



# Guelph Engineering Society



Report on     *National Conference for Women in Engineering*      
    At The University of Western,      
    November 21-22, 2008    .

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## *1. Purpose of Conference*

The overall purpose of NCWIE is to bring women and men in engineering together to network, but also to discuss issues facing women in the profession and suggest solutions. Through a variety of workshop sessions, speakers, and opportunity fairs, delegates are exposed to a different perspectives and views. After attending the conference a delegate is more prepared to face the challenges ahead facing women.

## *2. Personal Goals for Conference*

Before going to the conference there were a few goals that I had for myself. Since the conference was more geared toward personal learning and growth I set my goals accordingly. First I wanted to learn as much as I could about the actual issues facing women in engineering. Before the conference I had only a few vague ideas of what challenges lay ahead, and was not sure of what would be discussed. Since this is something that affects me it was really important for this to be my main goal.

Also, another goal that I had set for myself was to actively participate in the discussions. Some of the discussions that took place were regarding the future of the women in engineering conference, how to deal with issues facing women in engineering, how to encourage more young women to try engineering, etc. It was a good opportunity to share my opinion and help other women in the same position. Finally, since I knew that there would be an opportunity fair, my goal was to network and get information about potential summer job opportunities.

## *3. Summary of Events*

**Keynote speaker- Howard Brown and Diane Freeman:** We arrived just at the end of Diane's presentation majority of it was missed. The main thing that I stuck with me from the little bit that I heard was her discussing her undergraduate experience. She admitted that she failed a couple university

classes, but she made it seem like it wasn't a big deal. She just did them again and was a little behind, but it got her degree all the same. It was nice to hear from someone who has made it in the industry that you don't have to get the best grades in all your classes to be a successful engineer.

**Icebreakers:** After the two speakers we played a quick game to get to know the other delegates. We all had a sticker on our backs with something to do with engineering written on it. By only asking yes or no questions we had to try and figure out what word we had on us.

**Breakout Session 1 (Outreach):** The first session that I participated in was an outreach to grade 4 students. The objective of the session was to introduce the students to the basic principles of engineering. The students were put into small groups and each group was given a problem that they had to design a solution to. There was an egg drop, a bridge build and a battery car challenge. This session reminded me about the challenges of working with kids. In my group there were fights, disagreements, and overly excited children. It was worth it in the end though because the group was all proud and excited about their final design. This session showed that all kids can get excited about engineering if you present it to them in a fun and interesting way.

**Breakout Session 2 (Entrepreneurship):** Jenifer McDonald, one winner on the show Dragons Den, spoke about her experience on the show and what it was like starting their own business. Some of the advice she had for those interested in starting their own business include:

- Finding a product or service that is unique and different from what is already available. Market based on what's different
- Take advantage of marketing times
- Make use of market studies
- Small business centers have a lot of valuable information for free
- Learn from talking with customers

**Opportunities Fair:** Here we had a chance to meet with employers and talk to them about opportunities that they have for students. I learned a lot about what employers look for when hiring coop/ summer students:

- Acceptable GPA
  - Involvement in extra-curricular activities is important
  - Past work experiences. Type of experience doesn't matter as much at this stage, just must be able to show students are capable of holding down a job
- When interviewing students the employers said they look for:
- Basic knowledge in the company
  - Interest and motivation for the job being applied for
  - Good answers to behavioral questions

**Social Event:** Dinner out and a night of dancing

**Breakout Session 3 (Do What You Love):** This session was all about personal reflection. We were given notebooks and spent an hour and a half individually answering questions in our notebooks about what makes us happy, what we want in a job, goals, etc.

**Breakout Session 4 (Understanding Social Styles):** Here we had the opportunity to fill out a questionnaire about ourselves. After determining our individual styles we learned about how to work with other personality types in the work place. The most valuable message that I took from this session was that you can be more successful in the workplace by learning about the different personality styles of others. In doing so, you will be more prepared for dealing with conflict and with personality differences. One example they shared about where this is useful is when dealing with your boss. If you were to present an idea to them, it would be beneficial to tailor the presentation to the way they might like it. You can get ideas for the way that they like it by their personality type.

**Breakout Session 5 (Social Impact):** In this session we discussed the social impact that engineers have on society. We also discussed the future of the conference and what direction we would like to see it go in.

#### **4. Evaluation**

i) *Conference Organizers*

Overall the conference was run very well. Everything seemed to go smoothly and on time. The organizers were very prepared and did a great job. I also liked that guys were encouraged to participate in the conference and were included in all sessions and event. Some of the highlights were the sessions on Entrepreneurship, Understanding Social Styles and the Outreach. The only thing I would change was the formal dinner. The restaurant and the meal were very good, it wasn't very formal and we had all dressed up for a formal evening.

ii) *Delegate*

Overall I think I did a good job as a delegate at the conference. I contributed to the discussions that I was included in, I participated in all the sessions, and I took notes so that I could bring back what I learned to Guelph. I learned a lot about what working in the industry is like from the speakers and about the possibilities for students from the

opportunity fair. My input in discussion hopefully benefits the conference so that it will be even better for the students who attend next year. If I got another chance to go, I would like to take even more notes. There is so much great information that comes at you in such a short period of time, that some of it is quickly forgotten. I think if I took more notes at sessions I would hold on to everything I learned longer.