



## **IWF Leadership Foundation Fellows Retrospective**

### **Introduction**

Brigadier General Barbara Faulkenberry, United States Air Force, completed her Leadership Foundation Fellows Program year in 2007 saying, “It is not the end – this experience is only the beginning of the next chapter.” The program took her to places previously unexplored, whether in location, through topic, or with people. It opened windows to other perspectives and professions. It honed her mentorship skills in ways that only time and spirit will test. Through the Fellows Program, Barbara Faulkenberry was able “to become a better leader and military officer.”

Barbara observed at the onset of her program year an uplifting spirit – one of support, camaraderie and commitment among women who knew no boundaries. She found IWF members coming together with a passionate interest in partnering for success, support and insight to be refreshing and unique.

Barbara, whose life career has been in the U.S. Air Force where most of the senior leaders are male, was able to experience a fascinating diversity in the Fellows Program. Fellows hail from throughout the world and have an assortment of professions, leadership attributes and perspectives. Whatever barriers exist – from language, religion, culture, political belief – come down in the spirit of growth, cooperation and friendship.

Barbara Faulkenberry has made a promise to use her experience in a variety of ways, but the most important will be in opening a new venue of communication between successful women leaders and the United States Air Force. Barbara Faulkenberry began the program as a Colonel and was recently promoted to an Air Force Brigadier General. The Leadership Foundation is very proud of her and her achievements.

Please read on to see what other former fellows, like Barbara, have accomplished since the completion of their IWF Leadership Foundation Fellows Program.

## Fellows Retrospective

**Debra Factor Lepore**  
**Fellows Class 1995-1996**  
**United States**

At the time of her Fellowship, Debra was living and working in Moscow, Russia, as the Chief of Moscow Operations for ANSER's Center for International Aerospace Cooperation. She had good technical skills and a solid reputation in the aerospace industry, but Debra was looking for something more. Her Fellows Program application essay outlined her near-term goals: to learn business development skills in a technical and international environment, to identify strategies for turning creative ideas into reality and to develop and finance a business plan. She aimed to reach a leadership position within five years, and set a long-term goal to lead a diverse, multinational corporation such as ANSER as its CEO or to lead her own multinational aerospace firm.

As a Leadership Foundation fellow, Debra sat down with her mentor to create a strategy to develop her leadership and business skills and to expand her exposure to other markets and networks. Together they used the assets of the Fellows Program and IWF membership to build on her skill set. One year after the program, she was offered a job at an entrepreneurial start-up aerospace company and relocated across the country from Washington, DC to Washington State. The new job offered every element of the business skills she sought to develop such as marketing, sales, finance, business analysis and strategic planning. Debra found that the Fellows Program enabled her to find the opportunity and to have the inner confidence to know it was the right fit. She writes, "When the time came to make the decision, I didn't have to consult anyone on what to do. I already *knew* I would accept the job."

Debra was at Kistler Aerospace Corporation for 8 years where she played a key role in the company's business development and strategy and helped to raise over \$600 million in private capital (a first in the space transportation market) and secured an innovative commercial contract worth up to \$135 million with the U.S. government. Today Debra is in a position that is the perfect culmination of her long-term plan that she developed during her fellowship. For the past two years she has been the president and an owner of AirLaunch LLC, a small aerospace company with the goal to enable more affordable and responsive access to space for small satellites. Debra writes, "When making decisions in my career, I always came back to what motivated me to become an aerospace engineer in the first place: *to do things that have never been done before*. And I've been true to that. Once I admitted what really motivated me, what I liked doing and what I intended to accomplish, I had the freedom to identify opportunities and create my own destiny – even if every day hasn't been perfect or easy."

**Molly Tschang**  
**Fellows Class 2002-2003**  
**United States**

Molly Tschang has been called a “Tornado of Energy.” Since completing the Fellows Program in 2003, she became involved with Save the Children, an organization dedicated to insuring the well-being of children around the globe. She traveled to Uganda and Ethiopia as part of a project to help empower women and girls and to educate them on HIV risks. In part drawing on her fellowship experience, Molly decided to explore ways to leverage her business background and skills to make a meaningful difference. She was chosen for her company’s Leadership Fellows Program where she served as the executive director of a non-profit, called NetHope. NetHope is an IT consortium of the top international NGOs collaborating around common technology and communications challenges. It enables members to expand their communications and to work more efficiently. During her 17-month tenure at NetHope, Molly provided focus, developed strategy, operationalized activities and raised funds.

