LEARNING OUR LEGACY: THE TUCKER CENTER’S FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR

Professor Mary Jo Kane has filled many roles over the arc of her life and career: advocate, teacher, athlete, sports fan, feminist, theorist, mentor, and researcher. But her professional roles as a pioneering scholar and much-sought-after national voice on all things women’s sports, as well as being the founder and first Director of the Tucker Center, are to be especially lauded and celebrated.

One could argue that Kane has a gift of being in the right place, at the right time, with the right idea. After graduating with a degree in sociology and cultural anthropology from Webster University in 1973, she worked in a rape crisis and battered women’s center in Champaign, IL. At the time she also worked at the University of Illinois in the Child Development Laboratory, where she heard about a new emphasis area in Kinesiology called “sport sociology.” Given her overall love of sports, her background as an athlete—though as “a classic Pre-Title IX tomboy” growing up in Bloomington, IL, in the 1950s and ’60s she didn’t get to play organized sports—the fact that she was (and remains) an avid sports fan, and a feminist in the middle of the women’s liberation movement, sport sociology seemed a perfect way for her to combine her avocations and vocations into an academic career.

Kane started her graduate training in sport sociology in 1980 at the University of Illinois with two of the discipline’s founding scholars—Drs. John Loy and Susan Greendorfer.

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

As I write what will be my last letter as Director of the Tucker Center, I look back fondly and with gratitude for my tenure at the University of Minnesota. It has been an enormous privilege over the last three decades to be able to do what I love most as an academic: conduct research on important issues related to women’s sports; teach and mentor students; and develop community partnerships which serve the public good. I was also able to address a gap in our knowledge base about what it means for girls and women to be engaged in sport and physical activity. As female participation rates skyrocketed in the wake of Title IX, scholars were not keeping pace with understanding what this increase meant. There was a critical need to take seriously their participation as a legitimate scientific enterprise. Out of this need, the Tucker Center was established due to the vision and generosity of our founder, Dr. Dorothy McNeill Tucker.

We have accomplished a great deal since our inception in 1993, from producing invaluable, evidence-based research used around the world to deepen our understanding of women’s sports, to providing scholarships and fellowships which attract the “best and brightest” students to come to the U of M and make their own scholarly contributions. We developed the first and only Distinguished Lecture Series dedicated to girls and women in sport in the nation and have partnered with outstanding local and national organizations such as tptMN, the Women’s Sports Foundation, and the NCAA Office of Inclusion. I am particularly proud of our association with tptMN. Together we produced three award-winning documentaries, one of which examined the role of media coverage and won a regional Emmy Award.

As I step down from my role as Director, I know that the Tucker Center is in good hands under the more-than-able leadership of Dr. Nicole M. LaVoi. She joined us in 2005 as the Associate Director and has already taken us to the next level, especially when it comes to her groundbreaking research on the dramatic decline in the number of females in sport leadership and the strategies she has developed to reverse this decline. I am also confident we will continue to receive support from Dr. Beth Lewis, Director of the School of Kinesiology, and CEHD Dean Jean Quam, both of whom recognize the importance of the work we do to make a difference in the lives of girls and women, their families and communities.

Many of you have asked what I will be doing in the next chapter of my life’s journey. Traveling, playing lots of golf, and as a dear friend says of her own retirement, saying “Yes” to those things I wasn’t able to fully pursue during my 35 years in the academy.

So, Minnesotans, I have one closing message to all who have given me so much encouragement and support over these last three decades. Simply and with great love and gratitude—Hats off to Thee!

Mary Jo Kane, TC Director Emerita

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The academy. I am grateful to her, as are countless others, for the unique opportunity she was given to make a difference in the lives of girls and women over her 30+ year career in the profession. Kaufmann also created a toolkit for the Tucker Center documentary, Women in Sport Leadership.

Listening to Kane talk about the arc of her career, it is clear she was meant to be a gender sport scholar. Kane herself stated, "Being a member of the academy is where I belong. Once I went to graduate school, I’ve always felt it was absolutely the right place for me and I have never looked back. What a privilege it is to work on a college campus, to be surrounded by really smart and interesting people, to be able to work with students, to do collaborative research, and to not ever have to worry about a [financial] bottom line. We [faculty members] actually get paid to teach about, think about, write about, and talk about things we care deeply about and are committed to. The vast majority of people don’t ever get to do that. I have much gratitude for what the University of Minnesota has allowed me to do throughout my career.

It is clearly evident that as Professor Kane approaches retirement and passes the TC directorship over to me, she has no regrets and is immensely thankful for the opportunity she was given to make a difference in the lives of girls and women in sport over her 30+ year career in the profession. I am grateful to her, as are countless others, for the many ways she has made a real difference in our lives.

—Nicole M. LaVoi, TC Director

Staff Update: 2019 Summer Interns

This summer’s class of interns was our largest to date. Our four interns came to the Tucker Center not only from around the globe, but also from within the University of Minnesota. They each brought with them a unique skill set and approach to the work they were doing at the Tucker Center. The interns worked on various aspects of the TC documentary, Women in Sport Leadership, as well as the distribution plan and strategy for the upcoming Women in College Coaching Report Card. The interns also helped write the Tucker Center 2019 Summer Interns Report Card as well as the distribution plan and toolkit for the TC documentary Game On: Women Can Coach.

