

***Home Grown***  
***An Evaluation of ATN WEXDEV Leadership Programs for Senior Women 2003 to 2008***

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**Background to the program**

Leadership development programs for women have been a WEXDEV initiative since 2003. While there has not previously been a follow up evaluation, the feedback received at the end of each program has been very positive and the initiative has continued to be supported by the ATN Vice Chancellors. The programs have been managed and facilitated by WEXDEV Directors: Colleen Chesterman from 2003 to 2006, Susan Harwood in 2007, and Lynette Browning in 2008 and 2009.

Analysis of the 2002 ATN staff statistics showed that women were still significantly under-represented in senior academic management in all five institutions, comprising less than one fifth of academic staff at levels D and E. The proposal for a pilot leadership program for senior women staff in the ATN Universities was developed with the support of the ATN Human Resources Directors and ATN WEXDEV Management Committee. ATN WEXDEV's central activity is ensuring priority is given to professional development programs for women across the ATN. Most delivery of professional development occurs at the local level and the proposal built on the opportunity for ATN collaboration to which the ATN Vice-Chancellors are committed. Leadership development is a priority for all ATN Universities and a joint ATN program developing required leadership capabilities for an under-represented group proved highly successful in 2003.

The intended objectives and benefits of the program have been:

1. To run a leadership forum for a group still numerically under-represented in academic leadership.
2. To provide an opportunity to strengthen personal capacities in leadership.
3. To focus on current critical organisational issues in senior university management, for example the changing nature of academic work, supportive cultures, innovation, business development, and planning.
4. To involve emerging academic leaders in the ATN conference.
5. To strengthen the network of senior academic women managers across the ATN universities.
6. To foster a community of practice and peer mentoring network for women entering senior academic management.
7. To meet both individual and organisational needs and priorities.
8. To provide an opportunity to highlight strengths of the host ATN university.

## Outline of the evaluation

While feedback has been sought from participants during each program, and in a more summative form at the conclusion of each year's program, after six years it was timely to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the program more formally to enable the Management Committee to assess the role of the leadership program for women and assist in fine-tuning the program in future years.

Ms Lynette Browning, Coordinator of the WEXDEV Program from December 2007 to February 2009, undertook a formal evaluation in 2008 using information from a range of sources:

- an online survey of participants
- focus groups of participants conducted at each ATN University
- individual interviews with members of the Management Committee
- statistics on promotion and retention of participants.

The purpose of the evaluation was to address the following questions:

- how effective the ATN WEXDEV leadership programs for women have been in meeting their aims
- what the impact of the programs has been for participants and for their universities
- how participation has assisted women in their careers
- what the future of the program should be: if it should continue, and if so, in the same format or modified.

## Participants

The target group for the program has been potential academic managers – academic women at level C with some management experience. Each year it has been suggested that universities nominate up to three participants. Costs of the workshop and travel were administered by the WEXDEV National Office from 2003 to 2006. Travel for participants was arranged and funded by individual ATN Universities from 2007.

Each university has selected participants either via nominations from senior management or from women who have self-nominated, and final approval has been given by Vice Chancellors. The criteria have been:

- potential to be a high performer
- likely to be promoted to a leadership position within two years
- motivated to undertake development
- willing to give time commitment to the program.

Participants have been endorsed by their Vice-Chancellor to attend the ATN conference following part one of the workshop, and in an arrangement appropriate to each institution, met with a senior manager before and after the ATN conference for briefing and de-briefing.

Sixty-nine women have participated in the annual programs since 2003 and the table below provides information on participation, by year and by university.

	UniSA	QUT	RMIT	Curtin	UTS	TOTAL
<b>2003</b>	2	2	2	2	2	10
<b>2004</b>	2	3	3	3	2	12
<b>2005</b>	2	1	3	3	2	11
<b>2006</b>	2	2	3	3	3	13
<b>2007</b>	2	2	2	2	2	10
<b>2008</b>	3	2	3	3	2	13
<b>TOTAL</b>	13	12	16	15	13	69

## Program content

The content of the program has been slightly different each year. One of the benefits of different universities hosting the program is the opportunity to showcase senior women from across the ATN. The program utilises a range of speakers on topics which include gender in higher education, current factors influencing the higher education sector, challenges for academic leaders, perspectives on leadership, career planning, mentoring, and negotiation.

The Vice Chancellor of the host institution has welcomed each group, visibly demonstrating commitment to gender equity at the most senior level of the institution. Speakers on leadership have been members of senior management of ATN Universities, and a range of women professors have given their perspectives on academic leadership. A number of ATN HR Directors have also presented. All of the speakers have generated engaging question and discussion sessions. The earlier programs were criticised by participants for not allowing enough time throughout the program for discussion and this was addressed in the 2008 program.

