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# The Asherah Foundation

## 2020 Annual Report

*Second Chance Scholarships For Women Around The World*





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## Letter from the Asherah Foundation Executive Director, Heather MacCleoud, PhD.

### **Individual Actions Create Global Change**

March 8, 2021

Happy International Women's Day!

On this day in 2016, the Asherah Foundation was brought into existence. Seeing the barriers preventing women around the world accessing the education they needed, we wondered "Who is helping them?". That question became "Why isn't anyone helping them?" which finally became: "Maybe we can help them?". 1,826 days later, that has turned into "We are helping them!" with the "We" including hundreds of individuals from over 40 different countries - including many who are reading this report!

- *Some have helped by donating US \$10.*
- *Some have helped by "liking" and sharing our social media posts.*
- *Some have helped by giving their time to review scholarship applications or by providing guidance on strategic global operations...the list goes on and on!*

Those helping are also the very women we created this organization to serve:

- *Mrs. Amani Jebiril, Scholarship Recipient, has both inspired us and, after her graduation, provided significant support in our work in the Arab world through serving on our Advisory Board.*
- *2018-2020 Scholarship Recipient Maryline Jabar continues to inspire us as well. As she has been working on her baccalaureate degree, she has created her own NGO to support local women in her hometown. This is on top of her job, her school, and taking care of her family!*
- *2019-2020 Scholarship Recipient (and graduate!) Abeer Ghamdhan has already published academic research to further support educational access for underserved women.*

## Letter from the Asherah Foundation Executive Director, Heather MacCleoud, PhD.

COVID-19 disrupted the work of our scholarship recipients, our donors, our interns, our board members, and everyone reading this letter. While the socio-economic-political situation for women around the world accessing higher education has been bleak, the COVID-19 pandemic has made it far worse. For our resilient scholarship recipients, the shutting down of higher education institutions has been one of the more directly felt impacts. However, economic burdens (financial instability, uncompensated labor), access to healthcare, and safety from gender-based violence also remain concerns to these women, and to billions of other women around the world.

While we cannot solve all these problems for all affected women, we can solve some of these problems for some women. These women in turn will help solve more problems for even more women.

The individuals profiled in this report represent thousands of individuals around the world who are “doing something” to make a change. We have heard stories of incredible resilience from our scholarship applicants from almost 40 countries. Our board members and interns come from almost 30 countries. Each individual act- whether it be liking a post on Facebook or donating \$10 monthly- contributes to addressing these horrendous global issues.

While each individual action may be a “drop in the bucket”, these drops build into waves that are capable of crashing over barriers, or rivers that carve canyons out of seemingly impenetrable rock.

Thank you to each of you for the many contributions you have made over the past five years that are building these waves. Although COVID-19 may have disrupted progress, it has also helped raise awareness of the issues that women around the world have been facing for centuries.

Thank you for all that you do to support women around the world!

