$2.5M Award Enables the Launch of Wharton's Workforce Futures Lab, Led by Economist Corinne Low

New lab will study how workers and employers can thrive amid technological and demographic change

PHILADELPHIA, October 8, 2026 — Wharton has been awarded $2.5 million to launch the Workforce Futures Lab led by Dr. Corinne Low, a new research initiative focused on one of the defining economic challenges of the coming decades: how to empower workers and equip employers to thrive as technology, demographics and the demands of work rapidly change.

The award is part of the $60 million Workplace Innovation Now (WIN) Challenge, led by Aspen Digital, a program of the Aspen Institute, and supported by Pivotal, a group of organizations founded by Melinda French Gates. The challenge seeks to discover and scale transformative workplace solutions that help women thrive and everyone win in a rapidly changing workplace.

The launch comes as new data reveals uneven progress for women at work. Census Bureau figures released in September show that women working full time, year-round earned 83.9% of men's median earnings in 2025, up from 80.6% in 2024. Yet the 2025 Women in the Workplace study from McKinsey and LeanIn.Org found that women held 29% of C-suite roles at participating companies, unchanged from 2024. "The data shows that women's work is not optional for the economy. And yet, we're still operating from outdated models where jobs are designed for a male breadwinner for a stay-at-home wife," said Low, Associate Professor of Business Economics and Public Policy at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School. "Firms need to innovate to make care work possible for all employees, and the research shows they can do that without sacrificing productivity."

The lab will bring together researchers and employers to develop and test practical solutions to workforce challenges in the United States while advancing a broader research agenda on the future of work globally. Its work will examine how companies can better attract, retain and develop talent; how workplace practices interact with employees' responsibilities outside of work; and how changes in technology and demographics are reshaping the opportunities and constraints workers face.

The funding will support a dedicated research team and the communication of findings to employers. By testing interventions in workplace settings, the lab aims to identify which changes improve women's career outcomes and help firms make better decisions about their policies and investments.

"Corinne's research has deepened our understanding of the barriers that shape women's careers," said Nancy Rothbard, Deputy Dean and David Pottruck Professor of Management at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. "This award will expand her ability to work directly with firms and test new solutions to make workplaces work for everyone."

About Corinne Low

Corinne Low is an economist and Associate Professor of Business Economics and Public Policy at the Wharton School, where she teaches an award-winning class on the economics of having it all. Her

research examines how gender, family, workplace structures and economic institutions shape people's opportunities and choices. Her work spans the United States and developing economies and has been published in leading journals including the *American Economic Review*, *Quarterly Journal of Economics* and *Journal of Political Economy*.

Low and her research have been featured in media outlets from *CBS Mornings* to *The New York Times* and profiled in *The Cut*, which called her "Emily Oster with a touch of Audre Lorde." Her first book, *Having It All: What Data Tells Us About Women's Lives and Getting the Most Out of Yours*, published by Flatiron, is a *USA Today* national bestseller and Amazon Best Book of the Year and is currently being translated into six languages. She regularly advises and speaks to Fortune 500 companies and teaches in Wharton's executive education program. She was named one of Poets&Quants' 40 Under 40 MBA Professors in 2024. Low received her Ph.D. in Economics from Columbia University and her B.S. in Economics and Public Policy from Duke University and previously worked at McKinsey & Company.

For more information about the WIN Challenge, visit winchallenge.org. To request an interview with Corinne Low, contact Rebecca Proulx or Mark Fortier.

Media Contacts
Rebecca Proulx

Fortier Public Relations
203.598.1300
rebecca@fortierpr.com

Mark Fortier
Fortier Public Relations
mark@fortierpr.com