## Promotion and retention

Of the 69 women who have participated in the programs from 2003 to 2008, 26 have been promoted within their own organisations. The table below provides promotion data by level and by university.

Level of promotion	UniSA	QUT	RMIT	Curtin	UTS	TOTAL
Level C	0	0	0	1	0	1
Level D	5	2	0	3	2	12
Level E	1	2	2	4	2	11
Associate Dean	0	0	0	0	2	2
Total promotions	6	4	2	8	6	26
Total participants	13	12	16	15	13	69
Percentage	46%	33%	13%	53%	46%	38%

A total of 61 women are still working within the same institution, a retention rate of 88.4 per cent. Of the eight women who have left their institutions there have been four resignations, one did not want to renew her contract, one took voluntary early retirement, and two have left to take up more senior positions at another university (not within the ATN).

## Surveys

All participants in the programs from 2003 to 2008 were invited to complete an online survey tool. Of the 69 participants, 52 per cent (39) completed the survey and the following data is based on their responses.

*Promotion* – 53 per cent have applied for promotion since participating in the program, 28 per cent were successful, and 31 per cent indicated their decision to apply for promotion was influenced by participating in the program.

*Applying for grants* – 64 per cent have applied for grants since participating in the program, 53 per cent were successful, but only one woman indicated that participation the program contributed to the decision to apply for, or to success in gaining, grants.

*Special projects*: 67 per cent have commenced work on special projects and 31 per cent indicated that participating in the program influenced their either being offered, or applying for, special projects.

*Higher duties*: 47 per cent have undertaken higher duties since participating in the program, with 30 per cent indicating that participating in the program influenced their undertaking higher duties.

*Secondments:* 14 per cent have undertaken secondments since participating in the program, but only one woman indicated that participation in the program contributed to her undertaking a secondment.

*Mentoring:* 28 per cent have received mentoring support since participating in the program, with 33 per cent indicating that participating in the program encouraged them to seek mentoring support. Sixty one per cent have provided mentoring support to someone else since participating in the program and 42 per cent indicated that participating in the program encouraged them to provide mentoring support to others.

*Visibility:* 58 per cent indicated they feel more visible since participating in the program, and 44 per cent indicated that participating in the program increased their visibility.

*University networks:* 33 per cent indicated that their involvement in networks has increased since participating in the program and 28 per cent indicated that participation influenced that increase.

*Renegotiated workload:* 39 per cent indicated they have renegotiated their workload since participating in the program, with 33 per cent indicating that participation in the program encouraged them to renegotiate their workload. There were a number of examples provided on how workloads had changed, with eight stating their workloads had increased and five spending more time on research.

## **Focus groups**

All participants were invited to attend focus groups at each ATN University and 25 women participated. The focus groups were an opportunity for past participants to meet and reflect on the program. Participants consider the program contributes to the development of leadership capabilities including negotiation, career planning, and mentoring. They were also able to provide examples of what they saw as the strengths of the program and suggestions for improvement. A selection of the comments made follows.

### *Strengths*

Provides an opportunity to meet with other female academics at similar stages of their career.

The program is a reminder of how important cross-institutional links are.

Opportunity to connect with others and recognise your issues are common.

Cross-disciplinary connections.

Networking across the ATN.

Support and commitment of own university towards the participants.

The role models are very good.

The ATN conference was valuable.

### *Opportunities for improvement*

Having a component where women get together with previous participants from the program.

Linking the program back within our own institutions.

Removing the peer learning project.

Including mentoring or shadowing as part of the program.

Opportunities to reconnect after completion of the program.

Improve the integration of the WEXDEV program with the ATN conference.

Having visible institutional champions.

Include sessions on negotiation, presentation, political competence, and running meetings.

The programs are considered to have many benefits, including:

Indicates to senior managers you are interested in leadership.

Opportunity to become more reflective.

Being able to identify and prioritise how to achieve goals.

The ATN Conference was good, and now understands the significance of the ATN.

Increased confidence.

Promotion and networking.

Increased profile in own institution.

Attendance at the ATN Conference was highly valued for the broader perspective it provided, and for networking and increased visibility with senior staff. Everyone said the program should continue and many said that institutions should facilitate alumni networks for past participants. Some of the additional comments were:

Having the program in two parts is a good strategy, which should be maintained.

The program may have relevance as an ATN retention strategy.

Did like going to the ATN Conference.

Fantastic opportunity.

The 'tap on the shoulder' is valued.

### **Management Committee members**

Interviews were conducted with all members of the Management Committee at the five ATN universities and a selection of comments follows.

#### *Benefits of developing the leadership capabilities of women at ATN Universities*

Networking and the opportunity for participants to meet other senior women.

People are taken out of their own environment and have permission to reflect on their careers.

Participants get an understanding of how they are travelling compared to others.

