadership and shared their experiences.

Diane Winston, founder and CEO of Winston Strategic Partners, and Beverlee Dacey, president of Amodex, encouraged members of the audience to stay true to themselves and become successful leaders. Professor Kiku Jones, co-director of the People's United Center for Women & Business, noted that women still fight the notion that men should be leaders.

"One thing leaders can do to make women feel confident in being authentic is to be authentic themselves and create an open environment that is welcoming to everyone," said Jones. An engaging conversation followed the panel discussion.

"Being an authentic leader is really about owning who you are," Winston said. "Who are you representing? Are you representing yourself or are you representing someone else?" she asked. "Being authentic means being able to trust who you are."

Dacey remarked that women should never underestimate the power of soliciting ideas and working together. "A real leader listens to people around them because we do not know it all. Collaboration is key to being a leader and really listening to those around you and getting their input," she said. "The other piece that I think is so important is what I call graciousness. It means you are being empathetic and reaching out."

To Winston, effective leaders embody and recognize that each employee will work differently in the environment they are in, but a leader will listen and respond to that to ensure their team can be successful.





## Business professionals impart advice to students

People's United Center for Women & Business co-hosted a networking luncheon in March as part of the "People's United Week" series of events taking place at QU.

More than 15 business professionals from various industries in the area were paired with 35 business students for conversations on career-focused topics. The students also got valuable advice and a broad perspective of what it takes to succeed in business. The topics included: "Interviewing for Success," "Networking to Win," "Leading from Any Chair," "Real Talk with Business Leaders," "Collaboration is Essential" and "Communication is Key."

Many thanks to Maddy Lapides, People's first vice president/talent management, and co-host People's United Bank, for inviting such an impressive group of business mentors to support and guide students as they navigate their future career paths.

*hope, resilience,  
and healing*

## Webinars focus on hope, change and working from home

A two-part webinar, "Hope, Resilience, and Healing During Adversity," was presented by the PUCW&B in June with Trish Kelly, an instructor of management at Quinnipiac, and Nicole Davison, founder of NMD Career Consulting. The webinar focused on ways to increase skills and self-awareness with a focus on resilience while preparing for the future. This workshop allowed participants to explore, discuss and share successful strategies to navigate change and uncertainty. Two breakout sessions allowed networking and interaction among participants. In July, Professor Julia Fullick-Jagiela, co-director of the center, presented a webinar titled "Navigating Work Remotely: Tips for Managing Effectively." Among the topics discussed were managing and building relationships with employees while promoting a positive company culture; building trust; establishing a company culture; measuring remote employee performance; and considerations for long-term remote options.

## Galvanize Connecticut event

In the lead-up to the 2020 United State of Women Summit, representatives from PUCW&B attended the Galvanize Connecticut event in December 2019 in East Hartford. It was held in partnership with the Connecticut Collective for Women and Girls and the Governor's Council on Women and Girls. Participants learned about the work being done in Connecticut and across the country, and they connected with local activists, community leaders and women looking to make a difference. Galvanize Connecticut brings together an inspiring combination of local and national experts at the forefront of the fight for gender equity.

Speakers included Valerie Jarrett, co-chair of the United State of Women, chair of the Board of When We All Vote, and author of "Finding My Voice: My Journey to the West Wing and the Path Forward," and Susan Bysiewicz, Connecticut lieutenant governor and chair of the Governor's Council on Women and Girls.



▲ Holding signed copies of Valerie Jarrett's book, from left: Kathleen Simone, professor and senior adviser of the center; Julia Fullick-Jagiela, professor and co-director of the center; and graduate assistant Emily Stoveken '18, MBA '19.



## Students share insights about campus leadership

Student leaders shared what it's like to be a campus leader in the 21st century at a forum hosted by the People's United Center for Women & Business in February. Moderated by Austin Calvo '20, Student Government Association president, the panel consisted of student leaders from a variety of organizations ranging from student government and Greek life to varsity athletics. Participants included Emily Stoveken '20, PUCW&B graduate assistant; Kaleigh Oates '20, Student Athletic Advisory Committee executive board and women's volleyball captain; Sean Regan '20, president of Beta Gamma Sigma and president of the Computer Information Systems Society; Irsa Awan '21, Muslim Student Association president and chair of The Big Event; Sophia Marshall '21, '23, SGA vice president and club soccer president; Hannah Cote '21, '23, president of Alpha Delta Pi; Leah Lavin '19, '20, founding member of Students for Environmental Action and a Global Engagement Fellow; and Julia Suesser '20, SGA senior class president.

