



# NEWSLETTER

**Mission Statement:** The Association for Women in Science, Inc. (AWIS) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the achievement of equity and full participation of women in all areas of science and technology.

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Spring is here. Days are growing longer and that gives us more time to engage in AWIS-SD activities. We have had several recent exciting events and more are upcoming. I encourage you to attend these events as a benefit from your AWIS membership.

The 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Science Fair was held at Balboa Park on Wednesday, March 24<sup>th</sup> and showcased science projects from students, grade 7-12. AWIS-SD volunteers helped evaluate these science projects and selected winners for the AWIS Science Fair Awards. Thank you to those who judged the science projects. The Awards Dinner for winners, parents, and teachers will be May 2<sup>nd</sup>. Last year's Expo Day was a great success and this year, EXPO DAY at PETCO PARK was on Saturday, March 27<sup>th</sup>. On March 23<sup>rd</sup>, AWIS-SD members toured the San Diego Zoo's Institute for Conservation Research to see their research facilities and learn about conservation biology.

One of our flagship events is the Scholarship Gala and this year, we will honor the 2010 scholarship recipients during an evening affair on May 6<sup>th</sup> at the Reuben H. Fleet Science Center in Balboa Park. Dr. Sherry Seethaler, educator and science writer at UCSD, will be our keynote speaker. She is author of *Lies, Damned Lies, and Science*, a set of tools to help people make sense of the science they encounter in their daily lives. [Register](#) for the Gala now as space is limited.

There are many ongoing events including Coffee Club meetings and Strategy Sessions. Be sure to stay tuned for the Focus Session on Consulting on May 3<sup>rd</sup>.

The Board has reviewed the operational status of the chapter and has revised the Bylaws by which the chapter functions. In order for the changes to take effect, the revised Bylaws must be approved by the membership. The survey is anonymous and your response is important to us. Individual invitations to the survey will be sent and I ask that you please follow the link to complete the one-question survey.

Happy Easter and happy spring to all.

With regards,

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### AAAS 2010 Career Development Workshop: "When There Is a Chill in the Air: Managing Your Academic Environment."

By Norma Velazquez Ulloa

Has your hard-earned degree title regularly been left out by a colleague addressing you by name only in a professional setting? Have you ever noticed your advisor/supervisor paying differential attention to men versus women colleagues? Have you been left out of peer interactions because they involved "guy stuff"? Have you ever been encouraged or praised more for your ability to make coffee, cook, photocopy, or take notes, than for your work? Have you felt ignored or isolated in your work setting?

These are some of the examples and scenarios presented during a workshop organized by members of the *CareerWISE* project, which is based at Arizona State University and led by Bianca Bernstein, PhD, Professor of Counseling Psychology, Higher Education and Policy Studies, and Women and Gender Studies. One component of the project examines the barriers women in STEM fields face during graduate school, including bad relationships with advisors, work-life balance issues, unexpected delays, and the climate experienced by students. Another part of the project is focused on developing and providing resilience skills training for students via online resources and workshops, like the one I attended at this year's American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) meeting.

The goals of the *CareerWISE* program include giving students the tools to 1) recognize inequities and develop awareness of what constitutes a chilly climate, and 2) develop active listening skills, clarify and manage problematic incidents, and identify and create opportunities.

A chilly climate is hard to define, but it feels uncomfortable. It may consist of a high level of competition, hostility, micro-aggressions, or a null-environment where you are ignored. These forms of chilly climate can erode confidence and disadvantage women. The workshop focused on subtle sexism, an unequal and harmful treatment of women, which is one particular aspect that contributes to generate a chilly climate. Attitudes that fall within the realm of subtle sexism include condescending chivalry, supportive discouragement, benevolent exploitation, considerate domination, and collegial exclusion. All these attitudes have mixed messages, which makes subtle sexism so hard to identify.

At the workshop they gave us four steps to counteract subtle sexism: assess, specify, decide, and act. The first step in recognizing when you are experiencing subtle sexism and asking yourself questions about whether there are any patterns, and if the behavior is continuous or isolated. The second step is to deflect the offense back to the offender by active listening, including asking the offender to further explain the comment, using silence to illustrate the comment was not welcomed, or using humor and positive self-talk. Then you might decide to confront or report, depending on the circumstances. In handling subtle sexism it is important to share the experience with others, build your network, form alliances, and find support online.

