

**Section Officers:**

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Vice President

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Secretary

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Irma Nicholls  
[newsletter@swe-nebraska.org](mailto:newsletter@swe-nebraska.org)

# EASTERN NEBRASKA WIRE



**Volume 4:  
Fall 2010**

## Welcome to the new year!

It will be an exciting year for the Eastern Nebraska Section! The new officers and committee chairs have been elected. Take a look at the list of new officers and chairs:

### OFFICERS

<b>President</b>	Cybil Boss, URS Corporation
<b>Vice President</b>	Angel McMullen-Gunn, Hamilton Sunstrand
<b>Treasurer</b>	Elizabeth Hunter, LEO A DALY
<b>Secretary</b>	Jeny Mitchell, URS Corporation
<b>Section Representative</b>	Janis Pfungsten

### COMMITTEE CHAIRS

<b>Membership Chair</b>	Angel McMullen-Gunn, Hamilton Sunstrand
<b>Program Development Chair</b>	VACANT
<b>Newsletter Editor</b>	Irma Nicholls, LI-COR Biosciences
<b>Webmanager</b>	Lara Syrocki, Kleinfelder
<b>Outreach Chair</b>	Amanda Stahlnecker, HDR
<b>UNL Student Section Counselor</b>	Angel McMullen-Gunn, Hamilton Sunstrand
<b>UNO Student Section Counselor</b>	Rebecca Reinhardt, Northern Natural Gas

The Program Development Chair position is still vacant, if you would like to apply for this position please contact the president, Cybil Boss at [president@swe-nebraska.org](mailto:president@swe-nebraska.org).

## Message from the President



### Greetings!

Welcome Officers, Chairs, and Members to a new SWE year! We are also excited to have the attention of our prospective members. The Eastern Nebraska Section is shaping up for a strong FY11 and we hope that you will join us at one of the upcoming opportunities.

The Eastern Nebraska Section serves the Omaha and Lincoln communities and surrounding areas. We also mentor Collegiate SWE Sections at both the University of Nebraska at Lincoln and Omaha. The Section will continue to host meetings in both the Lincoln and Omaha areas and we will search for locations in between. Do you have a spot to meet? Please let us know.

On a National level, SWE has tasked each Section with extending the benefits of SWE membership to 10 new members. The Eastern Nebraska Section has decided to take that challenge, and we will be hosting various membership events throughout the year. Our Section also hopes to initiate a corporate campaign to help us achieve this goal. If you've been thinking of SWE membership, we could use your support as we start our membership drives.

The Eastern Nebraska Section hosted a successful strategic planning meeting in May, and highlights from that meeting are included in this newsletter. Elections for Officer and Chair positions were held this past June, and the results are also presented in this newsletter. Congratulations to the newly elected Section Leadership! We have already participated in two Board meetings and are working hard to get the Section off to a good start in FY11.

As we enter this new year, our Section is gaining momentum! Attendance at our meetings and functions is increasing! We will strive to host quality programs that support this strong attendance. We are also working to formalize succession planning procedures to ensure leadership continuity. We currently have an opening for the Program Development Chair. This person coordinates our monthly meetings, manages the section calendar and our Evite account, and attends the monthly Board meetings. Please evaluate your SWE involvement and consider if this is a good fit for you.

Wishing everyone a pleasant Fall and hoping to see you at a SWE event soon!

Respectfully,

Cybil Boss

[President@swe-nebraska.org](mailto:President@swe-nebraska.org)

# FY 2011

## Eastern Nebraska SWE Section Calendar

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Contact the Program Development Chair, with any questions! Email: [program\\_development@swe-nebraska.org](mailto:program_development@swe-nebraska.org)

### Upcoming Events

## EASTERN NEBRASKA SOCIETY OF WOMEN ENGINEERS

### Get to Know SWE Networking Event

Thursday Sept. 30th, 5-6:30pm \* Old Chicago, 826 P St., Lincoln

Come learn about all the *SWEet* opportunities our organization offers!

\* Door Prizes \* Appetizers \* Networking \*



[www.swe-nebraska.org](http://www.swe-nebraska.org)

- ◆ Professional Development (PDH's)
- ◆ Networking / Support
- ◆ Education / Outreach
- ◆ Work / Life Balance

Bring a Friend!

