

# **EY Corporate Finance Woman of the Year**

Global finalists

February 2018



# Congratulations to the 2018 EY Corporate Finance Woman of the Year global finalists

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**Rebecca Zhang,  
Australia finalist**

Campus: University of Sydney  
Degree: Bachelor of  
Commerce



**Aliaa AlMheiri,  
UAE finalist**

Campus: New York University  
of Abu Dhabi  
Degree: Bachelor of Arts,  
majoring in Economics



**Lena Förster,  
Germany finalist**

Campus: Dublin City  
University  
Degree: Bachelor of Arts in  
Global Business



**Henny Tanberg  
Hansen, Norway  
finalist**

Campus: Copenhagen  
Business School  
Degree: Master's of Applied  
Economics and Finance



**Yanyan Duan,  
Singapore finalist**

Campus: Nanyang  
Technological University  
Degree: Bachelor of  
Accountancy and Business



**Eleanor Knight,  
UK finalist**

Campus: University of York  
Degree: Bachelor of Science  
in Accounting, Business  
Management and Finance



**Jacinta Chang,  
US finalist**

Campus: Cornell University  
Degree: Bachelor of Science  
in Hotel Administration



**Sabrina Peng,  
US finalist**

Campus: Southern Methodist  
University  
Degree: Bachelor of Science  
in Computer Science

# Global finalists, 2018

## EY Corporate Finance Woman of the Year

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- ▶ Australia: Rebecca Zhang
- ▶ UAE: Aliaa AlMheiri
- ▶ Germany: Lena Förster
- ▶ Norway: Henny Tanberg Hansen
- ▶ Singapore: Yanyan Duan
- ▶ UK: Eleanor Knight
- ▶ US: Jacinta Chang and Sabrina Peng

# Australia finalist 2018: Rebecca Zhang



## Rebecca Zhang

**Country:**  
Australia

**Campus:**  
University of Sydney

**Degree:**  
Bachelor of Commerce

Rebecca Zhang first developed her interest in corporate finance through an inspirational high school economics teacher. While she seriously considered other career options, the opportunity to have an impact during the most important times in an organization's life, and the variety of market sectors that a corporate finance career would give her exposure to, continue to hold her interest. Rebecca said:

“What I discovered about the importance of both the advisory component and relationships in corporate finance really changed my view of the career path. I've always wanted to balance the technical focus with a people focus in my career, and I didn't realize how much I could have this in a career in Transactions.”

Studying for a Bachelor of Commerce degree at the University of Sydney is an important step towards that career goal. Entering the EY Corporate Finance Woman of the Year competition has been another.

Rebecca says that it has been an incredible opportunity to talk to EY people about what it's really like to pursue a career in corporate finance.

“The university experience gives you a good understanding of the technical process and what outcomes should theoretically look like. However, while you do need the knowledge and expertise to form a solution, the solution is useless if you can't convey it properly, or express it in the correct way to your client.”

As part of the competition experience, EY people talked in detail about the types of transactions they were involved in, and how they go about developing and implementing solutions.

“I had no idea of the diversity of specialists that often collaborate on any one transaction, and the diversity of roles and career paths possible within corporate finance.”

Rebecca believes that a lot of women don't necessarily consider a corporate finance career option, but the EY Corporate Finance Woman of the Year competition is an important opportunity for them to get a taste of what it's really like.

“I believe this competition will provide me with an excellent opportunity to gain the right experience to become a leader in the future.”

# UAE finalist 2018: Aliaa AlMheiri



## Aliaa AlMheiri

**Country:**

United Arab Emirates

**Campus:**

New York University of  
Abu Dhabi

**Degree:**

Bachelor of Arts, majoring  
in Economics

Aliaa AlMheiri has a strong desire to play a part in the economic future of the UAE and the growth of different sectors across the region. This led her to commence a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Economics at New York University Abu Dhabi.

It was also one of her key reasons to enter the EY Corporate Finance Woman of the Year competition. “I wanted to see what it would be like to work for a large organization in the private sector, and gain a better understanding of what it did and how it impacts investment and growth in different industries,” she said.

One of the first things that Aliaa observed was the focus on diversity and inclusion. “I found it really interesting to understand how involving people with different backgrounds and ideas to develop solutions created better projects, better work and better outcomes,” she commented.

Aliaa drew a quick parallel to her own personal experience while working on the case study. “It was amazing being able to bring together so many different ideas from across a broad range of wonderful students,” she said.

However, it was through hearing people talk about their own personal experiences that led to an even greater revelation for Aliaa. “I had no idea about the number of different types of projects that a career in corporate finance could expose you to. This has completely changed my perception of what corporate finance is and how it can impact the wider community,” she remarked.

“Understanding more about the work EY does has helped me realize the impact I could have in shaping today’s world by choosing a consulting career in corporate finance,” she said.