National versus local perspective, big picture policy and context, and inter-institutional collaboration.

Visibility at the ATN Conference and networking is invaluable for participants.

There is value in meeting with women from other environments as there is a tendency to become insular within your own institution.

#### *Impact of the program*

Awareness raising at an organisational level.

Data sharing across the ATN.

Increase in confidence.

### *Effectiveness of the program*

The program has been effective for the participants and for the organisation and this is evidenced by promotions, increased confidence, and the increased profile of WEXDEV.

Beyond the benefit to individuals is the benefit for attraction and retention.

### *Additional comments*

The program is a fine design and the format of the program is successful.

The program should include mentoring or shadowing.

This program is a high-level value-add and we select people who would benefit.

A good program, well run, with a good mix of strategy and protocol.

We are strategic in the selection of participants as you have to 'grow your own'.

### **Impact of the program**

Because of the relatively low numbers of women involved (69 women over seven years across five universities), the program on its own can have only a limited impact on organisational culture. Culture change requires demonstrated commitment from the CEO, visible champions at senior levels of the organisation, and consistent application of a range of good policies and best practice initiatives.

Over the six years the program has been offered there has been some progress in the percentage of women in senior academic positions within ATN Universities, placing the ATN above the sector average for the percentage of academic women at Levels D and E. The table below compares the representation of academic women at Levels D and E when the leadership program was first proposed in 2002 and their representation in 2008. This data was provided by the individual ATN Universities and is based on the FTE numbers provided to DEEWR as at 31 March each year.

	<b>Level D 2002</b>	<b>Level D 2008</b>	<b>Level E 2002</b>	<b>Level E 2008</b>	<b>Total D+E 2002</b>	<b>Total D+E 2008</b>
<b>UniSA</b>	25.7%	32.9%	26.2%	27.8%	26.0%	30.4%
<b>Curtin</b>	23.8%	42.6%	15.2%	25.8%	18.9%	36.1%
<b>UTS</b>	29.3%	36.7%	21.1%	33.3%	25.2%	35.0%
<b>RMIT</b>	24.6%	25.6%	14.0%	23.4%	19.3%	24.5%
<b>QUT</b>	32.9%	27.9%	16.9%	35.2%	24.2%	32.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>27.2%</b>	<b>33.1%</b>	<b>18.7%</b>	<b>29.1%</b>	<b>22.7%</b>	<b>31.7%</b>

The impact of the program in measurable terms is reflected in the number of participants promoted to senior positions – 26 women to date. The program cannot claim their success entirely as these women were identified as already having leadership potential, however many indicated that participation in the program contributed to their success in some way. There are other factors involved which can't be measured, for example the loyalty participants may feel towards their institutions because of the opportunities which have been made available. Feedback from participants confirmed that participating in such a high profile program with commitment from the highest level of the organisation does contribute towards women feeling rewarded, recognised, and valued within their institutions.

## Conclusion

The WEXDEV Leadership Program for Senior Women is a very small program and can only be effective if it is underpinned by rigorous gender equity policies and practices within each university. The program has strong support from participants and the Management Committee and has been supported by the ATN Vice Chancellors since it commenced in 2003. Information collected through this evaluation confirms the programs have met their aims by:

- running a leadership forum for a group still numerically under-represented in academic leadership
- providing an opportunity to strengthen personal capacities in leadership
- focussing on current critical organisational issues in senior university management
- involving emerging academic leaders in the ATN conference
- strengthening the network of senior academic women managers across the ATN universities
- fostering a community of practice and peer mentoring network for women entering senior academic management
- meeting both individual and organisational needs and priorities
- providing an opportunity to highlight strengths of the host ATN university.

A high percentage of women who have completed the program have been retained within their universities and a significant number promoted. In 2002 women comprised less than one fifth of academic staff at levels D and E across the ATN Universities. In 2008 they comprise almost a third, which is above the sector average. The program is considered beneficial for attracting and retaining senior academic women and in encouraging women to apply for promotion. Participants have gained valuable leadership skills and access to role models, opportunities, and networks which they may not have without participating in the program. Unique in the Australian Higher Education sector, the ATN WEXDEV program has made a valuable contribution to enhancing the potential of individual women, and towards increasing gender equity in senior academic leadership positions within ATN Universities.

## Recommendations

If the ATN WEXDEV Leadership Programs for Senior Women are to continue as a core element of the WEXDEV Program it is recommended they continue to be visibly supported at the most senior levels and include the following elements:

- a range of topics and speakers addressing relevant national, organisational, and individual issues
- formal mentoring for career planning and development
- contact and follow-up within individual institutions to capitalise on learning from the program
- a peer network of alumni within institutions to foster a community or practice for women entering senior academic management roles
- attendance at the ATN Conference for access to the broader context, networking, and visibility.