



AWIS President Susan M. Fitzpatrick can be contacted at susan@jsmf.org

From Where I Sit: For the times they are a changin'

By Susan M. Fitzpatrick, PhD

I am writing this column, my final as the President of AWIS, in mid-October. In Missouri this means the day-time temperatures can hover around 80 degree F. Our first frost is not yet in sight. Out my window, the foliage is mostly green with the hinting promise of the russet and gold to come. Still, with surprising suddenness the seasons will change, and by the time you are reading this issue of the magazine the mild warmth of autumn will have yielded and the seasons will have changed.

Similarly, you will continue to see changes at AWIS as the National Governing Board and the AWIS staff work to make certain AWIS is well-positioned to respond to, and anticipate, the changing environments of professional opportunities for women in science.

AWIS is committed to working closely with its academic institutional partners to improve the climate for women faculty, students, and academic administrators. Recognizing that more than 60% of professionals with scientific doctoral degrees work outside of academia, AWIS is building corporate partnerships with companies committed to recruiting, retaining, and rewarding women as part of a strategy for success. AWIS will continue to develop initiatives for women entrepreneurs and for women who are self-employed.

Less than 10 percent of patent holders in the U.S. are female.

Many of the challenges facing professional women in science in the two-thousand and teens reflect societal norms that under-value the contributions and accomplishments of women. AWIS is continuing its efforts to change these perceptions with programs aimed at the national, institutional, and individual level. Changing societal norms is not easy but AWIS programs are grounded firmly in the scholarship supporting best practices.

When I reflect on the progress that has been made since AWIS was founded it is clear that "the times, they are changin'" – the changing times have brought vast opportunities for women to advance and succeed in science. Challenges remain – and taking on both the lingering challenges and the new challenges that arise, ironically, because of hard-fought success requires a dynamic AWIS – true to its core mission but adapting its strategies and tactics to the demands of the times. I heartily believe AWIS is more than up to the task!

With this final column comes just a tinge of sadness. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as the President of AWIS. It is a pleasure to work with the very talented AWIS National Staff, with the smart and savvy women who serve as volunteers on the National Governing Board and as chapter leaders. I have enjoyed every opportunity I have had to meet with and get to know AWIS members.

16.6 percent of Fortune 1000 board seats are filled by women

The times, they are a changin' and I am excited to welcome Ann Lee-Karlon as the next President of AWIS. Enjoy this issue of the magazine – and as always, I look forward to hearing from you. ■