Please RSVP to [membership@swe-nebraska.org](mailto:membership@swe-nebraska.org) by 9/24/2010

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

**Women Interested in Engineering Day** hosted by the UNL SWE Collegiate Section

**Date:** Saturday, October 9, 2010 from 9:00am to 3:00pm

**Location:** UNL Campus

The collegiate section is looking for 2 panel members and other members to assist with hands-on activities.

**Website:** [www.wiie.unl.edu](http://www.wiie.unl.edu)

Contact Amber Retke, UNL College of Engineering Recruitment Coordinator, if you are willing to volunteer ([aretke2@unl.edu](mailto:aretke2@unl.edu) or 402-472-3060).

WOW! THAT'S  
ENGINEERING

**WHAT:**

An engineering workshop for middle and high school girls

**WHEN:**

Saturday, October 23, 2010  
8:30 am - 3:00 pm

**WHERE:**

The University of Nebraska at Omaha  
Milo Bail Student Center  
6101 Dodge Street, Omaha, NE 68132

For more details, visit our website at [www.swe-nebraska.org](http://www.swe-nebraska.org)

## Upcoming Meetings

Please reserve the following dates for SWE meetings:

Sept. 23, 2010

Oct. 28, 2010

Nov. 4-6, 2010 SWE National Conference, [WE10](#),  
Orlando FL

Jan. 27, 2011

March 24, 2011

April 28, 2011

May 26, 2011 Strategic Planning

### **Board Meetings**

Board meetings will be held the first Wednesday of every month at 11:45 am. All are welcome to attend. The officers and chairs will provide monthly reports and discuss unfinished and current business of the section. For more information contact the president, Cybil Boss, at [president@swe-nebraska.org](mailto:president@swe-nebraska.org).

# Save the Date!

**ANNUAL E-WEEK BANQUET  
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2011**

1.0 Professional Development Hours (PDH) available  
0.1 Continuing Education Units (CEU) or

**Banquet Location:**

Strategic Air and Space Museum  
28210 West Park Highway  
Ashland, NE 68003

6:00 PM – Social Hour (Cash Bar)

7:00 PM – Banquet & Speaker

**LOOK FOR THE SIGN-UP FLYER WITH  
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION SOON!**

Sponsored by the Engineer's Roundtable

Engineers Roundtable website:

<http://www.eroundtable.unomaha.edu>

## LADY IN THE SPOTLIGHT

My name is Irma Nicholls and I am an optical engineer at LI-COR Biosciences. As an optical engineer, I get to develop systems that use laser light to analyze biological samples that are used for research and drug discovery. My work also includes the use of software to simulate the performance of optical systems. Optical engineers measure and shape light for use in many practical applications such as photographic cameras, telescopes, microscopes, TV displays, etc.



I am married and I have a four year old son. In my free time I enjoy playing the piano and cooking.

I'll be the newsletter editor this year. If you have any information, suggestions or comments for the newsletter, please contact me at

[newsletter@swe-nebraska.org](mailto:newsletter@swe-nebraska.org)

## Famous Quote

"Our attitude toward life determines life's attitude towards us." –Earl Nightingale

## Highlights from the FY11 Strategic Planning Meeting

By: Cybil Boss, Section President

The FY11 Strategic Planning Meeting for the Eastern Nebraska Section of the Society of Women Engineers was held on May 22, 2010. We met at Amanda Stahlnecker's house with coffee, cinnamon rolls, fresh fruit, and other breakfast treats to fuel our meeting. We utilized an online survey system to collect comments from those who were unable to join us at the meeting. Discussion centered around successes of the previous year, mapping a 5-year strategic plan, drafting the FY11 section calendar, and setting goals for the upcoming year.

Although the weather worked against us in FY10 (especially during the holiday season) the meetings were generally viewed by our members as good. We successfully used the Evite system to advertise our meetings and track attendance. Zachry Engineering (Renee Day and Susan Randall) were the first members to serve as meeting hosts. They organized a highly successful meeting with SWE providing support.

Our Section hopes to improve upon the Lincoln and Omaha connection. We will be persistent and keep trying to find a format / meeting location / time of day that works for our members. We will also formalize our procedures for hosting a SWE meeting. This entails coordinating with the speaker, managing the logistics, and communicating with SWE (through the Program Development Chair) to ensure the meeting details are shared with our members.