Courtney Boucher finished her Master’s degree in the School of Kinesiology in June 2019, advised by Dr. Nicole M. LaVoi. Boucher’s thesis focused on the longitudinal hiring practices of intercollegiate athletics directors, particularly women head coaches. This summer, as the Borton Fellow, she worked with Dr. LaVoi on various aspects of the Women in College Coaching Report Card as well as the distribution plan and toolkit for the TC documentary Game On: Women Can Coach. "I’m so grateful to have received the Borton Fellowship and the awesome opportunities that it afforded me," says Boucher. "This prestigious award allowed me to do everything from contributing to the Tucker Center’s incredible and important research to engaging in physical activity with girls in the Minneapolis community!" Boucher will continue her studies as a doctoral student at the University of Iowa this fall under the direction of Dr. LaVoi.

Cecelia “CeCe” Kaufmann will start her senior year of high school this fall at Minneapolis South. As our first high-school intern, she worked on collecting and coding data on NCAA Women Coaches’ Academy graduates and analyzing occupational employment patterns within the coaching profession. Kaufmann also created a HERESPROOF infographic. When asked about her research experience at the Tucker Center, she spoke about her “magnificent summer” working with the Tucker Team and also stated, “Being involved was such an incredible undertaking and being a part of a center that makes a difference is so inspiring. The research, critical thinking, and communication skills I gained will be very beneficial in the future and my work this summer has helped me realize that I want to be involved in sports research throughout college and beyond.”

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GENDER EQUITY SUMMER INTERNs

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Sarah Silbert will pursue an MSC in Comparative Social Change this coming Fall through a program run jointly by University College, Dublin and Trinity College, Dublin. Silbert is interested in the relationship between sport and community development and plans to utilize her degree and experiences at the Tucker Center in her future academic and professional career. She analyzed data and helped write Head Coaches of Women’s Collegiate Teams: A Comprehensive Report on NCAA Women Coaches’ Academy graduates and analyzing occupational employment patterns within the coaching profession. Kaufmann also created a HERESPROOF infographic. Silbert had an incredible summer with the Tucker Team and stated, "From research skills, general communication and critical thinking skills, I've learned so much through my experience at the Tucker Center. Being involved in public scholarship that makes a difference in society has inspired me and I feel more prepared, confident and excited about starting my Master's program in the fall."
Research Updates and Accomplishments

Media guides are university-produced and distributed publications whose role has changed as the college sports media landscape also has changed. This longitudinal study, “A 26-year Longitudinal Analysis of Intercollegiate Division I Media Guides in a Changing Sports Media Landscape,” by Drs. Jo Ann Bussyse (U of M, TC Affiliated Scholar) and Sarah Wolter (Gustavus Adolphus College), documents changes in male and female athlete portrayals and representations over time. Read all of their findings, now available on our website.

Over the last eight years the TC has produced numerous Women in College Coaching Report Cards (WCCRC) in collaboration with WeCOACH. These groundbreaking reports document the percentage of women in head coaching positions at institutions, conferences, and within specific sports. The data are beginning to show some interesting trends such as these particular 2018-19 NCAA D-I highlights:

- The percentage of women head coaches in NCAA Division-I conferences went up to 42.1% (from 41.7% in 2017-18)—the data is trending in the right direction! However, the majority of hires are men. Many ADs are missing targets of opportunity to hire women when a head coach position becomes available, and we have documented their hiring patterns over the last eight years.
- The Ivy League is the NCAA D-I conference that boasts the highest percentage of women head coaches (53.1%).
- Lacrosse has a large percentage (92.9%) and swimming a small percentage (16%) of women head coaches. Lacrosse also had the highest percentage of all-women coaching staff (72.6%).
- Nearly a quarter (843 of 3,541; 23.8%) of D-I women’s athletics teams do not have any female coaches on staff.
- Despite the fact that men didn’t play on the women’s team, an equal percentage (16%) of women head coaches.
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Watch the Game ON: Women Can Coach full-length documentary, the updated condensed version (with new footage of two-time NCAA Championship Notre Dame Women’s Basketball coach Muffet McGraw), or view coach profiles, including USWNT two-time FIFA World Cup Championship coach Jill Ellis and four-time WNBA Championship coach Cheryl Reeve. Game ON explores evidence-based research, dispels false narratives, and celebrates female coaching pioneers at all levels of sport.

To read all the WCCRCs, see grades, download the infographics, discover how the report is making a difference, and learn more about the +1 Challenge, visit our website: www.TuckerCenter.org.

Kudos & Announcements

Nicole M. LaVoi, Tucker Center Director, and Tucker Center Affiliated Scholar Laura Burton (UConn), co-authored an article using colleague Pat Griffin’s term “The war on women coaches,” which appeared in The Conversation (June 4, 2019) and highlighted the double standard that holds female coaches to different standards of coaching behavior than male coaches.

