

## AWIS-PHL ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER, JUNE 2011

### **Elizabeth W. Bingham Award Recipient Dr. Sherrill Adams**

#### MY JOURNEY IN FACULTY MENTORING: WORKING WITH INDIVIDUALS, SCHOOLS AND THE UNIVERSITY

**By: *Dr. Pushpinder Multani***

The AWIS meeting for the month of June started with a cheerful, informal social networking dinner, where Dr. Sherrill Adams was the guest of honor. Dr. Adams, Professor of Biochemistry, School of Dental Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, was the recipient of the 2011 Elizabeth Bingham award for her outstanding efforts in the mentoring of junior scientists. The student travel awards for this year were awarded to our brilliant future scientists Sonali Jalan (**Robert E. Davies Award**) and Annika F. Barber (**Adelaide M. Deluva Award**) from the Fox Chase Cancer Center and Thomas Jefferson University, respectively. Among other category for awards was the University of Pennsylvania's Women's Club award, which was awarded to Feini Sylvia Qu and the Delaware Valley Science Council AWIS-PHL award given to Kelly Rogers from North Penn High School. Unfortunately neither Sylvia nor Kelly could attend due to prior commitments. Congratulations to all the winners!

Following dinner, Dr. Adams gave an incredible talk about the importance of mentoring in academia. She started by sharing the story of the original "Mentor" who was a character in Homer's epic poem "The Odyssey". When Odysseus, King of Ithaca,

went to fight in the Trojan War, he entrusted the care of his kingdom to Mentor. Mentor served as the teacher and overseer of Odysseus's son, Telemachus.

A sustained relationship between a mentee and mentor involves understanding yourself and others, interpersonal communication, and developing others. After family and personal relationships, another powerful bond that can influence behavior are these professional relationships.

Dr. Adams is one of those scientists who truly define the quote "Behind every successful person, there is one elementary truth and somewhere, some way, someone cared about their growth and development". She paved her own way and now mentors junior faculty at the University of Pennsylvania. In her talk, she revealed how her academic career necessitated mentoring for every faculty member, especially for women as they have greater need being under represented particularly in STEM fields. Dr. Adams very elegantly embarked on vital questions such as: "Why do we need mentoring?" and "Who needs mentoring?"

She explained that being a faculty member with more research funding and more recognition does not mean that one does not need mentoring. Early on in her career, Sherrill had a difficult time in finding a mentor for herself, but was lucky when she met Dr. Phoebe Leboy who became her instant mentor. As Sherrill moved up in her career she began to model her own views about mentoring in the broader context of the University as she had daily discussions regarding University politics, faculty affairs, gender equity, teaching and science. That's what ignited a spark in Sherrill and she began mentoring other faculty by creating a mentoring committee in the School of

Dental Medicine. She realized that promotion of clinical faculty as opposed to basic scientist faculty is quite skewed. After examining the practices in all 12 schools, the Faculty Senate's Committee on Faculty Development, Diversity and Equity, chaired by Dr. Adams, issued a report on faculty mentoring where they correlated higher job satisfaction and greater understanding of promotion to faculty who were mentored periodically. After seeing that Mentoring programs were a huge success, the committee decided to set up a formal mentoring program in each school to ensure that every new junior faculty member had access to constructive support and guidance from senior colleagues. This support allowed colleagues to realize their own, as well as the University's, highest aspirations in research, teaching and service. With the ongoing efforts of mentoring, Sherrill team founded the Penn Forum of women faculty (<http://www.upenn.edu/provost/pfwf>) to promote policies and practices for the equity of women faculty and create opportunities for education, professional skill-building, networking, cross-school and cross-disciplinary interactions for women faculty.

Dr. Adam's talk represented her incredible efforts towards making mentoring a significant part of academic careers for the development of independent investigators capable of providing unique contributions to the research and educational environment.

*See below for photos from the dinner.*



Lisa Kozlowski, Ph.D., President, AWIS-PHL presents the 2011 Adelaide M. Delluva Student Travel Award to Annika Barber (left above) and the 2011 Robert E. Davies Student Travel Award to Sonali Jalan (above right) as Helen Davies, Ph.D., looks on.



Sherrill L. Adams, Ph.D. (right), recipient of the 2011 Elizabeth Bingham Award, with Phoebe Leboy, Ph.D., who nominated her for this honor.



Dr. Adams receives 2011 Bingham Award plaque from Dr. Kozlowski