

Hello, for those of you who don't know me, my name is Amanda Cardinal. I was a 2015 Young Women Leaders scholarship recipient and I am now a sophomore at Oklahoma State University. Many of you are probably asking yourselves, "Oklahoma, what's in Oklahoma?" The answer to which is... not much. Going to college in another state has been different to say the least, but I am very thankful that I have the opportunity to experience the different culture and people that comes from moving 4 states away. This experience has been largely impacted by Young Women Leaders. Young Women Leaders is a program that is near and dear to my heart and truly influenced my path in life more than I would've ever guessed.

What an amazing opportunity it is to be speaking in front of such incredible women. I have always been passionate about empowering women in all aspects of life, whether that be socially or professionally, and no program does that like Young Women Leaders. As women, we learn to say sorry. We apologize when a waiter messes up our order, or when someone runs into us on the street. We must always be likable

and “not too bossy.” Young Women Leaders is an amazing program, because it takes girls who haven’t yet learned what it means to be a woman in the work place and exposes them to strong women who aren’t sorry for being who they are and working to get what they want. It is extremely important for young girls to have role models like this, who pave the path for them. Young Women Leaders is an extremely formative experience that really can change a girl’s life.

When I began the program, my plan was to become a mechanical engineer, so you can understand my confusion when my mentor worked as an account executive in media sales. Like anyone would, all I could think was “how can this help me?” My reluctance continued until I actually met my mentor. She immediately came off as such a strong independent woman, and I knew that there was so much I could learn from her. As I learned more about what she did and everything that came along with it, I saw that every bit of it could be taken to any other field, from her demeanor in dealing with colleagues and clients, to her persistence in making a sale. She was professional, convincing, and

fierce. My impression of her in the work place, is exactly how I want to be seen 5-10 years from now.

Fast forward to orientation day at OSU. I walked in to orientation for engineers and I felt a pit in my stomach. You always hear people use the phrase “women’s intuition,” and there is no better way to describe what I felt that day. I had always loved engineering and I knew I always would, but something in me told me that that’s not what I wanted to do. Then and there I walked over to a counsellor and changed my major to Multimedia Journalism. And by “then and there,” I mean after 15 minutes of crying with my mom in the bathroom and then learning what multimedia journalism was. College is a place of self-exploration and lucky for me it only took ten minutes of exploration to figure out what I wanted. That is until I had another spout of self-exploration later in the semester and once again changed my major, this time to Strategic Communications. I changed my mind twice and many of you will do the same, but that’s the great thing; you're allowed to change

your mind and figure out what you want, and for me Young Women Leaders helped me do that.

College thus far has been an amazing experience, from all the sleepless nights, cramming, and crying, to the laughing, late night Sonic runs, and randomly buying a puppy with my roommate. Young Women Leaders has made all of that possible for me as it will continue to do for girls in the future. This program not only gives girls life skills that they will use forever but provides scholarships that make a huge difference for so many. I would like to thank the board as well as the many donors for how this scholarship has helped my education and as well as the recipients here today. As I look out into the audience and see so many strong women supporting women, I am overwhelmed with pride for my community. So, here's to strong women, may we know them, may we be them, and may we raise them.

*~ Amanda Cardinal
2014 Graduate & YWL Scholarship Recipient*