Tucker Center Affiliated Scholars, Professors Lisa A. Kihl (U of M) and Nancy Lough (UNLV), co-authored an article, “Why Empowering Women in Sport is a Winning Game Plan,” in Mediaplanet’s Women in Sports campaign.

Austin Stair Calhoun, TC Affiliated Scholar, was recognized and honored as a “Rising Alumni” at the annual College of Education and Human Development Spring Assembly last April. Calhoun currently serves as the chief-of-staff for the U of M Office of Medical Education.

Beth Lewis, Professor and Director of the School of Kinesiology and TC Affiliated Scholar, was featured in a June Mom Enough podcast, “Exercise and Mental Health.”


One-third (33.5%) of women head coaches explicitly mention children in their online bio, dispelling the myth that women can’t have a family. However, the percentage is less than their male colleagues (52.6%). This data suggests more support is needed for female coaches with children. Examining and adjusting family policies to ensure parent-coaches are supported is one way to benefit all coaches, regardless of gender.

In 2019, we launched the Plus One (+1) Challenge to enlist institutional buy-in, break the stagnation, and increase the percentage of women head coaches over the next five years from 42.1% in 2019 to 50% by 2024. What does this mean for each institution? The +1 Challenge is achievable and simple: 1) Replace one male head coach with a female head coach over the next five years, and 2) Replace all outgoing female head coaches with another female coach to maintain, rather than reverse, the percentage of women. There are many targets of opportunity to hire a woman head coach: when a new sport is added; or when a male coach retires, leaves for another job, is fired, or when his contract is not renewed.

To read all the WCCRCs, see grades, download the infographics, discover how the report is making a difference, and learn more about the +1 Challenge, visit our website: www.TuckerCenter.org.
FALL 2019 DISTINGUISHED LECTURE

CELEBRATING THE CAREER OF A GROUNDBREAKING SCHOLAR: PROFESSOR MARY JO KANE

Tuesday, October 15, 2019 • 7:00 - 9:00 pm
Cowles Auditorium, Hubert H. Humphrey Center
University of Minnesota West Bank Campus

Free and open to the public

About the Lecture

In 1993, the Tucker Center at the University of Minnesota was established as a result of the vision of its first Director, Professor Mary Jo Kane. Over the past 26 years, Dr. Kane's scholarship, leadership, teaching, mentoring and community outreach has shaped and changed the landscape for sportswomen. Her contributions throughout her 30-year career have influenced countless stakeholders who care deeply about and advocate for gender equity. Our annual Distinguished Lecture will examine and honor the arc of Dr. Kane's academic history as she is interviewed by the University of Minnesota Foundation's Trustee, Shari Ballard. We invite you to join us for what will be an historic moment and celebration of the Tucker Center's Founder, who has lived the mission of making a difference in the lives of girls and women in sport.

About the Panelists

Mary Jo Kane is a Professor in the School of Kinesiology and Founder and Director Emerita of the Tucker Center. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Illinois with an emphasis in Sport Sociology. Professor Kane is an internationally recognized scholar who has published extensively on media representations of women's sports. She is the recipient of the first Endowed Chair in the nation related to women in sport: The Dorothy McNeill Tucker Chair for Women in Sport & Exercise Science. Professor Kane is a Fellow in the National Academy of Kinesiology, the highest academic honor in her field, and is a past recipient of the Scholar of the Year Award from the Women's Sports Foundation. In 2018, she was named one of the 100 Most Influential Sports Educators by the Institute for International Women in Business. “According to Fortune, Ballard’s leadership at Best Buy played an essential role in creating “one of the most impressive turnarounds in retail over the last decade.”

Shari Ballard is the former Senior Executive Vice President and President of Multichannel Retail at Best Buy. She currently serves as Vice Chair of the University of Minnesota Foundation Board of Trustees and is a member of the Board of Directors at Ecolab Inc. After graduating in 1989 with a bachelor's degree in social work from the University of Michigan-Flint, Ballard was hired to work in a Flint Best Buy store. Beginning as an assistant store manager, she rose through the ranks to lead at the highest levels of the company. Ballard was named several times on Fortune magazine's annual list of the “Most Powerful Women in Business.”

Please direct my gift to the following fund:
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☐ Tucker Center Internship Fund for Gender Equity in Sport
☐ Borghild Strand Endowment
☐ Dorothy McNeill Tucker Fellowship Fund
☐ Edith Mueller Endowed Fund for Graduate Education
☐ Edith Mueller Park Memorial Award
☐ Eloise M. Jaeger Scholarship at the Tucker Center
☐ Graduate Fellowship for Gender Equity in Sport
☐ Research Fund for Gender Equity in Sport
☐ Pamela Buy Endowment for the Promotion of Women and Girls in Sport Leadership
☐ Tucker Center Graduate Assistantship Fund

VISIT www.TuckerCenter.org, click the Support Us link, and get more information on each fund, on monthly or planned giving, and on matching gifts.

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