Goals identified for our 5-Year Strategic Plan include the following:

- Host a Regional Conference in the next 5 years.
- Add an RSVP system to our section website.

- Establish a consistent cost for our general membership meetings.
- Find the SWE-et spot for our meetings!
- Present an award at the FY12 E-Week Banquet.

We discussed a tentative calendar for FY11 and decided to target the fourth Thursday of each month for SWE meetings. These dates include:

- September 23<sup>rd</sup>
- October 28<sup>th</sup>
- November 9<sup>th</sup> (adjusted for the Thanksgiving Holiday)
- December 9<sup>th</sup> (adjusted for the Christmas Holiday)
- January 27<sup>th</sup>
- February 24<sup>th</sup> (E-Week Banquet)
- March 24<sup>th</sup>
- April 28<sup>th</sup>
- May 26<sup>th</sup> (Strategic Planning)

Section goals for FY11 are:

- Three hosted meetings
- Try door prizes or a 50/50 raffle at a large meeting
- Formalize the leadership pipeline (identifying future leaders)
- Increase membership by 10% (subsequently adjusted to be 10 new members!)
- Maintain an 80% retention rate
- Post the schedule for the entire year
- Have the SWE Leadership Coaching Committee present at 1-2 meetings
- Offer PDH/CEU credits where applicable

Thanks to all who participated in the strategic planning process!

## PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

### Stop Doing it All!

by Jim M. Allen

The 21st century sure seems to have brought a lot of great ideas, projects, and work for people to do. I say that because I've seen quite an increase in the number of people who contact me for help on how to juggle all these various activities.

So that everyone can benefit, I'm going to tell you like I tell all those people who call & write: You *can* get out of this "doing everything" trap and get a lot more done in the process. Here's how:

#### **1. YOU CAN'T DO EVERYTHING ANYWAY**

Face it: If you could do everything, none of the rest of us would have to worry about anything, would we? Truth is that there's always much more to be done than there is time to do it.

When you realize that you're not going to get it all done by yourself it gets a whole lot easier to do what work you *do* have to do.

#### **2. JUST BECAUSE YOU HAVE A LOT TO DO DOESN'T MEAN IT ALL NEEDS DOING**

Closely examine the stuff on your "to do" or projects list. Some of it just doesn't need doing. Not now at any rate. And in some cases, not ever.

Don't believe me? Put it at the bottom of the list and leave it there for a while. You'll see.

#### **3. SAY "NO" MORE THAN YOU SAY "YES"**

I don't know why, but it seems like the people who are most willing to volunteer for a new project or additional work are the ones who just DON'T have the time available to do it.

Get in the habit of saying "no" to requests for your time more than you say "yes" and soon you'll have a lot more time to give.

If you can't say "no" then get as much time to work on the project as you possibly can (and give yourself plenty of time to get it done).

#### **4. HAVE ALL THE IDEAS YOU WANT... BUT WORK ON ONE IDEA AT A TIME**

Many people tell me that they have "too many" ideas: they can't get anything done because they keep getting new ideas to work on.

The problem isn't the number of ideas; it's that they're trying to work on all of them at the same time. (See #2.)

You just can't do that, not if you want to get anything done. So, keep coming up with great ideas, but write them down and save them for later while you work on one idea/project at a time.

#### **5. YOU CAN'T DO IT ALL, BUT WE JUST MIGHT**

Whether it's work or a just a fun project, you improve your chances of success when you share some of the workload with others.

So the next time you find yourself trying to do it all, remember these few ideas and do a little less... You may just find that you actually get a lot more done in the process!



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Jim Allen is a professional life coach, speaker, and writer. (©2001 Jim Allen & CoachJim.com ALL RIGHTS RESERVED) Source: CoachJim.com  
<http://www.coachjim.com/articles/doingitall.html>

## Searching for STEM Success

By David Moltz

In recent years, rural community colleges have done significantly better than their urban and suburban counterparts in the percentage increase of associate degrees awarded to women and minorities in science, technology, engineering and mathematics disciplines.

And though the reasons for their relative success — which is detailed in the [latest issue](#) of the *Journal of Women and Minorities in Science and Engineering* — remain unknown, community college researchers are suggesting policy recommendations in an attempt to replicate it elsewhere and boost the numbers of these underrepresented students. At the same time, they say STEM educators should not forget about their male students, who appear to be falling further behind academically, though enrolling in greater numbers.

