

Evaluation of the 2013 Women in Leadership Program

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Executive Summary

In 2013 the University of Ballarat offered a Women in Leadership (WiL) program to its senior and mid-career staff. A total of 80 women participated in the Program. End of session evaluations were conducted and, in addition, an on line evaluation was undertaken in April 2014 by the Manager, Equity and Equal Opportunity, and the data was then analysed by the Principal Researcher.

The aims of the evaluation were to determine the effectiveness of the Women in Leadership program in providing skills and knowledge to assist career development; its effectiveness in providing networking opportunities for participants; its effectiveness in providing a better understanding of the organisation; and its impact on the career aspirations of the participants in the medium term.

The evaluation found that the WiL program provided skills and knowledge to assist career development. Most participants were positive about their participation in the program and the opportunities it presented for career development. The program was particularly effective in providing participants with networking opportunities which many considered was a valuable tool for career development. The program was less effective in providing a better understanding of the organisation, and some participants were critical of the leadership of the university. In turn, they were critical of the program as a strategy for “fixing the women” when, they asserted, the organisation not the women needed fixing. Finally, the program overall did not have any significant impact on the career aspirations of participants in the medium term. It had not impacted on their working lives, and most participants were not encouraged by the program to seek new positions or look for opportunities within the organisation. The current restructure and excessive workloads may have influenced their career aspirations.

The report recommended that:

- the Manager, Equity and Equal Opportunity and the Director, Human Resource review the findings of this evaluation in planning any future Women in Leadership programs, particularly in relation to the structure of the program and the impact of the program on career development
- the university offer leadership programs for women and men

- the University provide a program of mentoring and networking for senior and mid-career women
- the findings of this report are presented to the senior management team and relevant university committees.

Supplementary recommendations were: that the university examine staff perceptions of leadership in the organisation, and undertake a comprehensive research project on effective career progression for women and men in the organisation which examines career paths, workloads, impact of organisational change, work-life balance, and generational issues.

Background and aims

In 2013 the University of Ballarat (now Federation University Australia) approached Dr Kate White, a gender in HE researcher and leadership development facilitator to assist in the planning of - and undertake the facilitation of - a Women in Leadership Program that would target academic, teaching and professional staff in its higher education and TAFE sectors. The university decided that two separate programs – one designed for mid-career women (Building Professional Strengths) and a second for women already in leadership roles (Strengthening Women as Leaders) – would be badged under the Women and Leadership program. The purpose of program was to facilitate participants’ understanding of different approaches to leadership and help them to identify and develop their own leadership style in relation to their personal capacities and their organisational context. The target group for the program was women at academic Level B and above; TAFE teachers at SEI and above; and professional staff at HEW 7 and above.

The facilitator, the principal researcher (PR) of this evaluation, helped design and facilitate most of the sessions in the 2013 WiL Program. Julie Warnock, an organisational psychologist, facilitated two sessions with each group on skills development.

The PR’s brief was to work with the Manager, Equity and Equal Opportunity and the Director, Human Resources in the development, planning and preparation of the program for 2013. This included identifying appropriate materials and structure for the sessions that could assist participants to explore different models of leadership and their applicability to the current and future needs of women wishing to play leadership roles in the university sector. Secondly the PR was to facilitate three of the five workshops to ensure maximum participation and engagement of the participants and to focus the discussion on the specific challenges of leading in an educational institution within a time of significant change in the sector. Finally the facilitators would undertake an evaluation at the end of each workshop and review the program after each workshop, in collaboration with the Manager, Equity and Equal Opportunity and the Director, Human Resources to ensure that the sessions cumulatively built participants’ understanding and addressed emerging concerns and issues.

A total of 85 staff enrolled in this program. Approximately two-thirds of those who participated were mid-career, mostly professional staff and one third were more senior staff already in leadership roles, over half of whom were academics.

The program consisted of five workshops, programmed over first semester from April to June/July. Timing was negotiated around availability of key speakers who were an essential part of the program, venues, the facilitator and key university events.

Each workshop followed a specific theme. The first workshop in the Strengthening Women as Leaders stream focused on leadership and management in universities, and building influence through networking and mentoring. The second workshop focused on skills development. The next workshop explored building leadership capacity through leadership in research, teaching, administration and service, and the tools available. The fourth workshop focused on strategies for building on leadership strengths and moving forward. The final workshop covered assertion negotiation and resolution of difference and conflict.

The first workshop of the Building Professional Strengths stream – the mid-career program – focused on universities and change. It then looked at how this impacted on participant's present roles and sense of satisfaction with their workplace. The next workshop covered understanding the difficult emotions and skills for working with them, and strategies for staying inspired while working in demanding and challenging roles and work cultures. The third workshop explored leadership in various roles across the university and the tools needed to develop university leadership. The focus of the fourth workshop was on how to achieve work-life integration and wellbeing, followed by looking at how to plan and achieve career goals, and tools that could support this process. The final workshop looked at effective workplace communication.

The modules for both streams of the WiL program were linked through continuing discussion and reflection on leadership and what this meant to participants in their current career stage. In addition, the participants in the two mid-career groups in the program received a workbook at the first workshop and were asked to keep a reflective journal during and beyond the WiL program.

While conducting short evaluations at the end of each workshop provided some feedback, it was important to assess the program's longer-term impact. As the 2013 Program was a pilot, it is decided to undertake a qualitative evaluation in order to assess its effectiveness.

The aims of this research were to evaluate the 2013 UB Women in Leadership Program in order to determine:

- its effectiveness in providing skills and knowledge to assist career development
- its effectiveness in providing networking opportunities for participants
- its effectiveness in providing a better understanding of the organisation
- its impact on the career aspirations of the participants in the medium term

The significance of this evaluation is that it will provide valuable feedback to the Director of HR and the Manager, Equity and Equal Opportunity, on the effectiveness of the pilot program in equipping participants with the relevant tools for career development.

Literature Review

The report reviews the literature on the context for women in leadership programs, on career development for women in Australian universities, and on the role of gender equity programs.

WiL programs: the Australian context

Most universities in Australia undertake leadership development programs for women. Tessens (2007) found that the majority of universities have multiple women-only staff development programs, each with a different target group. Forty percent of the universities offer programs for a mixed group of academic and general staff women, while about 50 per cent run a combination of programs, and the remaining 10 per cent have programs only for academic staff. Australia is the only country in the OECD where such programs are conducted so extensively in universities. The popularity of women in leadership programs may be a response to the acknowledged under-representation of women in senior academic and professional leadership. Support for such interventions may therefore form part of equity and diversity strategies designed to improve the representation of women at senior levels.

Tessens (2007) found that thirteen Australian universities had programs with an explicit development focus, aimed at enabling women to develop their leadership competencies to increase participation in positions of leadership and decision making. Twenty-eight universities had programs focusing on skills development. Some universities offered both developmental programs as well as training for skills.

This review of women's leadership development workshops found that some universities claiming to offer a leadership development program had a training focus with workshops about leadership, assertiveness training, promotion strategies and project management. Such leadership programs, Tessens (2007) asserted: 'will assist the individual staff member but might not necessarily affect organisational culture in the long term'.

Networking activities and mentoring programs are also important components of most Australian women in leadership programs with some offering formal mentoring as an integral part of the program.

The purpose of such programs and the university's understanding of their role in women's career development require some consideration. Tessens (2007) argued that women-only staff development designers and facilitators needed to revisit 'the underlying assumptions, values and approaches of their programs. Current practices must be challenged to optimise women's leadership opportunities. Without a clear strategy that includes a focus on organizational culture, programs will continue to help individual women fit into organizational cultures while leaving those cultures untouched'.

It is clear then that a focus on individual women participating in these programs rather than the organisational context will result in missed opportunities for universities and may lead to frustration among participants.

Career development for women: academic staff

A great deal of literature focuses on gendered career paths in academia. One issue is the gendering of academic careers—having been established during PhD candidature through lack of support and mentoring particularly in relation to advice about career paths and in the early career phase—which persists and is consolidated throughout the careers of women academics (Bell 2009; Dever et al. 2008; van den Brink 2009; Hatchell & Aveling 2008; Etzkowitz & Kemelger 2001). Academic women are often building their careers later than their male colleagues, and are less likely to have a traditional trajectory starting as a lecturer and then progressing through the ranks to senior lecturer, associate professor and full professor (Bagilhole & White 2013). Not surprisingly, women are therefore a clear minority in leadership and senior management positions of higher education (Bagilhole & White 2011), as well as more generally in the corporate and public sectors in Australia (CEDA 2013).

