

Symposium for Women Entering Ecology and Evolution Today (SWEET) 2013

The goal of SWEET is to address issues that influence the advancement of women with postgraduate degrees in ecology/evolution into academic, government, NGO, and industry positions. As always, SWEET 2013 was held in conjunction with the Canadian Society for Ecology and Evolution (CSEE) meeting, which was hosted in May by UBC's Okanagan Campus in Kelowna.

The 2013 theme was inspired by a 2012 paper by Moss-Racusin et al. in PNAS, "Shedding Light on Subtle Gender Biases in Science: Awareness, Challenges, and Solutions". The 50 participants included tenured and non-tenured professors, postdocs, graduate and undergraduate students, government scientists and university administrators.

Four panelists presented their perspective of subtle gender biases in science, and offered practical advice and solutions on how to overcome this hidden obstacle in female career advancement. Speaker presentations were followed by lively discussions in both small and large groups. These discussions highlighted issues ranging from the challenges of shifting the culture of subtle gender biases in scientific departments, to tips on negotiating during the job interview process. A key outcome was the recognition of mentorship as a crucial component for young women at the early stages of their career, and during the transitions between graduate student, postdoc, and faculty member.

Responses to the question of whether SWEET 2013 was useful to career development included: "Yes, it is encouraging to hear the experiences and tips from women in science today," and "Absolutely, because I am now more aware of strategies to deal with gender biases."



UBC Okanagan Deputy Vice-Chancellor Deborah Buszard leads a breakout session.