Women in Materials Science Committee: Advancing the Future of TMS and MSE

Mary Juhas

First, a little history.

The National Academies' 2006 report *Beyond Bias and Barriers, Fulfilling the Potential of Women in Academic Science and Engineering*, noted that there is much to be gained if professional societies encourage women to raise their professional profiles and more fully participate in Society affairs.

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"The representation of women in leadership positions in our academic institutions, scientific and professional societies, and honorary organizations is low relative to the numbers of women qualified to hold these positions," the report stated. "It is not lack of talent, but unintentional biases and outmoded institutional structures that are hindering the access and advancement of women. Neither our academic institutions nor our nation can afford such underuse of precious human capital in science and engineering."

TMS took the first step toward examining the status of women in the Society in 2007 when it established the TMS ad hoc Women in Materials Science and Engineering Committee (WIMSEC). The advisory group met twice in 2008 and found that, on a positive note, women in recent years have been assuming positions of prominence at TMS, including seats on the Board of Directors and the presidency. However, the group also found room for improvement. To ensure continued progress on behalf the Society's female membership, the ad hoc committee recommended that the Board of Directors formalize WIMSEC's place in TMS by establishing it as a standing, rather than

advisory, committee. The board agreed to do so in February 2009.

One day later, the committee elected me chair and Deborah Whitis vice chair. Whitis, manager of structural material development at General Electric Company, brings the industry point of view while I, Senior Assistant Dean for Diversity & Outreach in the College of Engineering at Ohio State University, offer the academic point of view.

WIMSEC has representation by women and men, professionals and students, with no set number of members. We have invited each of TMS's five technical divisions to appoint a representative, so this committee can become well integrated into all activities of the Society. The group is a subcommittee of the TMS Membership and Student Development Committee, and that committee chair will report on WIMSEC to the Board of Directors.

The committee has adopted bylaws that define its purpose:

- Track the status of issues concerning women in the MSE profession, with a focus on TMS members
- Recommend programs and policies to increase the representation of women in TMS at all levels and in all roles
- Support actions to enhance the status and improve the recruitment and retention of women in the MSE profession at large
- Report on committee activities and forward committee recommendations to the Membership and Student Development Committee

Now, with the organizing in place, the group is getting down to business. One of the first outcomes of its efforts is the Women in Science reception, to be held at Materials Science & Technology 2009 (MS&T'09) in Pittsburgh,

Pennsylvania. This event opens the door to networking for the women of the four professional societies that organize the conference: TMS, the American Ceramic Society, ASM International, and the Association for Iron & Steel Technology. No registration is needed; just stop in at 6 p.m. October 28 in the Westmoreland Central room of the Westin Convention Center.

The committee will meet at MS&T'09, as well, and the meeting is open to all. It will be in Room 332 of the David L. Lawrence Convention Center from 3–4:30 on October 26.

A few months later, at the TMS 2010 Annual Meeting, the Women in Science Breakfast will provide an opportunity for both women and men to start off their week with dining, networking, and listening to an interesting speaker. This year's presentation will be "ADVANCing Women in Engineering" by Eve A. Riskin, professor of electrical engineering and director of the ADVANCE Center for Institutional Change, University of Washington, Seattle. The breakfast will be at 7 a.m. Monday, February 15.

We expect more activity on the horizon, and appreciate the participation of as many members as possible. Please plan to attend a meeting, or contact me with any suggestions or questions.

This committee takes seriously the outcome of the *Beyond Bias* report, and is working hard to nurture the "precious human capital" that comprises a growing percentage of TMS membership. I look forward to hearing from you.

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