

Society of Women Engineers New York Section

Email: swe-ny@swe.org
Website: www.swe-ny.org

March 2008

Spring Issue

Inside this issue:

President's Message	1
SWE Columbia Net- working Panel - Participants Needed!	1
Save the Dates!	1
2007 - 2008 Officers	2
SWE New York Kicks Off the New Year	2
SWE Region E Conference Highlights	2
2008 Middle School Science Bowl	3
Effective E- Communication Seminar Recap	4

Save the Dates!

- ◆ April 3, 2008- SWE Monthly Board Meeting
- ◆ April 7, 2008 - SWE Columbia Networking Panel
- ◆ April 9, 2008 - NYC Happy Hour
- ◆ May 3, 2008 - Revlon Run/Walk in NYC
- ◆ May 5, 2008 - SWE Monthly Board Meeting
- ◆ May 19, 2008 - SWE/Google Event: Women Developing a Leadership Presence (open to Members Only!)

President's Message



Rebecca Goldberg

Dear SWE New York,

As spring gets into high gear, let's spring clean our minds too. Here's a new take on the golden rule that I'm going to try to put to use: "Do to yourself as you'd have others do to you." Let's remember to be our own best cheerleaders, to cultivate our own self-respect and self-acceptance, and to help us be able to treat others properly.

Spring also means that it's nearly time for our next election. If you are a talented and motivated individual, and you would like to join our board, please [let us know](#) when we request nominations in mid-April.

We started off 2008 with some very successful events: *Effective E-Communication*, our annual "After the Holidays" party, and more Networking Happy Hours in Manhattan. It's been a real pleasure to meet new faces, and to see familiar faces again. Some of us

also attended the Region E Conference in Richmond, Virginia, where we heard some excellent technical and personal-development speakers, got to hear a Sweet Adeline's barbershop quartet, and also touched base with some local student sections.

We're looking forward to some worthwhile upcoming events with talented speakers: a Columbia University SWE discussion panel on April 7; *Women Developing a Leadership Presence* on May 19 (for SWE members only – a "Thank You" event!); and our rescheduled Dale Carnegie *Improving Confidence, Power and Visibility* on June 4 (NYC-LIRR pickup can be arranged on request). We're also planning a SWE NY team at this year's Revlon Run/Walk, on Saturday May 3, with a post-walk meet-up and/or brunch. Details and RSVP information on all SWE NY events are in our SWE Bits emails and on our website: www.swe-ny.org.

Kind regards,

Rebecca Goldberg, P.E., LEED AP

President, SWE NY FY08

SWE Columbia Networking Panel

The Columbia University 7th! student section of SWE is happy to invite all SWE-NY members to attend a Networking Panel Discussion on Monday, April 7th! Panelists will answer student questions, and there will also be time for informal discussions after the panel. The event begins at 6:00pm. Refreshments will be provided. This is a great opportunity to network and meet with the next generation of young engineers! For more info, please checkout our website: www.swe-ny.org.

SWE Mission

Stimulate women to achieve full potential in careers as engineers and leaders, expand the image of the engineering profession as a positive force in improving the quality of life, and demonstrate the value of diversity.

2007—2008 Officers**President**

Rebecca Goldberg, PE

Vice PresidentsAlicia Licata, EIT (NYC)
Hetal Sanghvi (Long Island)**Secretary**

Kimberly Wong

Treasurer

Kelly Schumacher, EIT

Professional Development**Committee Chairperson**

Kyrsten Brea, EIT (NYC)

Committee MembersSadaf Khattak
Margaret Tang, EIT (NYC)
Ruth Ayalon
Mina Agarabi**Membership Chair**

Sadaf Khattak

Section RepresentativesSaydra Battersby
Lorena Moschetta, PE**Alternate Section Representative**

