

WISEATLANTIC

# Step-Up Workshop Report

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## Academic Advancement Strategies for Female Faculty in STEM

3/17/2017



**NSERC**  
**CRSNG**

Chairs for Women in Science and Engineering  
Chaires pour les femmes en sciences & génie

**Réseau National Network**

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## Introduction

The NSERC Chairs for Women in Science and Engineering developed a workshop to support the career advancement of women faculty members in Science and Engineering, in particular the step-up to Full Professor. The design for the workshop included the sharing of insights by women who have gone before them in this journey and who others who have served as Deans or Department chairs. Additionally, networking opportunities were created and the women were encouraged to develop plans for their career advancement. The March 17, 2017 workshop in Saint John, NB was the second one to be held in Atlantic Canada, the first having been offered in Halifax in October 2014. This was the fifth workshop offered by NSERC Chairs across Canada. Fourteen (14) women faculty in STEM attended from New Brunswick and Nova Scotia universities excluding presenters.

This report provides highlights of some of the conversations and feedback as recorded by participants on flip chart notes, notes of collective conversations taken by Dr. Tamara Franz-Odendaal, NSERC Chair for Science and Engineering for Atlantic Canada and evaluation forms completed by participants and lessons learned by the host and facilitation team. It is not a content summary of the day. It is intended as a documentation of the process of the day for those who attended and for others who may wish to offer a similar workshop in another region.

## The Process

The process was developed based on the experience and learning from the first workshop offered in Halifax and adapted to take advantage of the expertise and experience of women faculty from the University of New Brunswick, Saint John, where the workshop was hosted. Dr. Ruth Shaw worked with Dr. Tamara Franz-Odendaal to identify and invite the speakers. Sally Burke, Program Coordinator for WISEAtlantic was responsible for the logistics and registration of participants. Dr. Franz-Odendaal reached out to all the Science, Technology and Engineering Deans in the region to encourage them to pass the information along to the women faculty in their departments and support the attendance in this workshop. Dr. Shaw supported marketing efforts in New Brunswick. Donna Clark, Leadership Partner with Courage Group International, provided professional facilitation of the workshop. She brought experience working with women in science and engineering and ensured a highly participative process design that would maximize the opportunity for the NSERC chair and speakers to interact with participants and for the participants to connect with each other.

Courage Group worked with the following assumptions about what is essential to create authentic engagement and committed action to guide the planning and design of the facilitation process:

- Meaningful purpose compels engagement.
- Invitation and welcome are essential.
- Passion and responsibility aligned with purpose are the source of engagement.
- The whole person is engaged – hands for doing, heads for thinking, hearts for caring, and spirits for achieving inspired results.

- The 'presence' of the hosts/facilitators matter – you work intentionally with the processes and hold the space.
- Relational space is created working with both the energetic and physical space in which we meet.
- Knowledge and wisdom exist in the group or community – people in the system know best what will work.
- Holistic approach informs commitment – when we see the whole system, the story up til now, both the visible and the unseen, we see possibilities for the future that wants to unfold, and our role in it.
- A new story is co-created by the participants out of the best of what is – people support what they help to create.
- Choice is a key ingredient to unleash the power of the individual to contribute and take action. Space is created to invite individual commitment and leadership for action to emerge.
- Change is not an event, it is a process. Planning before the event and planning for follow-up are all essential to engage and sustain energy and action.
- Pay attention to what emerges, learn and act again.

The appendix includes the invitation, agenda, and a planning worksheet. A facilitation outline is available from Dr. Franz-Odendaal upon request. The presentations are not included. Each participant was invited to note what was important for them from these presentations and use this to support their planning for their academic advancement.

The process design included opportunities for participants to reflect on and connect with their purpose for attending as well as their purpose for choosing and planning to advance in their careers. Participants were engaged early in the session in conversations with colleagues at small table groups and were invited to change tables throughout the session to meet and network with others in their discipline in other universities. The sharing of first person stories including the process learning and emotional experiences by female professors, previous acting deans and department chairs engaged the whole person of both the presenters and participants. Opportunities for discussion after the presentations engaged the participants in making meaning for themselves about the information and experiences shared by the speakers. The women had opportunities to choose who to engage with and how they wanted to engage in these small group conversations. Opportunities to share challenges in achieving criteria in service, research and teaching were created as well as space for the sharing of strategies for dealing with these challenges in the journey to associate or full professor. One session provided strategies for communication and boundary setting, key skills in the overall career management process. Another one was devoted to work-life effectiveness and sustaining health and energy. A Stepping-Up Plan was shared with the women as a tool to be used in their career planning. In the workshop there was an opportunity to get a brief introduction to working with this planning framework, and make an assessment of a first step toward that career goal. The workshop ended with an opportunity to provide written feedback on the day and a closing circle for sharing reflections about the experience of the day.

