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# Bank of America, Women Who Code Partner to Debut Charlotte Chapter of Tech Education Org.

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The crowd at the first-ever Women Who Code Charlotte event. Courtesy photo.

By Courtney Gabrielson

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[Women Who Code](#), the global nonprofit that looks to "empower women in technology," now has a Charlotte presence, thanks to a new partnership with Bank of America.

Inside an auditorium at One Bank of America Center, representatives from both Women Who Code and BofA announced the move during the Charlotte chapter's first meeting. The gathering was then followed by a Hackathon, where attendees were encouraged to provide feedback on how Women Who Code could best serve its forthcoming Charlotte members.

Charlotte Inno was able to speak with both Jennifer Manry, the chief technology officer for Workspace Services at Bank of America (who was also instrumental in facilitating the partnership) and Shanna Gregory, global leadership director for Women Who Code, about the move, why it is important and the goals the two entities had for Charlotte's chapter of the organization.

But first, some context. Women Who Code uses everything from events to conferences, scholarships to mentorships, job boards and free resources, to ensure those looking to enrich their technological skills — or even begin obtaining them — have the opportunity to do so. It's in more than 60 cities around the world, and there are more locations on the docket.

"We inspire women to accelerate their careers," Gregory explained. "[It's] about women who are working on their careers already ... [we're] not focused on the pipeline."

"There's a need for it. ... I don't think there's going to be any trouble getting membership sustained."

Instead, Women Who Code wants to lead more tech-focused employees up the developmental ladder, thus allowing companies to retain and mature those staff members it already has.

Bank of America, alternately, considers providing greater opportunities for its female employees, as well as enriching their technical education, a "cultural imperative." There's a legacy to uphold, after all; the company was named one of AnitaB.org's "Top Companies for Women Technologists" [in both 2018](#) and [2019](#), the first time a large company has done so consecutively.

And across the board, there's a general need to ensure the right people have the abilities necessary for increasingly in-demand roles.

"There are millions of jobs that we don't have enough [potential employees] to take them," Manry said, who also serves as Women Who Code's executive sponsor.

And alternately, not enough women in the type of roles that have the kind of perspective women need to grow their careers.

"It's really hard for women in the tech industry to see themselves reflected in the typical Silicon Valley engineer," Manry added.

Women Who Code (and its corporate partners) want to change that.

It was Manry who ended up facilitating the creation of the Charlotte chapter, having worked with the nonprofit to launch another offshoot in a past professional role.

"I'm really passionate about this kind of work," Manry said. "I did it because I love it."

And Manry and Gregory want Women Who Code members to love it, too. They discussed how the local group will provide opportunities for networking events, mentorship and more — and their shared desire to ensure the group speaks to the Charlotte tech community as a whole.

"This is not just for Bank of America," Manry said.

It's for everyone — men and women alike — who are in Charlotte and want to bolster, well, women who code.

"The way the chapter is set up ... makes it really approachable," Gregory said. Need a soft entry into the tech world? No problem. Support, encouragement and opportunity are on the menu (which, by the way, is free).

While the chapter is only fledgling, both Gregory and Manry said the response has been positive. After all, they were already getting emailed requests to have Women Who Code set up shop in the Queen City, long before it officially did so.

"Everything I've seen is a lot of enthusiasm," Manry said. "There's a need for it. ... I don't think there's going to be any trouble getting membership sustained."

And membership — from event attendees to the mentors and volunteers who help power them — is an element that the duo said would be integral metric for success. Not in terms of numbers, necessarily; while those are important, they aren't as valuable for the team as, say, having a diverse crowd of women from across the tech industry. Or dynamic representation from all corners of the local tech ecosystem.

Increased diversity is also beneficial to the group as it means more event offerings, which in turn bolsters a more colorful suite of educational and professional opportunities for members, Gregory added.

All told, the first success for the group appears to be its very existence. It says something about Charlotte's moment as a city, and what it hopes to become.

As for Manry, that's already clear.

"We're a tech town," she said. "We've arrived."

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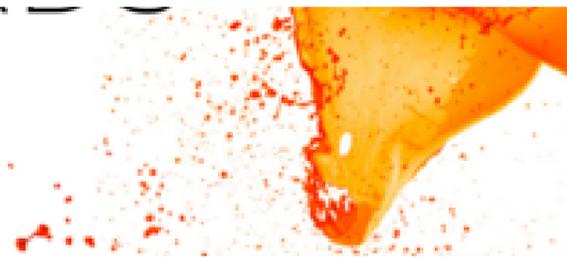
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