## Graduate Women in Business group

In collaboration with the School of Business, the center launched a graduate student affinity group, Graduate Women in Business, which aims to promote a spirit of solidarity among Quinnipiac's graduate students through a variety of educational and social events. This group serves to empower graduate women studying business by creating inclusive spaces to grow authentic connections, further gender equity and forge partnerships on and off campus.

During Spring 2020, the group hosted a virtual book club that culminated in a live Zoom session with the author, Kate Crocco. It also had a weekly virtual Netflix Watch Party, virtual happy hours, and a virtual wellness event with Tami Reilly called "Living Well While Living Online."



▲ Professor Kiku Jones spoke at a Hamden Regional Chamber of Commerce event.

## Jones speaks to Chamber

Kiku Jones, PhD, associate professor of computer information systems and co-director of the People's United Center for Women & Business, spoke to women business leaders via Zoom in April at the Hamden Regional Chamber of Commerce Women in Business meeting. She reminded the group of the importance of tending to their own needs while they are also taking care of their families, friends, and businesses during the pandemic. Jones discussed the challenges women faced while sheltering in place and suggested that networking with other women business leaders could be helpful.





▲ Pop-up retreat participants try a balancing exercise to relieve stress.

## Pop-up retreat gives students and faculty a chance to reflect, reset

As midterm exam time approached in March, the PUCW&B hosted a pop-up retreat to encourage participants to de-stress by rejuvenating their minds and hitting the reset button. The retreat, led by Tami Reilly, director of fitness and well-being at Quinnipiac, drew a mix of 20 students, staff and faculty members.

“Sometimes we need to get away and feel that break. We are not good at putting down our phones and having ‘me time,’” she said. The challenge for Reilly is creating that transformative feeling for just one hour in a convenient meeting space.

For all her retreats, Reilly sets the mood with flowers, candles and some stretching exercises and used notecards with questions to prompt dialog and sharing. “I asked them to connect with their own breath, close their eyes, be a little silent, and think about how they could treat themselves better and practice self-care and acceptance,” Reilly said. She explained that people tend to be hard on themselves and can really benefit when they strive to treat themselves as kindly as they treat their friends.

“You are the only person you will be with for the rest of your life, no matter what,” she said.

Reilly noted that sharing with people from the university community affords them the chance to get to know each other in a different way. Some of the cards prompted participants to reflect on how they are becoming comfortable as a leader, how to build on known strengths, and habits they are creating to become the highest versions of themselves.

Reilly hopes to conduct several virtual retreats this coming fall as the university community adjusts to its “new normal.”

### News and Notes

#### **After Hours Building Community event**

The first After Hours Building Community event took place on Feb. 26, 2020, at Ireland's Great Hunger Museum. The event offered a relationship-building experience held in a relaxed setting to share ideas that benefit the community through added contacts and resources. More such events are planned.

#### **Salary negotiation workshops**

The center is planning a series of workshops for students, alumnae and members of the community on how to negotiate salaries. The series is presented in partnership with the Women's and Gender Studies Department with support from the Office of Development and Alumni Affairs and the Office of Academic Innovation and Effectiveness. The schedule will be announced soon.

#### **G.I.R.L. Talk**

In partnership with the Girl Scouts of Connecticut, PUCW&B will co-sponsor the G.I.R.L. Talk Series with Gender Equity Champion level of sponsorship. This level allows the center to bring up to 15 college and high school students to the series presentations.

#### **Coffee Chats**

This series of relationship-building and community-building programs began in July after we realized a need for our community to connect during this time. The Coffee Chats are held via Zoom each month. We invite members of our PUCW&B community to gather in a relaxed setting to share ideas that will benefit you and your organization through added contacts and resources. The registration link can be found on the PUCW&B LinkedIn page: [linkedin.com/company/qu-womenbusiness](https://www.linkedin.com/company/qu-womenbusiness)



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