Summary of A Celebration of Women in Neuroscience Luncheon Table Discussions
October 20, 2009
How do you decide when to say yes and when to say no?

More than 250 women and men at all career stages met to network at the Celebration of Women in Neuroscience Luncheon held at the 2009 SfN Annual Meeting in Chicago. They were given the pleasure of listening to a terrific talk by Dr. Huda Zoghbi, enjoy lunch together, and discuss how you decide when to say yes and when to say no.

Say Yes:

• When it doesn’t compromise your own values.
• When it’s beneficial to your career
• When the request is reasonable and will push you in the right direction.
• When the activity will help you realize your goals.
• If there is time to complete the project.
• If your mentor/advisor thinks it’s a good idea.
• When you trust the others involved to contribute their share.
• If it’s something you are passionate about.
• To activities and events involving family.
• When you have no choice, it must be done.
• When benefits outweigh personal cost.
• When projects are well-defined and have a time-line.
• To some interests outside of work.
• To taking care of yourself.
• To the major focus of your department.
• To activities that affect your environment (such as search committees).

Say No:

• If it compromises what you’ve already said yes to.
• If it is illegal or unethical.
• When your participation will interfere with getting promoted or tenure.
• When the activity will take you away from your goals.
• When you can bow out gracefully.
• To everything. If they specifically need you, they’ll come back and ask again.

General Advice:

• Make sure you have the resources to support your decision.
• Know that you can live with the worst-case scenario.
• Go with your gut.
• Weigh pros and cons and keep the big picture in perspective.
• Say maybe, analyze the situation, then say yes or no.
• Budget a certain percentage of your time to service.
• Know your limits.
• Decide ahead of time how you will respond to given situations.
• Ask senior mentors for guidance.
• Take into account who is asking.