Final Report: WORLS Seminar Series “Aspects of Communication within the Work Environment”

Organizers: Brigitte Baueule (EOL), Astrid Maute (HAO) on behalf of the WORLS Steering Committee (10 January 2012)

The NCAR/UCAR Women Organizing Research and Leading Science (WORLS) Steering Committee organized a four-speaker seminar series in CY11 with prime focus on aspects of communications in the work environment. The following speakers and subjects were covered:

(1) **Conflict Resolution:** Dr. Audrey Nelson from Boulder-based Nelson Communication addressed approximately 50 primarily female UCAR/NCAR staff on 1 April 2011 to talk about conflict resolution in the workplace. In her talk “Code Switching: Managing Conflict for a Positive Outcome,” she focused on women’s reluctance to address conflict head-on, how to deal with difficult people, and how to use conflict in a productive manner.

(2) **Gender Bias in Negotiations:** Sara Laschever, co-author of “Women Don’t Ask – Negotiation and the Gender Divide” spoke to approximately 50 primarily female UCAR/NCAR staff on 17 May 2011 at Center Green. Drawing on research in psychology, sociology, economics, and organizational behavior, Sara’s presentation, titled “Learning to Ask: Women and the Power of Negotiation,” showed the dramatic difference between men and women in their propensity to negotiate for what they want, and the high price that women pay for avoiding opportunities to negotiate.

(3) **Intercultural Communications:** Dr. Young Y. Kim, a professor of communications at the University of Oklahoma spoke to a group of approximately 40 primarily female UCAR/NCAR staff on 24 June 2011 about “Weaving the Fabric of Diversity: A Communication Perspective.” Dr. Kim described various associative and dissociative ways in which ethnically dissimilar individuals communicate, and how situational and environmental factors can influence individual behaviors.

(4) **Communicating Science to the Public:** Susan J. Hassol, Director of Boulder-based Climate Communication, gave a lecture called “Improving Scientists’ Communication of Climate Change” to approximately 60 UCAR/NCAR staff on 28 November 2011 at the Mesa Lab. The lecture discussed the main causes for a decreasing acceptance and partisanship of climate change science, and focused on better and more effective ways of communicating science to the general public.

ASSESSMENT
(1) **Attendance:**
- The number of attendees per seminar ranged from about 40 to 60.
- About a dozen women attended all four seminars.
- With the exception of the Hassol seminar, the audience was predominantly female. After hearing from several male colleagues that they were under the assumption that these seminars were exclusively for women, we stopped advertising under the WORLS logo after the second seminar to encourage more male attendance.
- Not surprising, professional representation, cultural background and age of each audience differed at each seminar. The first lecture appealed to a larger number of staff in administrative functions and support; the second seminar was well attended by early-to-mid career female scientists and women in non-administrative functions; the third talk drew attention from staff with international or multi-cultural backgrounds; and the fourth lecture was primarily of interest to UCAR/NCAR scientific personnel.
- Half a dozen staff took the opportunity to also attend the follow-on lunch with the speakers Nelson and Kim, and about a dozen with speaker Laschever. Greater attendance was not achieved because of the large time commitment needed for these lunch meetings. A survey was conducted after the first three speakers (Nelson, Laschever, and Kim) and 26 people participated. The result of the survey guided the assessment of the seminar series in this report. The main suggestions were: (a) continuation of the seminar series possibly using a workshop venue; and (b) webcasting of talks. A solicitation of future topics resulted in suggestions ranging from work-family balance, understanding different communication styles, career assistance for women, and networking.

(2) **Advertisement and Venue:**
- Events were advertised approximately one month in advance via announcement in Staff Notes, by email distribution to the “woms” mailing list (which reaches women across UCAR and NCAR), and by posting fliers across all NCAR campuses.
- Seminars were held at three campuses (ML, FL, and CG), although location was primarily driven by the availability of seminar rooms.
- None of the presentations was video-conferenced to any of the other campuses due to speakers’ reluctance to sign the UCAR release form.
- None of the presentations was recorded for later showing due speakers’ reluctance to sign the UCAR release form.
(3) Quality and Applicability of Presentations