CareerWISE is developing the type of online support that can help graduate students overcome some of these issues during graduate school, and to be better prepared to face and thrive in the scientific environment, however chilly, after obtaining the degree. For more information about the CareerWISE project visit their website: <http://www.asu.edu/careerwise/index.html>

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## Life Is All About Balance, The “Work – Life Balance”

By Shweta Sharma

Balancing our work and personal life, particularly for women, has always been a challenge, but more so in recent times now that more women are independent, educated, and working. In a stand-off with men, women have traditionally been described as the weaker sex. Even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there are societies where women primarily serve the role of bearing children and perpetuating the human race. Recent surveys reveal that even Western societies do not have equal wages for male and female employees doing the same work and having equivalent skills. However, in the age of high-tech science it is brainpower that is most valued. Equivalence, and even dominance, of women in a professional setting has amply come to the forefront, with women serving prominent roles in many areas including politics as well as the war front.

In spite of all this, women still face the challenge of maintaining the delicate balance between work and life. This can impact their decision to extend their families, including having children. I have faced this challenge of balancing work and personal life due to multiple things to take care of at work; some are priorities, and some are time bound. These challenges can sometimes lead to frustration and stress, which often gets easily carried over to home life. Oftentimes I have a sense of guilt when I decide to take a break from work, even if it is as simple as catching up with my favorite comedy shows, reading a biography, or taking a belly dancing class. I always think I deserve this luxury or free time only after I clear my back log or work list. But in research, the breaks or the end points

are too transient to free up some time for relaxing. Like success, research is a journey, not a destination. "Life's demands may not slow up any time soon, and learning life balance is an ongoing art. If you think one day you will get it all done, and then you can relax, you are bound to be disappointed." *Christina Winsey-Rudd, from Life Balance Coaching: Balance Work and Life Like a Pro.*

To address the work/life balance issues and to help women in a predicament similar to mine, AWIS-SD organized a ‘Work-Life Satisfaction’ workshop this past February 18<sup>th</sup>, sponsored by Elsevier by virtue of AWIS/Elsevier partnership. The session began with an introduction of Ylann Schemm, Corporate Relations Manager at Elsevier. Janet Bandows Koster, AWIS National President, and Cindy Simpson, AWIS Director, Programs and External Relations, hosted the workshop. Simpson pointed out, “work-life satisfaction begins with awareness.” One of the goals of the workshop was to raise awareness amongst women about their priorities, to emphasize the role of a support system (from family, work or friends) and to share each other’s work/life wisdom/solutions. The workshop was concluded by Bandows pointing out that, “a change in the very nature of the way things are done is needed. Things have not changed since World War I; systemic changes are required.” Finally, Simpson joined Bandows in congratulating the AWIS-SD chapter for being the largest AWIS chapter in the country and one of the most active chapters.

Though a balance between work and life can be challenging, there are many examples of highly successful women who balance their work and personal life effectively. For example, Michal Sharon is a tenure track faculty at the Weizmann Institute of Science featured in ‘science careers’ who set up the first structural mass spectrophotometry lab in Israel. She remarks that women, especially those with families, lack confidence in their talent to manage science with their personal life. Sharon’s key to work-life balance has been effective time management. Margart Dalzwell Lowman, an environmental biologist, faced the challenge of not only balancing life and work but had the need to excel at work as a single mom. She said, “Juggling family and a career is a wonderful blessing if you can get through the initial phases.”

These successful women and many more beyond the scope of this piece can be role models and an inspiration for all of us who are struggling to strike the delicate balance between work and life.

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## AWIS Speed Networking Event

By Jenifer Capalbo

On November 2<sup>nd</sup> 2009 the AWIS-SD Event Planning Committee held a Speed Networking Event at Biogen Idec. AWIS members from industry and academia participated in an hour-long speed networking session. The event began with an introduction to speed networking and taught members how to build and optimize their professional network. It allowed members to interface one-on-one with other members in five-minute intervals whereby both parties would briefly share their professional backgrounds, education and, at times, employment history. In addition, both parties exchanged business cards for future networking. Every five minutes a gong would ring to signify to the members that it was time to switch networking partners and the “speed” networking would start all over again with a new partner. This was an outstanding event! It allowed members to feel comfortable with basic introductions and allowed them to get to know each other. In addition the event allowed members to develop professional contacts for future networking purposes. This should be a repeat event!

## AAAS workshop: Communicating Science

By Alka Malhotra

February 18<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> were filled with exciting and invigorating presentations and conversation as researchers, communicators, and members of the public gathered at the San Diego Convention Center for the 2010 American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) conference. This year's theme was "Bridging Science and Society". In keeping with this theme, a workshop, "Communicating Science: Tools for Scientists and Engineers", was held to guide researchers to better explain their science to a lay audience.

Jeff Nesbit, Director of the Office of Legislative and Public Affairs for the National Science Foundation, explained the need to bridge the gap between scientists and the public. For those of us in research, most of our funding comes from the public. Therefore, there is a need to communicate the significance and benefit of our work to society.

