The Networker

Commission for Women

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The Networker is published two times each year by the UT Commission for Women. Comments and suggestions may be forwarded to the Communications Committee in care of Ms. Delia Haines. bhaines@utk.edu or 865-974-0889. If you are a club advisor, you may receive duplicate copies. Please share extras.

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AWIS (Association of Women Scientist) Meetings are held monthly alternating between Main Campus (Dabney) and the Ag Campus (Hollingsworth). Please contact Dr. Suzanne Lenhart via email for meeting times and location [lenhart@math.utk.edu].

WOMENS STUDIES Scholarship Referral Site: http://web.utk.edu/~wstudy/scholarships.php

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The first Women in Science Symposium was held on the University of Tennessee Knoxville campus on October 15 and 16, 2007. Led by Professor Jan Musfeldt in the Chemistry Department, the symposium focused on gender bias in the physical sciences including chemistry, physics, mathematics, and materials science and engineering. As such, it was a very positive step toward gender equity within the sciences on the University of Tennessee campus.

The goals of the workshop included a discussion of employment issues and career decisions facing graduate students and postdoctoral researchers, the importance of mentorship, risk taking, and leadership opportunities, tactics for addressing dual career and childbearing issues, the rewards of a diverse scientific workforce, and specific strategies that our representative academic departments can implement to improve the climate for women in the sciences, whether they are preparing for careers in academics, government laboratories, or industry.

Indeed, as these photographs from recent National Academy, National Research Council, National Science Foundation, National Institute of Health, and Department of Energy reports show, the challenge is upon us, both nationally and here at the University of Tennessee. The overarching goal of this Symposium was to turn these challenges into opportunities.

In Chemistry departments across the country, women are well-represented at the graduate and postdoctoral levels, a success to which many Physics and Materials Science and Engineering departments aspire. This level of participation is not, however, reflected in the faculty ranks at major research Universities, in government laboratories, or in industry. Where do these intelligent, well educated women go upon graduation? What influences their choices? What can be done to strengthen their hands?

The Symposium attracted several nationally recognized speakers, including Dr. Vivian W. Pinn (M.D.), director of the Office of Research on Women’s Health at the National Institutes of Health, who will speak on campus Tuesday, March 25, at 2:00 p.m., in the University Center Shiloh Room. The general theme of Dr. Pinn’s talk will be Women’s Health and Health Disparities.

Dr. Pinn is an engaging speaker, and her talk is open to the entire university community including students, faculty, staff, and researchers. An informal reception will be held in room 220 of the UC between 1:30 – 2:00 p.m., just prior to her address.

Addressing the challenges that women and men face in their careers, Dr. Pinn will focus on issues of heart disease and the importance of early detection and treatment. She will provide an overview of heart disease in women, which then hopefully can guide our young medical students, our young nursing students, and our young physicians, as well as many more resident physicians, to know that one must counsel women about risk for heart disease and how to modify our behavior, and what kind of medications can help us in prevention of heart disease, so that women are more aware of this as a threat to themselves—not just to their husbands or their fathers.

We've been able to institute a number of programs to help increase career opportunities for women but, at the same time, career opportunities for men, too. Because everything that we fund really relates to both women and men. Our focus is on women or, as the trend seems to be now, to focus on sex and gender issues, sex and gender differences—that is, if you're born male or female, how that affects your physiology, and your system and your health as opposed to gender issues, which means the expectations of society of you because you are male or female, femaleness or maleness. And looking at the importance of addressing those issues, and, at the same time, wanting more to participate in conducting that research.