Greetings from your Co-Chairs!

Happy spring! (Or am I just being optimistic?) As we all start to emerge from the mountains of snow, I’d like to reflect on the great work our committee has done – and is doing – this year.

At our December meeting the Women’s Career Development Sub-Committee invited Dr. Deborah Plummer to present and lead a discussion about negotiation. The session was quite successful and informative.

At our February meeting, PhD student Dr. Reka Haraszti presented a recent article that found gender differences in time spent on parenting and domestic responsibilities among physician K awardees. The resulting discussion was lively and thoughtful, and many of us came away from the conversation inspired to think about how these issues play out in our own lives, and how we may be able to shift perspectives among our colleagues and trainees.

On 2/23, the WFC, along with the PWC and WLWG hosted a reception to welcome the new president of WPI, Dr. Laurie Leshin. The event was well attended. To hear more about it, see page 2.

At the Women’s History Month event in early March, Dr. Michelle Budig of UMass Amherst spoke about some of her research on the “the motherhood penalty versus the fatherhood bonus”. The event was well attended and encouraged interesting conversations.

We’d like to remind you of several events coming this spring that WFC members have organized:

**Women’s Health Event**, Tue 4/28 12-1pm (lunch at 11:30am) in the Faculty Conference Room, speakers: Dr. Jennifer Lauretti and Dr. Nancy Dragoon

**Women in Research Mentoring Reception**, Tue 5/14 5pm, LRB Function Space, Blais Pavilion

**Women’s Faculty Awards Luncheon**, Wed 5/20, 12-1pm (lunch at 11:30am), Faculty Conference Room, speaker: Dr. Judy Ockene

Please remember to invite a colleague to our March meeting. We’d like to engage women faculty who are passionate about the work we do on the WFC and may like to join the committee. Ann and I will be leading a discussion about the results of the recent Diversity Engagement Survey, particularly differences in the responses by male and female faculty, and how our committee might work to “move the needle” on some of these issues. And, lunch will be served. We look forward to meeting your colleagues!

Best,

Molly Waring & Ann Salerno
The Women’s Faculty Committee (WFC), Professional Women’s Committee (PWC), and the Women’s Leadership Work Group (WLWG) recently held a reception to welcome Dr. Laurie Leshin, the President of Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI). After an opportunity for connecting and conversing informally, Dr. Leshin inspired – and entertained – the group with stories of how she became excited about science, her graduate work dissecting rocks from Mars, and her varied accomplishments and experiences including her work at NASA on the Mars Curiosity Team. She then spoke about her vision for WPI and undergraduate STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) education. A self-proclaimed “space nerd”, Dr. Leshin’s passion for her research and for creating opportunities for students to find their passion was apparent.

Members of the WFC, PWC, and WLWG and other UMass women then asked questions and engaged Dr. Leshin in a discussion ranging from the “leaky pipeline” and how to engage young students, particularly young women, in science to opportunities to collaborate on faculty development activities. There was much enthusiasm for future collaborations to promote women in STEM and the recruitment, retention, promotion, and advancement of women at both our campuses.

Women Leaders of UMass Gather for a Photo with Dr. Laurie Leshin, President of WPI, at a Reception in her Honor
Back row: Greer Jordan, PhD, Deborah Plummer, PhD, Mary Munson, PhD, Luanne Thorndyke, MD, Karen Oates, PhD (WPI). Front row: Mary Lee, MD, Tammy LeBlanc, CRA, Laurie Leshin, PhD (WPI), Molly Waring, PhD, Ann Salerno, MD

Tech Talk  Constance Nichols
Change is coming!!
As you may or may not know the Clinical System is now evaluating two complete hospital information suites to institute in place of Soarian Clinicals, soarian Financials, Allscripts, ED PulseCheck, Visicu, Salar, dbMotion, Meditech Lab, Imagecast and all the other myriad of products we currently use.
The two systems being evaluated are EPIC and Cerner. Here is an article from HIMSS that you may find interesting.
http://pages.healthcareitnews.com/index.php/email/emailWebview?

