

Impact Report: Women of Color and Mental Health: Navigating the Academy

Event Summary:

The WSU Graduate Women of Color Alliance (GWOCA) hosted its inaugural Spring Speaker Series event, *Women of Color and Mental Health: Navigating the Academy*, on Friday, April 19th, 2024, at the Elson S. Floyd Cultural Center. The event featured Dr. Arifa Raza, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology at Washington State University, as the keynote speaker. Dr. Raza shared her experiences navigating challenges in graduate and law school, focusing on mental health and resilience as a woman of color in academia. The event included a networking session and a Q&A opportunity, fostering meaningful dialogue among attendees.

Goals of the Event:

1. Provide a platform to discuss mental health challenges faced by women of color in academia.
2. Empower graduate women of color by sharing strategies for navigating academic spaces.
3. Build a supportive community through networking and shared experiences.

Outcomes Achieved:

1. Impact on Attendees:

- Attendees actively participated in the Q&A session, posing insightful questions and sharing their own perspectives.
- Feedback from participants highlighted the relatability and inspiration drawn from Dr. Raza's personal story. Many attendees expressed appreciation for the emphasis on balancing mental health with academic pressures.
- The networking session allowed women of color to connect, fostering a sense of community and solidarity.

2. Broader Implications:

- The event initiated critical conversations about the systemic barriers faced by women of color in academia, emphasizing the importance of mental health and self-advocacy.
- Participants reported feeling more empowered to seek support and implement strategies discussed during the event.

Reflections:

The GWOCA Spring Speaker Series successfully met its objectives, providing a space for graduate women of color to discuss shared challenges and opportunities in academia. Dr. Raza's talk resonated deeply with attendees, underscoring the need for more such platforms

to address mental health and intersectionality. The event set a strong precedent for future GWOCA initiatives.

Future Directions:

Building on the success of this event, GWOCA plans to:

- Host similar speaker series addressing other aspects of diversity, equity, and inclusion in academia.
- Organize follow-up workshops or discussion groups focused on practical strategies for mental health and academic success.
- Expand outreach efforts to include undergraduate students and broader community members.

We are grateful to Dr. Raza for her impactful contribution and to all attendees for their active participation. This event reaffirmed our commitment to fostering an inclusive and supportive academic environment at WSU.