All the best,

Heather

*Heather MacCleoud, PhD*

*Executive Director & CEO*

*The Asherah Foundation*

5 Years with Asherah: Highlights



**16 SCHOLARSHIPS  
OFFERED**



**5 DEGREES  
COMPLETED**



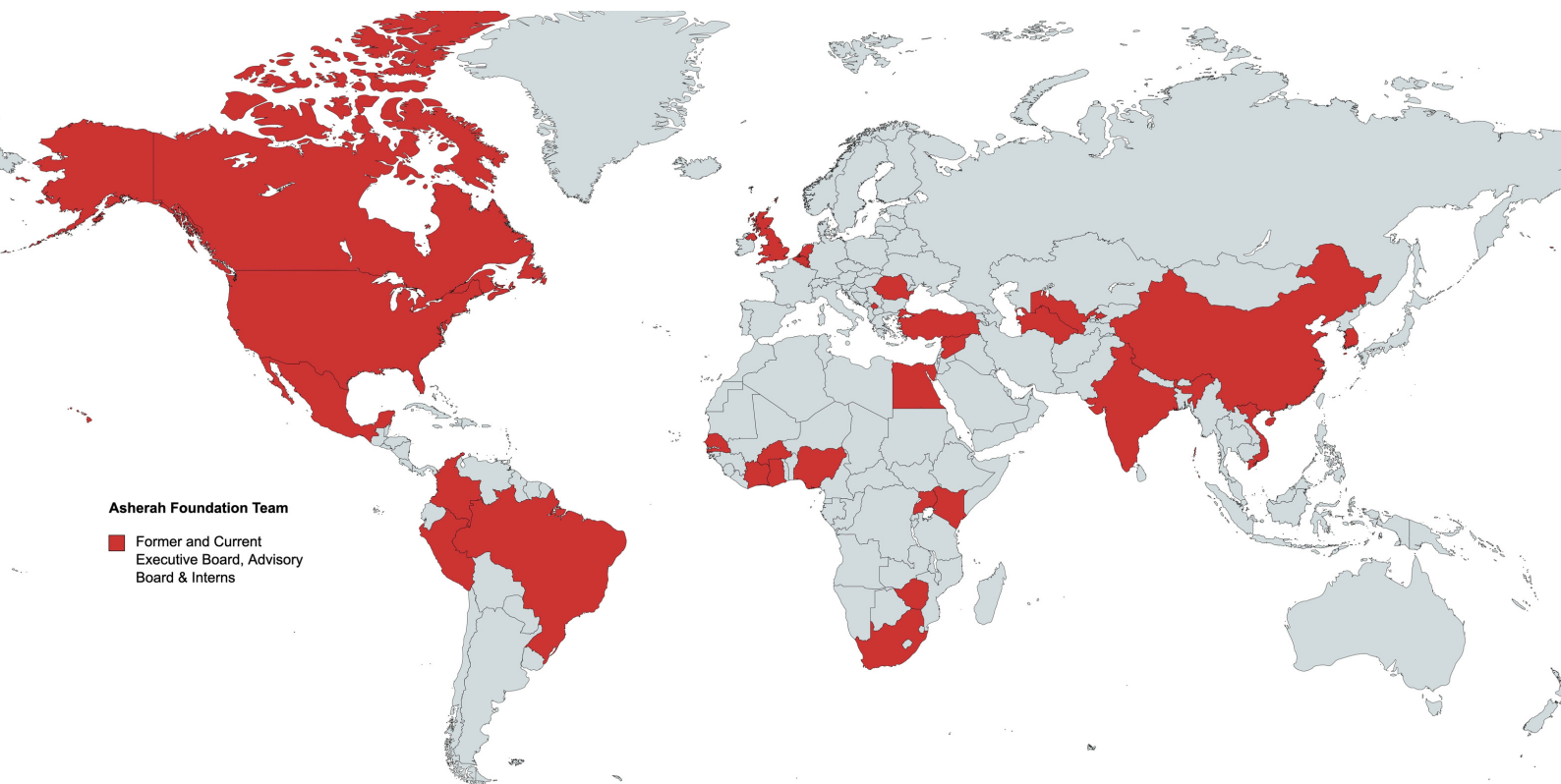
**40+ COUNTRIES  
REPRESENTED**



**\$36,480  
RAISED**

## 5 Years with Asherah: Global Representation

Ever since the Asherah Foundation was created in 2016, we have had the honor to celebrate diversity, thanks to our colleagues from all over the world, who have passionately supported our foundation's mission. We are proud to announce that over the past 5 years our colleagues have represented us in over 20 different countries.



Map of former and actual Asherah colleagues (interns, Executive and Advisory board members)

5 Years with Asherah Feature Story:  
Dr. Maklin Al-Ahmadi



**Dr. Maklin Al-Ahmadi has been our scholarship recipient since 2018. In November 2020 she has successfully received her doctorate degree in Economics, from the Institute for Arab Research and Studies, in Egypt.**

*"I spent today preparing my daughter for her exams, and it was the bedtime but I couldn't sleep. I spent three hours after midnight thinking about you, all you have done for me was bursting in my head. Today I can tell you to open your memorial album and post my photo there with pride, I have gotten a PhD with FIRST Class HONOR. I defended my thesis on November 25th, but during this week I was tired and dazed, the announcement of the result was echoing in my ears all the time. I was wondering how could a shattered woman, a single mother coming from a raging country, get such thing. I am sure you bet on me and defended me many times. I watched your tireless efforts in every occasion to help other woman around the world, all I can say is I admire you. Thank you can not be enough."*

(Maklin, November 2020 scholarship update)

*"As a woman from Yemen, I feel that I have lived a constant war since I was born, just because I was born a woman. Women in my country are guilty for no reason and are deprived of many rights, the most important being the right to education."*

(Maklin, 2018 Scholarship Application Essay)

