

## NEWSROOM

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## TAKING THE LEAD

## TWO LUTER STUDENTS LAUNCH THE WOMEN IN BUSINESS CLUB, BLENDING PROFESSIONAL GROWTH WITH COMMUNITY.

by [Kelley McGee](#) | April 25, 2024*Read time: about 2 min*

It may be one of the newer organizations on campus, but the Women in Business club (WIB) has quickly grown to over 85 members, offering students a valuable platform for networking and professional development in the business world.

The club grew from a spark of inspiration two business students had while attending the Women's Stock Pitch and Leadership Conference at the College of William & Mary. Energized by being around a crowd of ambitious and driven women, Maggie Traverse '24 and Annabelle Puckett '25 quickly realized the power of a supportive community in fostering personal success. They decided they needed to find a way to share that same empowering experience with other business majors.

"We were surrounded by strong and capable women at the conference who were excited to make an impact on the business world. There is something so powerful about being in a room full of driven women; we wanted to give that experience to every student who wanted it at CNU," Puckett said.

"So, we started talking about this idea to start a Women in Business Club to help other students feel that same sense of empowerment and connection," said Traverse. "Until that conference, I hadn't fully realized how isolated I often felt in my major. Annabelle and I talked about how difficult it can be when we walk into our finance classes and we're the only female students there."

Traverse and Puckett immediately began laying the foundation for the new club. They worked closely with advisors, Rebecca Reimers, Assistant Director of Student Professional Development, and Lorraine Hall, Assistant Dean at the Luter School of Business, to structure the organization and set goals.

"As VP, I had the responsibility of conducting new member interviews, and as I sat down with each new member, I realized they were all looking for the same thing: connection, belonging and professional development," said Puckett. "We all knew this club could make a difference in the lives of students on campus because empowerment comes from connection. My hope is that through connecting women with other students (both older and younger), along with business professionals in the community, they will feel that they have a place in the business world and that being a woman in business isn't scary, it's exciting. There are people cheering them on as they take this step into their future career."

The response to the Women in Business club has been overwhelmingly positive. Flyers with QR codes were spread across campus to recruit new members and quite a few students quickly signed up.

"I think within a week I had 50 responses from interested students. I was like, 'Oh my gosh, this is something people are excited about.' And it validated that other students on campus were feeling the same way Annabelle and I were feeling," said Traverse.

One of the key aspects of WIB is its focus on professional development and community building. Through workshops, speaker events, and networking opportunities, the club provides its members with the tools and confidence to navigate the business world.

"I've learned that you are responsible for building your network," said Puckett. "I love constructing community, and I have been blown away by the number of students and women in the Newport News community who want to construct it with me. I have had the opportunity to connect with professionals in the Hampton Roads community as well as make new friends at CNU."

Traverse emphasizes the importance of women thriving in professional and academic fields typically dominated by men.

"A pattern I noticed from freshman to senior year is that many female students would switch majors before [Signing Day](#) sophomore year because they said it was often intimidating to walk into so many pre-business courses and learn you are the only female there," Traverse said. "And most worried about how their future workplaces would look. But this club helps to build comradery so that students can walk into those classrooms and hopefully they already know someone!"

Traverse has accepted a position with Capital One as a Finance Rotation Program Associate. As she prepares to pass the torch to future leaders of WIB, she has a simple yet powerful message for underclassmen:

"Don't be intimidated. Take up space, be heard. Be confident. Do the work, stick with it. It's so rewarding. There are so many opportunities within business," she said. "But make time during and outside of your classes to find your support system."