## Welcome and Context for the Day

*Dr. Laurelle LeVert, Associate VP, UNB Saint John* welcomed participants to Saint John, New Brunswick.

*Dr. Tamara Franz-Odenaal, Professor of Biology, Mount Saint Vincent University and NSERC Chair for Women in Science & Engineering* set the context for the day and shared her own career journey with participants.

### Goals for the Session: What attracted the women to attend?

The invitation to the session noted that the purpose of the workshop was to support the career advancement of women faculty members in Science and Engineering,. The women who responded to the invitation were from a variety of different disciplines (Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, Engineering, Nursing, Agriculture, Environmental Science and Computer Science). The women were invited to share with each other and the group why they responded to the invitation they received and what would make the day successful for them. The following themes emerged for attending the session:

- To learn more about and prepare for academic advancement;
- To hear the experiences of other women;
- To learn tips and strategies to increase chances of succeeding;
- To find mentors/network for support and to develop mentorship at universities;
- To find support, inspiration and hope from women faculty who have similar experiences of being in the minority within their STEM faculties – how to “survive”;
- To develop new strategies for work-life balance and balance amongst teaching, service and research demands; and
- To have laughs and fun!

### Four Fold Way

Show up and choose to be present

Tell the truth without blame or judgment



Pay attention to what has heart and meaning

Be open to outcome,  
not attached to outcome

Source: Angeles Arrien, Ph.D.  
COURAGE GROUP INTERNATIONAL WWW.COURAGEGROUP.CA

The women were invited to take personal responsibility for their learning for the day, and use each of the various opportunities in the day to get the information and support that they came to find. They were asked to respect the confidentiality of the conversations and personal stories that would be shared and invited to engage in the conversations with authenticity. The Four Fold Way as created by Dr. Angeles Arrien was offered as a way of looking at participating with authenticity.

## Inspiration to Step-Up

A Stepping-Up Plan was shared with the women as a tool to be used in their career planning. The women were invited to have a conversation about why academic advancement was important to them. The following emerged from the conversation:

- Personal fulfillment to reach the top of STEM profession;
- Respect, recognition and credibility in the field and at the university;
- Passion and joy in training the next generation in STEM field;
- Job security.

It is important to have a clear purpose in achieving a goal. This conversation reminded the women of their commitment to the work they love and a purpose that inspired them. They were also invited to be specific about a date to achieve their goal, a commitment to themselves that some had not taken until this workshop. The stage was set for deeper learning and commitment for action.

## Service Challenges and Strategies

*Dr. Lisa Best, Professor of Psychology, UNB Saint John and VP Saint John AUNBT Executive and Dr. Petra Hauf, Dean of Science, StFX* shared their insights into the challenges and opportunities in meeting service requirements from the perspective of faculty and dean. Then the participants were invited into conversations about this important topic. Here are some brief highlights from this collective conversation and flip chart notes.

### Challenges:

- Nebulous criteria for service – difficult to know when I have done enough;
- Requests to sit on committees with heavy time commitments, unclear or hidden time requirements or too many committees;
- Identify and prioritize the committees and service commitments that are most useful for personal growth and advancement – how to make strategic service choices;
- Saying “no”, particularly to chairs who will evaluate your work.
- Women agree to do more service whilst they are still junior, unlike men

### Strategies for dealing effectively with service:

- Strategically focus service to emphasize areas of importance for promotion
  - according to collective agreement – can’t replace service with other work;
  - research the committees;
  - include committees that make decisions e.g. hiring appointment committees;
  - Include opportunities to work on university wide committees e.g. senate;
  - Have conversation with mentor/dean regarding choices.
- Consider your personal schedule. Keep track of the terms of service work, annual cycles of work, start and end dates.
- When you take on a big commitment say “no” to others

- Sell yourself as a team player – keep track of and spell out contributions you have made in your cover letter.
- If you say yes then ask yourself what will drop off your list

## Communication for the Workplace: Setting Boundaries and Achieving your Goals

*Dr. Beth Gilbert, Owner/CEO of Practically Speaking and Jackie Campbell, BSW, St Thomas University* led a session on developing communication skills. Participants were introduced to a mindfulness practice and a framework and script for working with difficult conversations. They practiced a conversation on dealing with work-load issues.