## 5 Years with Asherah Feature Story: Ms. Amani Jebril

**Ms. Amani Jebril was one of our first scholarship recipients, receiving support during 2016 and 2017. She successfully completed her master's degree in Water and Environmental Science, from Birzeit University, in Palestine, and is now a consultant in water and renewable energy.**

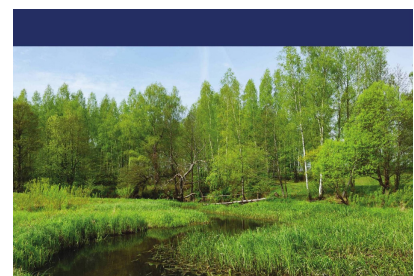
Ms. Amani Jebril started her journey by becoming a science teacher in Palestine, where she inspired her students to take science education to a different level, mentoring them to take part in local and even in national competitions. In addition to changing the way students viewed the scientific world, Ms. Jebril helped develop scientific initiatives at the school, such as using alternative energy sources in order to address larger issues in the community. While her accomplishments as an educator were impressive, she saw the larger problems faced by those living in Palestine, namely environmental pollution and water shortages. She realized that women and children were the most affected by these conditions. She also realized that women were not well-represented in science – especially in environmental studies critical to addressing these issues. With the support of the Asherah Foundation, she returned to school and began researching ways to improve these environmental conditions that so terribly impacted women and children in her community.

As a result of her research, Ms. Jebril published the book "Bio-energy in Palestine between Reality and Potential" – a comprehensive study regarding bio-energy potential in Palestine, which can be found on Lambert Publishing's [official website](#).

*"And I noticed a problem documented by many feminist studies in the areas of environment and water, is that women and children are the most affected by water scarcity and pollution of the environment."*

*"In Palestine the majority of specialists in environmental and water issues are men. There may not be enough awareness of gender considerations. There is a serious need to strengthening gender in this sector, as well as for my occupational evolution, reflected in my character and my family and kids towards a better future."*

(Amani, 2016 Scholarship Application Essay )

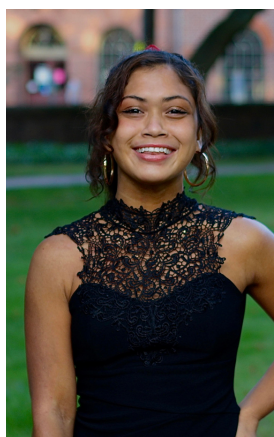


Amani Jebril  
Issam A. Al-Khatib  
**Bio-energy in Palestine  
between Reality and  
Potential**





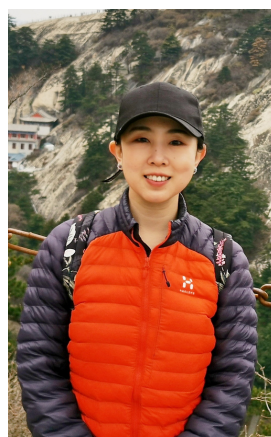
## 5 Years with Asherah: Voices



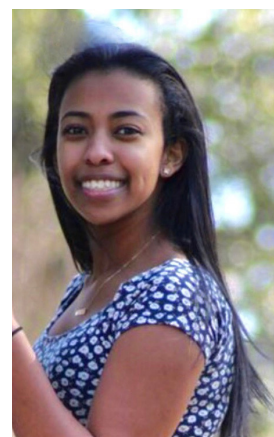
Celeste Chalkley



Chandler Nutall



Wen Zhou



Helen Tariku

"I found the Asherah Foundation on a whim one day and fell in love with their mission. During my internship, I not only learned a ton but was enveloped with open arms by a team from around the world. We shared the same goals and there was something really beautiful about that connection and drive. I only hope that with time the foundation will gain an increase in support and resources to extend to more applicants. I truly cannot say enough good things about Asherah Foundation and to this day I keep up with the social media updates on recipients."

**Celeste Chalkley, former 2020 intern**

"A quality education is so powerful because of the way that it expands your mind to imagine the seemingly unimaginable and develop creative solutions to remedy the issues impacting your community. I was interested in becoming an intern with the Asherah Foundation because I wanted to be part of a dedicated team of individuals who are passionate about making education more accessible."

**Chandler Nutall, former 2020 intern**

"My time in the Asherah Foundation brings me a sense of belonging and confidence to overcome obstacles in my career and my life. Working with teams on exploring potential funding partnerships in DC and other regions, I have deepened the knowledge and understanding of women's education, the challenges and opportunities we face."