Christine Chappell

Volunteer Coordinator

Margaret Tang, EIT

Corporate Relations

Lauren Pellegrino, EIT

Website Coordinator

Yuping Shen, EIT

Newsletter Editor

Alicia Licata, EIT

Student Section Liaison

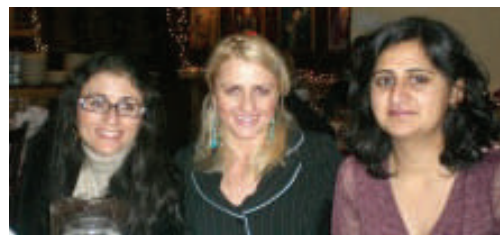
Anika Agarwal

Student Section CounselorsCora Winter
Saydra Battersby
Kimberly Wong
Vivien Peng**SWE New York Kicks Off the New Year****By Kelly Schumacher**

For the past four years, SWE-NY has hosted an "After Holiday Party." It is a great time for SWE members along with their families and friends to get together for a nice relaxing lunch after the hectic holiday season. This year, the luncheon was held on Saturday, January 12th at Tony DiNapoli's in Times Square. The location changes every year, but it is always centrally located for those coming into Manhattan from Grand Central, the Port Authority, Penn Station, or any of the NYC subways.

For a mere \$34.00 per person, the twenty plus attendees had a fantastic Italian family style lunch. It included salad, an appetizer, pastas, entrees, and of course deserts. The wait staff was extremely courteous and informative; they even wrapped the leftovers for those of us who wanted more to take home!

The atmosphere was warm and relaxing, as we had the back corner of the restaurant all to ourselves. The president, Rebecca Goldberg offered the welcome and closing remarks for the event. She talked of upcoming SWE-NY events for the spring, and had each table introduce themselves. Everyone got to know each other as the afternoon went on and new relationships were established. All in all, it was a great kick-off to the new year!



Members in attendance at the After Holiday Party

SWE Region E Conference Highlights**By Lauren Pellegrino**

This year, the SWE Region E Conference was held at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia. I had no idea what to expect of the conference. Not being involved in SWE at the collegiate level put me at a disadvantage of not having previously experienced a Regional SWE conference. Unfortunately, due to travel arrangements, I missed the opening Welcome and Keynote, but I made up for that by attending the various seminars the conference had to offer in the afternoon.

First stop: Registration Desk – all went well. (You never know if sometimes a payment doesn't get received). Since I sent a check through the mail, there was still that moment of anxiety. The registration desk was staffed by SWE members from the VCU collegiate section. They were friendly and helpful. My "goody bag" of free stuff contained a "green" shopping bag (this is the new grocery bag that can be re-used in order not to use plastic.) In addition, it contained a pen/highlighter, a coffee mug (which stated "Engineerthis.vcu.edu" on one side and VCU logo on the other), and most

importantly a program and schedule.

The conference was divided into 4 workshop tracks: Technical/Professional/Collegiate and SWE. The conference had something for everyone. Close to the registration table were seated current President Michelle F. Tortolani and past President Ronna Robertson (2005-2006). After the general meet and greet, I was suddenly at a loss for words. Despite the lack of conversation, it was still cool to meet them. They both offered to come and speak at any event the SWE-NY Section sponsored. If you would like the SWE-NY Section board to coordinate a visit, please let me know.

My first seminar was from the Professional Workshop Track titled "Implicit Bias in the Workplace" by Ms. Peggy Lane, Program Director – Advance Program Director at Virginia Tech. The focus of the seminar was to discuss statistics on hiring and evaluations, while discussing ways to combat their effects. The seminar was both interactive and thoughtful.