However, this is easier said than done. The majority of scientific interactions of researchers are with colleagues who generally share an understanding of the science. Therefore, the use of jargon is ingrained in their language; breaking free of this can be a difficult task. To add to this, the norm is to begin talks by giving an extensive background on previous studies, before explaining one's own work.

Denise Graveline, the workshop facilitator, underscored the need to develop a clear message which is "memorable, miniature, and meaningful". She recommended starting with a 3-point outline which gives the main points of your research in simple language. By presenting this at the beginning, it will help draw in the audience. Once these main points are made, they can be followed up with details.

Developing such a clear message allows the speaker to "stand out as a presenter, set the agenda, speak briefly or at length, and, most importantly, speak without jargon." Furthermore, this will increase the chance that the audience will "remember the message and pay attention throughout the talk."

A main component of the workshop was to record and analyze a practice interview. This exercise helped the researchers realize that with some initial effort, it is possible to explain their work in a "memorable, miniature, and meaningful" pattern to any type of audience, be it college students or family members with a minimal science background.

There are many venues for scientific exchange and interaction with the public, including partnering with museums and science centers, collaborating on educational activities, and participating in conferences and workshops. When researchers spread their knowledge to scientific and non-scientific audiences, the benefits are immense. This allows them to reinforce a sense of accomplishment and purpose of their work, which can easily be forgotten in the middle of repetitive experiments and minute details, which are part of everyday life.

Further information about communicating science can be found at <http://www.aaas.org/communicatingscience>

## Networking: Challenging, Informative, Necessary

By Alka Malhotra

We have all heard about it, most of us have participated in it, some of us do not enjoy it, but it is essential for career development – Networking. During the American Association for the Advancement of Science "Career Weekend", several presentations were made on this topic including those by Dave Jensen, widely known for his invaluable advice and articles from the Science Careers magazine, and Tamara Lewis-Johnson, who works on issues related to women's health research at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Jensen highlighted some key approaches to networking and using it as a tool to help in career development. Networking is a long-term activity that needs to occur throughout our career and not only during job-seeking periods. Maintaining a network database is an excellent way to update and access a contact's information and touch-base regularly. Another point he stressed is the need to self-promote. Scientists are usually uncomfortable with this; however, it is possible to self-promote, while being honest and genuine.

Some cautionary points about networking included being respectful of the other person's time, especially when contacting someone via telephone. In addition, only ask about job availability after developing a rapport with the contact, and avoid doing it too soon.

A major benefit of networking is interacting with people from different scientific backgrounds and career levels. For those who want to make a career change, these contacts could be vital to accomplishing this. Individuals who have made career changes are usually very willing to discuss their transition and be of assistance.

Networking is also an ideal way to find mentors. Both speakers stressed the need to identify multiple mentors from different backgrounds, for example one mentor each from industry, government, and academia. They can provide different perspectives on an issue you might be encountering. Lewis-Johnson also brought up the concept of alliancing, where you interact with a smaller circle of people with common interests. The members of this group can then discuss issues in detail and provide advice to resolve problems a member might be having.

In conclusion, Jensen expressed the need to "Pay It Forward." For those of you who have embraced networking, a contact most likely helped you in your career. You were once a mentee, but now have the opportunity to be a mentor and help a person who is just getting started.

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## News Update on AWIS Members

To include you career and/or personal updates in the AWIS-SD newsletter, please email [newsletter@awissd.org](mailto:newsletter@awissd.org)

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## About the AWIS Newsletter

The AWIS-SD Newsletter is published six times per year and provides AWIS members and supporters with information on Chapter activities, career development, and issues related to women in science.

Newsletter staff for March/April issue:

Bhawanjit Brar, Mindy Davis, Kerri Hebard-Massey, Siobhan Malany, Alka Malhotra, Janice Payne, Shweta Sharma, Rachel Schwartz, Paula Soto, Geetha Srinivasan, Sama Tamrakar, and Norma Velázquez-Ulloa

### **Please contribute to the Newsletter!**

If you are an AWIS-SD member, we encourage you to contribute to the Newsletter. Please send articles, photographs, and member news as MS Word attachments to [newsletter@awissd.org](mailto:newsletter@awissd.org). News articles should not exceed 250 words, event summaries should not exceed 500 words, and feature articles (special-interest stories and profiles) should not exceed 1000 words.

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### **AWIS-San Diego Sponsors**

AWIS-San Diego thanks our corporate sponsors for their generous support. Donations from corporate sponsors help us fund scholarship awards, monthly events and Strategy Sessions, community outreach efforts, the Newsletter and the website.

For more information about how your company can support AWIS-SD, send e-mail to [fundAWISSd@gmail.com](mailto:fundAWISSd@gmail.com).

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