**Wen Zhou, former 2018 intern**

"I am a firm believer in the educational and cultural values that the Asherah Foundation has to offer and its mission to enact changes for women around the world. I didn't have a lot of experience doing work that expands beyond the US, so gaining international experience and getting to work with such a diverse team was truly eye-opening and fascinating."

**Helen Tariku, former 2020 intern**

## 5 Years With Asherah: Voices



"My time at Asherah will forever be a memorable experience. Asherah's mission is what made me want to become a part of this great organization. Studies show that women's education is an important step towards a more equitable world, but how can one become involved? Asherah gave me the opportunity to do something about it."

**Marily de Alba, former 2020 intern**

"I believe the work Heather and the organization are doing is sacred. There are not enough organizations helping women in higher education studies and as a scholarship recipient of a different scholarship, I know how much hope these women receive being given even a little help."

**Adar Kalter, former Advisory Board member**



"The Asherah Foundation supports women in their endeavors to obtain the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to change their communities by the means of providing them with valuable scholarships. I would say that the help Asherah Foundation provides to career-oriented women, who always had the dream to stand up for themselves and create their own identity in this world, is the best way to help someone."

**Swapan Kumar, former Executive Board member**

"When I found Asherah Foundation, I thought it would be a greater starting point in my career because of its strong mission and vision to serve women and provide them with a second chance to return to school. My time at Asherah Foundation was wonderful! It truly meant so much having a wonderful organization fully supporting me and the work I was producing and sharing, through social media channels."

**Matilda O. Izevbigie, former 2017 intern**



## 5 Years With Asherah: Voices



"Descending from a line of powerful women who finished their education in the midst of financial, familial, and political turmoil, I understand the value of education as an integral step to a more prosperous future. I have gained an abundance of skills— from running my first fundraising campaign to learning how to develop marketing strategies. Most importantly, my time with the Asherah Foundation led me to see how advocacy and education can lead to a direct and positive change in someone else's life."

**Tala Fahoum, current intern**

"Growing up, I also witnessed my mother's fight for a second chance to continue her higher education, and her strength and determination were always a source of hope for me. That has imprinted on me a strong sense of mission that encouraged me to support and applaud the development of each woman around me. What I enjoyed the most was the opportunity to learn from each one of our scholarship recipients' stories."

**Tayna Baptista Ferreira, former 2020 intern**



"I admire the Asherah Foundation for its commitment to supporting second chances. I think continuing to support women in education during a time when they are disproportionately affected is important work, and I want to keep raising awareness and fostering stronger communities, cultivating more positive and sustainable impacts on communities through advocacy."

**Adela Arriola, current intern**

"Asherah Foundation involvement started for me with a simple belief to make the world a better place for others. This belief alone is enough to make all the pieces of the puzzle come together. Even when you think that you cannot help the world, you ALWAYS can! Get involved and don't be afraid that you may not know everything."

**Shariq Khan, Scholarship Review Committee member**



## 5 Years With Asherah: Looking Forward

Over the next five years, we hope that we can create waves strong enough to provide scholarships to 100 more women. These 100 women will create resources, develop research, and change policies so that millions of women will have even improved access to education.

We do not say “millions” blithely. We mean literally millions of women. Consider: The amazing women we have supported so far have already raised the educational levels of their families and communities. They have developed research, informed policies, and trained other women to support access to education for women in the Middle East, in West Africa, in Latin America, and in Sub-Saharan Africa as well. The work of the Asherah Foundation has informed the work of the UN around data collection and analysis for SDGs 4 and 5 concerning access to education and gender equity around the world.

With all of our support, these 100 women will create resources, develop research, and change policies so that thousands, and then millions of women will have greater access to education. We hope that you will join us in this endeavor and help us provide second chance scholarships for women around the world!

2020 at a glance: Highlights



**3 SCHOLARSHIPS OFFERED**



**2 DEGREES COMPLETED**



**44 INTERNS**



**3 NEW EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS**



**\$9,984 RAISED**



**\$34.90 AVERAGE DONATION**

2020 at a glance: COVID-19

**COVID-19 IMPACT:**



**COLLEGES AND  
UNIVERSITIES AROUND THE  
WORLD SHUT DOWN**

**COVID-19 IMPACT:**



**SHIFT TO ONLINE  
LEARNING**

**COVID-19 IMPACT:**



**HEALTH AND SAFETY**

**COVID-19 IMPACT:**



**ONGOING GLOBAL  
CHALLENGES, WORSENERD**

## 2020 at a glance: COVID-19

### **Impact 1: Colleges and universities around the world shut down**

- Two (2) of our scholarship recipients for Academic Year (AY) 2019–2020 are only now (in Spring 2021) finishing the exams from that previous academic year.
- Two (2) of our AY 2019–2020 recipients delayed completion of their final degree requirements until late in Fall 2020.