Another critical issue for women in building academic careers is developing strong networks (Wroblewski 2010; Husu 2004; Leden et al. 2007; Faltholm & Abrahamsson 2010; Benschop 2009; and Sagebiel, Hendrix & Schrettenbrunner 2011). Networks become essential, especially in securing funding and gaining promotion. The control and selection function of networks in these appointment procedures are critical (Wroblewski 2010). However, allocation of funds tends to focus on male values and networks (Husu 2004), produces ‘a pervasive culture of negative bias—whether conscious or unconscious—against women, resulting in a lack of professional support and networking’ (Leden et al. 2007), and results in less access to important research networks necessary for securing funding (Faltholm & Abrahamsson 2010). As Wilson-Kovacs et al. (2006, p. 683) assert: ‘Informal networks of influence outside women’s reach are at the core of their struggle to be acknowledged and treated on an equal footing’. Some women academics therefore choose to develop all-women networks as a strategy in furthering career progression (Sagebiel 2013). Benschop (2009, pp. 222-3) asserts that these ‘intertwined processes of networking and gendering are micro-political processes: they reproduce and constitute power in action in everyday organisational life’. Thus powerful homophilous networks, or what is often called homosociability, operate by selecting those ‘with familiar qualities and characteristics to one’s self’ (Grummell et al. 2009, p.335) and can often exclude women.

Mentoring is also important in building academic careers. There is evidence that women who have mentors have greater research productivity and career satisfaction than those without mentors (HoC 2014). However, women are often reticent to seek mentors or to ask their institution to provide mentoring (Bagilhole & White 2013). Senior women may often favour peer mentoring with women in other universities, rather than in their own institution (Tessens et al. 2013).

Career development for women: professional staff

This report defines professional staff as those who are in non-teaching and non-academic roles in universities. Dobson (2000) identified an ‘attitude problem’ toward the role of professional or what he calls general staff among some academics, while Burton (1997) and Carrington and Pratt (2003) highlighted that there were few career opportunities for professional staff across the Australian university sector. Burton (1997, pp. 71,100) explained that: ‘Little evidence is available to suggest that universities have made a planned and systematic effort to apply EEO

principles to the situation of general staff women' and universities lack 'effective strategies to ensure that the encouragement given to general staff women to further their careers is integrated into workplace and management practices'.

Moreover, there is little professional development for facilitating career management of early career professional staff in Australian Universities, which contrasts with the broad capacity building programs for early career researchers and academics (Graham, 2009, p.179). Given the ageing workforce, Graham (2009, p.181) argued that Australian universities 'need to facilitate more effective professional development for their general staff, if early career professionals are to be attracted *and* retained as higher educational professions'. She recommended that general staff be encouraged to use professional development portfolios to document professional experience. Activities that might contribute to developing such a portfolio could include participating in relevant workshops or study; working with a more senior mentor; developing skills by collaborating with others on relevant projects; attending conferences; and gaining skills through secondments, committee work or voluntary work for professional associations. Rinkin, Scharp and van Dollan (2009) found in relation to professional staff that investment in professional development led to greater job satisfaction, and willingness of employees to embrace the necessary skills and knowledge to increase performance.

The target for two of the three groups in the 2013 WiL program were women in mid-careers, who may struggle to prioritise work in relation to family responsibilities, which can have a strong influence on women's work achievements (Robinson 2008). For some, choice can be constrained in relation to their other roles (David & Woodward 1997). A number of these women may have a belief system that ignores that careers can be targeted or planned in a systematic way, and there is evidence that some women are content to drift in their careers (Robinson 2008). Some professional women may put their family first (White 2009). Consequently, those with dependent children 'may under-achieve for a period of time relative to their skills, experience and qualifications' (Robinson, 2008).

The role of gender equity programs

Gender equity programs are targeted initiatives for university staff. They have often been criticised for their emphasis on the 'teach the women to play the game' approach that focuses on women as the problem. In fact Tessen's (2007) survey of WiL programs found that seventy-four per cent of Australian universities seem to focus on a 'fix the women' approach. This approach positions women as outsiders on the inside (Gherardi 1995) and reinforces women as 'the problem' in higher education leadership (O'Connor 2011). As Bhavnini (1997, p. 142) succinctly puts it:

This notion of "otherness" or "deviant" from the organisational norm suggests that women as a group lack certain skills and behaviours necessary to success. ... This not only confirms a deficit model of women, it puts the major responsibility for change on to women themselves and negates the role of the organization ... in sustaining women's disadvantage.

A different approach, adopted by the Leadership Development for Women Program at the University of Western Australia, has been to focus on 'organisational culture as the problem and take[s] a systemic approach to re-visioning work cultures' (de Vries & Webb 2005). While gender

equity programs have been widely implemented across the sector, how do we know that they make a difference to participants and to the organisation as a whole? As de Vries (2005, p. 11) asks: ‘How does one measure organisational cultural change and isolate the impact of a single factor?’ and she continues: “What kind of changes would we be looking for? When we are talking about women’s working lives, their careers, their leadership development, what might constitute success? It will surely be different for different people, particularly for different groups of staff’ (de Vries 2005, p.11). Clearly gender equity programs will impact differently on women in leadership positions compared to those aspiring to such positions, and those who are mid-career staff members.

At a broader level it has been argued that universities need to explore new leadership models that better meet the career aspirations of women and most men in higher education (Bagilhole & White, 2011).

Methodology

The principal researcher, after consultation with the Director of HR and the Manager, Equity and Equal Opportunity, submitted an application to the Federation University Australia Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at the end of 2013.

HREC granted provisional approval on the following conditions:

The Committee wonders whether it is appropriate for the researcher to evaluate her own program. Would it be possible for HR to send out the invitations to participate in the evaluation, and then for one of the participants of the WIL program to run the focus groups (with the questions etc. provided by the Principal Researcher (PR))? The PR could then take herself out of the data collection phase of the project. Anonymous data could then be supplied to the PR.

The PR therefore discussed the HREC’s special conditions with the Director of HR and the Manager, Equity and Equal Opportunity. They took the view that it would not be appropriate for a participant in the 2013 WiL program to conduct the focus groups as this could bias the data collected. They preferred instead an external facilitator to be engaged. However, the Equity Office did not have a budget for an external facilitator or for the transcription of the taped focus groups.

It was therefore agreed that an on-line survey would be used instead of focus groups and the PR submitted an amendment to the original ethics application that was approved by the chair of the HREC. The survey instrument was Lime survey, a program that is supported by the University. The survey is attached (see Attachment 1). An email inviting participants to complete the survey was sent by the Manager, Equity and Equal Opportunity (see Attachment 2).

The survey was designed to capture a range of feedback about participation in the program – what worked, what was less effective, and what were the key benefits. The principal researcher consulted with the Manager, Equity and Equal Opportunity, and a New Zealand academic colleague in developing the survey.

The data from the surveys was then collated by the Equity and Equal Opportunity Office and de-identified data was forwarded to the Principal Researcher for analysis.

Results

The survey invited participants to reflect on the importance of women's only career development programs, to share their experience of the 2013 WiL program and to assess any impact it had on their working lives and career planning. They were also invited to provide any additional comments. Forty three participants of the respondents who finished the program completed the survey representing a 53 per cent response rate. The analysis of the results has not separated out responses of mid-career participants and of those women already in leadership positions. Rather, it focuses on responses across the two streams of the program in order to determine key themes that appeared to emerge.

Women's only career development programs

In the first survey question respondents were asked if they thought women's only career development programs were important and to rank their importance on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 – with 5 being very important and 1 not important. Of the 43 respondents who completed the survey, 17 said they were very important, 20 said important, and seven rated them at 3.

Respondents were then asked 'Why is this'? Seven respondents did not answer the question. Those that rated career development for women programs as very important provided a variety of reasons for their responses. Some argued that women in higher education faced different challenges to men: 'moving through your career is very different as a woman to that of a man' and 'women express themselves in different ways to male colleagues and for some women a career development program that is not gender specific could inhibit them from stating opinions publicly'.