Overall, all four seminars were well received. The presentation most applicable to women’s issues within UCAR/NCAR was Sara Laschever’s, which received the most positive feedback. The results of her current research on initiating negotiations and exploring societal factors that hold women back from actively asking for pay raises and promotions are of significant importance to the majority of women in this organization, regardless of position or career stage. While by far the longest lecture (close to 2 hours), the audience stayed until the very end and asked excellent questions. In addition the informal lunch with Sara Laschever was well attended. Her sound, hands-on advice was much appreciated by the participants. Unfortunately, there was no representation at the seminar from NCAR/UCAR upper management. The WORLS Steering Committee strongly recommends bringing back Ms Laschever or her colleague, Linda Babcock, for a follow-on seminar and discussion, preferably through Human Resources for a longer, 4-hour workshop. It is also recommended that UCAR/NCAR Management attend this follow-up seminar/workshop.

Susan Hassol’s talk drew the largest and most diverse audience. The presentation was well done and very timely. The information she presented provided cultural and political insights as well as recommendations on how to better communicate science. While the talk was originally intended to provide tools that women can use to engage acquaintances and friends in topics relate to climate, the actual presentation ended up targeting scientists across the institution. The WORLS Steering Committee recommends that NCAR management continues to work with Susan on setting up regular training sessions with staff to routinely practice many of the recommendations provided by the speaker.

Dr. Kim’s talk was very scientific: she presented her theory on interethnic communication. She elucidated her theory with examples about situational and environmental factors that illustrated how ethничal dissimilarities can cause associative and dissociative behavior and activities in people. In a systematic way she broke down her theory to the different levels starting with interpersonal communication up to the macro-environmental level. She explained the sociological theory of communications, and the way networks of communication evolve at the social level. Overall, it was an excellent presentation.

While also quite applicable to the work environment, Dr. Nelson’s presentation on conflict resolution, while highly entertaining, was the least remarkable as it catered primarily to well-established clichés and stereotypes. Surprising for a professional speaker, her talk was badly timed, lacked depth, and only touched on a few issues. The WORLS Steering Committee recommends that this area be covered through routine HR workshops that also provide hands-on practice sessions.
(4) Cost to Benefit Ratio

Professional speakers are expensive. Unfortunately, the UCAR release form was unacceptable to all four speakers and we therefore did not record any of the lectures to allow other staff to watch at a later time. Considering that speaking fees ranged from $500 to $3,500, the option of recording would have made the investment more worthwhile. Additionally, help from HR or Contracts to negotiate speaker fees may have been beneficial. Some of the areas covered may be better handled by HR in longer (e.g., 4 hour workshops) rather than a single lecture.

(5) Recommendation and Future Activities

The WORLS Steering Committee recommends the following:

a) Bring Sara Laschever or her co-investigator Linda Babcock back to NCAR to repeat or expand on the subject.

b) Ask UCAR to either modify the UCAR Release Form or have multiple forms adjusted to the specific purpose, e.g., nowcasting, taping and release for internal purpose.

c) Have NCAR/UCAR offer regular training for staff to practice “communicating science to the public.” This can be done in association with the Communications Office.

d) Several of the seminars would have benefitted from an expanded timeframe for questions. The original idea was to use the joint lunches to go into more detail about some of the issues raised; however, many of the attendees were time constrained and unable to spend an additional 30-45 minutes for an extended lunch break. Future lectures will allocate at least 30 minutes to ask questions from the audience.

Overall, the WORLS Seminar Series was a success. The lecture series introduced WORLS to NCAR/UCAR as an active group. Additionally, results from the survey provided suggestions for additional future seminars and workshops. Before pursing future activities, the FY12 WORLS activities will focus on team building efforts for the WORLS group.

Note that both HAO and EOL contributed internal diversity funds to this effort:

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## Account Budget Summary

### Account Information
- **Account**: 744221
- **Status**: Active
- **Fund Source**: NSF Regular/CORE Funding
- **Program Title**: FPS Diversity WORLS
- **Program Lead**: Sharpe, K.
- **Group**: PRIZE
- **Proposal No.**: M0856145

### Contract No. M0856145

### Notes:
- Current account information as of December 31, 2011
- Financial & staffing data as of December 31, 2011

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### Field Information Report

Printed on 1/17/2012

Account Budget Summary.rpt

Month & Fiscal Year selected: December 2012