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From The President's Desk

by Ingrid Borecki

Is sexism alive and well at Washington University? From my perspective, reflecting on this past year, I feel it has been a year of setbacks for women at our institution. Notably, one of the highest-placed academics and administrators, Dean Mary Sansalone, was summarily fired, even after achieving remarkable progress in the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences in numerous areas. She faced serious challenges when she arrived just 18 short months ago, which required vision, strategies, and courage to do what had to be done. It was a job that would not be viewed as easy or enjoyable by any sincere leader and, inevitably, would create opposition from some of those affected. However, a small group of detractors succeeded in convincing Chancellor Mark Wrighton that it was not worth backing up Dean Sansalone. Was there sexism involved? One of the leading faculty within the Engineering School during Dean Sansalone's tenure remarked "All women and minorities are politically correct hires and none of them are as competent as white males to be there." Is this an offhand inconsequential comment, or is it indicative of the culture of the School that succeeded in ousting her? It is interesting to note that similar discussions are ongoing regarding Hillary Clinton's campaign for the Presidency, whether sexism has influenced her bid. One commentator remarked that at one of Clinton's rallies, someone called out "Iron my shirt!", a remark which went unnoticed by the press. By contrast, if someone had called to Barak Obama "Shine my shoes!" it is not likely to have been tolerated. Perhaps women are simply accustomed to being minimized and choose to let such remarks go without raising a ruckus. But perhaps such remarks are also indicative of sexist tendencies in our culture.

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In addition to the influence Dean Sansalone had in the School of Engineering, she was also an avid proponent for women, teaming with Associate Dean Diana Gray from the Office of Faculty Affairs to develop and submit an NSF grant to institute programs aimed at supporting women faculty, particularly their advancement to higher ranks, and to literally change institutional culture to neutralize gender bias. Even though the administration signed off on the grant, presumably supporting its objectives, shortly thereafter, they fired the Principal Investigator of the grant, Dean Sansalone. While still dealing with the fallout and implications of these events, commencement brought its own message with the announcement that the Board of Trustees chose to bestow an honorary degree on Mrs. Phyllis Schlafly, an arch-conservative and vocal anti-feminist who believes that women should not be in the workplace. The Chancellor's remarks in a letter to the WU community preceding the exercises and at commencement were full of assurances that the University did not endorse Mrs. Schlafly views and values, and that the University continues to embrace the ideal of gender equity and remains committed to support the journey towards that goal. However, these recent actions are not consistent with that point of view.

After almost 3 years since the Faculty Climate Survey was undertaken, summary results were released this last spring (<http://facultysenate.wustl.edu/links.html>). Lynn McCloskey, a Senior Analyst and Assistant Dean of Arts and Sciences, kindly came to the Medical School to present to the AWN membership a more detailed analysis of the survey, as it pertains to the Medical School. While further work needs to be done to really understand the trends in the data, it was remarkable to note that there were no "smoking guns", no huge differences in satisfaction or concerns by gender over a variety of items. This all suggests that whatever the etiologic factors of gender bias, they are likely to be subtle, each almost imperceptible and perhaps not significant standing on its own. However, that does not imply that gender bias does not exist!

In my scientific work, I am engaged in the task of identifying genetic factors influencing complex diseases, such as coronary heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and so on. Recent advances in the ability to interrogate the genome with hundreds of thousands of markers, and a shift toward investigator cooperation and data sharing among the studies of the world have produced significant new results for type 2 diabetes, which is known to have a substantial genetic component. These studies, pooling thousands of samples, have replicated evidence for the involvement of 16 variants across the genome, together explaining a total of approximately 4% of the trait variance – that's about ¼ of a percent each, on average. And those are the big detectable effects in hugely informative datasets! But nonetheless, Type 2 diabetes has a substantial genetic basis, meaning that the remaining etiologic factors are likely to be subtle. Likewise, we may be facing a similar challenge with gender bias. Even though we may be tempted to dismiss occasional comments, the particular challenges of women succeeding in traditionally male-dominated fields, or the decision to honor an anti-feminist, or even feel reassured that there is "no significant" differences between gender in a recent survey, it seems that taking all these things in aggregate, we may still experience gender bias as alive and well. Moreover, it will take real commitment and diligence to identify these subtle factors that contribute to keeping it alive, and to nurture cultural change.

