

Remarks
Judy Franz, Executive Officer, American Physical Society
Panel Discussion - May 8, 2007

Like Millie Dresselhaus, I got my PhD back in the days when the % of women physics PhDs was 2.5%, and it has been wonderful to see the change that has taken place since then. At the Department Chairs conference that we had here last year, someone was decrying the lack of women and I looked and saw 10 women chairs or about 10% and thought this was wonderful because I remember the chairs conferences when there were no women.

But here is a problem, the % of women physics PhDs has been increasing at the rate of **0.4%/year**. Over the 40 years that I have been watching this, that's an increase of 16 % from 2.5 to 18 or a factor of ~7 !! This is what I see – a factor 7. What does a young woman see? Well maybe she's been watching this for 5 or 6 years and she sees an increase of 2 to 3%, which is in the background noise. Thus young women think that nothing is changing, and some are very discouraged about this. And what if things continue at the same rate? Well in 2017, the % of women PhDs will be 22% and in 2027 it will be at 26%. I am hoping we can do better than this. We must do better to achieve a doubling in the next 15 years.

APS has been working on trying to increase the number of women in physics for 35 years. CSWP was initiated in 1972. We were cautious in the beginning – there was a fair amount of hostility, and we were afraid to rock the boat – the committee has always been very active. In 1989 at a department chairs conference (which I attended to talk about women in physics), the chairs agreed that they needed to increase the number of women in physics and asked for our help. Out of this grew the site visits program that continues until today and has been one of our most important programs. We started with a small NSF grant with and did on the job training. Now there have been about 40 visits that have been made and they continue. How many of your departments have had a site visit? (Many hands were raised.)

I remember that the visit to Harvard about 5 years after the program started produced one of our big surprises. Howard Georgi was chair and he had actually talked to the women undergraduate students. As he said yesterday, he found that the undergraduate women were unhappy and he invited the women in to talk to him. This was the first chair whom we met who had done this!! Good communication and a caring attitude can work wonders, and you saw that it did at Harvard.

Other APS programs over the years have tried to increase the visibility of women physicists by encouraging more invitations to women to give departmental colloquia. How many of you have had at least 2 women speakers this year? (Many hands were raised.) This is terrific and shows that we are making progress.

We have tried to encourage good practices in a number of ways. One is by posting a list of best practices on our website, but another is by allowing departments to post their

female friendly practices on a special website for this. I looked at this last night and over 130 departments had posted something. But I have to admit, that most didn't look particularly female friendly. You might want to check your listing and do better!!

For the last 3 years, APS has been running a series of workshops for professional skills development for women. They have occurred the day before our March and April Meetings and have focused on negotiation and communication skills. The first year, we focused on tenured women faculty, the second on non-tenured women faculty, and this year on women in industry and national labs. The evaluations have been overwhelming positive and ask us to sponsor more such workshops, which we will plan to do. One interesting outcome was to learn how unhappy many of the tenured women faculty members are. They did a survey of themselves after the first year's workshops. It was clear that many felt underappreciated and marginalized in their departments. What one sees, I think, is the accumulation of the small disadvantages that Virginia Valian talked about and the accumulation of many small put-downs. The "you only got this promotion, grant, award, etc. because you're a woman" syndrome that hurts down deep.

The latest effort is the one that you are participating in right now. I sincerely hope that you will go back to your departments and make change happen. If you make all your women students and faculty feel more valued by your speech and actions – including speaking up for family friendly practices - and if you publicly chastise those that make demeaning or snide comments, you will find the rewards are great. The young men and women in your department are watching you – your attitudes and speech will have an influence on how they lead their lives. If you can create an atmosphere where everyone is valued and treated with dignity, you will have a really female friendly department.