

# Cornell Conference Tries to Interest Women in Financial Management

By Francesca Di Meglio  
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Now in its fourth year, Cornell University's Johnson Graduate School of Management Women in Investing (WIN) conference is one of the first efforts by a business school to address the lack of women in financial management and provide a forum for MBA students to learn and network.

Sixty women from 12 top business schools, including Johnson, London Business School, Columbia Business School, and University of Chicago's Booth School of Business spent two days in Boston discussing what it takes to have a successful career and getting advice on picking stocks, generating investment ideas, and investing in emerging markets.

This year's conference comes on the heels of Harvard Business School's efforts at a "gender makeover," and the national discussion about sexism raised by Sheryl Sandberg, the chief operating officer of Facebook (FB) and HBS grad class of '95, in her book, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*. The finance sector is woefully behind in gender equality: Women represent only 16 percent of executive and board positions in financial services and less than 10 percent in fund management, according to the National Council for Research on Women.

Blog: Too Many Businesses Don't Know What Women Want

Getting more women to see career opportunities in investment management has been a slow process, says Lakshmi Bhojraj, conference founder and executive director of the Parker Center for Investment Research at Johnson. "It requires a change in the cultural mindset of how accommodating firms are willing to be to women," she says.

Bhojraj can count at least one convert. Michaela LeBlanc, a first-year student at Dartmouth College's Tuck School of Business attended the conference hoping to meet women in the industry and learn more about investment management as a career track. "Hearing from senior investment professionals served to further reinforce my belief that investment management will be a great career to utilize both my analytical skills and my interest in the markets," she wrote in an e-mail.

Story: Haas Launches New Institute for MBAs Who Want to Do Good

She understands why the field hasn't attracted more women. "The unpredictable nature of the role, time requirements, and assumption of risk, are all factors that lead women to lean toward other career options."