Of course you can’t just replace a system in a few weeks. Once the follow up calls to other academic medical centers that use one of the systems and the final decision is made there will likely be a greater than a year and more likely two year implementation effort. In the mean time we need to maintain and upgrade all our current systems that we use to care for patients and do research.
It is a fabulously exciting time in clinical informatics and I urge you all to participate in this process whenever the opportunity presents itself.
Stay tuned for more updates!!
Proper Work-Life Balance Appears Key to Good Health for Women

A retrospective study conducted by Sabbath et al. sought to observe the relationship between 7 prototypical work-family situations and female mortality risk. After adjusting for confounding factors, married women who stayed home with their children briefly before returning to work were found to exhibit the lowest mortality rates. Calculated hazard ratios were higher for single non-working mothers (2.14) than single working mothers (1.98) and married nonworking mothers (1.36), suggesting that work and partner support may be protective factors against female mortality.


Pregnancy as a Contraindication for Prescribing Antidepressants

Osborne and Payne addressed the findings of Robinson’s literature review surrounding the controversy of prescribing antidepressants to pregnant women. Though antidepressants can potentially cause a variety of complications including miscarriage, congenital malformations, and autism spectrum disorder, they argued that such risks are often overestimated and that untreated depression can lead to poor nutrition, substance abuse, and attempted suicide, which would significantly and negatively impact both maternal and fetal health. To conclude, Osborne and Payne called for physicians to consider prescribing antidepressants when supported by scientific evidence and appropriate based on risk-benefit analysis on a case-by-case basis.


Potential New Benefit of Oral Bisphosphonate

Newcomb et al. examined the relationship between oral bisphosphonate use and endometrial cancer risk in 89,918 postmenopausal women who previously participated in the Women’s Health Initiative launched in 1991 and found that ever use of bisphosphonate was associated with a 20% reduction in endometrial cancer risk. This study contributes to the growing number of studies in the literature suggesting that bisphosphonate can be used in risk reduction as well as treatment of certain cancers, such as breast cancer.

We would like to spotlight Rachel Gerstein, PhD, Associate Professor in the Department of Microbiology and Physiological Systems and a long standing member of the Women’s Faculty Committee. Rachel is an immunologist with an interest in B cells – cells in our immune system that produce antibodies and defend us against infection. Rachel’s laboratory uses state of the art techniques including flow cytometry to understand how normal processes during B cell development and immune responses go awry, leading to B cell lymphoma. Rachel earned a BA from Smith College in Biological Sciences and a PhD from Brandeis University. Rachel is very active in the Smith College Club of Central MA and also serves on a Task Force for Diversity and Inclusion for the Smith College Alumnae Association. In her spare time, Rachel likes to walk her Jack Russell in the woods and ride her horse, a very patient and sweet Thoroughbred x Clydesdale cross.

When and why did you decide to become a scientist?
I made this decision after freshman year in college. With absolutely no experience, I talked my way into a summer job in the lab of Kim Bottomly at Yale. Kim is an Immunologist. Kim’s husband was Charlie Janeway - I wish I had transcripts of the arguments that Charlie and Dick Gershon had - history in the making! Yale was and continues to be an Immunology epicenter and I entered the field at an exciting time - I made some of the first hybridomas at Yale and antibody gene diversity was only starting to be understood. I fell in love with Immunology and never waivered. I wanted to be a veterinarian as a kid and was pre-Med at first in college, but pretty quickly knew I wanted to be an academic and a scientist. In addition to the pure joy of "figuring stuff out" - when I was in college, the AIDS epidemic started, giving a pretty stark incentive to contribute to the field.

What do you like about being a scientist and what is the best part of your job at UMASS?
I still love being at the bench! I really enjoy the blend of creatively, imagination, and deeply thinking about problems that being a scientist entails. Now that I am involved in translational research, I have the added gratification that as we are contributing to new cancer treatments. There are many things I love about being at Umass - we are fortunate to have fantastic facilities and resources here, and such amazing and generous colleagues. I enjoy teaching very much, and I feel deeply that mentoring is one of our most important functions.

What advice would you give young scientists who want to pursue a research career?
If science is your passion, go for it!!! Please do not give up because of all the "might nots". I see too many wonderful scientists leaving science or leaving academia because of the current NIH funding situation. As a community, I think we need more discussion and strategic planning in order to mentor the younger generation so that they can survive and thrive.

