

Aug. 31, 2007

Roosevelt launches program to advance women in real estate

By [Eddie Baeb](#)

(Crain's) — Roosevelt University this week named the first class of students in the Goldie B. Wolfe Miller Women Leaders in Real Estate Initiative, a program designed to help advance the careers of women in commercial real estate.

The new program provides a stipend or scholarship, career counseling and placement assistance, forums and networking events for as many as 10 women a year who are working toward a master's degree at Roosevelt's Chicago School of Real Estate in the Walter E. Heller College of Business. Each student is also assigned a mentor to provide additional career guidance and tutelage.

Funded by a three-year, \$300,000 commitment from the Jack and Goldie Wolfe Miller Foundation, the program was the brainchild of Ms. Wolfe Miller, a Roosevelt graduate who started her own brokerage firm in 1989 that grew into one of the nation's largest woman-owned commercial real estate companies before she sold it nine years ago.

"My hope is that we could provide these young women some of the things I didn't have when I started in the industry — like mentors and a good support system and networking opportunities," says Ms. Wolfe Miller, who is now president of Millbrook Corporate Real Estate Services. "I want more women in high levels of the professional arena in the real estate industry."

A 2005 nationwide survey by the Commercial Real Estate Women (CREW) Network, whose local chapter is providing many of the mentors, found some evidence of a glass ceiling in the industry. Only 23% of women with more than 20 years experience surveyed held the title of president, chief executive or chief financial officer, vs. 44% of men surveyed with more than 20 years experience.

Roosevelt's new program kicked off Tuesday with a breakfast meeting where the students, known as fellows, met their mentors.

"Establishing that relationship between successful women in real estate and the fellow is so important," says Jon DeVries, director of Roosevelt's Marshall Bennett Institute of Real Estate. "We believe this is a program that's going to make a big difference in the industry." He says two forums and a spring fund-raiser are being planned in hopes of expanding the program.

The eight students selected for the program are: Wendy Mingin of the John Buck Co.; Mysty Harris of the Illinois Housing Development Authority; Renee Huber of Citizens Financial Group/Charter One Bank; Paige Steers of Jones Lang LaSalle Inc.; Kimberly Taylor, Paige Staffing Agency; Sevara Sherman of Keller Williams Realty; Sacia Fowler, a full-time student, and Carrie Wagener of Owen Wagener & Co.