- Your tone, body language, eye contact, posture – all contribute to your message
- Practise active listening
- Reflect on what you heard them say – “it sounds like you are..”
- Know your position, and know your goal. “I feel strongly that...” or “this is very important to me..” ... “can we talk about strategies to reach this goal...”
- People are predictable so you can be ready
- Accept feedback graciously

## Teaching and Research Challenges and Strategies

*Dr. Kate Frego, Biology, UNB Saint John and Professor Emeriti and Dr. Judy Buchanan , UNB Saint John (retired) and Dalhousie Medicine New Brunswick* shared ideas about “teaching smart to make it count”. *Dr. Karen Kidd, Biology, CRC Tier I in Chemical Contamination of Food Webs* discussed strategies for establishing and maintaining a research program. Highlights of the challenges and strategies that emerged are provided below:

### Teaching

Three aspects to teaching that we should consider: pedagogically (student learning), personally (your satisfaction) and professionally (as scholarship)

Teaching Challenges:

- Teaching takes a lot of time
- Providing meaningful feedback
- Lack of teaching release

Teaching Strategies:

- Scholarship of teaching – reflection, documentation and publication from your teaching

- Aligning methodologies with your teaching objectives. Provide clarity of expectations – how achieve and how measure achievement
- Develop confidence and assertiveness over time
- Develop and use a variety of learning contracts with students
- Rotate courses

## Research

Research Challenges:

- Finding collaborators for research
- Prioritizing between writing papers and funding applications
- Getting funding in early years of research

Research Strategies:

- Go to meetings and conferences to make linkages with colleagues
- Be strategic with networking – meet people with experience who know what funders are looking for and find opportunities to collaborate
- Protect research time – keep multiple balls in the air for both individual and group research
- Schedule time for writing. Try snack writing – 15 minute slots.
- Write confidently – channel your inner bulldog!
- Have a clear vision for your research short and long term, plan and go for it
- Set targets and goals (identify barriers)
- Guard your research time

## Achieving Balance in your Life as an Academic

*Dr. Joanna Everitt, Dean of Arts, UNB Saint John*, shared strategies that she has discovered to maintain balance. Participants joined in the conversation and identified several tips and strategies:

- Pick your battles
- One day at a time
- Reframe balance as peaks and valleys that are natural flow
- Bring family on field trips when possible
- Time when need to put my health and family first and that is ok
- Children help me to switch off work and teach me
- Be kind to yourself – you are not alone
- Be proud of all you have done – applying for tenure is a time to celebrate!
- Know yourself and what drives you
- Find things that require 100% of your time and which force you to switch off from work (e.g. reading a novel)



## Frank Discussions and Take Home Messages

While the detailed presentations are not included, speakers and panelist invited the women into frank discussions about the process and experience of applying for advancement.

Several discussions took place that focussed on the following topics: family challenges (two academics looking for work, children, etc); how to handle challenges with your promotion; external mentors; cover letters to your package and the sharing of personal experiences.

Through the sharing of the stories of the speakers and panelists, several key messages stood out:

- Women faculty in STEM need support to thrive. The workshop created a space for these women to gather, take stock, talk openly, and reenergize. Participants connected to a new community of women in STEM who can be supportive after the workshop.
- Women faculty in small departments with few if any women need mentors who may not be in their current institution.
- Know the requirements for advancement in your institution. Apply for tenure and promotion as soon as you can – pay attention to the wording in the contract eg. “normally” is not a minimum. If possible combine tenure and promotion in your documentation.
- Be a strong advocate for yourself – make a well argued case for your promotion.
- Appeal decisions that are not aligned with the promotion requirements – be vigilant about the potential impact of systemic biases that may not be known to assessors.
- Make strategic choices that work for you, take time to reflect before you answer a request and learn to say “No” – you can’t do it all at once.
- In your application, make sure you explain your environment to your external reviewers; they will know your field and work but not necessarily your environment
- It is important to know yourself and what you really love to do. Give yourself time away from work, take your holidays, and find the support you need.
- Know who is on your Departmental Review Committee and who is on your University Review Committee
- Ask others to review your file (including your cover letter) for comment

## Feedback from Participants about the Workshop

Overall the participants were very appreciative of the workshop and the opportunity to engage in conversations with colleagues about this journey. All of the respondents noted that the knowledge and participation that they gained in the workshop met their expectations and was beneficial to them. Highlights of their feedback are presented below.