### **Impact 2: Shift to Online Learning**

- One (1) of our scholarship recipients from AY 2019–2020 has been only able to access her coursework via her mobile phone. She did not own a laptop or computer. For context, in her region (Sub-Saharan Africa):
  - 89% of learners (216 million individuals) do not have a household computer
  - 82% do not have household internet, and - 11% (26 million) are not covered by mobile networks (UNESCO)
- For those who do have internet access, they may not have sufficient internet speed. For example, university students in Malaysia were worried that their Internet connection couldn't support online learning. Fortunately, our recipient attending the University of Malaysia, Perlis was able to successfully complete her studies after significant delay.

### **Impact 3: Ongoing Global Challenges Worsened by COVID-19**

- "Across the globe...women spend more than six (6) hours per day in domestic tasks and family care activities." This has increased due to school closures, quarantine, family members falling ill, etc. -WorldBank
- "researchers estimate that women's unpaid contributions to health care equal 2.35% of global GDP - almost USD\$1.5 trillion." -UN ("Nearly 70% of community health workers in Sub-Saharan Africa are women, but most receive little or no compensation for their care duties." -UN)
- "[W]omen earn less, save less, hold less secure jobs, are more likely to be employed in the informal sector, and are more likely to lose their sources of income due to impacts of COVID-19." -UN

### **Impact 4: Health & Safety**

- "Violence against women and girls is increasing globally as the COVID-19 pandemic combines with economic and social stresses and measures to restrict contact and movement." -UN
- Women have reduced access to information about COVID-19, economic, and social resources due to differences in cell phone ownership, internet access, level of education, etc. -UN

2020 at a glance:  
Scholarship Recipients

Due to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Asherah Foundation focused its resources in 2020 on continuing to support the same women it had supported in 2019 so that they could continue their educational journeys with as little interruption as possible.

**Maklin Al-Ahmadi, PhD in Economics**

**Institute for Arab Research and Studies, Egypt**

Maklin obtained her PhD at the end of 2020, successfully overcoming the difficulties brought by Covid-19 restrictions, which postponed her thesis defense for 4 months. In her thesis, Dr. Al-Ahmadi researched monetary policy instruments and their impact on the inflation rates of Egypt.



**Maryline Jarbar, Environmental Health Science,  
Stella Maris Polytechnic University, Liberia**

Maryline is dedicated to the development of her country and the increase of opportunities for disadvantaged children and women in Liberia, and plans to use her degree to empower these communities. Through her advocacy, she hopes to contribute to the progress of literacy for all, better health conditions, and clean drinking water.



**Abeer Ghamdhan, Human Development and Techno  
Communication, Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia**

Originally from Yemen, Abeer finalized her studies in Malaysia, at the end of 2020. Despite constant delays in her master's degree program due to Covid-19, she has successfully submitted her thesis and published two academic articles: one on Malaysian students volunteering attitudes, and another on teaching quality in Yemeni universities.





2020 at a glance:  
Messages of Encouragement

Messages of encouragement and support for our scholarship recipients, applicants, and for every woman around the world seeking a second chance.

“Poet & civil rights activist, Maya Angelou said, "Each time a woman stands up for herself, without knowing it possibly, without claiming it, she stands up for all women." Your strength, determinism and passion to survive and prosper, in the face of the many hardships you have experienced in your lives, inspires me to reach my highest potential and continue being of service to others. Thank you." **Adar Kalter, former Advisory Board member**

"I have spent more than a year and a half with Asherah, and the reason behind my lengthy stay was to continue supporting you, our constituents. Reading your stories have touched my heart, and made me understand how resilient women could be. Fighting with abuses and rooted social norms, raising above limiting beliefs, while still staying kind and nurturing, takes courage, and you, are for sure, some of the most courageous women I know.