Respondents also considered women's only programs important because they encouraged networking and camaraderie among women at the university. One commented that: 'Creating good relationships with other women is needed in successful organizations', and another said: 'creating a network amongst like-minded people in the work place. Many women are not the bread winners in their families but deserved to have the chance to be a leader in their workplace, learn the skills and practice these skills in a safe environment'. A further respondent commented: 'It allows women to be in contact with great leaders and gives the opportunity to network'. Part of the networking that the program provided for some of the participants was support and empathy for women as the following respondent explained: 'because women understand women especially when it comes to career development. Men can view it differently', and 'because moving through your career is very different as a women to that of a man'.

Others viewed women's only programs as a safe space in which to reflect on their career and providing an opportunity for open discussion and communication, evident in the following comments:

This is a safe forum where the issues that are exclusive to women can be aired. For example, many women feel inadequate although talented

It gives us the opportunity to look at career development with issues that are more related to women. Everybody was very open in discussion and I don't know if this would have happened if men were in the group

I believe women only programs allow for more effective and open communication that allows all women within the program to speak freely.

Several women saw particular value in women's only programs for those women aspiring to leadership roles. One thought such programs could help to raise the aspirations of women and 'close the gender gap at senior management level'. Another argued that 'leadership is very different as a female and a separate program lets you explore styles and issues related to women in leadership'. A third mentioned that these programs focused on issues that affected women's careers: 'There is more focus on the work issues faced by women in professional roles - taking time out for family, returning to work etc and how this aligns with career goals and development' and another added: 'more emphasis is put on a wider variety of issues mainly affecting women in their career progression'. There was also appreciation that women and men often have different career challenges: 'While both sexes face a lot of similar challenges in career development, there are many challenges that are unique to women. Discussing with men would get a "it's only a problem if you make it a problem" response, but we are not wired like that'. This narrative was hinting at the gendered challenges for women of a difficult organizational culture.

Others were more specific in their criticisms of this difficult organizational culture and named the pervasive dominance of men in higher education and men's networks as an issue:

I believe that women face different challenges to men. It is difficult to break into a traditionally male domain in higher education

The academic environment of the university-sector is generally masculinised; strong 'boys' networks are in operation; academic promotion still favours male applicants

Issues confronting women are different as they generally have many conflicting roles to juggle because of the glaring gender inequities in the workplace.

These participants were clear that universities were not a level playing field. Males dominated leadership positions and gender disparities were obvious.

Nevertheless, one respondent argued that women's only programs could impact on this dominant male culture and the traditional male career path by endorsing more diverse models:

Women face different challenges in the workplace and are viewed differently to our male counterparts. However men are looking at how women are structuring their work life/

family situations and are increasingly changing their outlook. This could not happen if women were not proactive in career development programs etc.

While several respondents who rated women's only programs as important (a rating of 4 or 3), talked about universities as 'dominated by men' and 'deep seated inequality in the workplace', the strongest theme in their responses was to question the need for women only programs. One commented that 'much of what we learnt was not specific to women', while another said: 'Good for women to share their experiences with other women, which includes insights on working with men. But a complementary program with men and women would be good as well'.

There was a firm view expressed by several participants that all staff should be given access to staff development and that to achieve equity in the workplace men should also be included in leadership development programs. Comments included:

I understand there is a difference in gender and these differences impact on leadership styles. However if we are talking about equity, then there should be a leadership for men's program, and they should focus [on] similarities and understanding of the differences

I think development programs are important but they don't necessarily need to be women only

I believe that all university staff members, men and women, should be given the opportunity to attend programs that assist them to develop their careers.

Therefore some participants favoured leadership programs for both women and men as a way of changing the organizational culture, encouraging wider views of equality in the workforce, and ensuring that all staff had access to career development, and offered the following views:

I think male career development workshops are very important too, however, they are rarely (if ever) conducted for 'men only'- I think running 'men only' sessions would cause outrage in today's day and age. As such, multi-gender sessions might be a better way forward.

I think a women's only is a good idea. However if it wasn't gender specific I think it would still be valuable and you would get more varied opinions from each gender on their views of equality in the workforce that could be interesting

Good for women to share their experiences with other women, which includes insights on working with men. But a complementary program with men and women would be good as well

It is essential that staff at the University are provided with career development, that is, male and female, administrative and academic.

These comments on 'what about the men' are often raised in gender equity programs and, as discussed later, need to be addressed (de Vries 2014).

In summary, most participants considered that women's only programs were important. Those who rated career development for women programs highly identified a range of benefits that they provided. These included: women in universities facing different challenges to men; the programs encouraged networking and camaraderie; and they provided a safe space to reflect on careers, and also to challenge the current organisational culture. The respondents who rated the importance of women's only programs lower were more likely to prefer leadership development programs targeting both women and men, and also to emphasise that all staff should be offered career development opportunities.

Light bulb moment

The survey was conducted eight months after the completion of the Women in Leadership program. We were keen to discern if, after this period of time, there was one particular highlight of the program that they could identify. They were asked if there had been a "light bulb moment". Eighteen of the participants said there was a light bulb moment, several said there was not a light bulb moment, and others said this question was not applicable.

While one respondent did not nominate a particular light bulb moment, saying 'no, it was all good', there were five strong themes in the responses. The first was that presentations from particular staff members had made an impact with comments such as: 'Marcia Devlin and Rowena Coutts were very inspiring and motivating'; 'listening to paths and opportunities of presenters'; 'a presentation about how to manage personal and professional life'; and 'the presentation by Jeanie King on her career progression to her current role'. The second strong theme was the value of the skills development workshops conducted by Julie Warnock. One commented: 'the motivation and inspiration session with Julie Warnock was fantastic and gave me an insight into my personality type and where I saw myself within my career' and another said her light bulb moment occurred, 'during the emotional intelligence workshop'.

Not all these light bulb moments were positive. One respondent explained: 'It was more like a blown light bulb moment in that I realised I was not coping with work life at the university. This was during the second session with Julie Warnock' while a further respondent was ambivalent about what she learnt in a skills development workshop: 'Realising that the 'conflict management' techniques we were being taught to use had been used on me in the past - unsuccessfully, I must note, as I just felt disrespected and nothing was solved'.

A third theme was in relation to the change in self-awareness, career planning and/or work practices engendered by the program. Comments included: 'career planning and making a conscious choice to develop and pursue a career using knowledge gained from emotional intelligence and vocational values sessions'; 'taking control'; 'I was constantly writing keywords (affirmation) down, that I will put up around my desk to remind me of what I am doing'; 'about how your skills can transfer to any job and that you don't need to be from that field but have a reason and motivation for wanting the position'; 'learning so much more about myself, the ways in which I learn and my work ethics'; and 'learning styles, gender and leadership styles, personalities, reactions etc.'.

The fourth theme in the responses of participants to the question was the opportunity to network and the importance of mentors, as the following responses indicate: 'just the networking aspect,

and figuring out what my personal strengths are and what I should be focusing on career-wise'; 'taking control and the importance of mentors to help with this'; and 'the important thing for me was meeting women from across the University. There is so little time to get about due to the workload models used and other decreased opportunity due to restructuring'.

The final theme in responding to the question about a particular 'light bulb moment' was the difficult organisational culture in which some of these women were operating. This culture was manifest in the under-representation of women in senior positions: 'realising that women at this institution are so poorly represented in leadership' and 'that our university needs more women in senior leadership roles'. The impact of work intensification and restructuring was also clear to several respondents. One observed 'that there are some very unhappy women working here! I wonder why they stay if they are so unhappy - lack of options?' Another alluded to intrusive surveillance, 'that people are constantly watching to see how well you react'. A third was more forthright saying that the light bulb moment was 'when I realised that this program would do absolutely nothing for my career progression and amounted to extra work.' The implication here was possibly that the focus of the program was on fixing the women rather than the organisational culture. Finally, the ever increasing work pressures meant that one respondent had no time for reflection and could not now recall any light bulb moments: 'unfortunately I can't remember now; too busy no brain space'. These responses suggest that the program had little impact on career development because women were under-represented in leadership, were marginalised, unhappy and so stressed they had little time for reflection.

