



**WOMEN FOR
ECONOMIC AND
LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT**

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**Central Ohio's Women for Economic and Leadership Development (WELD)
Hires First Executive Director**

Former Nationwide Financial VP Barb Smoot to Lead Expanding Organization

Columbus, Ohio (TBD, 2011) – Columbus-based Women for Economic and Leadership Development (WELD) has hired Barb Smoot to serve as its first Executive Director.

WELD is a non-profit organization founded in 2003 that strives to increase the number of women serving in leadership positions in business and government in central Ohio and raise the visibility of their accomplishments.

With Smoot as Executive Director, WELD members will see a greater breadth and diversity of programming and events, including more leadership training opportunities, greater community outreach to corporate and government partners and their employees, and enhanced visibility for WELD and its members.

An active member of WELD since 2007, Smoot joins WELD following a 21-year tenure at Nationwide Financial in a variety of roles, including VP of Business Development for In-Retirement and VP and Product Manager for Individual Life Insurance. A graduate of Leadership Columbus, her experience includes board service for the King Arts Complex and St. Joseph Montessori School, membership in the Society of Actuaries, and a degree in physics from Amherst College.

Retaining Smoot, a business executive and women's advocate, marks a major milestone in WELD's history and underscores its commitment to increase the number of central Ohio women in business and government leadership roles.

Through the creation of the Executive Director position, WELD plans to increase its reach within existing membership to provide leadership development and business growth opportunities, while also expanding its network by attracting new members to the organization.

Smoot will serve as an additional "touch point" for corporate members to identify developmental opportunities for their associates that align with individual company strategies, maximizing the value and impact of WELD partnerships. Moreover, WELD can build on its progress in collaborating strategically with other central Ohio organizations that share WELD's focus on women professionals.



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About WELD (Women for Economic and Leadership Development)

Founded in 2003, WELD is a non-profit organization that strives to increase the number of women serving in leadership positions in business and government in central Ohio and raise the visibility of their accomplishments. WELD focuses on economic and leadership issues facing women in profit and non-profit organizations and builds special programs, events, and a community to support leadership development and business growth. WELD offers distinct programming for women in medium-sized or large corporations and organizations as well as women who own their own businesses or work in small organizations. Programming provides both personal and professional development advice and advances the dialogue around women's issues, challenges and opportunities.

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