In an effort to provide professional development for women in athletics, the Coast Guard Academy held its 5th Annual Women’s LeadHERship Symposium in January.

To begin the program, Tim Fitzpatrick, Coast Guard Academy Director of Athletics and Captain Melissa L. Rivera, Coast Guard Academy Commandant of Cadets, welcomed the 100 attendees to the symposium. Following the welcome was keynote speaker, Sandy Barbour, second year Director of Athletics at Penn State University. “Any time that you have an opportunity to bring women together where we can share and all learn from one another is always important,” said Barbour. “We all have something to learn from each other, particularly younger women coming into intercollegiate athletics. They have an opportunity to learn from shared experiences and get exposed to things that they might not even have known were available to them. Only good things happen from events like this.”

Additionally, the symposium included a coach and an administrator panel. The first coach panel featured Nancy Stevens, head field hockey coach at UConn; Robin Salters, head volleyball coach at the University of New Haven and Jill Cook, head swimming and diving coach at Western Connecticut. The administrator panel followed, and featured Susan Bassett, Director of Athletics at Ithaca; Kelly Mehrten, Deputy Athletics Director and COO at the University of Maryland and Christine Lowthert, Associate Director of Athletics & Recreation at Assumption College.

To close out the afternoon, attendees participated in breakout sessions and roundtable discussions. The symposium continues to offer women in all points of their career an opportunity to engage with and learn from other women in athletics. According to Coast Guard Senior Women’s Administrator and head softball coach Donna Koczajowski, who has been coaching for 18 years, “I will always continue to learn something new every year at this event, that features intelligent speakers and promotes excellent conversation about athletics.”

For their efforts in providing women in athletics a platform to engage with others, and an opportunity to develop professionally, the Coast Guard Academy is this month’s recipient of the Diversity Spotlight.