Molly then returned to Cisco in an entirely new capacity. She is now part of the Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group (IBSG), the global strategic consulting arm of Cisco, which helps Global Fortune 500 companies and public organizations transform the way they do business—first by designing innovative business processes, and then by integrating advanced technologies into visionary roadmaps that improve customer experience and revenue growth. Molly is working to develop how, from a business standpoint, her company effectively collaborates in international development with funding agencies, NGOs, public and private sectors. Her group is bringing to bear the collective resources and capabilities of Cisco and is committed to multi-stakeholder approaches that spur economic growth and social inclusion. The intention is to help embed communications as core infrastructure and enable “emerging markets to emerge faster.”

Having spent many years integrating acquisitions and being a “bridge builder” that can find common ground among different groups, get buy-in for vision, develop strategy and help a team to work collaboratively, this was the ideal role for Molly. She writes, “The IWF Leadership Foundation Fellows Program greatly helped me to find my own voice, understand how to more effectively communicate and to ‘own my own branding.’ I was able to improve my interpersonal skills and define the type of leadership I aspired to and to think about the kind of impact I wanted to have.” Working at the intersection of the public, non-governmental and private sectors, Molly is helping to tackle some of the world’s tough challenges.

**Sonia Brown**  
**Fellows Class 2002-2003**  
**Bahamas**

Since the completion of her fellowship year Sonia Brown has made two life changes. She credits her Leadership Foundation mentor with encouraging her to leave her position as a project director in a large company to become the principal and owner of her own engineering consulting company, Graphite Engineering Ltd. Since 2001, Sonia also runs the PACE Foundation, which aims to raise money for a multi-purpose educational facility for

teenage mothers in the Bahamas. Teen births comprise 12-15 percent of all births annually – most young teen mothers are asked to leave school and for many this is where their education ends. To address this issue, Sonia leads a group of about twenty volunteers from all areas of the Bahamian community to raise money and lobby the government for the hope, empowerment and freedom of these young girls and their families.

For the past 38 years the PACE Programme has worked to intervene in the lives of young mothers to assist them in re-entering the school system. While the program currently holds classes in a local church, Sonia plans to build a new facility that will include classrooms, an on-site day care, a health clinic, offices and a thrift shop. Sonia believes that the day care facility will address widespread absenteeism in school and that the thrift shop will give the girls an opportunity to make a small salary, while also raising funds for building upkeep. During their year in the program, the girls learn to care for themselves and their babies, and to protect themselves from getting pregnant or contracting sexually transmitted diseases. They also receive a general education and learn craft and other job-related skills.

Sonia is putting her engineering background to good use; she reports that the Foundation is on track – they have been granted land by the government, developed building plans, and raised public awareness and funds and she has had a lot of fun in the process. While they have a long way to go, she is comforted by the little successes along the way. As for her consulting company, she writes that she has “not looked back. There have been times when I have been so busy I could not come up for air and there have been other times I have stared at the phone and hoped it would ring ... even if it were the wrong number.” Since the time of her fellowship, Sonia has become a member of the Bahamas Women's Forum and was recently appointed to the Leadership Foundation Board of Directors.

**Samar Dudin**  
**Fellows Class 2003-2004**  
**Jordan**

Samar Dudin writes, “Encountering the West in this program brought back the silent monologue of an Arab woman who wants her culture to be understood and her people to be free.”

During her Fellows Program year, Samar was appointed to the city's (Amman) municipal council. Serving as one of only three women city councilors, she was the catalyst in establishing a policy intervention programming unit to serve the marginalized disadvantaged youth of Amman. The establishment of The Child Friendly City program allowed the city, reaching out to 48 percent of the city's population who are under the age of 18, to cater to children in the marginalized and forgotten areas of the city.

A key building block in the initiative was the launching of the first child municipal city elections across four overpopulated and neglected parts of the city. As a city council member from 2003 to 2007, Samar worked closely with Queen Rania Abdullah's office, the Mayor of Amman and many City Council colleagues to lobby for funding for this initiative and to create the policy framework. She orchestrated her efforts, supported by Unicef and the Arab Urban development Institute, with over 800 activists, including children and youth, and served as deputy mayor for the initiative from 2004 to 2006.