We are working to ultimately make the necessity of such organizations as AWN obsolete. On May 28th, Sally Goldman (President AWF), Diana Gray (Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs), and I met with Chancellor Wrighton to discuss what might be done in the wake of all these events to restore our faith and to create positive movement towards a gender neutral environment at Washington University, a place where the careers of women may flourish. A dialogue has begun, and it is likely that this will be a long-term project! I urge you all to get involved, help when you can, share your thoughts, and to help pave the way for professional women in our society. I thank you all for your support in the past year, and I know AWN is in good hands with President-Elect, Dayna Early. I wish you all a wonderful summer!

Three New Members Named to NIH Advisory Committee on Research on Women's Health

Three new members have been appointed to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Advisory Committee on Research on Women's Health (ACRWH), which held its semiannual meeting on March 17 in Bethesda, Maryland. The new members are: **Linda C. Giudice**, M.D., Ph.D., who is the Robert B. Jaffe, M.D., Endowed Professor and Chair of the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Sciences at the University of California, San Francisco; **Nancy H. Nielsen**, M.D., Ph.D., who is the Senior Associate Dean, State University of New York at Buffalo School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, and also the President-elect of the American Medical Association (AMA); and **Debra Toney**, Ph.D., R.N., who is the President of the National Black Nurses Association (NBNA) and the Administrator, Rainbow Medical Centers, Las Vegas, Nevada.

Taken from:

<http://www.nih.gov/news/health/apr2008/od-18.htm>

First Annual Award Recognizes Women Leaders in Medicine

Pamela B. Davis, M.D., Ph.D., and dean of the Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, will be presented with a Raising Our Voices Award by the American Medical Student Association (AMSA). The honor recognizes distinguished women who have demonstrated leadership and commitment to the field of medicine. The award will be given at AMSA's 58th annual convention in Houston.

The large Case Western Reserve AMSA chapter was the impetus behind Davis' nomination. The spirit of the award acknowledges not only Davis' many academic successes, as both an accomplished physician and researcher, but also highlights her as a role model to both female and male medical students. According to the nominating students, Davis is recognized as a significant contributor in changing the face of medicine.

Taken from:

<http://blog.case.edu/case-news/2008/03/17/davisaward>

AWN Spring Dinner Focused on Compassion

The AWN Spring dinner was held on Tuesday April 8th at the King Center. Dr. Joan Cassell, Ph.D., author of "*The Surgeon in a Woman's Body*" <http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=1114085> gave an excellent presentation on compassion in male vs female healthcare workers. Dr. Cassell noted differences between genders from very early in life where females are raised to be more nurturing than males. She noted that modern day healthcare has a certain dualism about it where "evidence-based medicine" is posed against "intuition and anecdotes", while "facts" stand against "values" and "Hard scientific medicine" is opposed to "the soft emotional approach".

Today we place value on evidence-based medicine, but devalue behaviors such as compassion. What is needed is "Value-based compassion", however, this is difficult to quantify. She went on to stress the dangers of conceptualizing medical care in terms of binary opposites such as "curing vs caring", "men vs women", "doctors vs nurses" and "hard vs soft". Both men and women can be compassionate. Doctors can practice evidence-based medicine and at the same time demonstrate compassion towards patients. She concluded by stating that certain categories of healthcare workers should not be "responsible for" compassion while others are not and if the political order needs to change to achieve this..." Let's work to change it!"

AWN Mentor Awards



Kelle Moley, M.D.



John C. Morris, M.D.

Rosalind Kornfeld Student Leadership Awards



Kari Wanat, MS1



*Ellen Langer, and her nominator
Greg Longmore, PhD*

The Academic Women's Network Mentor Award was established in 2000. This award is intended to recognize an individual who has served as an outstanding mentor to a female Washington University faculty member or trainee. The award is meant to be distinct from a teaching award in that nominees should mentor in every sense of the word, not simply through teaching responsibilities.

This year, because we received so many outstanding nominations, the board was unable to choose a single awardee and instead selected two: Kelle Moley, M.D. and John C. Morris, M.D. These awards were bestowed at the Annual AWN Spring Dinner, Tuesday April 8th.

The AWN Leadership Award is given each year to one woman in the graduating class of the M.D. program and one woman in the graduating class of the Ph.D. program at Washington University School of Medicine who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in service to, or advancement of women within the community. In 2007, the Award was named to memorialize Rosalind Kornfeld, Ph.D., the founding President of AWN, as well as a valued colleague and mentor to many women scientists at Washington University.

