



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WeCOACH Introduces Team of Staff Dedicated to MOVE *the* NUMBERS

October 14, 2022 – WeCOACH CEO, Vanessa Fuchs is proud to introduce several new hires whose unwavering commitment to the mission and vast experiences will impact and elevate the WeCOACH Community. Whitney Davis Showalter (Director of Leadership Events & Branding), Maria Lopez (Director of Member Experience, Engagement, & Inclusion), Vicki Brown (Manager of Membership Growth & Development), and Lizzy Ristano (Manager of Leadership Events & Strategic Relationships) join Team WeCOACH to serve an all-time record high number of members. In addition, Aviana Goode and Priyana Kalita will continue to provide support as vital members of the team.

Highlighted by athletic participation and coaching experience across numerous different sports and at every level of sport, this team of talent joins WeCOACH from not only different parts of the country, but the world. Their comprehensive educational backgrounds demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning and notably, three are NCAA Women Coaches Academy (WCA) graduates.

“We set out to build a team who have a heart for our mission and mirror the diverse and inspirational community of leaders, mentors, and role models who we serve. We have assembled a dream team who will work each day toward achieving the lofty vision and strategic goals established for WeCOACH. With our staff, events, and in all aspects of our organization, WeCOACH will strive to model and epitomize what support looks like for women in sports.” said Vanessa Fuchs, WeCOACH CEO.

Get to know [Team WeCOACH](#):



Whitney Davis Showalter (she/her), Director of Leadership Events & Branding

Born and raised in Southwest, Virginia, Whitney is a former Virginia Tech softball student-athlete and went on to work for her alma mater as a student and Volunteer Assistant before becoming the program’s first Director of Softball Operations. She also directed and coached a youth softball organization in the New River Valley (Virginia). Most recently, Whitney founded a lifestyle photography business. Whitney resides in Blacksburg with her

husband David, two children Camden & Chase, and fur baby Beau (English Bulldog). Whitney's creative talents and acute attention to detail will elevate all aspects of our transformational year-round programming and events offered by WeCOACH, including the premier NCAA Women Coaches Academy and Academy 2.0.



Maria Lopez (she/her), Director of Member Experience, Engagement, & Inclusion

Maria hails from Venezuela originally and moved to Florida where she was an All-American tennis student-athlete at Barry University in Miami. She went on to coach at her alma mater, becoming a two-time national coach of the year before pursuing coaching opportunities at Longwood University and most recently at Boise State. Maria has served as an assistant, associate, and head coach, including experience developing players at the youth, high school, college, and professional levels. She is also a proud 2022 WCA Class #51 graduate. Maria resides in Boise, Idaho with her two fur babies Yassu and Izzy (Yorkies). Maria will apply her passion for establishing inclusive environments to provide the WeCOACH Community a best-in-class member experience and engagement opportunities.



Vicki Brown (she/her), Manager of Membership Growth & Development

An All-Big Ten volleyball student-athlete for the University of Illinois, Vicki most recently served as the Head Coach for the University of Iowa Women's Volleyball program. Vicki is originally from Toledo, Ohio and was a two-sport standout (basketball and volleyball) in high school. She is a 2016 WCA Class #40 graduate who has also coached at the University of San Francisco (indoor and beach volleyball), University of California-Davis, Illinois State University, and University of Toledo. A newly wed, Vicki moved to Gainesville, Florida earlier this year after her husband, Eric Werskey, was hired by the University of Florida Track & Field program as the Assistant Throws Coach. Vicki's expansive network in every level of sport and dedication to empowering women coaches will propel WeCOACH's reach, growth, and impact in new communities throughout the country.



Lizzy Ristano (she/her), Manager of Leadership Events & Strategic Relationships

A 2010 WCA #22 graduate, Lizzy grew up in Irvine, California as a two-sport student-athlete (soccer & softball) before becoming an All-BIG EAST softball player of the year for the University of Notre Dame. She went on to play for the USA Softball Women's National Team. Lizzy gained experience in compliance and fundraising before returning to her alma mater as Notre Dame Softball's Associate Head Coach for 17 years. She and her family recently moved to Tallahassee, Florida after her husband, Chuck Ristano, was hired as Florida State University's Baseball Pitching Coach. Lizzy & Chuck have two children, Jane & CJ. Lizzy has been supporting WeCOACH membership functions since September and will now utilize her long-term familiarity with our organization to enhance, elevate, and expand WeCOACH leadership programming and events.



Aviana Goode (she/her), Coordinator of Creative Marketing & Branding

Aviana is a former track and field multi-event athlete at Syracuse University and the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley where she recently graduated with her master's degree. Interested in pursuing a career in sports marketing, digital media and/or student-athlete development, Aviana has returned to her home state of New York where she has been assisting with WeCOACH social media planning and content design since August.



Priyana Kalita (they/she), Coordinator of Leadership Events & Strategic Initiatives

Recruited from India as a scholarship tennis student-athlete at Miami University (Ohio), Priyana graduated with a degree in Kinesiology (Coaching) & Women Gender and Sexuality Studies. Currently an FSU Sport Management master's student scheduled to graduate in December 2022, they have been assisting with WeCOACH virtual events, communications, and research projects since August. Priyana plans to pursue a doctoral

degree and aspires to be a collegiate tennis coach.



"I would be remiss if I did not recognize and thank former Senior Director of Events and Branding, Jan Whitbeck, for her three years of leadership with WeCOACH—she will be a tremendous asset for the University of Minnesota's Women's basketball Program. It's important to me that through our team's efforts, we are honoring and making proud our organization's founders, former leaders and staff, Board members, and certainly our community of women coaches and allies. With this collaboration of talent, WeCOACH is

well positioned to advance our mission to **MOVE the NUMBERS** to support and increase women in coaching."

About WeCOACH

Founded in 2011, WeCOACH is a one-of-a-kind nonprofit dedicated to recruiting, advancing, and retaining women coaches in all sports and levels through year-round professional growth & leadership development programs. Prior to Title IX, over 90% of women's collegiate sports teams were coached by women. Today, 50 years later, data indicates that number has decreased to a stagnant 43% in Division I (41% in all three NCAA Divisions), with only 7.3% women coaches of color. A dearth 5% women coach men's teams, and at the youth level, the data is hard to estimate (approx. <20% of teams are coached by women). As part of its year-long Title IX 50th Anniversary campaign, WeCOACH launched MOVE the NUMBERS to help change the landscape for women coaches and to impact history for the next 50 years. For more information visit wecoachsports.org/50th