

Summary of the AWIS 30th Anniversary Leadership Conference.
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On October 25-27 I had the good fortune to be sponsored by the Philadelphia chapter to attend the Leadership Conference. This was a great experience, and the sessions I attended were informative, stimulating and fun! I particularly enjoyed meeting current, future and past-AWIS presidents and officers and was quite impressed by the dedication and effort they put into AWIS, on top of their schedules already over-filled with career and family obligations. These women are outstanding examples of how it really is possible to balance a myriad of fulfilling and challenging activities and still maintain a sense of humor and perspective!

The session on AWIS Unity identified several needs to improve unity throughout the organization and among women in science globally. These were:

- 1) improving communication between the National organization, local chapters and individual members
- 2) increasing outreach to non-Ph.D. scientists and individual members living outside the reach of a chapter and
- 3) increasing visibility on campuses and at meetings of other national organizations.

Lots of specific ideas were presented from the panel speakers and the audience participants about how to address these needs, and it was clear the officers would be taking stock of all the suggestions and putting together action plans to meet these goals. Remarkably, about 50% of AWIS members live in areas where there is no local chapter to which they could belong. There also could be a better way for local chapters to find out about individual members in their area to send information to.

The session on “Research findings on women and girls in science and technology” was presented by Ruta Sevo of the National Science Foundation. This session was both fascinating and dismaying, as I had no idea how much remains to be done in the way of equity in hiring, reviewing and promoting women and ethnic minorities in science. For instance, only 2% of the new hires at Berkeley from 1995-2000 were women – actually down from 18% from 1990-95! It wasn’t until 1989 that the first female science professor was awarded tenure, and of 400 government-classified job types, women are concentrated in only 20, and within those, remain the lowest paid. Dr. Sevo provided a long list of excellent references and resources for additional information, and if anyone would like a copy, I’d be happy to send you one.

A great deal of discussion ensued about the reasons for this continued slow progress in achieving equity and what AWIS and we as individuals can do about it. It was generally agreed that there is a need to incorporate diversity into the university climate and in evaluations of universities that students use to select a school, that the government uses to determine accreditation, overhead costs etc. It is difficult to get ‘hard’ data to support this kind of evaluation, but in some places student exit interviews are beginning to be done that will provide the kind of information needed to generate this data about ‘climate’. Also discussed was the need to alter the image of a scientist presented to children – our image of a scientist as a male is shaped by the second grade, and parents are three times

more likely to explain science to their sons than to their daughters (based on a museum study). Discrimination today tends to be more covert than previously, and more difficult to document and deter. When more women enter a field the salary declines – this has been seen quite clearly in the field of Veterinary Medicine recently – but is this because of overt discrimination, or lack of negotiation?

Certainly, developing strategies/policies is not easy, and it's important to understand that what works for one group or organization may not necessarily work for another. If you are making a new policy or program, it is critical to incorporate evaluation measures so that you can benchmark and modify as you proceed. It was generally felt that a major purpose of AWIS should be in efforts to embed diversity strategies into institutional policies, practices and accountability. For instance, characteristics that tend to be strengths in women such as mentoring and community activities should be incorporated into the criteria used to determine promotions and tenureship.

The presentation by Ted Greenwood of the Sloan Foundation was exceptional. He described some of the efforts by the Foundation that have worked and some that are being discontinued/modified because of problems that have arisen in translating the effort into a long-term commitment. He noted that there are still stereotypes by males and also some females that lead to under-valuation, recognition and inclusion of females. Also, that institutions are simply not designed with the different lifestyle/needs of either men or women when the woman is in the workforce. Previously the family comprised two adults and one job; now typically two adults and three jobs, or one adult and two jobs, yet the female still typically does most of the household tasks and caregiving. Women are opting out of academia more than men and are not moving up as successfully. The Foundation is discontinuing the pre-tenure leave fellowship program, in which funding was provided to support faculty earlier in their career wishing to take time to start a family. While successful in the short-term, this program proved too costly for most institutions to have to hire replacements, so none of the institutions were able to continue the program without Sloan Foundation support. It is clear that fundamental changes in institutions are needed before we will see more progress in increasing the number of women in science and technology.

Finally, there was an extended general discussion regarding the concern that training in science and the demands of the career are not producing well-rounded citizens. AWIS can provide a force to promote the development of a workforce with a global perspective.

The workshop on Chapter Leadership – Challenges and Successes brought up some interesting challenges and innovative solutions. The San Diego chapter is clearly way out in front in the fundraising arena! They provided some great handouts for fundraising strategies and procedures that have clearly proven very successful and should be good to keep in mind for our future efforts. It was also suggested that a consistent website template would be helpful, and that in designing your website it is important to be sure that search engines can find it.

Some key points for National AWIS to work on in the coming months were outlined:

- 1) Identify prospects for fundraising efforts
- 2) Improve communication of goals
- 3) Increase international connections
- 4) Increase AWIS as a player on the national scene/influencing policy
- 5) Provide a supportive environment to learn skills through sessions at meetings of AWIS or other scientific societies

General areas of focus should include:

- 1) Policy guidance
- 2) Skill set development
- 3) Facilitate networking
- 4) Support/promote/initiate outreach efforts

I greatly appreciate the opportunity awarded me by the Chapter to attend this meeting and value the experience and insight it provided. Thanks!