



# Why Advancing Women Requires Networking

Patricia Rankin  
Associate Vice Chancellor for  
Research



University of Colorado  
Boulder

# Networking for Women (and Men)

- Networking gets you known
- Networking provides support
- Networking provides information
  - Valuable in negotiating offers, resources
- Interaction process itself is valuable
  - Discussing work helps clarify ideas
- Matters most when the rules are unwritten
- If participation in networks is uneven then playing field may not be level

# Norm of Reciprocity/Social Capital

- Networking is “two way” – if someone does something for you then you inherit an obligation (“**Norm of Reciprocity**” – Alvin Gouldner)
  - Needs Trust
  - Norm implies likelihood of balanced trade
  - Can “give forward”, do not ignore “intangibles”
- Social Exchange builds Social Capital
  - Learn things when you talk to people
  - Gain Tacit Knowledge

# Tacit Knowledge

- Definitions “fuzzy” usually suggest that it is information that it is difficult to write down/transfer
  - Boulder is in Colorado
    - ***Explicit knowledge, can be written down, transmitted and understood by recipient***
  - Solving a Sudoku problem
    - ***Yes – can write down rules to follow – but***
  - Riding a bicycle -
- Know what (facts) Know why (science), Know who (networking) Know how (tacit)
- What you use to do something without knowing you are using it



# Tacit/Hidden Knowledge

- Evidence is mounting about its importance in enabling people to be successful
  - Every field has its own jargon, unchallenged assumptions (24/7) and common culture
  - How “replicable” is an experiment?
  - Bessemer – steel – people had problems following patented process
- Tends to be something you are more likely to learn by watching/doing than by reading about
- Nonaka – hypothesizes that it is a property of social networks which hold it and communicate it to members by informal means

# Mentoring/Sponsors

- Mentors are important
  - Often “Heroic”
    - Goal is for protégé to establish independence and slay monster
    - Usually research supervisors – have specific role
  - Other models include “collective”, “peer” and “composite”
- Current discussion is shifting to consideration of value of sponsors
  - Sponsors take a more pro-active role – nominate, suggest, raise profile
    - Who do we put on committees?
    - Who gets awards? (Japanese study – women on nominating committee increase number of women awardees)

# Mentors/Networks

- Networks
  - Include more casual contacts
  - Broader connections (loose/strong links)
  - More responsibility on individual to choose between suggested paths
- At a minimum need multiple mentors
  - Research – advisor, chair, colleagues
  - Teaching – civility, authority
  - Service – how to limit strategically

# Issues

- Majority groups just may not experience some of problems facing non majority individuals
  - Assumed expert if fit norms so not challenged
  - Goldfish in fishbowl of privilege
  - Need some special networks
- Current data suggests that men and women use networks differently
  - Probably societal influences
    - Suggestion that women can network more effectively but currently focus on family/friends
    - Need to make sure building career network
    - Changing perspectives can change interactions





# Issues

- “Impostor Syndrome” – fear of not belonging
  - Asking for help not a sign of weakness
  - Increased emphasis on need to collaborative efforts to solve problems
- Seen as “using” people by making connections specifically because they are valuable or because exploiting a connection
  - More comfortable if focus on reciprocity
  - Need to be at table to change norms



# Local (Institutional) Networking

- Campuses should encourage networking
  - How do you get busy people to attend?
    - ***Skill building/Presentations encourage attendance***
- How often do faculty talk to others about their research (quick way to measure isolation)
- How do you connect people in affiliate departments?
- Do people attend colloquia?
  - Are the colloquia accessible (when are they scheduled)?

# Remote Networks

- These are growing and can be real assets
  - Good way to
    - ***Build Critical Mass***
    - ***Overcome Geographical isolation***
  - Mentornet, AWIS...
  - List servers, Blogs.....
- Not an either/or – some networks may focus more on professional opportunities, some more on support, some on long term change initiatives