In summary, while most respondents identified positive experiences in the program such as presentations, skills development, self awareness and networking opportunities as their 'light bulb' moment, several argued that the difficult working environment and organisational culture had impacted on their experiences of the program.

Understanding the organisation

One of the aims of the program was to provide participants with a better understanding of the organisation in which they worked. As the university is dual-sector it was an opportunity for participants to gain an appreciation of its complexity and of the internal and external influences on university management. Several senior managers, including the VC, DVCs and a PVC had addressed participants.

Respondents were asked to rate their responses from 5 (learnt a lot), 3 (some new understanding), to 1 (no not really). Half of the respondents said there was some new understanding, while a quarter rated the question at 5 or 4. A further five respondents gave a rating of 2. They were then asked to provide comments. Approximately a third of participants did not comment on this question.

Several respondents considered that the program provided them with a better understanding of various roles in the university and the challenges others were facing rather than the organisation itself:

I don't think I gained a greater understanding of the University, I gained a better understanding of what others are facing in their areas of work and was able to gain some fantastic networks

Provided me with a better understanding of the various roles women in the program had within the organisation and how they interact with other positions and how this can be relevant to my position

In terms of the organisation, the networking provided the understanding of other people's roles; but not necessarily of the organisation as a whole.

The above comments on the valuable networking the program provided were echoed by another respondent who noted: 'a women's networking group would be a great spin-off from this program'. The importance of networking will be discussed later in this section.

Others did think that the program helped them to better understand the organization.

Yes, given that we had a couple of senior women speak and share their experiences

I was a newly arrived employee at the University and it helped understand the hierarchy and how most things work (or don't!)

I appreciated the Vice-Chancellor expanding on the diverse nature of his role

It was excellent to hear from senior leaders at the university and learn more from them about the university through their experiences. But sadly, it just reinforced the impression I already had that the university leadership team lacks strength and determination.

However, there was ambivalence in some of the above comments. While they learnt more about the organization, the picture that emerged of management and leadership was not all positive. Other respondents took up this theme, and tended to be cynical about the organisation:

That it is much smaller and parochial (in mind set) than anything I had experienced before

And not in a good way. It made me question whether academia was the career path I want to pursue. I love what I do, but I see so many obstacles, and so many poor decisions that impact on staff satisfaction and staff development

Yes. It was interesting that we all agreed on how the organisation functioned. No surprises here!!

Some participants saw value in the program, although not necessarily in providing more understanding of the organization as a whole. Comments included:

Probably not more of an understanding but an awareness of what areas in the university existed and what those areas did that I wasn't previously aware

Different personalities in different roles and departments and how different each departments runs

Nevertheless, several participants learnt a great deal about the organization from getting to know other women in the program and understanding their roles:

variety of positions available; resources available

I met people from areas of the uni I knew little about, so learnt more from them

As I seldom interact with academics it was interesting to hear their point of view and perspective of the university environment

Not so much an understanding of the organisation but a real need for staff to develop and nurture strong working relationships and the importance of mentoring

There were a lot of common issues and concerns across Schools, Departments etc – for example, staff numbers, work-loads etc.

A few participants considered that the program did not necessarily increase their understanding of the organization for a variety of reasons; some noted that they already understood the organization and others thought the information was too basic:

I felt that some aspects of the program were going over old ground without actually getting to the heart of ways we could build our own knowledge and skills.

I was already well aware of the organization; its structure and policies

The program harnessed some skills which I had already acquired in previous roles

In trying to bring all cohorts together (academic and general, all levels of each) into the one program the general level of address was too basic to be of real use aside from some basic networking the program facilitated.

And finally, one respondent was unable to recall details of the program in relation to learning about the organisation:

I cannot remember much about the program in relation to this. But it doesn't mean it didn't happen. My memory is very bad, possibly due to stress and other personal health issues.

Clearly this respondent had experienced significant workplace stress which had impacted on her assessment of the program.

In summary, there was some ambivalence in response to the question of whether or not they gained a better understanding of the university. While several respondents now had more

appreciation of various roles and challenges colleagues faced, others were critical of the lack of effective leadership in senior management, and there was little sense of strong and positive leadership in the university.

Meeting expectations

The next question was designed to gauge the expectations of participants of the program and whether or not these expectations had been met. Respondents were asked if the program met their expectations, on a scale of 5 (exceeded expectations), 3 met expectations, and 1 (no not really).

Three quarters of respondents said that the program had met their expectations, while 20 per cent said it did not meet their expectations, and five per cent did not respond.

Participants were then asked to comment on whether or not the program met their expectations. Half the participants provided responses that were mostly positive. Several said the program had exceeded their expectations, and had 'met it and more'. Others described it as an 'excellent program', the 'presenters were terrific', 'all presentations were very enlightening and useful in my line of work' and 'It was a great program and I enjoyed the different aspects of it'. There were also positive comments about the facilitators: 'the discussions/workshops by Julie and Kate were very effective and gave me a lot to think about and how I go about my work' and 'the range of topics covered was very good and related well to professional staff in the organisation. Delivery, presentation and facilitators were great'.

Six participants identified networking as a real strength of the program 'It was great to meet some of the other staff members throughout the university and to get an understanding of where they were in their career and how they managed the work life balance' and 'fantastic opportunity for me to meet with a wide range of colleagues within the organisation'. Another commented: 'The networking opportunities were terrific', while a fourth respondent reflected that 'It was a great way of meeting other people outside of my department and in different roles around the university'. One participant had anticipated the value of networking opportunities: 'I thought it would be a great learning and networking opportunity and it was!', while another wanted more: 'I would have like some more time on the networking section'. A further respondent saw the networking as empowering: 'Great opportunity to meet new people and a great way to strengthen women as leaders'.

Another strong theme in the comments was the value of the program to their career development. One respondent noted: 'I still reflect on sessions and draw on skills learnt', and another explained that she had 'gained greatly from this program and it has assisted me in developing in my current role'. A third respondent saw benefits in being challenged about her career: 'I found the program extremely interesting and found it challenged me to think about the whole picture in terms of career development and what I want out of my career'.

Despite this positive feedback there were several critical comments on the program. Two participants were concerned that the program was anti-men: 'some aspects of the program seemed to be more about bad-mouthing men, rather than how women can support women' and 'I thought that it was slightly degrading towards the male population'. Another two respondents did

not consider that having both academic and professional women in the program worked ('it was focused too much on academic staff') and that the program focused on fixing the women:

Having a mix of academic and professional staff meant that much content was really not relevant. Also, much of the 'advice' was focused on us changing rather than us working together to fix the system that is the problem. Without real buy in from the university's leadership and our male colleagues nothing will change.

Three further respondents thought the program was too general: 'At times it was stuff we already knew'; 'Was simply too generalised, trying to address too many different cohorts who possessed very different starting understandings of and expertise in gendered analysis', and 'too general and basic. This feedback will be addressed in the discussion chapter.

Finally, several respondents reported that they did not find benefit in the program. One commented that while 'the personality traits were interesting as was the nutritionist' she thought that: 'some of the information that was spoken about lacked follow through for people that wanted to take the information back and use it in the workplace'. Another experienced difficulties with health and work during the course of the program: 'Although due to illness I was not able to attend all sessions. At the time I enjoyed it. I did have a conversation with my manager partly due to this program. She was so busy trying to get kudos for her own situation that she undermined me in every way possible'. While a third respondent had benefited more from other management and leadership courses in the past, her concern was about the lack of honesty of some participants: 'I was disappointed in some of my peers for not being honest with their self reflection of their own practice. They would rather say what was perceived as right, rather than what was real'.

One participant was critical of every aspect of the program:

I came into the program with really high expectations as people who had completed it in previous years had told me how valuable it was. I understand the structure/ presenters had changed somewhat this year and unfortunately there were many occasions when I found the program to honestly be a waste of my time. There were occasions I had used consultancy money to cover my teaching so I could attend and I was disheartened that I had used my money for this as some of the sessions were simplistic, poorly conducted and didn't appear to have a clear focus for what we would gain from participating in them.

In summary, overwhelmingly the program had met the expectations of participants. Most were content about the content of the program and the facilitators, and several saw networking as a strength of the program. However, two respondents were concerned that the program appeared to be anti-men, a few said it was too general and four respondents were quite critical.