This year, the award was given to two outstanding young women: **Kari Wanat, M.D.** for her tireless efforts as a volunteer for her class and for our Community including: Lowry-Moore Academic Society; leader of the Forum for International Health and Tropical Medicine (FIHTM), the Pediatric Outreach Program, and Students Teaching AIDS to Students; and **Ellen Langer, Ph.D.** for her outstanding research and leadership in the community including: coaching grade school basketball and serving as co-director for the summer research program for high school students at Washington University.

Gender Bias Suits at *Four* Prestigious Hospitals

Harvard Medical School professor, Carol A. Warfield, filed a lawsuit charging the president and the chief of surgery at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Josef E. Fischer, with gender discrimination, saying she endured years of sexist treatment which culminated with her demotion. Dr. Warfield is seeking recovery for the "loss of her career, her income, her reputation, and all of the consequential damages that flow from these injuries".

In a separate law suit, four women on staff at **Brigham and Women's Hospital** have given sworn statements about the sexual harassment they received from Dr. Arthur L. Day. The employees made the statements this month as part of the lawsuit brought by Dr. Sagun K. Tuli, a neurosurgeon who has accused Day and the hospital of denying her promotions while giving more favorable treatment to male colleagues with less experience.

In yet another case, a former professor at the **Johns Hopkins School of Medicine** is suing the school and two of her supervisors, claiming a longstanding pattern of gender-based bullying and harassment forced her out and nearly derailed her career. Dr. Anne C. Fischer, a pediatric surgeon, filed the lawsuit April 28th. In the 57-page complaint, she lays out what she claims is an eight-year pattern of sexual harassment and gender discrimination that ultimately led her to resign.

She also cites a 2006 report by the Johns Hopkins University Committee on the Status of Women, which identified a history of gender-based concerns throughout the university that had been documented repeatedly since 1985.

Finally, Evelyn White, a nurse hired to correct problems at **Howard University Hospital's** ER, has filed a suit claiming she and other ER nurses were forced to deal with unwanted sexual advances from the head doctor of the emergency room. She filed an internal complaint alleging that Dr. Mount Varner was sexually harassing her. She says there was no response from the hospital. Now she's filing a \$4 million sexual harassment lawsuit against the hospital and Mount Varner.

For more on these stories visit:

<http://www.thecrimson.com/article.aspx?ref=522450>

http://www.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/2008/03/28/bias_suit_rips_brigham_surgical_chief/

<http://www.mddailyrecord.com/article.cfm?id=5233&type=UTTM>

<http://www.nbc4.com/news/15857523/detail.html>

Kudos

Nancy Tye Murray, Ph.D., research professor of otolaryngology, has received a three-year, \$872,000 grant from the National Institutes of Health's National Institute of Deafness and Communication Disorders for research titled "Auditory Training and Talker Variability."

Sherry Teefey, M.D., professor of radiology was featured in the April 3rd issue of *The Record* for her work teaching radiology around the world.

<http://record.wustl.edu/news/page/normal/11389.html>

Do you have a topic for AWNings?

Send ideas to: Ann M. Gronowski; gronowski@wustl.edu

Jessie Ternberg Receives Honorary Degree

Six distinguished individuals, including a pioneer of women in medicine and a multimedia entrepreneur, will receive honorary degrees May 16 during the University's 147th Commencement ceremony.

Jessie L. Ternberg, M.D., Ph.D., WUSTL professor emerita of pediatrics and of pediatric surgery, renowned researcher and pioneer of women in medicine blazed a trail for women physicians in her nearly four decades as a researcher and pediatric surgeon. Going into the field at a time when women were discouraged from entering, she was the first female surgical resident at Barnes Hospital, the first female surgeon on Washington University's School of Medicine faculty and the first woman elected head of its faculty council.

During her tenure at the School of Medicine and St. Louis Children's Hospital, she performed more than 500 operations each year. In addition, she led a surgical team in successfully separating two sets of twins joined at the pelvis, a very rare condition. Colleagues have described Ternberg's surgeries as "works of art."

Ternberg earned a bachelor's degree from Grinnell College in 1946 with an eye on medical school.

Scholarships were scarce, so she earned a doctorate in biochemistry from the University of Texas at Austin in 1950. A year prior, she and Robert Eakin, Ph.D., reported their discovery of the mechanism by which vitamin B-12 is absorbed in the intestine, helping to establish a cure for pernicious anemia.



Jessie L. Ternberg

Ternberg, who earned a medical degree from WUSTL in 1953, joined the medical school faculty in 1959, and, in 1971, she was appointed professor of surgery and associate professor of surgery in pediatrics. She became chief of pediatric surgery in 1972, and, in 1975, she was named professor of surgery in pediatrics.

