UNSW Receives Employer of Choice for Women Citation in 2010

The Federal Government’s Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) has again recognised UNSW as an Employer of Choice for Women (EOCFW). This is the fifth consecutive year that UNSW has received the Employer of Choice for Women citation.

To be recognised as an EOWA Employer of Choice for Women, employers are required to meet stringent criteria each year which include offering a minimum of 6 weeks paid maternity leave after 12 months of service; conducting sex-based harassment education at least every two years; providing the ability for female managers to work part-time; ensuring the percentage of female managers is the same or greater than the industry average, and ensuring a pay equity analysis has been undertaken and any gap identified is less than their industry average. The CEO of an EOCFW organisation is also personally interviewed and needs to demonstrate a strong commitment to equal opportunity initiatives resulting in positive outcomes for women.

EOWA spokesperson Vanessa Paterson said, “By applying for and receiving this citation, successful organisations are not only meeting the pre-requisites and criteria, but are publically declaring their commitment to making their workplaces equitable. They know they are not perfect, but they are working hard to make their organisations good place for women to work.”

The UNSW Women’s Employment Strategy (WES) 2008 – 2010, developed in consultation with the Gender Equity Strategy Committee (GESC), outlines UNSW’s commitment to addressing areas of need for women. The key objectives of the Strategy are:

1. Identify and promote female talent.

2. Increase the numbers of women appointed at levels where they are under-represented.

3. Develop an organisational culture that attracts and retains women.

4. Ensure pay distribution by gender is equitable.

5. Recognise and proactively manage our female talent for leadership roles.

The Academic Women in Leadership Program (AWIL), managed by the Organisation & Staff Development Services team, directly addresses the fifth objective of the WES by supporting academic women to achieve increased representation in higher level academic appointments and decision making bodies at UNSW. In 2008 Professor Poole-Warren was a participant in the AWIL. She was recently appointed to the position of Dean of Graduate Research.
Coming from Engineering, a male dominated field, Professor Poole-Warren had some initial misgivings about participating in AWIL. However, she quickly became a convert and was amazed at the enormous positive impact AWIL had on her career. "Participating in AWIL helped me to feel ready for promotion and gain the confidence I needed to apply for the position of Dean of Graduate Research. It got me thinking about leadership versus management, reinvent myself as a more visionary person and examine my personal values and leadership," Professor Poole-Warren said. Professor Poole-Warren also highlighted the networking opportunities that AWIL offered and the links to an impressive group of senior women who were willing to share their stories and offer encouragement.

The University is serious about building a more gender-inclusive leadership culture and increasing the number of women in senior positions and AWIL, a 12-month leadership development program, assists women participants to develop an understanding of their individual leadership style, increase institutional knowledge, access to mentoring with senior executives, networking with senior women colleagues, career coaching, and gaining an understanding of the challenge of effecting cultural change in the unique academic environment.

Penny Pitcairn, Co-Manager, Workplace Diversity said, "Receiving the EOCFW citation for a fifth year was a great achievement for UNSW and demonstrates that the strategies that we have in place have a positive outcome for both women and the University."

UNSW will continue to offer a range of other initiatives that support women in the workplace, including the Vice-Chancellor's Childcare Support Fund for Women Researchers and the Early Career Researcher's Program.