

Report for AWiSE (Forum), Broadview (UEA) and Pfizer.

Managing Your Future

A seminar for women researchers and academics in the sciences

Fifty women delegates, drawn from Universities and Research Centres throughout East Anglia, attended this day-long seminar at Robinson College, Cambridge on Monday June 11th 2001. The event was organised by ResNet 2000 (University of East Anglia) on behalf of LAWN (Local Academic Women's Network) and the UK Universities' Athena project. Additional sponsorship was provided by Pfizer Global Research. The participants represented all levels of seniority from postgraduate students to lectures, senior scientists and managers, and held in common an interest in the development of careers for women working in the sciences.

After registration and coffee Ruth Goodall, Head of the Centre for Staff Development at UEA and Project Director of ResNet 2000, introduced the day's activities. These were designed to give an opportunity for networking with other women scientists from the region, to do some career stocktaking, to think about the implications of an academic or research career and to find out about some other career options.

The first session, on the topic of "Career Assessment", was led by Stephanie Spink, a Management Consultant. The entire group was taken in a very lively manner through the subjects of self-assessment, self-belief and self-motivation. Then, in a few moments of quiet contemplation, delegates were asked to visualise their future in stages over a few years, to think about how to achieve their goals, and importantly, how to avoid putting obstacles in their own path to achievement. Further discussion of these aspirations continued in small groups and finally at the one-to-one level with different partners. By the end of this session everyone had discussed their ideas with at least five other people and, since delegates had widely different interests and were at such varied stages of their careers, some very helpful advice had been exchanged.

Next Dr Nancy Lane, OBE, Deputy Chair of the Athena Project and Project Director of Cambridge University's Women in SET Initiative, described in an inspirational and amusing manner how she has managed her high profile career. Her obvious boundless energy and enthusiasm have enabled her to combine scientific research, lecturing, committee work and caring for her family, and she told the meeting that there is every reason to suppose that we are all capable of doing the same thing.

Networking continued over an excellent lunch and we then reconvened for a series of 6 small workshops. "Improving self-presentation skills through your CV" was led by Ian McGilvray, the Director of the UEA Careers Centre. Stephanie Spink continued her good work with "Managing and developing yourself as a resource", while Mary Phillips, Manager of International Biomedical Programme and formerly with the Wellcome Trust, gave "An introduction to the principles of grant getting". Brian Bemment of the Norwich Enterprise Agency Trust led "Setting up your own business". Three members of the co-ordinating group of ResNet at UEA presented evidence from the UK and Europe about "Careers in Science for Women:", and "Creating a Regional Network" was led by Ruth Goodall.

Everyone came together again for the final session of the day when a panel of invited speakers gave the audience a "taster" of alternative career options, explaining both the intricacies of their present jobs and how they came to make the move from bench science to

their current position. Belinda Clarke, who is Science Liaison Manager for the Norwich Research Park described her activities as a science communicator at all levels, from small groups of the general public to government committees. Management Consultancy was covered by Danielle Miller, a member of a management consultancy practice working in European business development. Jean Wagstaff from the Teacher Training Agency emphasised the current urgent need to recruit science teachers during her talk about the teaching profession. The Civil Service Fast Stream Route was described by Sally Randall who is a Project Manager in the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions, and Val Lucas, from Pfizer Central Research, gave us an insight into her activities as a Drug Development Project Manager with a major pharmaceutical company. Lively question and answer sessions after each speaker were continued in a panel discussion to round off the day.

Feedback indicates that there was a high level of satisfaction among the delegates who felt that it was a very enjoyable, thought provoking and helpful day. Comments have included requests to "Do it again".

Julia Marcantonio, School of Biological Sciences, University of East Anglia