While at WUSTL, Ternberg studied free radicals using electron spin resonance and was able to show that differences in free radical levels exist between normal and cancerous tissues.

Taken directly from The Record, May 1, 2008

<http://record.wustl.edu/news/page/normal/11663.html>

AWN Board meetings will begin again in Fall 2008. Everyone is welcome to attend. Watch AWNNings for time and location.

Visit <http://awn.wustl.edu> to see our new updated AWN website.

“Lasting change is a series of compromises. And compromise is all right, as long your values don't change.”

Jane Goodall

Controversy Over Honorary Doctorate for Phyllis Schlafly

by Tamara Hershey

On May 1st, the Washington University Board of Trustees announced their slate of honorary degree recipients for the 2008 commencement ceremonies. The presence of one recipient on this list, Phyllis Schlafly, a renowned anti-feminist who has vigorously opposed many laws addressing women's equality (e.g. Title IX; sexual harassment, Equal Rights Amendment, the concept of marital rape) as well as holding many other controversial views (see websites below for more information), surprised and dismayed many people.

In the short time between this announcement and commencement exercises on May 16th, opposition to this action took the form of protests, on-line debates, letters to the Chancellor, the Board of Trustees and newspapers, interviews with local and national media and concrete demands to the Chancellor. For example, Chancellor Wrighton received a letter spearheaded by the Association of Women Faculty (AWN's sister organization on the Danforth campus) and signed by 262 WU faculty from both campuses stating their objections to this perceived endorsement of Mrs. Schlafly's views, a request to retract the honorary award and their desire for positive action supporting women faculty in the future. The Chancellor also received a formal request from the Executive Committee for Faculty Concerns (ECFC), cosigned by 155 faculty members, to evaluate the way honorary degrees are awarded. This request was underscored by a public letter, signed by student members of the Board of Trustees Honorary Degree Selection Committee, which retracted their support of Mrs. Schlafly's award on the basis that her controversial views were not discussed at meetings, dissent was "...met with hostile opposition" and voting was not done on a candidate by candidate basis. Many publicly

posted letters mirrored the statement in the ECFC's letter that "Although Ms. Schlafly is entitled to her views, by giving her an honorary degree the University puts a stamp of approval on her words." Many of these letters have been posted on-line (<http://www.artsci.wustl.edu/~awf/schlafly-protest.html>) and provide a context and articulated arguments for their objections. Finally, WU students built a comprehensive website explaining their opposition with links to the media coverage of the controversy <http://nohonorarydegree4schlafly.angelfire.com/index.html>.

Days before commencement, the Chancellor and the Board of Trustees declined to withdraw their offer of an award to Mrs. Schlafly. In a letter sent to the entire WU community on May 14th, Chancellor Wrighton stated that "...the University has concluded that it will fulfill its commitment to award the degree". Anticipating this decision, students organized a silent protest of the award at commencement where many members of the audience, including students, families and faculty, stood with their backs to the stage while the award was presented.

Now that commencement is over, the honorary degree awarded and the media attention dying down, it will be important for the AWN, AWF, ECFC and other like-minded organizations to translate this episode into positive action that supports equality for women on the WU campus and enhances the WU community as a whole. Given the Chancellor's stated desire to do "...whatever work needs to be done to rebuild damaged relationships with members of our community...", we may have a unique opportunity for implementing concrete changes. Stay tuned!

Focus on Female Faculty

“Focus on Female Faculty” is a new column that will run 1-2 times per year in AWNings and will highlight portions of interviews with senior WUSM female faculty. Below is our second interview.

Susan Dutcher, Ph.D., is a Professor in the Department of Genetics and in Cell Biology and Physiology. She serves as Interim Head of the Department of Genetics.

Briefly, tell about your educational and career background.