Useful aspects of the program

In order to assess the effectiveness of the program, we were keen to identify what aspects worked for participants and what aspects were less useful. They were asked to list three areas that were most useful to them. The area identified as most useful was the presenters (nine respondents), followed by skill development (seven respondents), and networking/mentoring (five respondents). Others mentioned 'time out to contemplate the future', leadership and the team sessions. The second area of the course that was most useful was skills development (11 respondents) networking/mentoring (nine respondents), presenters (six respondents), and career planning (four respondents). The third area that was useful was networking (four respondents), presenters, career planning (four respondents), skill development (three respondents), and group work (two respondents). One respondent commented 'It felt like work but it wasn't'.

Three areas that participants identified as least useful were – first area – the HR presentation (four respondents), and presenters (four respondents). Other respondents identified, career planning, skill development (workplace communications), research, 'analyses provided too basic, and 'I am not sure what I was able to incorporate into my work'. However, two respondents thought all of the program was useful: 'all had some valuable' and 'all of the material was interesting and useful'.

The second area identified as less useful was the HR presentation (three respondents), health and wellbeing 'nutritionist session - uncomfortable for 'larger' people in the group' (three respondents) and group discussion (two respondents). Another respondent questioned the mix of professional and academic staff in the program: 'Advice that may be appropriate for professional staff but was totally inappropriate for academic staff', while others referred to 'examples not always relevant', and 'prior reading - when most people don't do it' and 'last session'. Only four participants identified a third area that was less useful. One replied 'not applicable' and the remainder wrote, 'research', 'length of time spent', and 'looking after your health'.

In summary, participants identified presenters, skills development and networking/mentoring discussion and opportunities as the most useful aspects of the program. The areas that were least useful related to presentations on HR and health and well-being.

Strengthening skills

The next question focussed on the skills development workshops facilitated by Julie Warnock. Participants were then asked to reflect on whether or not the program had helped to strengthen their communication skills, assertion skills and negotiation skills and to rate each of these on a scale of 5 (very helpful) to 3 (helpful) and 1 (not helpful). Almost a third of respondents gave a rating of 4 (and 10 per cent 5) for the impact of the program in strengthening communication skills. A quarter gave a rating of 3. Interestingly, the responses were not as positive for assertion skills and negotiation skills. Over a third of respondents rated assertion skills as helpful (3) and slightly more rated negotiation skills as helpful, with a quarter rating each of these at 4 or 5. About 10 per cent of respondents rated each of these skills at 2 or 1.

Participants were then asked to comment on their ratings. Several participants saw the skills development as positive. One commented: 'excellent experience and useful', while another added: 'understanding anger stemming from fear has drastically changed the way I approach situations in the office that would previously resulted in conflict', and a third reported 'more confidence in ability to express views and learnt new negotiation skills'. Similarly, another respondent reported: 'I am not easily intimidated when trying to communicate with the wider university's internal stakeholders. I now negotiate successfully with external parties as well'. A further respondent saw skills development as gradual: 'Slowly getting there...' and finally, two other participants commented that the program provided: 'Nothing new, but a positive reinforcement'; and 'Strengthen' not quite correct - reminded me of a few strategies I had fallen out of practice with'.

However, some participants found that they had not been able to maintain the skills they learnt in the program and/or needed more practice in using these skills. One participant said that while she was empowered by the WiL program, that strength had not been maintained: 'When I was doing the course I felt very empowered, but now as time has gone on I don't feel that same empowerment, but I am more confident getting in touch with people around the university. Assertion skills are something I need lots of practice with'. The sense that participants needed more opportunities to practice these skills was reflected in the comments of several others: 'we could have done with more work on negotiation skills'; 'I have forgotten everything and need further reinforcing'; 'I feel most of this is a work in progress. Remembering to employ the skills we learnt as needed can often be an issue - afterwards I'll think "I should have said ..."'; and 'I found the sessions Julie ran began to build some of these skills and capacities - however I would have liked much more of this kind of work in the program'. Similarly, two other respondents commented that 'these skills are something best learned by doing. I think it was really helpful to run through them but you almost need to go away for 6 months or a year and "practice" them by doing them, then return for another session to reiterate what has been learned'; and 'needed more follow up with assertion and negotiation skills; maybe further PD around this'.

Two participants were critical of the skills development, one arguing that participants should be grouped according to personality type, and another asserting that the skills training was flawed because it ignored the power imbalance in the organisation:

I don't think I got a lot out of it. I think that maybe the groups should be split up in personality traits rather than by HEW level/Academia, so that people with strong personalities could work on different things than people who are not as assertive and more shy.

I think the skills training provided (which was rather limited) was flawed in many ways and basically is teaching people to take no responsibility for their actions. Also ignores the ethical issues relating to power imbalances evident in many real world situations. If, as a leader, I implemented many of these things I would be treating those under me in a very poor way. As someone who has to deal with more senior people, I see these approaches in another light, such that it seems that there is no real effort made to understand another's point of view or circumstances, just to coerce/force them into doing what the 'leader' expects - I see this as an abuse of power, not leadership. Unfortunately, this style of 'leadership' is highly prevalent at our university.

In summary, while most respondents saw skills development as really useful, several argued that the program (or follow up professional development) should provide opportunities to practice these skills.

Impact on career goals and work

Next the survey focused on any impact the program may have had on career goals, working style and participant's relationship to work colleagues. They were asked to rate from 5 (very helpful) to 1 (not helpful) if the program had helped them to focus on future career goals, if it had changed how they went about their work, if it had changed how they related to work colleagues, and if their skill level had improved as a result of the program. And they were then asked to comment on these four questions.

Almost a third of respondents rated the question "has the program helped you to focus on future career goals" at 5 (very helpful) or 4. Less than a quarter gave a rating of 3, and around 14 per cent rated the question at 1 or 2. The second question – did the program change the way you go about your work – produced less positive responses. Almost a fifth of respondents rated it at 5 or 4. Another fifth rated it at 3, and almost a quarter rated it at 1 or 2. It should be noted that some respondents did not answer this question. In relation to the third question – had the program changed how they related to colleagues – over a quarter of respondents gave a rating of 3, and 20 per cent rated it at 4 or 5, with under 15 per cent rating it at 1 or 2. In relation to the fourth question – has your skill level improved as a result of the program – the ratings were polarised. Over a quarter of respondents provided a rating of 4 or 5, and over a quarter rated it at 1 or 2, with 15 per cent rating it at 3 (helpful).

The comments from participants in response to these questions indicated a wide spectrum of views. Several were clear that the program had had a positive impact on career goals, working style and relationship to colleagues. One had already successfully made a career move: 'Have moved into a different area of the university working in an area and with people that I really enjoy'. Two others responded positively: 'More focus on my own career goals and how and what I need to do to achieve them. Better understanding of my colleagues and how I interact with them'; and 'there is a significant improvement in the above named areas'. A further two participants could cite improved inter-personal skills and confidence: 'it re-emphasised how important relating to work colleagues is and gave me some new skills to help with this' and 'I feel more confident'.

While another participant had little recollection of particular sessions, she thought that the skills development had probably been of benefit in subtle ways, suggesting that this learning remains at an unconscious level:

I feel I gained a little bit of all of these through the program but nothing stands out as a great change. My recollection of each day is a bit rusty now and I am sure that there were some days where I really gained a lot out of the course. I suspect some of these "gains" are probably quite subtle and I won't be aware of them until a situation arises where those learnings suddenly come into play

A further respondent had come to the realization through the program that she needed to look for a job outside the university and was changing her work style in order to help her gain a new position:

Having time to think about my career and to learn and reflect on the workings of our university has had an impact - in conjunction with my other experiences within the university within the past 12 months - primarily, this has acted to convince me that I am a poor fit with this university. So I have started making changes to the way to do things with the specific focus on what will assist me to get a job elsewhere.

This response contrasted to that of the following participant who had a sense of being trapped in her current job and being unable to change this situation: 'At the moment because of my position I feel there is nowhere else for me to go within the organization'.

Finally, several respondents found little benefit in the program because of their current work situation or that of their colleagues:

There needs to be more follow up, via email or newsletter, as the program was so long ago and life, work etc. gets in the way!

I didn't find much in this program that I could apply in my career that I don't already

Work is a very stressful place at times and I am at a very unstable place at present. I used to be able to cope with workplace stress but in the last 2 years I am less able to cope with the bullies in my area. I do not think as clearly as I used to and it is almost like I have forgotten everything I know.