**Silvia Pencu, former Senior Management intern**

"In their ability to overcome all odds, our constituents are setting a precedent for women everywhere that post-secondary education is attainable— inspiring many others to continue reaching for their goals! **Tala Fahoum, former 2020 intern**

"I would like to send a special congratulations message to Dr. Al-Ahmadi on her graduation, and to remind everyone of the women we serve that, just as my mother was to me, you are the source of hope and pride to our future generations and our communities!"

**Tayna Baptista Ferreira, former 2020 intern**

"You make this job and all the hard work that we do worth it; you are our motivators and never give up because there are people out there fighting for you and are on your side. Keep staying strong and pushing through it all." **Helen Tariku, former 2020 intern**

"We cannot decide where we were born; we cannot avoid and calculate risks in our lives in the future. What we can do is to face the challenges, conquer the difficulties and live a hopeful and meaningful life. Believe in yourselves and believe in The Asherah Foundation."

**Wen Zhou, former 2018 intern**

## 2020 at a glance: Achievements

Despite the disruptive effects of the global pandemic, thanks to our team's passion and dedication, we closed off 2020 with important achievements. We are happy to announce that Asherah Foundation has been offered a offered a Google AdWords Grant worth up to \$10,000 in services.



We are proud to share with you that we have also achieved the 2020 Gold Seal of Transparency on GuideStar. For more information on our organization's practices, as well as financial statements, please see our official GuideStar [profile](#).

We would also like to highlight that in 2020 the Asherah Foundation held its inaugural Facebook Live concert, which with your support, helped us raise over \$400! Our gratitude goes to Grace Lundy for sharing her music with us so that we might serve even more women around the world. Thank you!



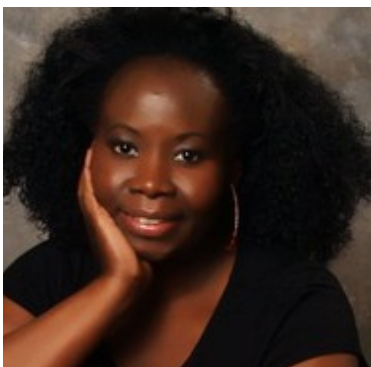
## The Asherah Foundation Team: Executive Board Members



[LinkedIn Profile](#)

### **Heather MacCleoud, PhD** **Founder & Executive Director**

Heather collaborates with higher education institutions, governments, and non-governmental organizations to develop strategic international partnerships in support of improving access to, and quality of higher education around the world.



[LinkedIn Profile](#)

### **Fadima Savadogo** **President, Executive Board & Chair, Constituent Engagement**

Fadima is an experienced knowledge management professional. Currently at the International Finance Cooperation (IFC), she has also worked for the World Bank and World Learning. She is originally from Burkina Faso.



[LinkedIn Profile](#)

### **Juan G. Alanis** **President-elect, Executive Board & Co-Chair, Global Development**

Originally from Mexico, Juan is an experienced strategic planning professional, with vast experience in Latin America, as well as in Europe. He is the founder and CEO of Grupo Azimuth, and has previously held key leadership positions for The Estée Lauder Companies, P&G, and Samsonite.

## The Asherah Foundation Team: Executive Board Members



[LinkedIn Profile](#)

**Tara Van Der Hoorn, MSc**  
**Secretary & Vice President; Chair, Board Development Committee;**  
**Chair, Public Relations & Marketing Committee**

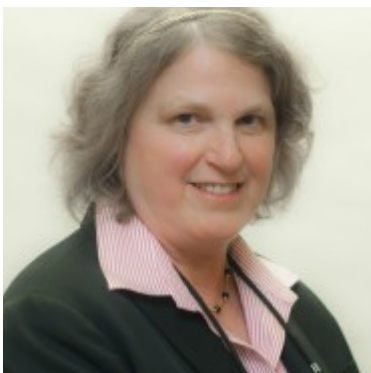
Tara is based in the Netherlands, and is currently the Global Director of Membership for AACSB International, a global non-profit association connecting business schools, students, and industry. She received her MSc from the University of Amsterdam Business School.



[LinkedIn Profile](#)

**Deepika Warriar**  
**Vice President & Chair, Development Committee**

Deepika is an experienced marketing and branding professional, currently the CMO of Diageo India. She has previously held important leadership positions within the PepsiCo corporation in Dubai, as well as in India, where she is originally from.



[LinkedIn Profile](#)

**Dale Hill, MPA**  
**Vice President & Treasurer, Executive Board; Chair, Finance Committee**

Dale joined the Board of the Asherah Foundation in 2017. She has a distinguished career in evaluation (M&E), management, aid policy, as well as international economic development for the World Bank and many other NGOs. She received her MPA from Princeton University.