ERRATUM: In the previous issue (Fall 2014) we featured an article about an early woman physician Rebecca Davis Lee Crumpler and posted what we thought was a picture of her. The picture in the newsletter was of Mary Eliza Mahoney, the first professionally trained African American nurse in the US. No photos or other images survive of Dr. Crumpler. We apologize for the confusion and thank Rose Beard who pointed out the mistake from Charlotte NC!
Sexism in STEM-related academia: the debate continues

A recent report by psychologists and economists suggests gender equity – rather than gender bias – in eight academic math-intensive fields of science. The authors find parity for males and females among early and mid-career faculty regarding salary, retention, promotion, and tenure, rates of grand funding and acceptance of journal submissions, citation of publications, and job satisfaction. Moreover, female applicants are more likely than male applicants to receive job offers. The authors conclude that under-representation of women in these fields is due to women’s preferences and choices regarding occupation and lifestyle, and suggest that early exposure of girls to science and math will help boost recruitment of female faculty.

The authors’ analysis and interpretation have been challenged, however. Those commenting on the article note that key topics such as workplace hostility, harassment, and physical aggression are not addressed in the recent publication, and that gender parity in career progression does not imply that these and other work-related issues no longer exist. In fact, a PLOS study finds that in an Internet survey of field scientists, over one-quarter of female respondents reported physical assault, coming primarily from senior male colleagues; in contrast, only 6% of male respondents reported assault, mainly by peers.

Also, the higher rate of job offers for female applicants is counterbalanced by a lower rate of applications from females. For example, for physics faculty hires, 13% of applicants were female – much lower than the percent of female PhDs – and 19% of those invited for an interview and 20% of those hired were female. The authors take a “half-full glass” view, focusing on the percent interviewed and hired, while commenters take a “half-empty glass” perspective and point to the relative dearth of female applicants. The latter could reflect women’s preferences, or their experience and perception of workplace hostility. Clearly the discussion is far from over!

References:
http://www.the-scientist.com/?articles.view/articleNo/41381/title/The-End-of-Science-Sexism-
http://www.theguardian.com/science/occams-corner/2014/nov/04/is-the-sexist-scientific-workplace-really-dead

Women in medicine/science articles

- The Effect of an Intervention to Break the Gender Bias Habit for Faculty at One Institution: A Cluster Randomized, Controlled Trial J. Acad Med. 4 Nov 2014 http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25374039
- 2014 Life Science Salary Survey for The Scientist
Congratulations!

Promotions:
Madaiah Lokeshwari, MD, Medicine, St. Vincent, Assistant Professor
Pegeen Eslami, MD, Pediatrics, Clinical Assoc Professor
Susan Zweizig, MD, Ob/Gyn, Professor
Heather Forkey, MD, Pediatrics, Associate Professor
Neng Yu, MD, Pathology, Associate Professor

JeanMarie Houghton, MD, PhD, Medicine, Professor
Monika Mitra, PhD, FMCH, Associate Professor

Awards:
Faculty Scholar Award
Phoebe Moore, PhD, Psychiatry

Publications:

American Medical Women’s Association
UMass Student Chapter

UMass’s Student AMWA Chapter is transitioning to a new group of leaders for the 2015 – 2016 academic year! The new co-leaders are: Kathryn Czepiel, Laura Desrochers, Jessica Feng, Tran Nguyen and Emily Yuan. Each leader will be spearheading different aspects of the organization, such as community service, communications and AMWA-hosted events. We look forward to growing our on-campus presence and working closely with the WFC in the upcoming year.

In other AMWA news, some of our previous AMWA co-leaders are pursuing election to national and regional AMWA leadership positions! Safiyah Hosein (’16), Amarilys Rojas (’17) and Elizabeth Yuan (’17) are passionate about staying involved with AMWA and expanding their leadership contributions as Conference Co-Chair (Hosein); Recruitment Chair (Rojas); and Regional 1 Director (Yuan). We wish our student colleagues good luck! Results will be announced at the AMWA Centennial Meeting on April 23-26, 2015 in Chicago, Illinois. For more information regarding attending the Centennial Meeting, please visit www.amwa-doc.org. (Elizabeth Yuan, 17)

The New Co-leaders (from left): Jessica Feng (’18), Kathryn Czepiel (’18), Laura Desrochers (’18), Emily Yuan (’18), Tran Nguyen (’18).

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Comments: Yumi.Uetake@umassmed.edu