While one woman had personally benefited from the program, she was concerned that others had not done so:

The program gave me a broad insight into how other women act and feel within this organisation. Disappointing that women didn't feel more empowered.

In summary, the responses indicated that the program had often not impacted on the working lives of participants for various reasons, including inability to change jobs and the pressure of work. However, several were clear that the program had had a positive impact on career goals and how they related to work colleagues.

Becoming pro-active about career and community engagement

The next group of questions were designed to determine if the program had encouraged them to be pro-active and seek new opportunities. They were asked if the program had influenced them to seek a new position or take on a different role at the university, get involved in a committee, and/or get involved in a working group. They were asked to rate these responses 5 (yes) 3 (thinking about it) or 1 (no).

The consistent response over these four questions was negative – over a quarter of respondents either responded with 1 or 2. Another quarter responded with 3 – thinking about it. Only around 20 per cent rated the questions with 4 or 5. Several respondents did not answer this question. This would suggest that most of the respondents either had not been pro-active in seeking new opportunities, or were thinking about it.

Participants were then asked to comment on their response. Those who did provide comments were mostly positive. One had: ‘enrolled in a degree at the Uni to help further my career’, and several others had become interested in being more involved in the organisation, had come to value their skills and had moved into a new position. Their comments included: ‘I was already interested in getting involved in a university committee or working group. I guess the program just reinforced this’; ‘I am already involved in many working groups and committees, the program strengthened my resolve to be active within the organisation’; ‘currently I am involved in one committee and have been on a couple of working parties’; ‘this program has definitely helped me to value my skills and talents’, and ‘have moved up within the Uni’.

One respondent commented on the impact of the program on her being actively involved in committee work: ‘It highlighted how important committee work is and how you influence change; you need to "be involved". I'm more likely to raise my hand now and not only be part of a committee but remain involved’; while another who had a recent career change was ‘not sure that the program is responsible for my change in career at the Uni. I would have taken up the opportunity regardless’.

However, there were various reasons for not getting involved. Three participants cited the current restructure and workloads as an impediment to committee work:

I would love to get involved in a committee, but there aren't any that are appropriate for me to apply for. There are also no full-time jobs that I can safely apply for, going through the restructure process again

Already involved in committee however workload pressures prevent further involvement at this stage

If I could manage my workload, yes I would consider it all.

One participant had a positive experience of the program and was keen to join a networking group, but was dismayed at the negativity of some colleagues:

I would like to get involved in a networking group. This would be most helpful in my area of work. I enjoy my current position at the University, but from the program felt that there were people who were very negative and unhappy in the positions they were in.

While two further respondents considered that getting involved in committees was important, there had been impediments: ‘immediately following the program the answer would have been yes (5), but now it seems too late to implement due to work, life etc.’; and ‘I did request to go on a committee but was not permitted - This committee is in the administrative area’.

Finally, one participant complained that the program did not address her needs because it was focused too broadly, and another curiously spoke of the program being ‘a lonely experience’:

I was already engaged in a variety of university and school level committees and working parties. This is another example of the program not addressing my needs by its trying to address too many different cohorts

I realised that if I don't stand up, there are not many others to take my place - excluding some exceptions who also took part in this program. This course was quite a lonely experience.

In summary, most participants had not been encouraged through the program to seek new job opportunities or to become more involved in the university through looking for new opportunities or joining a committee. The restructure of the university which was underway during the program and excessive workloads were possible reasons for not being more proactive.

Networks

There was a strong emphasis in the program on the importance of networks and networking in building careers and participants were encouraged to use the various sessions as opportunities to network with colleagues from different areas of the university. They were therefore asked if the program had helped them to develop stronger networks and to indicate their response on a scale of 5 (enormously helpful), 3 (helpful) and 1 (not helpful at all). Two thirds of participants rated this question. A third rated the program as enormously helpful in developing stronger networks, while a fifth of respondents rated the program at 4, and another fifth rated it at 3 (helpful). Only one respondent did not find the program helpful, adding: 'I already have strong networks'.

It is therefore clear from these ratings that participants considered the opportunity to develop stronger networks as one of the strengths of the program, and also that they really valued the discussion of the importance of networking in the program.

In fact, for one participant the networking was the most important benefit of the program and helped the students with whom she interacted: 'The main thing I got from the program was networking skills and information on who is in what area and people to contact and have since developed relationships with these people and utilised them in my work to essentially help the students have better outcomes'. Another commented on her internal rather than external networks: 'Yes. I formed a good relationship with several other women around designing a mentoring program, and now I catch up with them from time-to-time. I am really appreciative of this opportunity within this university. My networks outside the university have not been influenced by this program to any great degree'. Three other participants also identified the value of networking: 'I am more confident in approaching new people at work and social circles'; 'yes, especially in areas that are beneficial to my own work area', and 'quite helpful and interested in doing further networking events'.

Several participants indicated that they found networking difficult, but the program had been helpful: 'I'm still not a comfortable or strong networker but since completing the program I've actively put myself in networking situations that I would have avoided at all costs previously; and another added: 'still working on it'.

The program clearly had strengthened internal networks for several participants, one explaining: ‘The conversations I had with some of the other academics during the course acted to strengthen the relationships we already had’ and two others explained: ‘feel I have a better understanding of what types of things are on offer at the uni, in terms of access for students and who to contact. Now I have a face to match with a name’; and strengthened networks ‘amongst mid-career research women’. A further respondent said that while the program had strengthened networks within the university, she needed ‘more work on outside the Uni’.

Two participants commented that they already had strong networks, with one adding: ‘I now have developed new networks and friendship due to the WIL program’. Two further participants thought the program had strengthened their networks, but qualified these comments: ‘although I have not kept this up as there are few opportunities to come into contact with others at the sessions’ and ‘only in informal ways rather than formal ones’.

It can therefore be concluded that networking opportunities and discussion on the importance of networking were positive aspects of the program.

Additional comments on the program

Finally, participants were invited to add any other comments about the program. Half the respondents provided feedback. About 50 per cent of these responses were positive and included the following comments: ‘Useful and enlightening. I thoroughly enjoyed the WIL workshops’; ‘I highly recommend this program’; ‘really enjoyed it and found worthwhile. Definitely gave me something to think about’; ‘highly recommend it and hope it continues’; ‘very valuable program and really enjoyed the delivery by the facilitators and guest speakers’; ‘fantastic program. I hope there can be a catch up of the groups organised or another leadership program to be a part of’; ‘The program was well organised and coordinated; and ‘I found Julie Warnock to be a wonderful presenter - found her sessions most beneficial’; and ‘the program was very good, and probably made so by the variety of women who attended (from different disciplines and different levels)’.

Several respondents elaborated on what they found beneficial about the program. One enjoyed meeting other colleagues who were passionate about their jobs, and others enjoyed meeting colleagues from different departments and were interested in pursuing more professional development:

It was really good to be able to take time to reflect and meet with other people who want to be the best they can and are committed and passionate about their work, within the University community. I was writing in my journal up until November last year. I do need to go back and revisit and start adding to again.

I found the program very valuable. I enjoyed meeting other staff from the Uni and in particular staff from other departments. I would have liked the opportunity to have further PD in some of the areas covered.

I enjoyed the days I attended. Made a very nice change. I would like to attend more of these sessions but it is hard to balance all the requirements within the workload model we use.

It was great to have the opportunity to do this program. Each session I went away with a new idea or approach. I'm still using the skills I learnt. Julie's sessions in particular were very valuable to me on a personal level.

Several participants were looking for more skills development, a longer program or follow up to the program:

I would like to see follow up sessions on conflict resolutions skills and perhaps some more women in leadership programs and more networking opportunities

I think the program participants, and possibly even the program itself, would benefit from having a follow-up program in about 6 months - year. This would be a great opportunity to reinforce the lessons from the first one and to track where people have gone since the first one finished.

The program is beneficial to women at the university. It provides an opportunity to meet with women from across the different portfolios. I would like the program to provide more details to the topics provided. This would make the program longer in duration and that would have a positive impact on the attendees. I would like the program to be run over a shorter span of time. With a month between attendance days I forgot what the topics were about. I think it would greatly benefit the attendees if the program ran for a longer time over a shorter time span.