## The Asherah Foundation Team: Executive Board Members



[LinkedIn Profile](#)

### **Haley Carter** **Member, Executive Board**

Haley is a global business leader, a U.S. Naval Academy graduate, and former Marine Corps Officer. She is also a retired American professional soccer player, and has coached the Afghanistan Women's National Football Team and the Antigua and Barbuda Women's National Team.



[LinkedIn Profile](#)

### **Katherine Marshall, MPA** **Member, Executive Board**

Katherine is a global leader in international development. She currently serves as the Executive Director at World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD). Previously, she was a Senior Advisor at the World Bank, and a Trustee of Princeton University. She received her MPA in Public Policy from Princeton University.

The Asherah Foundation is currently in the process of welcoming new Executive and Advisory Board Members. Our warmest wishes go to everyone joining us. We are thankful for your interest in our organization and the mission we are serving, and are excited to welcome you on board! We are looking forward to working with you to raise awareness and help more women access higher education.

## The Asherah Foundation Team: Former Executive & Advisory Members

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who has previously served on our Executive and Advisory Boards! Thank you for supporting women around the world to access higher education!

**Sara Woodruff, PhD**- Vice President & Chair-elect, Executive Board

**Swapan Kumar**- Vice President & Chair, Board Development Committee; Secretary, Executive Board

**Kerstin Sorensen, PhD**- Founding Officer, Executive Board

**Gabrielle Malfatti, EdD**- Founding Officer, Executive Board; Advisory Board

**Ozlem Ozyon, PhD**- Founding Member, Executive Board

**Alexsis Blakely**- Vice President & Member-at-large of Executive Board

**Gaurav Chandra, MD, MBA**- Vice President & Chair, Board Development Committee; Secretary, Executive Board

**Robert Definis, EdD**- Vice President & Co-Chair, Development Committee

**Stephanie Fenniri**- Vice President & Chair, Youth Engagement Committee

**DeAnna Alonso, MSSW**- President & Chair of Advisory Board; Founding Member, Executive Board

**Amani Jebril**- Advisory Board; Scholarship Recipient 2016, 2017

**Arzo Kaderi**- Advisory Board

**Linda Lou O'Connor, PhD**- Member, Executive Board, Advisory Board

**Aimana El-Bahtity**- Advisory Board

**Cynthia Bleu-Lainé**- Advisory Board (Founding Member)

**Josephine Osea**- Advisory Board

**Nyaradzo Mashayamombe**- Advisory Board (Founding Member)

**Adar Kalter**- Advisory Board

## The Asherah Foundation Team: 2020 Interns

The Asherah Foundation would like to thank everyone who has dedicated time and energy to making 2020 another successful year, despite the global pandemic. We are grateful to our 2020 interns, who have enthusiastically worked on projects to support women's access to higher education around the world. Thank you!

Aman Dosanjh, Senior Management  
Jenna Thoretz, Senior Management  
Nina Bernardo, Senior Management  
Silvia Pencu, Senior Management  
Adela Arriola  
Anna Turcott  
Angela Grieco  
Ariana Habibi  
Brian Hung  
Caroline Salzman  
Catherine Blotevogel  
Celeste Chalkley  
Chandler Nutall  
Clarisse Liclic  
Dang Linh Nguyen  
Danny Germino-Watnick  
Evelyn Chan  
Hannah Adamson  
Hannah Darnton  
Helen Tariku  
Hussaina Abdullahi  
Jamilette Arango Loza

Julia Taladay  
Kimberly Appel  
Krystal Kilhart  
Maggie English  
Marily De Alba-Gonzales  
Mary Muldoon  
Olisa Bajgora  
Olivia Mill  
Onalee Duane  
Qiyu Li  
Rachel Levine  
Riley McKinzie  
Rophiat Bello  
Sannidhi Shashikiran  
Seyeong Lim  
Shurong Zhu  
Tala Fahoum  
Tania Perales  
Tayná Baptista Ferreira  
Xier Li  
Zeynep Calisir  
Zheren Li

Connect with us!

For collaborations, recommendations, or any other inquiries we invite you to connect with us online, or to send us an email at [info@asherahfoundation.org](mailto:info@asherahfoundation.org)



**ASHERAH  
FOUNDATION**