All sessions were considered useful with average responses on a 5 point scale (1 being not useful to 5 being very useful) of 3.9 to 4.8. The most useful sessions noted by participants were:

- Establishing and Maintaining a Research Program/Lab
- Teaching in the STEM Disciplines

- Service from a Faculty and Dean Perspective

It was interesting to note the variability of responses. Some sessions were noted as least useful by some of the women and most useful by others, indicating that the workshop had a good balance of topics that met the diverse needs of the women who chose to participate.

Several themes emerged from a review of the comments in the evaluation and the closing circle as follows:

- Not alone in this journey : Many women noted that they were glad to know that they were not alone, that others shared similar experiences and feelings, and that it was encouraging to have the support of other female colleagues, a new network to reach out to for ongoing support.
- New perspectives, ideas and solutions to challenges of stepping up: Women noted that they got many new practical tips, suggestions and concrete ideas from the workshop. This was the first experience of an event like this for women for some of the participants.
- Safe environment in which to share stories: Many women commented on their comfort and appreciation to be able to share challenges in career and life, successes and failures, and to discuss issues in a facilitated process that created a safe and non-judgemental environment.

Selected comments:

- “I usually jump in too much. I need to step-back to step-up.”
- “Opened my eyes to what others use as strategies to cope with difficult situations.”
- “Where is my tenure file for being a mother? My priorities are my health and my family”
- “This has been refueling. Academic life “pecks at me”. When I hear similar experiences it refuels me, gives me strength. Recharges me.”

Suggestions:

- “Offer babysitting”
- “Start a bit later in the morning for people travelling from other regions”
- “I would do it at a later date, after term is done. I struggled a bit to coordinate as I had lecture/lab today and I almost can’t make it”
- Offer content on “working with toxic co-workers”; “how to transition to administration”; or “how to mentor others”.
- “Continue offering these, perhaps with more widespread advertisement.”

## **Organizational Lessons Learned from Atlantic Step-Up Workshop**

In the process of planning and marketing the workshop, several lessons were learned that will be useful for organizing the next session either in this region or in others.

#### What worked well:

- Hosting the workshop in New Brunswick led to engagement of diverse faculty to share their experiences and participation of many faculty members from the host campus and other NB universities.
- Using multiple ways to reach out to the women including asking those for whom we did have contact information to share with others, emails to individuals and deans, mail-out and postcard distribution and the WISEatlantic social media platforms. Most people heard about the session from colleagues or the WISEatlantic email.
- Inviting speakers from diverse institutions and diverse disciplines- important to the women to have this cross-section of disciplines and institutions involved in the conversations to encourage and support them in their career development.
- Having a variety of ways to participate and engage in the day really enhanced the enjoyment of the day for the women.
- Using an external facilitator to help support the overall frame for the day, thread and weave the pieces together into a coherent program, and create conversational spaces for meaning making for the women.

#### Challenges to work with:

- Getting the message out about the workshop was a challenge since university websites were not up to date and Deans often didn't have a separate list of female faculty. Our strategies to reach out in multiple ways, particularly through our network was effective to address this challenge. The host of the event (Dr. Shaw in this case) is an important ally in the marketing.
- Timing in the academic year. Too early in the year is a challenge and too late is as well. There has been a suggestion to host another session after the term is completed.

#### Opportunities for additional impact:

- From the conversations at Step-Up, it is clear that there is a desire for learning about mentoring, dealing with toxic workplaces, saying no. Yet few female academics come to the WinSETT workshops on networking and mentoring, communication and negotiation. There is an opportunity to link these workshops to professional development for the purpose of promotion and support women faculty in science and engineering in prioritizing these professional development workshops.
- Systemic issues exist at various levels in STEM departments and academic institutions. The NSERC chairs are well positioned to profile work being done at other institutions in Canada and encourage attention to this issue in each region through their networks.

## Appendix

1 - Invitation

2 - Step-Up Workshop Agenda

3 - Stepping-Up Plan

## Appendix 1: Invitation

# Step-Up: Academic Advancement Strategies for Female Faculty in STEM

Friday March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017 • The Hilton Hotel, Saint John, NB

This workshop for female Assistant & Associate Professors in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math will feature the following topics: Career Planning, Service from a Faculty & Dean Perspective, Communication, Effective Teaching, and Creating/Maintaining a Research Program.

**Time:** 8:00am-4:00pm

**Fee:** \$11.20 taxes & fee's included  
(includes lunch, breaks and all materials)

**Register at:** <https://stepupnb.eventbrite.ca>  
Registration deadline is March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017

**Limited travel subsidies** are available, contact Sally at [WISEatlantic@msvu.ca](mailto:WISEatlantic@msvu.ca). Apply early.

