

WiS Week 2024

Leader Spotlight

**WOMEN IN
SECURITIZATION**

Renew. Reengage. Reimagine.



Cheryl Griffith
Senior Director
Fitch Group

What advice would you give to young women aspiring to pursue a career in finance?

Finance is a very rewarding yet challenging field, which requires among other things, a proactive approach, intellectual curiosity, hard work, determination, and a commitment to continuous learning. There are several points of advice that I would offer to young women pursuing a career in finance, starting with acquiring a strong foundation in technical skills such as accounting, financial analysis, and/or financial modeling through their academic careers, through in-person or online courses, school sponsored industry related clubs, and through selective internships. Which leads to my second point of advice, which is to pursue a variety of finance related internships to not only build technical skills, but to help build knowledge and further define the areas of finance you are interested in, or conversely less interested in. Another piece of advice I would offer would be to dedicate time to networking, building a strong professional network, and looking to find someone you connect with to act as a mentor. Someone you respect and look up to and connect with organically. And someone you can share a two-way dialogue with in seeking advice and being prepared with questions. Join on-campus clubs related to the finance industry, which offers opportunities to learn, apply knowledge through practical exercises and projects, attend speaker series, and network with industry professionals. With anything, the path to success can vary depending on timing, dedication, opportunities, and personal goal, but these suggestions for advice should greatly support you through the process.

What inspired you to pursue a career in Structured Finance?

Coming from a position in our company's finance and accounting department, I was drawn to the structured finance industry by its growth, innovation and complexity. Seeing the rise in issuance, the variety of asset classes, and the number of factors and motivations for issuance, made structured finance very appealing and something I wanted to be a part of. As I began to learn more about structured finance, I got a better understanding of the role it played in the overall financial markets and how it helped to fund portions of the global economy. Which only further cemented my interest and validated my career in structured finance.

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What does WiS mean to you?

Women in Securitization, which we state as being focused on the development, advancement and retention of women in our industry, means that I am part of and connected to something special. It means that I am part of a select group of colleagues and peers and establishing personal and professional connections with other women across a variety of sectors in the industry. It means that I can contribute to the development of new cohorts of female leaders in our industry, and that I am able to benefit from the collective knowledge and experience of my fellow members. It is a safe place for me to network and connect while pursuing growth and development. WiS inspires me and offers the opportunity to see that being successful as a woman in business is possible.

What inspires you to continue to grow in the industry?

Some of the same things that inspired me to pursue a career in structured finance continue to inspire me today. The opportunity to work with bright and talented structured finance professionals. The opportunity to be part of a continuously growing and highly innovative portion of the finance world. The opportunity to grow and develop personally and professionally. The opportunity to continue challenging myself, satisfy my intellectual curiosity, and continue my pursuit of lifelong learning while balancing life as a mother of three children and all the other challenges life throws at you.

What is a good way to give back to the community?

I am a big proponent of supporting our children and the children of the community. As such I feel a good way to give back is to support our local schools through volunteering, fundraising, chaperoning, and being a trustworthy resource for the children outside of their home. There is a quote, by author Leo Buscaglia, that I frequently think of, "Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around." Outside of monetary and devotion of time, it's this quote and this concept that can sometimes have the biggest impact of all.

This interview has been edited for clarity.