While the responses to this final question were overwhelmingly positive, two respondents were highly critical of the program. One had a philosophical challenge with a women's only program because men needed to be part of any change process, and considered that a session for both men and women would be more effective. She also believed that the focus should be on fixing the system rather than the women, and a stronger emphasis on transformational leadership:

I think leadership training is important but while it is singled out only for women there is no chance of engaging males within the change process that is needed to improve opportunities for women within the university. I would suggest running a joint program - although separately for academic and professional staff - with some break out sessions/extra sessions open only to women so that the ability to discuss shared experiences associated with the sexism inherent to the university are not lost. This would also perhaps take away some of the underlying assumptions such that women need special training to become leaders while men do not. I feel that there needs to be a focus on changing the system, not just expecting women to change themselves to better fit the existing system. And there needs to be follow through - what comes next? What is the university leadership doing to fix the problem? What is the university community doing?

Real leadership involves supporting those you are responsible for to reach their potential, facilitating real collegiality, and involves leading by example, being fair, just and ethical. This sort of leadership could transform our university for all employees, not just women. Disappointingly, I felt we were being encouraged to 'play the game' to get ahead and then 'manage' people so that they do what we want regardless of the adverse effects this may have on them. While this may pass as leadership at UB (and elsewhere), it really isn't.

So, to sum up, there were some good things, but my overall experience is one of frustration because, in isolation, such a program changes nothing - I do not see any evidence of the leadership of the university doing anything to improve things for their women employees and I do not want more 'leaders' trained in ways that emulate the poor leadership I see throughout our university.

The second respondent was disappointed that the program homogenised women as a group and stated that she could not recommend it:

I think there is lots of scope for a program of this nature. However, I don't find it useful when women are homogenised as a group and assumptions made that we all face the same kinds of issues in becoming leaders. Women have all sorts of lives, and so there were times when heterosexist assumptions were made that we all had husbands and children. While this was true for some of us, it was not true for all of us and there needed to be a sense of moving beyond some of those aspects anyway to a broader sense of the strategies and approaches women can take in moving beyond the institutional and social barriers that inhibit opportunities for leadership. I apologise if my responses have seemed overly negative, but I was incredibly disappointed with the program. I did find Julie Warnock's sessions engaging, and interesting and found that in those sessions I was encouraged to think about my own personal capacities, capabilities and approaches. Ultimately though, based on my experiences, and those of others I spoke to in the program, I would not recommend colleagues to participate in it.

Three further participants expressed concern about specific aspects of the program. Two of them considered that combining academic and professional staff in a single Women in Leadership program was not effective, while a third respondent thought that some individuals dominated the program:

For this program to be effective, it really needs to be more directly targeted. The academic and general staff expectations and experience is very different. A leadership program for academics irrespective of gender may be more beneficial for the university

All up a rather frustrating experience! I also think it was inappropriate to address both academic and general staff together, especially as one of the problematic issues women academic staff are dealing with (in my school at least) is a systemic lack of support from general staff

At times some participants dominated the program and it wasn't always positive. It affected both my enjoyment and others of the program. It shouldn't be about individuals only and I also didn't enjoy it getting too feminist in discussions

The additional comments often re-iterated themes raised in response to earlier questions. One theme was that participants had enjoyed the program and it had been valuable. A second theme was valuing the opportunity to meet other colleagues. A third theme was the need for more skills development; and finally there was criticism of the program for focusing on fixing the women rather than the organization and for being heterosexist.

Discussion and Conclusion

The decision of the university to undertake a pilot Women in Leadership program in 2013 reflected its commitment to equity and diversity, and perhaps its recognition that the current restructure was particularly challenging for women throughout the organisation. The program attracted considerable interest, and a second mid-career group was added in response to professional women seeing this as an opportunity for career development. Forty three of the eighty women who completed the program did the on-line survey, representing a 54 per cent response rate.

The aims of the evaluation were to determine the effectiveness of the Women in Leadership program in providing skills and knowledge to assist career development; its effectiveness in providing networking opportunities for participants; its effectiveness in providing a better understanding of the organisation; and its impact on the career aspirations of the participants in the medium term.

Overwhelmingly the response to the program was positive. Most thought that the program met their expectations, especially in relation to the opportunities it presented for career development. Participants enjoyed the diverse range of presenters from across the university and externally; they saw the skills development workshops as useful; and they particularly enjoyed the opportunity to meet other women from across the university. Moreover, most saw benefit in a women's only career development program as providing a safe environment to explore issues in relation to career development. However, a few were ambivalent about women's only programs and favoured mixed gender programs. Some asked: what about the men? As de Vries (2014) comments: 'whether the question is being asked cynically, pragmatically, out of fear or resentment, or a desire for partnership, it is a question that needs to be answered'. There is growing support both in Australia and the UK for men to engage in issues around equity and diversity. In Australia Elizabeth Broderick in 2011 launched a Male Champions for Change program, and in the UK Emma Watson has established a campaign called HeforShe.

The most positive response to the program was in relation to networking – learning more about networking as a valuable tool in career development, and being provided with opportunities to meet other women from across the organisation. This finding reinforces other research (Sagiebel 2013) on the value of women networking with other women. It was clear that building broader networks enabled participants to gain additional information and also a better understanding of the organisation. Another positive response was to the skills development workshops conducted by

Julie Warnock. While some respondents were looking for additional skills training, most considered skills development was useful and at times empowering. Thus their increased agency helped them understand the organisational culture in which they work and how to operate effectively within this environment (see White & Bagilhole 2013).

There was some ambivalence about the impact of the program on gaining a better understanding of the organisation. While several now had more appreciation of various roles and challenges colleagues faced, others were critical of the lack of effective leadership in senior management, discussed below, and there was little sense in their responses of strong and positive leadership in the university.

Moreover, the program did not overall make participants more proactive about career development – even though it did meet their expectations. It had often not impacted on their working lives for various reasons, including inability to change jobs and the pressure of work. Most participants had not been encouraged through the program to seek new job opportunities or to become more involved in the university by looking for new opportunities or joining various university-wide or faculty committees. The restructure of the university which was underway during the program and excessive workloads were possible reasons for not being more proactive. Interestingly, several respondents commented on the negativity of some colleagues in the WiL program. These findings are consistent with other research about the impact of managerialism on women's working lives in universities; women are often positioned as carers/outside in competitive, managerial regimes; and academic women can be marginalised in the gendered research economy (Lynch et al. 2012; Morley 2014). Nevertheless, several were clear that the program had had a positive impact on career goals and how they related to work colleagues.

A strong narrative in the responses was in relation to the organisational culture of the university, and particularly in relation to the failure of leadership at a senior level. As Tessens (2007) emphasised, gender equity programs that do not consider the broader organisational context, may assist the individual staff member but might not necessarily affect the organisational culture in the long term. A few women considered that the purpose of the program was to “fix the women” rather than the organisation, reinforcing O'Connor's (2011) view that women are often regarded as ‘the problem’. But they were clear that it was the organisation not the women that was broken, reflecting that the emphasis perhaps needs to shift instead to ‘the problem’ is the organisation (Fitzgerald & Wilkinson 2010, p. 136). A related narrative was about the stress that the current restructure was causing to some participants and the impact of heavy workloads on their health and wellbeing. Clearly a minority of participants were strongly critical of what they perceived as a failure of leadership in the organisation, and this perception needs to be addressed by university leaders. There was little sense of participants achieving small wins that have resulted in areas of the workplace that value and recognise women's contribution and diverse leadership styles (cf. Tessens & Webb 2014).

The participants in the 2013 Women in Leadership program were committed to the organisation but found their working environment was often challenging. This evaluation therefore suggests that a bi-focal approach is needed (de Vries 2012) in future to designing, conducting and evaluating gender equity programs. Such programs need to focus on both women and the

organisation to avoid the common trap of exclusive reliance on a 'fix the women' approach. The analogy of bifocal spectacles is that universities need to focus on both close up vision – the shorter-term solution of developing individual women - and distance vision - the need for longer-term transformational organisational change which is by far the most challenging aspect. While working with leadership development for women is relatively easy and rewarding, any success in gender equity programs will ultimately be undermined if there is no accompanying longer-term vision, and no commitment to changing the models of HE leadership that currently challenge women wishing to move into leadership positions.

