

## **Purdue Professor: Women Grads Face Extra Obstacles in 'Male' Fields**

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind., April 19 (AScribe Newswire) -- When this year's new college graduates hit their first professional jobs, women working in male-dominated fields can expect serious obstacles that their counterparts in other areas won't encounter, a Purdue professor says.

Mara Wasburn, an assistant professor of organization leadership and supervision in Purdue's College of Technology, says that although women constitute nearly 50 percent of the labor force, less than a quarter of the scientists, engineers, computer scientists and other technology professionals are women. Although opportunities for women in the work force continue to improve greatly, new female professionals are still fighting against sexism and a lack of opportunity.

"Many traditionally male industries are beginning to see the value of a diverse work force, so women are beginning to be hired more frequently," says Wasburn, who studies gender issues in the workplace and teaches a professional preparation course for women. "Unfortunately, male coworkers often view these women as 'Affirmative Action' hires, and they have to prove themselves to their male colleagues."

Wasburn outlines other roadblocks female workers might encounter in their first professional jobs.

- They are less likely to be mentored. Mentors tend to look for proteges who remind them of themselves when they were starting out, and most potential mentors are men.

- They are more likely to be socially isolated at work because men are more likely to go to lunch or after-work drinks with other men.

- They are less likely to be present when extra opportunities arise, as they often occur informally during those social times.

- They are less likely to be given overseas assignments or transferred for promotions, especially if they have children.

- If they take time off to have children, they are more likely to have lower salaries than male counterparts for their entire careers.

- They are more likely to receive committee assignments that are viewed as "women's work," such as planning parties and other social events for the company, rather than assignments that involve core business decisions.

While these obstacles may seem like insurmountable roadblocks, Wasburn says women can make major strides by being proactive and assertive in seeking out opportunity.

"If you are not being mentored by one of the senior men in your company, seek one or more mentors out yourself," Wasburn says. "Stay in communication with your supervisors and others at the company. Ask for challenging assignments. Make sure your senior colleagues understand

your goals, as well as what you can bring to the company. It may be difficult to reach out to someone and risk being rebuffed, but the alternative is to risk being ignored, and you can ill afford that."

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