After completing the Fellows Program, she began to work with a prominent business entrepreneur in Jordan Fadi Ghandour (CEO of RUWWAD, a foundation created by private sector Jordanian entrepreneurs with the mission of creating sustainable development in marginalized communities and engaging the society in social corporate responsibility). Fadi supported Samar in creating “Takween Open Spaces for Enlightenment and Creativity.” Samar’s vision for Takween was to help children and youth to expand the boundaries of their identity, to challenge their values and to engage them in a culture of dialogue and activism. Takween is an NGO committed to serving the community by empowering youth and spreading social responsibility through the mediums of theatre and creative arts.

Samar credits the Fellows Program with empowering her to transcend the frustrations that she felt as a Jordanian Arab Muslim woman with liberal and secular values, working in conservative, male-dominated contexts. She writes that the program helped her to challenge her own beliefs and fears, and to place her own leadership goals at the center of her decision-making process.

The program reinforced Samar’s commitment to the truthful expression of ideas, thoughts and opinions as the only means for democratic discourse and dialogue.

**Ivonne Monteagudo**  
**Fellows Class 2004-2005**  
**Mexico**

Ivonne’s fellowship year inspired in her a desire to share with other Mexican women the need to project an image of authority. In a culture where women are often not respected as professionals, Ivonne set out to help women achieve power and success. As the General Manager of Mead Johnson and President of the Mexican Association of Female Managers, Ivonne took away from the Fellows Program a stronger sense of self and accomplishment.

In order to share her inspiration with others, Ivonne organized a conference entitled “The Secrets of the Successful Female Manager” covering topics such as increasing visibility, improving public speaking skills, office politics, successful negotiations, leadership styles and networking. She marketed the conference by referring to “the secrets” she would share – believing that the concepts and insights that she would teach were unknown to most working women in Mexico. The first conference, delivered to over 50 members of the Association, was a hit. Ivonne followed her success with workshops run by consultants on more focused topics.

Ivonne has now taken her conference to more than 700 women in Mexico, Brazil, Peru and the United States. The enthusiasm for what she was doing was so strong that she adapted the content and created another training session aimed at female university students called “Success Secrets for the Future Professional Woman.” She has taken the session, which includes both professional and personal topics, to three universities in Mexico.

The need to project an image of authority was Ivonne’s driving force, but with her success came yet another revelation – that the concept of diversity was poorly understood among her peers and in her country. Ivonne created a training session aimed at directors and

managers, both men and women, of companies interested in learning about issues surrounding gender diversity. She has taken this session to 15 Fortune 500 companies in Mexico, reaching approximately 200 people.

Ivonne writes, “The outstanding experience of the Fellows Program gave me the tools and the inspiration to do something - to drive awareness, acceptance and action in order to accelerate change in the workplace. The Fellows Program was really an outstanding life-altering experience for me.”

**Oluyemisi Obilade and Kimberly Del Greco  
Fellows Class 2005-2006  
Nigeria and the United States**

After the completion of her fellowship year, Oluyemisi decided to strive to change what she'd seen for too long, a lack of support for female students in her country. Using her resources as a Senior Lecturer at Obafemi Owolowo University in Nigeria, she began working with government agencies to train secondary school teachers to better identify and encourage intelligent female students.

Oluyemisi wanted to push harder. She began an “adopt-a-school-girl” movement whereby volunteers “adopted” an indigent or financially-handicapped school girl by paying her school fees and purchasing books, as well as any other educational needs throughout the school year. She and her colleagues have already matched 10 girls with adoptive supporters. Inspired by other fellows in her class, Oluyemisi decided to expand the operation to provide reading materials to rural secondary schools where English language comprehension is almost non-existent.

Hearing about this initiative last year, Kimberly Del Greco, Chief of the Biometric Services Section of the FBI and Leadership Foundation fellow alumna, voluntarily embarked on a local drive to collect used books for Nigerian children. Her efforts have been fruitful – to date she has mailed 17 bags of books, each bag weighing 50 pounds, to Oluyemisi for distribution in the Nigerian schools. Seven new school libraries have been opened thanks to this initiative. This year Kimberly is establishing a non-profit company whose main purpose would be to fund their project, allowing more books to travel to Nigeria more frequently. The establishment of the non-profit will allow sponsors to receive a tax deduction with their donation. As this joint project continues, Kimberly and her family hope to travel to Nigeria soon to visit Oluyemisi and to meet the local school children who have benefited from this effort.