I grew up in Aspen, Colorado and when it was time to pick a college, I was not ready to leave Colorado and the mountains, so I chose to attend Colorado College. In 1975, I went to graduate school at the University of Washington, Seattle in the Department of Genetics. My mentor was **Leland Hartwell** who won the **Nobel Prize** in Medicine or Physiology in 2001 for his contributions to the understanding of the cell cycle and checkpoints using *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*. For my postdoctoral work, I went to the Rockefeller University in New York City for three years to work in the group of David Luck on *Chlamydomonas*. While working on yeast I became interested in how microtubules are organized and function. I was fortunate to have met Richard McIntosh while a graduate student; early in my postdoctoral training he invited me to apply for a faculty position in the Department of Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

Much to my surprise, I was offered and accepted a job after being a postdoc for just 20 months. The best part of the offer was the ability to continue my research for another 16 months at the Rockefeller. During this time, I wrote my first NIH grant and arrived in Boulder with three years of funding. I spent 15 years in Boulder and moved from Assistant Professor to Full Professor during that time. In 1997, Bob Waterston, the Head of Genetics at Washington University, called to explore the possibility of moving to Washington University. Two years later, my husband Gary (also a researcher) and I moved our labs and family to St. Louis.

How did you choose your career?

In college, I was interested in Ecology and Environmental Biology. Colorado College was a great place for field studies as students take only one course at a time for 3.5 weeks and it is possible to leave campus to do field work. In my junior year, I enrolled in Ornithology. My assignment for the first day of class was to write a 3-page paper on the specialization of the beaks of finches in evergreen trees in the Northeast. I spent the day in the library and at 11pm was running back to the dorm with my finished paper. I jumped off the curb, landed, **broke 7 bones** in my left foot, and ended up in a cast. Fieldwork on the Gulf of Mexico was out and I had to find a more sedentary class to take. I enrolled in Genetics with Dr. Werner Heim and soon knew that I had found my passion. Genetics was a way to understand and dissect organisms or cellular processes.

This epiphany led to my thesis work on cell cycle genes with Lee Hartwell as a graduate student. As Lee always explained, being a geneticist is like being an auto mechanic. You start with the broken car (or mutant phenotype) and your job is to reason backwards to figure out how the process works. The logic and ability to test hypotheses under controlled conditions using genetics was truly exciting.

How would you recommend achieving an optimal work/life balance?

I am not sure that I know the answer to this question. My husband is also a scientist in the Department of Genetics. When I arrived in Colorado as an Assistant Professor, Gary was a postdoctoral fellow. Soon after, he was promoted to Research Assistant Professor and ultimately switched tracks to become a tenured Full Professor. We married and have two great children. It would have never been possible to have two professors in the house with two kids if there had been a lot of give and take on both sides. We each had assigned jobs and rapidly figured out what chores we both disliked. These included cleaning the house and doing the taxes; it was well worth the money to pay someone else to do these jobs! When the kids were small, we found great daycare in Boulder that was near the University. *Continued on page 9*

This was especially important with my daughter who refused to take a bottle for a long time; only Mom would do. Having daycare close to work made it possible to finish one last experiment on some of those hectic days.

Our family loves to travel and this has always been a great time for renewing our commitments to one another. Our first trip as a family was to Italy when my daughter was six weeks old and our most recent trips have included visits to China, Norway, Japan, Switzerland, Czech Republic, and Spain. Having time to talk and explore together in new places is an important part of our family life.

Do you have any other specific comments or advice that you like to provide to the young female scientists and physicians?

If someone had asked me thirty years ago, as I was finishing graduate school, if I would be successful at being a scientist and getting a job, I think I would have laughed at them. I loved working at the bench, and I loved figuring out new pathways and relationships; I considered myself a pretty good experimentalist. I had acquired the ability to give a good talk. But, I was average at writing papers and grants. So how is it that I am now a Full Professor at the Number 4 Medical School and Interim Head of a Department?

There are a few things that have helped my career. First, I had an amazing network of colleagues. Some of them were fellow graduate students at the University of Washington or postdocs at the Rockefeller, others were people that I met at the first meetings that I attended, and others were new faculty at the University of Colorado. Having a network of colleagues to use as a sounding board for ideas was essential as I began to set up my lab and begin to do tasks for which I had no experience or skills.



Susan Dutcher and her husband, Gary and children, Benjamin and Adrienne in China.

Second, I had a great group of graduate students in my lab at the beginning. They were excited about the science and they worked as many long hours as I did. There was always someone in the lab that would listen to ideas or try unusual screens for new mutants or go out for coffee to discuss new data.

Third, I had several senior faculty colleagues who were my guardian angels. They help to foster my career and to make me visible to the cell biology and genetics communities. They invited me to important meetings as a speaker. On the other hand, they also kept me from accepting too many requests that keep you away from the lab. As one senior woman faculty member told me just before I started my faculty position, the most important objective is to be in the lab and to do the science (or medicine), *not* to serve on committees.

So the **three pieces of advice** are: have faith in your ability; find great colleagues and students; and follow your passion.



AWN

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