

# Women rate high in leadership skills, conference told

by Joan Bailey

Women get high marks in leadership skills, but many still bump their heads on the glass ceiling, delegates heard at the Third Annual

Claudette MacKay-Lassonde Memorial Forum, hosted by the University of Toronto, Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering.

Denise McLean, PhD, program manager at the Conference Board of Canada

Centre of Excellence for Women's Advancement gave the keynote address at the forum, held on October 18.

McLean said that the centre's studies show that 96 per cent of CEOs stated that women possess valuable leadership skills that complement men's. Women get superior ratings on most specific leadership skills and "bottom line skills." CEOs rate in-house leadership training as critical or fairly important for women's advancement.

However, women executives were less likely to rate in-house leadership training as important for women's advancement.

McLean said that in order to advance women should "take the tough jobs and 'wow' them at it. You are not going to advance if you never test yourself." However, women have a harder time getting access to these "stretch" assignments. Women are still more likely to get "acting" assignments, she noted, and thereby get less visibility, less scope and less decision-making.

McLean says that a Conference Board of Canada study was a wake up call, pointing out that there still remain challenges for women in the workplace. That study, entitled *Closing the Gap* remains the foundation for much of the work that the Centre of Excellence does. The centre was created in 1999 to promote leadership and to work to reduce gender barriers in organizational culture.

A separate study identified what to look for in gender equality in the work environment.

The views of leadership and management have changed over the last 15 years, to what may be considered a more "feminine" style. Innovative thinking, effective communication, capacity to inspire, passion and commitment, vision and decisiveness are the new leadership basics. "These are the competencies that you have to develop at the outset of your career," said McLean, "and the qualities you should seek in your mentor."

PEO has a formal mentoring program aimed to prevent engineer interns from

“falling through the gap,” according to Gerry Meade, P.Eng., manager of the engineer intern program at PEO. “The program fills the gap between knowledge provided in engineering school and skills required for practice,” Meade noted.

PEO looks to the mentor to assimilate interns into the engineering community, and also to be a referee for entrepreneurs, particularly in emerging disciplines, in order to help them to become licensed.

PEO’s pilot mentoring program was begun in the Toronto area so that it could be properly monitored. Meade said that there were two approaches to matching mentors and interns: either PEO would make the match, or the intern would select from three mentors. The program aims to match not only on engineering discipline and area of practice, but also on interests and skills.

Meade said that it is important that the mentoring process contain personal contact between the intern and mentor, discussion periods and continued support. The program, he said, requires more mentors than interns.

Developing a successful mentoring relationship has several factors, according to Akela Peoples, executive director, Women in Motion. Peoples said that a mentor should have something to offer,

the protégé should be willing to learn, a clear, mutually agreed upon goals should be set, and a structured relationship should be created with clear boundaries. Women in Motion has four mentoring programs for women, and will be holding its second national conference in October 2004.

Conference delegates also heard from Kathy Conway, principal, Virtual Communications, who outlined several necessary elements for a mentoring program, including setting participation guidelines for both mentor and protégé, defining length of partnership, assessing mentor and protégé expectations, and defining success.

Other speakers at the Fall Forum included Lisa Anderson, P.Eng., coordinator, Women in Engineering at Ryerson University; Márta Ecsedi, P.Eng., director, Alumni Relations and Advisor to the Dean on Women’s Issues, Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering, University of Toronto; Benilda Silkowska-Masior, coordinator, St. Michael’s Hospital Mentors for Foreign Trained Professional Project; Sarah Shortread, P.Eng., consulting principal, Communications Business Consulting Services, IBM Canada; and Catherine Karakatsanis, P.Eng., vice-president and principal, Morrison Hershfield.

More than 150 people attended the forum and WEAC Chair, Vera Straka, P.Eng., said that attendance had exceeded expectations.

## Chapter Calendar

PEO Chapter Calendar lists upcoming chapter meetings and events. Send listings to: Sharon Gillam, Field Operations, PEO, 25 Sheppard Avenue West, Suite 1000, Toronto, ON M2N 6S9; fax: 416-224-8168 or 1-800-268-0496; email: [sgillam@peo.on.ca](mailto:sgillam@peo.on.ca). The next Chapter Calendar will appear in the February/March 2003 issue of The Link. Deadline for submissions is January 29.

### NOVEMBER

**November 28, 2002**

YORK: CBC Studios Tour. Cost: \$5/person. Contact: [Hari.patel@peoyork.com](mailto:Hari.patel@peoyork.com), visit [www.peoyork.com](http://www.peoyork.com)

**November 30, 2002**

PORCUPINE/KAPUSKASING: Annual General Meeting, Ramada Inn, Timmins. Contact: Kevin at 705-267-7033 or Luc at 705-360-1209

### JANUARY

**January 28, 2003**

EAST TORONTO: Annual General Meeting, Arts and Letters Club, 14 Elm St., Toronto, 6:30 p.m. Contact: Nick Gurevich, P.Eng., at [nick.gurevich@sympatico.ca](mailto:nick.gurevich@sympatico.ca)

### FEBRUARY

**February 13, 2003**

KINGSWAY: Hamilton Museum of Steam and Technology Tour, 900 Woodward Avenue, Hamilton, 7:30 p.m. Contact: Wasiem A. Qadir, P.Eng., at 416-531-2319 (home) or email: [intfood@sympatico.ca](mailto:intfood@sympatico.ca)