Facilitated by Donna Clark of Courage Group International

Lunch & Nutrition Break sponsored by UNB Saint John & UNB Fredericton

*"Very useful workshop! Gave me ideas on how to proceed and tips on what to do to accomplish my goals." – 2014 Step-Up Participant*

Assistant

Associate

Full

 NSERC CRSH  
Chairs for Women in Science and Engineering  
Chaires pour les Femmes en sciences & génie  
Réseau National Network

 Women in Science and Engineering  
NSERC CHAIR - ATLANTIC REGION

## Appendix 2: STEP-UP WORKSHOP Agenda

### Step-Up: Academic Advancement Strategies for Female Faculty in STEM

#### Workshop Program

Hilton Saint John, Kennebecasis Rooms I & II  
March 17, 2017

8:00 am – 4:30pm

Time	Agenda Item
8:00 – 8:30	Registration & Breakfast
8:30 – 8:45	Welcome & Introductions <i>Laurelle LeVert - Associate VP, UNB Saint John</i> <i>Tamara Franz-Odendaal - NSERC Chair for Women in Science &amp; Engineering</i>
8:45 – 9:30	Career planning: Energizing your path forward <i>Donna Clark - Courage Group International</i>
9:30 – 9:45	Coffee Break
9:45 – 10:15	Service from a Faculty and Dean Perspective <i>Lisa Best - Psychology, UNB Saint John &amp; VP Saint John AUNBT Executive</i> <i>Petra Hauf - Dean of Science, StFX</i>
10:15-10:30	Service Challenges and Strategies <i>Donna Clark</i>
10:30 – 12:00	Communication Skills for the Workplace: Setting Boundaries & Achieving Your Goals <i>Beth Gilbert - Owner/CEO of Practically Speaking</i> <i>Jackie Campbell, BSW, St Thomas University</i>
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch
1:00 – 2:00	Teaching in the STEM Disciplines ... Teach Smart to Make it Count <i>Kate Frego - Biology, UNB Saint John and Professor Emeriti</i> <i>Judy Buchanan - UNB Saint John (retired) and Dalhousie Medicine New Brunswick</i>
2:00 – 2:45	Establishing & Maintaining a Research Program/Lab <i>Karen Kidd - Biology, CRC Tier I in Chemical Contamination of Food Webs</i>
2:45 - 3:00	Teaching/Research Challenges and Strategies <i>Donna Clark</i>
3:00 – 3:15	Nutritional Break
3:15 – 3:45	Achieving Balance in your life as an academic <i>Joanna Everitt - Dean of Arts, UNB Saint John</i>
3:45- 4:30	Group Discussion and Step-Up Plan <i>Donna Clark</i>

Lunch sponsored by UNB - Saint John

Nutritional Breaks sponsored by the VP (Academic) & Dean of Computer Science, UNB, Fredericton

Workshop sponsored by:



## Appendix 3 - Stepping Up Plan

NAME:

DATE:

<b>PURPOSE: Why do I want to step-up to full professor? (benefits/possibilities of achieving this status)</b>				
<b>GOAL/VISION: Stated as if you have achieved it – specific and with a time frame</b>				
<b>ASSESSMENT OF MY CURRENT SITUATION</b>				
	<b>What are the criteria at my university?</b>	<b>What have I already accomplished re each criterion?</b>	<b>What specific actions/task do I need to achieve each criterion?</b>	<b>What are my priorities? (number in order)</b>
<b>Research</b>				

	What are the criteria at my university?	What have I already accomplished re each criterion?	What specific actions/task do I need to achieve each criterion?	What are my priorities? (number in order)

Teaching				



<b>Service</b>				
	<b>What are the criteria at my university?</b>	<b>What have I already accomplished re each criterion?</b>	<b>What specific actions/task do I need to achieve each criterion?</b>	<b>What are my priorities? (number in order)</b>
<b>NEXT STEPS</b>				
<b>Action/Criterion</b>	<b>How will I accomplish this step? What challenges lie ahead in achieving this goal?</b>	<b>What resources do I need?</b>	<b>Who do I need to involve or ask for support?</b>	<b>When will I complete this step?</b>

Action/Criterion	How will I accomplish this step? What challenges lie ahead in achieving this goal?	What resources do I need?	Who do I need to involve or ask for support?	When will I complete this step?

**SUSTAINING MY HEALTH AND ENERGY**

	Strategies/Practices	What resources/support do I need to do this?	How often will I do this?	How will I know I am succeeding?
<b>Physical</b>				

Emotional/Spiritual	Strategies/Practices	What resources/support do I need to do this?	How often will I do this?	How will I know I am succeeding?
<b>Mental</b>				