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Natural Sciences and Engineering  
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en sciences  
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Canada

# Maximizing Opportunities: Increasing Women's Participation in Science and Engineering – A Summit



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# Past and On-going Initiatives

- Increased the number and proportion of women in science and engineering
  - Programs of support and education: CWSE (1996 - )
  - Programs of support: WFA (1991-1995), UFA (1999 - 2008)
  - Targeted underrepresented groups: PromoScience (2000 - )
- Facilitated the accommodation of career and family
  - Paid parental leave for graduate students and PDFs
  - Offer deferrals/grant extensions for parental, medical or family medical leave
  - Allow use of grant funds for child care expenses for nursing mothers and single parents while on travel status



# Past and On-going Initiatives

- Ensure fair practices
  - Added space in application forms to allow applicants to describe circumstances resulting in delays in research
    - Advise selection committees to consider delays in research
  - Reviewed guidelines for membership of NSERC committees to ensure fair gender representation
  - Developed peer review system to limit potential gender bias
    - Monitor on ongoing basis



# Recent Activities

- *Maximizing Opportunities: Increasing Women's Participation in Science and Engineering – A Summit*

November 16, 2010

- Accompanied by release of NSERC report *Women in Science and Engineering in Canada*





# Summit 2011

- Hosted by NSERC with support from Engineers Canada and Research In Motion
- Participants from universities, colleges, and the private sector
  - Researchers, policy makers, and students
- Timely review of status of women in science and engineering



# Summit 2011 – Goals

- Examine how businesses, colleges and universities are attracting women to and retaining women in careers in science and engineering
- Outline initiatives that can encourage more women to choose and remain in careers in science and engineering



# Summit 2011 – Highlights

- Analysis of available data necessary to identify gaps and trends
  - Barriers and solutions may be discipline-specific
- Encouraging young girls to consider careers in the NSE is important
  - Mentorship valuable
  - Use of social media
- Specific targeted programs were described
  - CWSE: International Network of Women Engineers and Scientists (INWES)
  - NSF: ADVANCE program





# Summit 2011 – Highlights

- Acknowledge that the current reward system may not reflect today's learners
  - Non-linear learners, late bloomers
- Mentoring is one of the best ways to encourage females in careers in both academia and private sector
- Exposure and interaction with new communities key for students
- Policies, practices and programs need to be people-friendly, not just women-friendly
  - Support of family responsibilities, spousal support, etc.



# Summit 2011 – Ideas Lab

- Educate how a background in NSE can lead to careers both within and outside of the NSE
- Demonstrate the contributions to society of women with a background in the NSE
- Highlight welcoming and supportive workplaces for women
  - Teachers and guidance counsellors need to be informed in order to reach young girls
- Encourage, model, and mentor leadership
- Support women balancing multiple priorities



# Summit Outcomes:

## Proposed New Initiatives (NSERC)

- Increase the number and proportion of women in science and engineering
  - Revise and post an updated policy statement
  - Publish competition results by gender
- Facilitate the accommodation of career and family
  - Increase awareness of existing policies (e.g. the option of deferring or extending research grants to accommodate parental leave)
  - Review the policy on leave to care for aging parents



# Summit Outcomes: Proposed New Initiatives (NSERC)

- Nurture leadership
  - Support
    - Additional resources to CWSE chairs for the hiring of a PDF
  - Encourage leadership opportunities
    - Allow leadership training as eligible research expenses
    - Allow project management expenses
  - Celebrate successes of women researchers
    - Actively encouraging the nomination of women for prizes
    - Providing increased exposure of high-achieving women



# Summit Outcomes: Initiatives of Summit Participants

- Summit report to be shared with all participants
- Participants will be asked to provide feedback regarding new initiatives implemented following the summit





# Questions and Discussion



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