David E. Hardy and Stephen G. Katsinas, professors at the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa's College of Education, conducted research on the production of STEM graduates in community colleges of different sizes and geographic locations — as defined by the [Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education](#). Their findings are among a handful of articles published in the journal's newest volume that focus on teaching STEM at two-year institutions.

During the two-decade period from 1985-1986 to 2005-2006, rural community colleges increased the number of women and minority STEM graduates by more than 42 percent. By contrast, urban community colleges boosted these underrepresented groups by just under 24 percent and suburban community colleges by about 10 percent.

Breaking down degree production within specific STEM disciplines and then by type of community colleges reveals even more variance. Rural community colleges, for example, bolstered their numbers of female engineering technology graduates by more than

37 percent during the two-decade period, while that figure fell by nearly 19 and 17 percent at suburban and urban community colleges, respectively. Rural institutions also reported gains in the number of female science technology graduates while their counterparts did not.

Urban institutions outpaced rural and suburban institutions in awarding women physical science degrees during the 20-year period. Suburban institutions reported the most improvement in producing female mathematics and statistics graduates, with a nearly 94 percent increase.

Hardy and Katsinas argue that these data evidence a demonstrable “difference in curricular focus” at rural community colleges. Otherwise, their logic continues, suburban and urban community colleges would have posted similar STEM growth for women and minorities over the same time period.

Variation within production of specific STEM fields at these different types of two-year institutions, however, is harder to explain.

“Why are suburban colleges currently involving greater percentages of women in their engineering and physical science programs, while rural colleges appear to do better with female participation in mathematics and statistics, and urban colleges seem to have the advantage in engineering technology, biological/biomedical sciences, and science technology?” write Hardy and Katsinas. “Might there be a connection between the mathematics programs and the need for K–12 math teachers in rural areas; between biomedical and engineering technology programs and the higher likelihood of securing internships, cooperative education experiences, and eventual related employment in urban centers with more medical and manufacturing facilities; or between engineering and physical science programs at suburban colleges and the kind of proactive academic advising and math/science

enrichment programs that are generally more available to high school students — both girls and boys — at suburban high schools?”

Aside from calling for more research on the topic to help bring these improvements to scale so all kinds of community colleges can see large gains, Hardy and Katsinas suggest that initiatives to increase STEM degree production in the future should focus on bringing up the bar for all. They note, for instance, the increase in the number of female STEM graduates from community colleges that they document was “certainly more than offset” by a substantial decrease in the share of STEM degrees at community colleges going to men.

“It may well be that the programs that NSF and others have targeted for women and other underrepresented populations in recent years should expand their focus to include populations that are better represented in higher education as a whole,” write Hardy and Katsinas. “It is obvious that even these traditional students are making choices to avoid — or, alternatively, are simply not prepared to succeed in — science, technology, engineering, and mathematics at a time when we clearly need young people to step into the STEM workforce. In fact, it may be time to dust off the concept of comprehensive (i.e., universal) funding for particular curricular initiatives represented by those old Perkins-funded gender-equity ‘set-aside’ programs that we developed at America’s community colleges in the 1980s and early 1990s, rather than to simply continue to make limited funding

available through competitive grant programs. Such programs could be recalibrated ‘STEM equity’ programs, and provide the necessary funding to support all community colleges in improving participation in STEM education across the boards, just as the old Perkins funding model allowed them to do in the past.” Also in the latest issue of the *Journal of Women and Minorities in Science and Engineering*, a group of researchers from Iowa State University’s Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program make an additional series of recommendation to ease the pathway in STEM fields from community colleges to four-year universities.

Though there is a disconnect for many STEM students between two- and four-year institutions — given the fact that many must retake major-level classes upon transfer and therefore may switch to another concentration or drop out — Frankie Santos Laanan, Iowa State education professor and co-author of another journal article, argued that transfer is especially difficult for the small numbers of women and minorities who make it that far.

“When they transfer onward, do they stay in STEM? What happens to women, who are high performers on one end, when they get to the next level?” Laanan said in an interview with *Inside Higher Ed*. “That’s what we need to focus on. But, in general, the transfer function should be seamless and productive for all students.”

David Moltz, Inside Higher Ed. Website: <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/09/03/stem>