One-on-One with Rhonda Matthews Ware, the new Executive Director of the Alverno College Research Center for Women and Girls.

She has the composure of Dominique Dawes on the balance beam; the strength of Serena Williams on the Tennis Court and the tenacity of Billy Jean King on empowering women – but never played a sport. What I can say is that Rhonda has the Integrity, Humility, Progressiveness and the Leadership to nationally impact the lives of girls and women.

The Research Center for Women and Girls at Alverno College is poised to become the premier women's research center in the nation, with the power to impact countless lives. As one of the first women's research centers to include research specific to both women and girls, the Research Center has already begun to create positive social change.

Rhonda Matthews Ware comes to Alverno College from the law firm of Whyte Hirschboeck Dudek S.C. where she was an attorney. She is also a domestic violence prevention educator who has co-facilitated numerous trainings for the Mentors in Violence Program, a national gender violence education program that equips young men and women from all socioeconomic, racial and ethnic backgrounds to identify, prevent and confront men's violence against women.

**Age:** 38  
**Title:** Executive Director, the Alverno College Research Center for Women and Girls  
**Previous Job:** Attorney at Whyte Hirschboeck Dudek S.C.  
**First Job:** TCBY  
**Education:** DePaul University, B.A., political science / Suffolk University Law School, J.D., cum laude  
**Resides:** Wisconsin  
**Grew up:** University Park, Illinois  
**People most admired:** My parents  
**Favorite movie:** True Grit  
**Favorite quote:** With passion and courage, women have taught us that when we band together to advocate for our highest ideals, we can advance our common well-being and strengthen the fabric of our nation. - President Barack Obama  
**Favorite book:** Throw Out 50 Things
**You worked for the NFL; share your journey?**  When I was a sophomore in college, I worked for a program aimed at helping professional athletes (primarily NFL players) transition from their sports. This included assisting them with returning to college for degree completion, and facilitating their participation in an outreach program aimed at working with middle and high school students. When I graduated at DePaul, I interned in the Player Programs division of the NFL League office in New York, where I worked with the NFL’s continuing education program.

**Tell us about your work on violence prevention?**  From the summer of 1997 through the spring of 1998, I was the assistant director of a program called the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) Program. The MVP Program is a gender violence education program that equips young men and women from all socioeconomic, racial and ethnic backgrounds to take on leadership roles in their schools and communities in identifying, preventing and confronting men’s violence against women. I have maintained a consulting relationship with this program and over the course of the past 12 years, I have co-facilitated MVP trainings for athletic departments at numerous colleges and universities including the University of Wisconsin, the University of Michigan, the University of Iowa, Michigan State, the University of Kentucky, Vanderbilt, the University of Alabama, University of Iowa and the University of Florida. I also co-facilitated MVP trainings for Department of Defense high schools in Mannheim and Heidelberg, Germany.

**What’s the biggest career risk you’ve taken?**  My biggest career risk was probably deferring law school and moving to Boston, Massachusetts to work at the Center for the Study of Sport in Society in 1995. After I completed my internship at the NFL, I decided that I wanted to pursue job opportunities in sports rather than attend Syracuse Law School in the fall of 1995. The only job offer I received was from the Center for the Study of Sport in Society housed at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts, for a receptionist position. Although I did not know anyone in Boston, I accepted the job offer and moved there. Nine months later I was promoted to assistant director of one of the Center’s national outreach programs, Athletes in Service to America. I subsequently became the assistant director of the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) Program, a program that I still consult for today. The experiences I gained working at the Center provided the foundation for me to become the Executive Director of Alverno’s Research Center. I guess my biggest risk was actually just another stop on the road to destiny.

**What is your biggest challenge as the ED at RCWG?**  One month in I have not identified my biggest challenge as the Executive Director of the Research Center. I can say that I view my role as coordinating the identification of research topics and creating an environment that allows the Center to showcase Alverno College’s expert faculty knowledge regarding important issues impacting the lives of women and girls; presenting that knowledge to the surrounding communities promoting change in Wisconsin and beyond; facilitating partnerships with community agencies to foster discussion about relevant topics and to evaluate existing programs geared towards enhancing the lives of women and girls.

**Why is working with women and girls so important to you?**  I sincerely believe that playing a role in creating a better world for women and girls creates a better world for us all.

**Work, Life Balance…how do you manage?**  One day at a time. I do find that when I am enjoying what I am doing, it is easier to achieve balance.

**How does your profession relate to sports?**  I actually believe that all professions relate to sports. Athletes learn discipline, leadership, teamwork, how to win and lose, not give up, etc. These are all lessons that serve people well in any profession.

**If you could change anything about how women’s sports are viewed, what would it be?**  For women and men’s sports to be viewed as equal.

**What’s the first word that comes to mind to the following?**  
**Share** - Giving  
**Educate** - Alverno  
**Empower** – Sisterhood
What is the best advice you could possible give to a young girl? To make sure that while you are working hard to achieve your goals, you stay true to yourself. Make decisions that make sense to you and feel right. If you follow your heart, the sky's the limit. There is more to success than financial gain. You should make choices based on values rather than prestige. If you do that, you open yourself up to achieving greater levels of success than you could have ever imagined.

The Alverno College Research Center for Women and Girls is a center devoted to taking scholarly research out of the world of academia and into the real world where it can inspire, transform and support initiatives that improve the lives of women and girls in Wisconsin and beyond. www.alverno.edu/research/

Bernell Hooker

Bernell Hooker is the Founder and CEO of Images of Us (IOU) Sports; a non-profit organization that empowers girls and women through education and sports. "Think of yourself as an athlete. I guarantee you it will change the way you walk, the way you work, and the decisions you make about leadership, teamwork, and success." - Mariah Burton Nelson