

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

The Australian Technology Network of Universities (ATN) will examine why women remain underrepresented in senior management positions in the public, private and higher education sectors across the country.

The ATN, which employs some 13,000 staff across the five universities, will host a conference in Sydney which will examine and promote the role of women in senior management positions.

The conference follows a major research project undertaken by the ATN's Women's Executive Development Program (ATN WEXDEV) which described the experience of women executives; characteristics of cultures that sustain and support women; how cultures change when women are in senior positions; and the challenges still to be faced.

This research project involved interviews with 255 female and male senior executives from higher education, the public service and 2 financial institutions.

Women are currently greatly underrepresented in senior management positions across Australia and whilst the higher education sector fares somewhat better the proportion of women above a senior lecturer level in Australian universities is still only 19 %.

The Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) 2003 Australian Census of Women in Leadership showed that only 8.8% of executive managers in Australia were women. Additionally, 49.1% of Australian companies have no women managers whatsoever.

Across the ATN, women are still significantly under-represented in senior academic management in all five institutions, although numbers are now beginning to increase. As a result of programs such as WEXDEV and other initiatives, ATN universities now comprise almost a quarter of female academics above a senior lecturer level.

The *Senior Women Executives and the Cultures of Management* will be held in Sydney on 29-30 November. Speakers include women in senior leadership positions in the private and public sector as well as higher education.

ATN Director, Vicki Thomson said this conference is an important opportunity to make further progress in understanding the experience and cultures that sustain and support women in senior positions.

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“Through our WEXDEV program we have had great success in changing the culture within the ATN to support senior women.” Ms Thomson said. “This conference is an opportunity for us to help promote that same attitude across other Australian organisations.

“This conference will not be about academics talking to one another. It draws on real-life case studies, and will debate and discuss the impact of women on senior management cultures in contemporary organisations. The conference aims to move beyond the 'glass ceiling' debate and focus on women who have sustained careers in senior management and the organisational factors that have kept them there.

“This will be an inspirational conference on the changes that have occurred in Australian organisations,” Ms Thomson said

Further information is available on the WEXDEV website  
<http://www.uts.edu.au/oth/wexdev/>