

2011 Annual Networking Meeting: Vision 2020 presentation  
Reported by Anita Gurnier-Hausser, Ph.D.

September's AWIS-PHL meeting featured Lynn Yeakel, Co-Chair, and Catherine Ormerod, Project Director, of Vision 2020 – a national initiative developed by the Institute for Women's Health and Leadership at Drexel University College of Medicine. The goal of Vision 2020 is to make equality a national priority through shared leadership among women and men. Lynn currently directs the Institute for Women's Health and Leadership at Drexel and holds the College's Betty A. Cohen Chair in Women's Health. With an impressive history as a civic leader, Lynn is past president or chair of more than a dozen local and national nonprofits. Among many accomplishments has been the recent creation of the Woman One Award and Scholarship Fund, which supports medical school tuition at Drexel for minority women. Catherine, with over 25 years' experience in the academic nonprofit and public policy arenas, is the founding director of the Nonprofit Executive Leadership Institute at Bryn Mawr. She has also served in senior leadership positions at Women's Way and Living Beyond Breast Cancer.

Lynn and Catherine enthusiastically described the short and long-term goals of Vision 2020 in a presentation entitled "Vision 2020: Equality in Sight". In essence, Vision 2020 envisions America as a country in which gender equality is guaranteed and valued by all, since equality is the foundation of our democracy. This initiative is working toward equal opportunity and respect for women and girls in all aspects of American life. To achieve such equality, Vision 2020 connects organizations and individuals with this common goal to take action.

Vision 2020's first public event was held in October 2010. A congress of national delegates, representing all 50 states and Washington D.C., congregated at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. The purpose of this inaugural meeting was to initiate a campaign to move America toward gender equality by 2020, the centennial celebration of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. This year's congress entitled "Vision + Action = Equality in Motion" will be held on October 12<sup>th</sup> in Chicago. Women leaders from all 50 states will meet to discuss action steps to achieve Vision 2020's 5 national goals (described below). In addition, 5 pairs of Chicago-area leaders who exhibit shared leadership among women and men, representing the areas of finance, education, arts and culture, law, and business, will be honored with Equality in Action Metals. By the centennial celebration of women's right to vote in 9 years, Vision 2020 hopes to accomplish the following:

1. Achieve equality in pay. Receiving equal pay for equal work should be standard practice.
2. Increase the number of women in senior leadership positions in America. This number should reflect the workforce talent pool and demographics.
3. Educate employers about the value of policies and practices that enable women and men to fairly share their family responsibilities.
4. Educate new generations of girls and boys to respect their differences. America is at its best when leadership is shared and opportunities are open to all.
5. Mobilize women in America to vote.

Lynn and Catherine also outlined an impressive, extensive list of Vision 2020's national allies, including the American Medical Women's Association, the American Bar Association, Rock the Vote, and the Girl Scouts of the USA, to name only a few. In addition, several key women involved in state initiatives were mentioned. Stephanie Stilson (the Florida delegate) is actively working toward achieving

gender equality within NASA, and Anita McCarthy (the Mississippi delegate) is working to encourage the growth of women in STEM.

In addition to these challenging, albeit inspiring, list of goals, Vision 2020 is currently planning its 3<sup>rd</sup> National Congress in Portland, OR in 2012. They will also be joining with the University of Edinburgh in Scotland in April of 2013 for an international conference entitled “Women in Warfare: From Troy to the Trenches and Beyond” at which 20 scholars from around the world will share their research and work.

The second half of the meeting involved an interactive exercise in which audience members were handed a short questionnaire to answer. The survey was comprised of 6 basic, yet thought and discussion-provoking, questions, which ultimately sparked a great deal of audience dialogue.

1. The first question found that most women present believed that women’s pay will ‘catch up’ to men’s by the year 2020, though many felt it would take longer than this. Others confessed they had either “given up” or thought it would “never” happen.
2. Question number 2 revealed the disappointment felt by the majority of women in the room when told that the percentage of women in top executive jobs has stalled around 18%. Others felt that “progress takes time” while a few were surprised the percentage is as high as 18%!
3. The third question asked the audience to ponder whether “workplace policies that encourage shared parenting” are improving. The answer to this question clearly fluctuated; some were pleased with the progress made by their employers, others were disheartened. One particularly interesting point was raised, however. Although a company’s “official” policy may grant a new father significant paternity leave benefits, the workplace environment itself may not allow the man to reap these benefits (i.e. Taking care of a baby is the “women’s job”)
4. Question number 4 was unanimously agreed upon: “If schoolgirls don’t feel they have the same career opportunities as boys, whose approach needs to change?” The parents, the teachers, and the students were ALL thought to be responsible.
5. In answer to why, in 2008, only 60% of eligible women voted in the national election, most answered that women don’t think their vote will make a difference. However, the percentage of eligible men who voted in this election was also questioned. Many felt that Americans in general, regardless of gender, are disenchanted with the government and feel a certain hopelessness with respect to voting.
6. The most interesting question by far was the last: “If women shared leadership with men, what would be different?” The consensus in the room was that, overall, the world would be a better place. The goal of course NOT being to replace men in leadership, but to supplement current male leadership with the novel insights, perspectives, and approaches that women can provide. Possibly the truest answer was voiced by Lynn herself, who thought that lines for the Ladies’ Room would undoubtedly be shorter.

The level of experience, knowledge and dedication possessed by Lynn, Catherine, and the state delegates, in addition to the strides already undertaken since the inaugural meeting last October, imparted the message that Vision 2020’s national goals are not insurmountable, but entirely plausible objectives.

## Lynn Yeakel (left) and Catherine Ormerod



*Photos courtesy of Sherri Meyer*