Given the impact of managerialism on higher education in Australia where decisions are from the top down, professors powers reduced, and there is a focus on accountability, evaluation and economic efficiency (Goransson 2011; see also Bolden et al. 2012), this university like many other universities could benefit from examining career paths for both professional and academic staff in the organisation, and how to optimise career development.

In reviewing the aims of this evaluation, it can therefore be concluded that the WiL Program provided skills and knowledge to assist career development. Most participants were positive about their participation in the program and the opportunities it presented. The program was particularly effective in providing participants with networking opportunities which many considered was a valuable tool for career development. The program was less effective in providing a better understanding of the organisation, and some participants were critical of the leadership of the university. In turn, they were critical of the program as a strategy for "fixing the women" when they were clear that the organisation, not the women, needed fixing. Finally, the program overall did not have any significant impact on the career aspirations of participants in the medium term. It had not impacted on their working lives, and most participants were not encouraged by the program to seek new positions or look for opportunities within the organisation. The current restructure and excessive workloads may have impacted on their career aspirations.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- the Manager, Equity and Equal Opportunity and the Director, Human Resource review the findings of this evaluation in planning any future Women in Leadership programs, particularly in relation to the structure of the program and the impact of the program on career development
- the university offer leadership programs for women and men
- the University provide a program of mentoring and networking for senior and mid-career women
- the findings of this report are presented to the senior management team and relevant university committees.

Supplementary recommendations

In undertaking this evaluation there were two recommendations that arose from the findings of this project that the University may wish to consider:

- the university examine staff perceptions of leadership in the organisation
- senior management undertake a comprehensive research project on effective career progression for women and men in the organisation which examines career paths, workloads, impact of organisational change, work-life balance, and generational issues

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Attachment 1 - Survey to participants of the 2013 WiL program

Women in Leadership 2013 Program

You are invited to participate in a research project to evaluate the **2013 University of Ballarat Women in Leadership Program** to assess its effectiveness.

All participants are invited to complete an anonymous on-line survey administered by Equity and Equal Opportunity. The purpose of the survey is for participants to share their experience of the 2013 Program and to assess any impact it has had on their working lives and career planning. Participants are also invited to provide comments on how any future programs could be improved to better meet the needs of women at FedUni.

The aggregated survey data will be analysed for dominant themes by the Principal Researcher, Dr Kate White, and a report and recommendations prepared for the Director, Human Resources and the Manager, Equity and Equal Opportunity. This report may inform any future gender equity staff initiatives at the University.

Participation is voluntary, and refusal to participate requires no explanation. You are entitled to withdraw your consent to participate and discontinue participation at any time until data is processed, without prejudice. Participants are also free to choose not to answer questions in the survey. Participants will have the opportunity to access the report.

Participation involves completing an anonymous on-line survey that will take approximately 15 minutes. The data will then be transferred to a computer in the Equity and Equal Opportunity Office and anonymous summaries produced which will then be analysed by the Principal Researcher. Summaries of data collected will be stored in a secure filing cabinet for five years and then destroyed. Anonymous summaries will be used in the report that will be produced.

Please click on the 'next' button to begin the anonymous on-line survey. If you have any questions about the project or participation in the survey please do not hesitate to contact me by email equity@federation.edu.au

This survey is open until 7:00pm on Friday 11 April 2014.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Webb
Manager, Equity and Equal Opportunity

There are 28 questions in this survey

Question 1

[]

Which Women in Leadership group did you participate in? *

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Strengthening Women as Leaders (SWL)
- Building Professional Strengths 1 (BPS1)
- Building Professional Strengths 2 (BPS2)

Question 2

[] Do you think women's only career development programs are important?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 5 Very important
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1 Not important

[] Why is this?

Please write your answer here:

Question 3

[] Was there one 'light bulb' moment for you during the program?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

Yes

No

[]

What was this 'light bulb' moment?

Please write your answer here:

Question 4

[]

Did the program provide you with a better understanding of the organisation?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 5 Learnt a lot
- 4
- 3 Some new understanding
- 2
- 1 No new understanding

[] **Please comment**

Please write your answer here:

Question 5

[] Did the program meet your expectations?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

Yes

No

[] Please comment

Please write your answer here:

Question 6

[] Please list three areas that were most useful to you

Please write your answer(s) here:

1

2

3

[] Please list three areas that were least useful to you

Please write your answer(s) here:

1

2

3

Question 7

[] Has the program helped to strengthen communication skills?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 5 Very helpful
- 4
- 3 Helpful
- 2
- 1 Not helpful

[] Has the program helped to strengthen assertion skills?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 5 Very helpful
- 4
- 3 Helpful
- 2
- 1 Not helpful

[] Has the program helped to strengthen negotiation skills?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 5 Very helpful
- 4
- 3 Helpful
- 2
- 1 Not helpful

[] Please comment

Please write your answer here:

Question 8

[] Has the program helped you to focus on future career goals?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 5 Very helpful
- 4
- 3 Helpful
- 2
- 1 Not helpful

[] Has the program changed how you go about your work?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 5 Significantly changed
- 4
- 3 Changed
- 2
- 1 Not changed

[] Has the program changed how you relate to work colleagues?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 5 Significantly changed
- 4
- 3 Changed
- 2
- 1 Not changed

[] Has your skill level improved as a result of the program?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 5 Significantly changed
- 4
- 3 Changed
- 2
- 1 Not changed

[] Please comment

Please write your answer here:

Question 9

[] Has the program influenced you to seek a new position at the University?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 5 Yes
- 4
- 3 Thinking about it
- 2
- 1 No

[] Has the program influenced you to take on a different role at the University?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 5 Yes
- 4
- 3 Thinking about it
- 2
- 1 No

[]

Has the program influenced you to get involved in a committee?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 5 Yes
- 4
- 3 Thinking about it
- 2
- 1 No

[] Has the program influenced you to get involved in a working group?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 5 Yes
- 4
- 3 Thinking about it
- 2
- 1 No

[] Please comment

Please write your answer here:

Question 10

[] Has the program helped you to develop stronger networks?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- 5 Enormously helpful
- 4
- 3 Helpful
- 2
- 1 Not helpful at all

[]

Please comment

Please write your answer here:

Question 11

[] Please add any other comments about the program.

Please write your answer here:

Thank you for your valuable input.

If you have any questions about the project or participation in the survey please do not hesitate to contact me by email equity@federation.edu.au

Barbara Webb
Manager, Equity and Equal Opportunity

04-11-2014 – 19:00

Submit your survey.
Thank you for completing this survey.

Attachment 2 – Email inviting participants to complete the survey

Wednesday, 19 March 2014 12:32 PM

You are invited to participate in a research project to evaluate the **2013 University of Ballarat Women in Leadership Program** to assess its effectiveness.

All participants are invited to complete an anonymous on-line survey administered by Equity and Equal Opportunity. The purpose of the survey is for participants to share their experience of the 2013 Program and to assess any impact it has had on their working lives and career planning. Participants are also invited to provide comments on how any future programs could be improved to better meet the needs of women at FedUni.

The aggregated survey data will be analysed for dominant themes by the Principal researcher, Dr Kate White, and a report and recommendations prepared for the Director, Human Resources and the Manager, Equity and Equal Opportunity. This report may inform any future gender equity staff initiatives at the University. Participation is voluntary, and refusal to participate requires no explanation. You are entitled to withdraw your consent to participate and discontinue participation at any time until data is processed, without prejudice. Participants are also free to choose not to answer questions in the survey. Participants will have the opportunity to access the report.

Participation involves completing an anonymous on-line survey that will take approximately 15 minutes. The data will then be transferred to a computer in the Equity and Equal Opportunity Office and anonymous summaries produced which will then be analysed by the Principal Researcher. Summaries of data collected will be stored in a secure filing cabinet for five years and then destroyed. Anonymous summaries will be used in the report that will be produced.

Please click on the link to complete the anonymous on-line survey. If you have any questions about the project or participation in the survey please do not hesitate to contact me by email equity@federation.edu.au

Link to survey: <https://limesurvey.federation.edu.au/index.php/534553/lang-en>

This survey is open until 7:00pm on Friday 11 April 2014.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Webb
Manager, Equity and Equal Opportunity