# Germany finalist 2018: Lena Förster



## Lena Förster

**Country:**  
Germany

**Campus:**  
Dublin City University

**Degree:**  
Bachelor of Arts in Global  
Business

Lena Förster places a lot of importance on experiencing things firsthand before making significant decisions. Currently pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree in Global Business at Dublin City University, she has focused on choosing internships across a variety of different business-related areas to better decide on her ideal career path.

Lucky for EY, Lena enjoys the consulting lifestyle: taking on new projects and experiencing new challenges every few weeks or months, while constantly travelling and meeting new people. She's also very curious about financial numbers and how they can quickly tell you what's going right and wrong about a business. This affinity with figures and being able to apply them to real-life business problems has led Lena to explore a career in corporate finance.

During her six-month work period in Spain prior to beginning her university studies, Lena developed an early love for different cultures and languages. This also shaped her decision to do a double degree studying at both Reutlingen University in Germany and Dublin City University in Ireland, while also doing an internship in Singapore earlier this year.

For Lena, entering the EY Corporate Finance Woman of the Year competition was about experiencing EY's culture, understanding more about the organization and deciding if this was the career path she wanted to take.

"I was initially concerned that a corporate finance working environment within a global organization like EY would be very competitive and individualistic. However, the competition experience helped me understand how important it is for individuals with different capabilities and perspectives to collaborate within a team to find solutions for challenging client issues," she said.

"I was really fascinated by the different thinking and different approaches each student brought. It was great to collaborate with others on real-life client issues and be able to develop a solution that you could never have come up with by yourself," she added.

Through the competition, Lena also found that applying her skills and knowledge from university was more interesting and rewarding than she had imagined.

"This competition has really changed my view of corporate finance as a career option. Seeing the whole package, from the work, to the people, to the lifestyle, I feel that all of my career doors would be open at EY," she said.

# Norway finalist 2018: Henny Tanberg Hansen



## NAME

**Country:**  
Norway

**Campus:**  
Copenhagen Business School

**Degree:**  
Master's of Applied Economics  
and Finance

Studying for a Master's degree in Applied Economics and Finance, Henny Tanberg Hansen had a variety of promising career paths in front of her. And she was keeping her options open until completing her degree. However, after participating in the EY Corporate Finance Woman of the Year competition, she has now firmly set her sights on pursuing a career in corporate finance.

Through the insights gained while working on the competition case studies and speaking to EY people about their jobs, Henny was very surprised at the huge variety in clients, solutions, people and places she was exposed to by the project-based nature of a role in Transactions.

"This experience has helped me to realize the impact I could have on entire communities - from helping them to make the right decisions in mergers, acquisitions and restructures, to making the entire economy stronger and even increasing employment and commercial opportunities. Corporate finance helps to make companies more robust and more prepared for difficult times, enabling them to better sustain jobs and important economic support they provide to communities during difficult times. It's much more than just about making money," she said.

Possibly one of Henny's biggest surprises from the competition was how friendly and collaborative the Transactions culture is. "I always had the impression that corporate finance was very competitive and for people who always put themselves first. But, after participating in the competition, I realized this wasn't the case. The people I met in Transactions seemed to really focus on helping and developing each other," she commented.

"You could see it in the way they asked questions, rather than talk about themselves, and in the way they knew so much about each other – both in and out of work; and the way they seemed so relaxed and were able to have a laugh with each other," she said.

Henny knew entering the competition would provide a useful opportunity to get a look inside EY as a potential employer, but she didn't know it would make such an impact on her career path.



# Singapore finalist 2018: Yanyan Duan



## Yanyan Duan

**Country:**  
Singapore

**Campus:**  
Nanyang Technological  
University

**Degree:**  
Bachelor of Accountancy and  
Business

Yanyan Duan, currently studying for a double degree in Accountancy and Business at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, discovered how just one day can change your perspective on an entire career path. That one day was participating in the EY Corporate Finance Woman of the Year competition in November 2017.

Yanyan was under the impression that a corporate finance role would be focused on the technical aspects of crunching numbers, because that's what she learned at university.

"During the competition, I discovered that corporate finance isn't just about the economic performance; there's a social value as well. I was also really surprised to understand the long-term impact Transactions has on clients and on wider stakeholder groups such as current and future employees, customers, and suppliers," she said.

Another realization for Yanyan was the importance of people and communication skills in any corporate finance transaction.

"You have to be very clear and convincing in how you communicate your recommendations – it's not enough just to have a great solution or idea. I also learned how important it is to ensure that everyone involved in the decision-making process is on-board," she commented.

With these new insights and experiences, Yanyan is confident a career in corporate finance would keep her constantly challenged, engaged and motivated.



# UK finalist 2018: Eleanor Knight



## Eleanor Knight

**Country:**

United Kingdom

**Campus:**

University of York

**Degree:**

Bachelor of Science in  
Accounting, Business  
Management and Finance

Eleanor Knight is currently working towards a degree in Accounting, Business Management and Finance at the University of York. When she joined the student group York Community Consulting (YCC), Eleanor gained a firsthand understanding of the practical impact business consulting can have. This experience has inspired her to pursue a career where she can work closely with people and clients and where she can apply her math and analytical skills to achieve a practical impact.