Article continued on Page 3

SWE Region E Conference Highlights

By Laureen Pellegrino

Article continued from Page 2

The speaker opened the seminar with the following question to the audience "Who knows the definition of implicit bias?" The crowd responded with different variations. The result was "A subtle, unconscious bias where a person does not even realize they are practicing bias." The speaker reviewed several statistics with the audience. One study involved admissions into medical and law school. The study showed that the percentage of women admitted into these schools increased exponentially once the potential applicant gender was unknown to the admissions board. The speaker stressed that it was not the conscious effort by the admissions board, but an unconscious or implicit bias that was unknown to the board members until the study was released. The speaker also mentioned the author Malcolm Gladwell and his book, 'Blink'. In 'Blink', Gladwell states how there is a preconceived notion that males are better musicians among audition judges. In a study to dispute this notion, orchestras began to have the musicians audition unseen (behind a screen) to judges. By doing so, this removed all sexual, racial, or physical characteristics so the judges could concentrate on listening for the best musicians. It was found that the admission rate for females into orchestras went from having very few females, to females becoming the majority of musicians found in orchestras. I myself have read his book and recommend it. In addition, the author has been recommended in previous SWE Professional Development Web Seminars. His book will definitely give you a new perspective on the idea of first impressions.

Ms. Lane had the audience take a quiz found on the website: www.projectimplicit.net. It involved shouting out which subject matter we correlated with which gender. For example, the word "English" was flashed on the screen, and the speaker had to press "left" or "right" arrow keys to indicate a female or male association. The quiz started slow and incrementally progressed faster. Audience members commented that the faster the quiz progressed, the more unconsciously the audience wanted to associate "male" with "engineering and science". When the audience took the time to think about it, the audience did associate "female" with "engineering and science". So if trained professionals such as us can exhibit implicit bias when rushing to answer a quiz, one can only imagine how much is practiced by the community at large. Ms. Lane spoke of double blind processes as more effective in hiring a 50-50 ratio of male vs. female. She believes that educating admission boards or search committees is the starting point for eliminating implicit bias. This seminar was definitely the highlight of my conference experience.

My second seminar was titled "A Business of Your Own." This seminar was given by two speakers: Ms. Weathers and Ms. Bey.

Both women are small business owners. Ms. Weathers owns Weathers Engineering Services, Inc., which is a technical consulting and project and construction management firm. Ms. Bey owns CJ Bey & Associates, Inc. which is a full service management company. The seminar focused on what you need to put into starting your own business. Both speakers stressed the need for hard work and having passion when owning your own business. Ms. Bey entered the world of small business ownership after being downsized from her job. Ms. Weathers entered after discovering a need for night time working hours (her optimum peak working time) and a love of travel. The speakers stressed the need of a support system, especially since, as engineers, the audience would not have a background dealing with business, accounting, or marketing. Ms. Bey's company manages such individual expertise and has a networking system in place. Her company assists others in the "business" aspect of running your own company, such as determining what type of company you want to classify yourself as (S-Corporation, Corporation, etc), and filling out the required paperwork (taxes, etc). The seminar also discussed the significance of getting a Masters in Business Administration (MBA) vs. a Masters in an Engineering Discipline, and value of the former rather than the latter.

Unfortunately, I was not feeling well so I was unable to attend the banquet, but I heard it was really fun. All in all, I had a blast at seeing so many other SWE members. I am now taking the plunge in preparation for attending the SWE National Conference in Baltimore, MD in November. Nationals, ready or not... here I come!

2008 Middle School Science Bowl

Brookhaven National Laboratory (BNL) has successfully completed the Regional High School Science Bowl Competition. Brooklyn Technical High School will represent Long Island/NYC and the Laboratory at the National High School Competition for the fifth year in a row! BNL begins arrangements to run the Middle School Academic and Hydrogen Fuel Cell Competition on Saturday, April 12, 2008. More than 20 teams signed up to compete. The U.S. Department of Energy's National Middle School Science Bowl is a two-part competition: a model hydrogen fuel cell car competition and a math and science academic competition. In 2007, more than 6,000 students participated in 36 regional competitions throughout the nation. BNL will once again host both competitions, inviting grades 6, 7, and 8 from schools on Long Island to participate in both parts of the program. Volunteers are wanted! For more information, please see our website: www.swe-ny.org, or contact Cathy Osiecki at osiecki@bnl.gov.

