

WOMEN LEADERSHIP VIRTUAL EXCHANGE (WLVE) DIGITAL STORYTELLING PROJECT

Paulina Guzman: Connecting Atlanta with the World

Story by KSU student Sofia Pinedo.

Photos provided by Paulina Guzman.

Paulina Guzman, Atlanta native and political science graduate, has a broad formal education enhanced by joining the labor force when she was young. Of Cuban and Venezuelan descent, Paulina is fluent in Spanish, and has always been influenced by her passionate family of first-generation immigrants that were very vocal and opinionated about political ideology. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science with a concentration in International Affairs and a minor in Economics from Georgia State University. As a political science and international affairs student, Guzman has always been concerned about promoting equity, inclusion, and diversity worldwide, and empowering her home city's foreign relations to make it a global city. At present, since she became the Global Engagement Officer in the Mayor's Office of International Affairs (MOIA) in 2018, she has been able to promote all these values, while managing the diplomatic and protocol division of the office as well as supporting the city's global education initiatives. It has not been easy since she did not have much experience as a woman leader. However, she has been able to overcome all the barriers by being patient and adapting to circumstances while following the advice of two of her role models: her mother and her former boss. During her relatively short path as a woman leader, Paulina realized something meaningful that might be of interest for future women leaders: "There is much more significance placed on soft skills that provide much more value to an institution than technical skills or 'know-how'". Soft skills here would apply to personal attributes such as adaptability, emotional intelligence, or active listening.



For more than 3 years as the Global Engagement Officer, Paulina has demonstrated her aptitude as a woman leader. It is important to note that more men than women in the U.S. occupy leadership and government positions. However, it is generally recognized that women who occupy these positions are often perceived as more trustworthy and public-spirited, and more likely to be civically and socially engaged than men. Although leadership is not gender specific, there are certain characteristics of women that make them great leaders, just like Guzman. First, many woman leaders care about the personal

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development of their team and value authentic communication, which translates into allowing employees to not only accomplish organizational goals but to transform into better people. Second, women leaders tend to be participatory and possess a democratic style of leading people. As a result, team members tend to be more creative, vocal, and collaborative as there is more of an open channel of communication for innovative ideas. Paulina meets all these requirements for being a great woman leader. Furthermore, she also contributes to multiple events to create a connected, invested, and united society. In 2020 alone, she has attracted young adults and children for the release of the “Future We Want” Video Campaign led by the United Nations, she has given multiple conference presentations, and moderated an engaging diplomacy panel.

Paulina has been surrounded by great mentors like her mother or her current and former boss, who shaped her personality for the better and helped her overcome adversity. In her personal life, her role model is her mother. Her mother has taught her that the two most important things in life are accomplishing personal goals and making time for family and friends. This piece of advice, according to Paulina, can only serve to amplify one’s success in one’s professional life. Her current and former boss have been a source of inspiration for Paulina, too, through the way they empower their teams, exhibit integrity, and give voice to their employees. She emphasizes that her former boss was very influential because she always told her in Spanish “El ‘no’ ya lo tienes”, which essentially translates to “you already have a ‘no’”. Basically, what the phrase is attempting to represent is to not be afraid of failure and to take the initiative to accomplish one’s goals; otherwise, the alternative is inaction. For Paulina, as women leaders move forward in their career, it is important to dedicate time to creating one’s personal path to success: never stop learning, be open to new experiences, uplift others, and redefine success.



Sofia Pinedo is pursuing a double major in international affairs and political science with a minor in French at Kennesaw State University. She intends to graduate in Spring 2023. She interned with the Model United Nations (MUN) at Kennesaw and participated in the Voices of Youth “Future We Want” Video Campaign. Her goal is to pursue a master’s degree in international affairs.

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