Keen to broaden her understanding of the impact of consulting, Eleanor entered the EY Corporate Finance Woman of the Year competition. Through the case studies and conversations with EY people, she quickly realized the extent to which corporate finance can impact an organization and its people.

“Bringing everything together to answer the case study really made me think about how connected everything is,” she said. “Whether you’re changing the structure of the business, merging with someone else, or even making small day-to-day transactions more efficient, your work can have a very real impact on so many levels – the organization, its people and the community, too. You really can make a difference,” she added.

Her competition experience has also had a big impact on her career aspirations. While she had an interest in math, Eleanor is now focused on a career that has a more immediate and tangible impact. Combined with her desire to work closely with people and clients, a career in transactions could be an ideal option.

“Transactions have the ability to fundamentally change a business. There’s so much room for impacting peoples’ lives in a really meaningful way,” she said.

# US finalist 2018: Jacinta Chang



## Jacinta Chang

**Country:**

United States

**Campus:**

Cornell University

**Degree:**

Bachelor of Science in Hotel Administration

Starting out in a hospitality career, Jacinta Chang is a little surprised that she's now on track for a corporate finance transactions career. The first seeds of change were planted in her freshman business classes at Cornell University, where Jacinta is completing a Bachelor of Science degree in Hotel Administration.

Jacinta's internships have played an influential role in her desire to alter career paths. "I loved working with guests, but I wasn't getting as much of the business side that I'd hoped I would. I wanted something more," she said. That opportunity came with a posting to the business excellence unit of the Jumeirah Group, while an intern at the Burj Al Arab hotel in Dubai.

While interning in Dubai, Jacinta was finally able to apply her business studies and she even developed a strategy that was implemented by the group. Importantly, Jacinta finally had some behind-the-scenes experiences of a corporate investment decision.

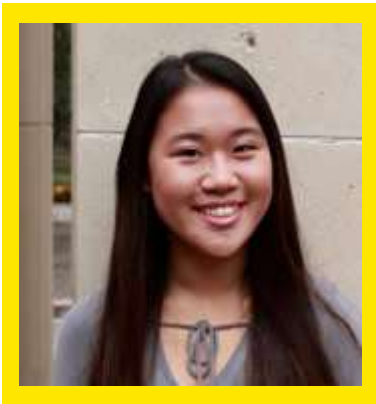
"It made me realize I didn't want to just stay within the hospitality industry, but understand how businesses worked across a variety of industries," she said.

Faced with this dilemma, Jacinta recognized that the EY Corporate Finance Woman of the Year competition was a rare opportunity for her to explore her aspirations further.

Jacinta says she initially felt intimidated about competing against students already years into a corporate finance career and studying related degrees. However, she knew about EY's inclusive and encouraging culture from friends interning with the organization and she was encouraged to find that both the individual and group case challenges required very broad mindsets and approaches, not just technical skills. This put her at ease about her non-finance background.

"I never felt afraid to voice my opinion. The support and encouragement was empowering," she commented.

# US finalist 2018: Sabrina Peng



## Sabrina Peng

**Country:**

United States

**Campus:**

Southern Methodist University

**Degree:**

Bachelor of Science in  
Computer Science

For Sabrina Peng, an interest in corporate finance began in high school, with a desire to understand why and how large corporations made the big decisions they did. So, while the rest of her family works in technology, Sabrina broadened her horizons pursuing a double degree in Business Administration (Finance) and Computer Science at Southern Methodist University.

An important realization for Sabrina was that doing something tangible, rather than just theoretical, is often the best way to gain understanding. Less than a month into starting her university studies she volunteered for a portfolio management training program, where students managed real equity portfolios. “I think putting yourself in a situation where your decisions have actual consequences, will teach you a lot more than just googling ‘corporate finance’,” commented Sabrina.

The same desire to understand through experience inspired her to enter the EY Corporate Finance Woman of the Year competition where her appetite to solve real world problems served her well.

“It was incredible to see the variety of ideas that we could develop in under an hour, ideas that were implementable and could achieve a real change in a global organization,” she said. “I was really impressed how each person’s individual experience and expertise plays out, when given the opportunity,” she added.

Reflecting on her experience, Sabrina says she was also intrigued by how transactions professionals advise their clients on corporate finance strategy, and don’t just focus on the technical aspects. “I was amazed by the variety of people with different skill sets and experiences, that come together to plan, advise on and execute transactions,” she said.

## About EY

EY is a global leader in assurance, tax, transaction and advisory services. The insights and quality services we deliver help build trust and confidence in the capital markets and in economies the world over. We develop outstanding leaders who team to deliver on our promises to all of our stakeholders. In so doing, we play a critical role in building a better working world for our people, for our clients and for our communities.

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