Summary of CWIN Luncheon Table Discussions
November 18, 2008
What are the top five priorities needed to get the most out of mentoring and networking?

More than 200 women and men all career stages met to network at the C-WIN Luncheon held at the SfN Annual Meeting in Washington, DC, in November, 2008. They were given the pleasure of listening to a terrific talk by former SfN President and scientist extraordinaire, Dr. Huda Akil, enjoy lunch together, and discuss the top 5 things that are needed to get the most out of mentoring and networking. The responses fell into four main categories: advice for mentors, advice for mentees, advice on improving mentoring programs and advice on networking.

Advice for Mentors

- Qualities of a good Mentor: Effective Communication, Trust, Flexibility, Kindness, Patience, Tolerance, Trust and Transparency.
- Identify expectations of the mentor and mentee and then be prepared.
- Share your network, introduce your mentee to people in your network and encourage your mentee to approach new people and introduce themselves.
- Be actively involved. Make a long-term commitment to the mentoring relationship. Be available to the mentee and follow-up to maintain contact throughout their career.
- Teach women to advocate for and promote themselves through advice on job negotiations, grants, etc.
- Understand work/life balance. As a mentor, be real, not superwoman. Share your human stories and personal experiences with your mentees.
- Treat mentees as individuals. Help them identify strengths and weaknesses, provide constructive feedback and don’t expect the mentee to fit a rigid mold.
- Teach the value of good science in conjunction with publishing.
- Understand managing is not the same as mentoring. Mentoring requires unselfish motivation; giving without expecting anything in return.
- Understand how the field evolves and the differences from when they were students.
- Care about the needs of the mentee.
- Lead by example. Be ethical in dealing with people.

Advice for Mentees

- Qualities in a good Mentee: Effective Communication, Trust, Flexibility, Patience, Trust, Openness, Optimism and Persistence.
- Identify the expectations of both the mentor and mentee. Ask about the educational background of your mentor.
- Identify your mentoring needs and how they change over time. Be aware of your own needs, deficits, strengths, goals.
- Find the group of people who can fulfill those needs. Find multiple mentors for different advice/perspectives.
- Take a proactive role in seeking mentoring. Identify a role model and don’t be afraid to ask that person to mentor you.
- Be able to “hear” the mentor’s advice even if it is not what you want to hear. Be open to constructive criticism. Be open to alternate careers.
• Give adequate time commitment to being mentored. Recognize that mentoring is a life-long process.
• Prepare with strategies to be discussed to help optimize goals and focused, specific questions. Focus on topics to allow fruitful exchange.
• Appreciate the importance of being mentored and networking at all stages of your career.
• “Pay it forward” and mentor someone else.

Advice to improve Mentoring Programs
• Find sponsorship (industry? government?) for mentorship grant funding.
• Create a searchable database for mentor-mentee matching.
• Hold Chapter events for WIN networking.
• Create an online bulletin board to ask questions with conversation threads.
• Drive to have more women present at middle and high school brain awareness functions.
• Identify middle and high school girls interested in science careers and mentorship.
• Make information about a mentor’s history of success in mentoring available.
• Have institutions award or appreciate mentoring.
• Luncheons like this- discuss family v. career issues.
• Advocate at your institution/group.
• Assess mentoring accomplishments as part of hiring, promotions, etc.

Advice on Networking
• Present your research via oral presentations and poster sessions.
• Exchange contact info and follow-up. Keep in contact with acquaintances and form collaborations.
• Create networking friendly atmospheres where meeting and greeting is encouraged and the environment is conducive to casual interactions.
• Be courageous and find new people to meet at conferences. Be resilient in the face of “rejection”.
• Network outside of your own lab or sub-field.
• Treat networking as part of your career.
• Make an effort to get to know the people, not just the science.
• Network in a variety of different ways such as with mixed age groups, within your peer group and gender-specific networking
• Come up with ways to practice if you’re uncomfortable.
• Networking doesn’t have to be about meeting “big names” but about connecting with the correct people for you.
• Speak up. Share your ideas and promote yourself.
• Take all opportunities (at meetings, etc) and meet as many people as possible.