Effective E-Communication Seminar Recap

By Mina Agarabi

E-mail has become one of the main methods of both personal and professional communication. I don't know about you, but I have three different email addresses: work, personal, and junk. On average, I get 30-40 emails a day between the different accounts. I have a hard time reading through all the emails, organizing, and deleting. The whole process consumes too much time. I have received and been copied on many email wars at work, and a few of my job applications have back fired due to miscommunication via email. Thus, often when I receive an email, I call the individual, respond, and discuss the issue to prevent back and forth emails (which only delay the process of reaching a conclusion).

My worries and dilemmas with email communication were addressed this past January by Fairlie Firari, Ph. D. at SWE's "E-communications" seminar. Dr. Firari has eighteen years of experience serving the energy efficiency community in marketing, training, program development and management, recruiting and communications. Currently, she is responsible for the national staff recruitment and staff development efforts of Conservation Services Group, Inc.

To get the ball rolling, Dr. Firari asked the audience what they expected to learn or gain from the seminar. The feedback from the audience was very helpful in directing the talk and fostered a very friendly, interactive, and open discussion. The underlying objective of the seminar was to explore "face to face" interpersonal communication, how it relates to e-communication, as well as sharing groundbreaking results from her PhD thesis.

The interactive part of Dr. Firari's discussion focused on learning how to communicate with people based on their distinct communication styles. Two behaviors of a person, assertiveness and responsiveness, were discussed in detail. Each member of the audience was asked to decide whether they were more assertive or less assertive, as well as their degree of responsiveness. Interlacing assertiveness and responsiveness, Dr. Firari identified four main groups:

- Analytical;
- Amiable;
- Drive;
- Expression.

During the seminar, I had chosen more assertive and more responsive behavior, which is considered an expressive style.

Dr. Firari stressed the importance of style recognition, and what drives individuals of one style to communicate with other styles. In particular, a certain comfort level must be reached between individuals to ensure agreement on and understanding of an issue. At all times, an individual must show respect for different styles, which may require an individual to adapt his/her behavior. Dr. Firari gave an example of her own experience: a

struggle in a relationship with someone of a different style. During her studies of interpersonal communication, she gradually strengthened her ability to recognize, accept and adapt to different styles, thus strengthening her relationships.

Dr. Firari also discussed her PhD study; the goal, challenges and applications of her findings. In today's environment, individuals must acclimate to the changing definition of the workplace, manage distributed or offsite employees throughout the US and other countries, and deal with the disconnect that comes with long-distance communication. Dr. Firari mentioned significant findings from earlier journals to gain perspective on the current situation. Did you know that recipients correctly interpret emails only 50% of the time? Misinterpretation of emails can impact business relationships, productivity, profits, and more. Dr. Firari's study objective was to build a style identification model for email and test the model. Her assumptions for the model were:

- Email communication styles of employees can be identified;
- Email communication e-styles correlate with in-person styles;
- Specific characteristics of email correspondence can be used to identify e-styles.

Dr. Firari explained that the e-styles identification model will provide techniques for managers who are seeking to write emails that are non-inflammatory, correctly interpreted, and the dissemination of information to those of varying e-styles in a professional manner. The findings of her study revealed that her model correctly predicted the e-style sender 166 of the 371 (44.71%) and e-styles of senders were correctly diagnosed (55.88%) of the time. Dr. Firari's conclusion was email communication styles exist and are highly related to social styles.

Dr. Firari also explored the possibility of gender differences in e-communication. During the seminar, Dr. Firari gave examples of written emails and asked the audience to guess if the e-mail was written by a male or female. After a few examples, people realized the email was different because of individuals' e-styles and not their gender.

During the months since this seminar, I have made an effort to be conscious of individuals' e-styles. Recognizing that my own style is "expressive" has enabled me to identify distinct styles that exist in my own work environment. My forethought has helped reduce the number of repetitive emails, misunderstandings and delayed projects. Dr. Firari's model is an innovative tool that will be valuable to managers, individuals who communicate frequently via email as well as those who strive to continually improve their professionalism.

Volunteers Wanted!

Elections are coming up soon - [let us know](#) if you would like to join the SWE-NY board next year!