Dear FWA Members, Sponsors and Friends,

I drafted this letter earlier this week, intending it to open with greetings for the New Year. However, the events that occurred in the Capitol Building this week have caused me to reflect and revise my message to you all. It was profoundly disturbing to watch the sacred democratic ritual of counting of the electoral votes be interrupted by rioters, leading to chaos and loss of life.

Throughout 2020, we have become increasingly aware of not only the economic impact that COVID has had on our society, but also the underlying inequality that sadly still exists. The political divide in the country is very real and the tone of the dialogue has been rancorous at best. It would be easy to give up on this new year before it really begins.

However, as Bono said, “America it’s not just a country, it’s an idea.” I believe deeply in this idea – the idea that a great democratic nation can be built and flourish with generations of citizens from a variety of backgrounds and beliefs. One of our greatest gifts to the world stemming from this idea has been the process and execution of the peaceful transition of power. That gift was tested this week, but after watching the electoral count resume, I am encouraged that constitutional protocols and procedures prevailed. There will be a transition along with more diverse representation in government.

Is there going to be continued volatility? Yes. Will we get through it? Yes – because we believe we can! Over the past year, the FWA devoted its efforts to ensuring our mentees, members, and the wider finance community were supported with programming geared to enhance professional skills and market knowledge. We will continue to be true to our focus of advancing women – all women – in this industry. We have accomplished much but recognize there is still much to do to ensure business, and our country lives up to this noble idea.

So, as we start this new year, let us be resolute to continue to make a positive difference in our industry and community. Resolutions tend to be forgotten.

I, together with the FWA Leadership and Board, hope you join us virtually in
celebrating this new year on Tuesday, January 12th at our 2021 Benefit. Help us continue our mission, support our mentees, and bring you programming that will make a difference in your career! Registration closes on Monday for this fun, interactive event, so be sure to sign up!

This time last year, I outlined issues we would be facing in the new decade: the increasing role of women in the economy, and the following unpredictable threats around: market stability, inflation, global trade, oil, Brexit, artificial intelligence, and regulation. While these still exist, they have been totally overshadowed by what I had NOT predicted – COVID19 and social upheaval.

At the start of this new year, global focus has been on the roll-out of the COVID-19 virus and thoughts on the full re-opening of the global economy once populations have been inoculated. Markets continue to be resilient, due to not only vaccine optimism, but also monetary stimulus. However, as we can see anecdotally in our own neighborhoods, the markets are not the economy. These two diverge significantly when there has been monetary and fiscal stimulus to the degree we have seen this past year. It can suppress volatility and interest rates, giving time for the economy to re-balance and pick up on its own. We last saw this during the 2008/2009 financial crisis.

2) The FWA

I am pleased to say that the FWA’s Giving Tuesday initiative was a great success! We surpassed our goal not only in terms of funds raised but also in terms of number of donors. Thank you to the Development and Marketing Committees for all your outstanding work on this project and a special thank you to those of you who supported these efforts.

Normally, our Benefit is held in December, but this year, we have moved it to January 12th in order to kick off the new year. It will be an interactive virtual event – come learn a bit more about wine and Dutch cheese. We are grateful to our corporate sponsors of this event: ING Bank, Investors Bank, and New York Life.

Speaking of all things Dutch, it is very apparent that our International Business Conference cannot be held in the Netherlands this Spring, given the ongoing global travel restrictions. I know this is a huge disappointment to many, including me. We will be working to infuse information on the Dutch culture and economy in our programming, as we are with the Benefit. Stay tuned for more details!

Other upcoming events include:

January 19th – Influencing and Negotiating for Women: Everything You Ever Wanted to Learn in an Hour

January 21st – Developing Personal Resilience: Learning to Thrive in a Time of Enormous Change and Ambiguity
January 26th – Supply Chain Management & Trade Financing


February 2nd – Letting Go of LIBOR 2.0 – Countdown to December 31, 2021

3.) You

January is always the Reset/Resolution Month. I ask each of you to be resolute in your determination to invest in yourself – both professionally and personally.

1. **Join:** The FWA's membership is an investment in yourself and your career. In addition to helping you, the membership fee helps to support the terrific work we do in advancing and mentoring young women in the industry.

2. **Participate:** With all events presented virtually, it is much easier to participate in the FWA's programming. Be sure to balance career development programming with market-based events to keep your industry knowledge up-to-date. Pick at least one topic you know nothing about, totally out of your usual area of expertise.

3. **Commit:** Being part of a committee is the best way to get the most out of your FWA membership because it helps build lasting connections and leadership skills.

I look forward to virtually seeing you all at the Benefit and upcoming programs. Happy New Year!

Simone G. Vinocour
FWA President 2019-2021
The FWA: Accelerating the Leadership and Success of Women across the financial community in all industries, by advancing careers, fostering alliances and preparing the current and next generation of professionals.

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