

Panelists Give Thoughtful Career Insights and Advice at Women in the Workforce Event

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To celebrate Women’s History Month, the Women’s Center and the University of Connecticut Center for Career Readiness and Life Skills hosted an event called Women in the Workforce: Employer Insights & Career Pathways Panel. The event took place on March 31 at the Women’s Center.

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The event featured two panelists: Leah DeLorenzo and Natalie Javier. DeLorenzo is a senior university relations talent consultant at Eversource Energy, and Javier is a senior talent recruiter at the City of Hartford Board of Education.

There were also two moderators, Mihika Sinha and Mary Catherine Decoteau. Sinha is an eighth-semester anthropology and political science student, and Decoteau is a career coach at the Center for Career Readiness and Life Skills.

Before the event began, information on the Center for Career Readiness and Life Skills was shared. Afterwards, the moderators began interviewing the panelists. Their first question was having the panelists talk about their career journeys and goals.

DeLorenzo and Javier provided similar answers. They both shared that they consistently changed careers and that their current jobs aren’t related to the degrees they got

in college.

The next question was whether DeLorenzo and Javier dealt with any challenges in their jobs, especially challenges related to gender. DeLorenzo said the field she works in is male dominated. She also discussed some challenges with working in an ethical environment.

“Without going into detail, I have encountered a lot of managers and coworkers that have been very demeaning,” DeLorenzo said. “And I think it’s been very challenging in terms of finding a place that is ethical.”

She also mentioned that the obstacles she’s faced in her work environment have impacted her willingness to stay in it.

“There have even been times when I have gotten to the point where I’m not comfortable with the environment I’m working in and therefore, I should move on to another role. And that shouldn’t be the first go-to thought, but after trying to resolve whatever’s in front of you and you’re still seeing these things happen, you know that you’re not in the right place. You have to have the courage to be able to move on and say ‘okay, well, I want to be somewhere that is more reflective of who I am as a person.’”

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Javier shared experiences that closely align with DeLorenzo’s. She mentioned herself and her coworkers feeling like they’re doing a little too much work. She has also witnessed microaggressions



at work and barriers in encountering a welcoming work environment, she said.

The next question the moderators asked was what skills and qualities are important for students seeking a job. Javier’s answer was being proactive: don’t be afraid to ask questions and seek out other people. She also emphasized the significance of feedback.

“Feedback is good. Like, you want feedback,” Javier said. “That’s how you grow and get better. I’ve learned and grown so much in the moments I messed up and made a mistake. I learned, I got really good feedback, and then I grew. It’s kind of ingrained in my mind like okay, I’m never going to do that again because

this is what I learned in that situation. So, not being afraid to get feedback and being collaborative can go a really long way.”

DeLorenzo agreed with Javier on asking questions and connecting with people. She also stressed the importance of finding the right people.

“Find the people that are going to advocate for you,” DeLorenzo said. “You want to be surrounded by people that want you to do well. If you are surrounding yourself with people that aren’t giving constructive criticism but are just giving criticism, it’s going to break you down eventually.”

“I have never heard one person say they went to school, got a job out of college and then stayed in that job for their entire life. And it’s absolutely horrifying to need the thought of having it all figured out upon graduation. So, I don’t mean you shouldn’t start planning before graduation, but I do mean you don’t have to have it all figured out before then.”

After DeLorenzo wrapped up her statement, the moderators moved on to their last question, which was what final advice the panelists could give to the audience. In DeLorenzo’s response, DeLorenzo declared that not everything needs to be figured out right this instant.

“No career path is linear,” DeLorenzo said. “I have nev-

er heard one person say they went to school, got a job out of college and then stayed in that job for their entire life. And it’s absolutely horrifying to need the thought of having it all figured out upon graduation. So, I don’t mean you shouldn’t start planning before graduation, but I do mean you don’t have to have it all figured out before then.”

Meanwhile, Javier advised everyone to take advantage of the Career Center as a resource.

“Utilize the Career Center,” Javier said. “I feel like schools and students don’t utilize the Career Center as much as they should be. They give you many resume workshops and they practice interviewing skills. They can even help hook you up with internship opportunities and to speak on your behalf the many things that you may not have access to, so I definitely suggest that.”

Towards the end of the event, the moderators opened a question-and-answer session for the audience. Questions revolved around topics such as internships, graduate school applications, interviews and Master’s degrees.

Izabela Neiger, a sixth-semester psychology student, said the panel was a valuable experience.

“This event was super helpful,” Neiger said. “Learning more about the different paths a person can take and how you’re not locked into one career forever was influential. And the fact that there’s always room to explore and develop yourself further was helpful as well.”

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Flyers from the Women in the Workforce: Employer Insights & Career Pathways panel. This event was hosted by the UConn Women’s Center, where panelists gave thoughtful career insights and advice.

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