



Announcing the WICB Network

The Women in Cell Biology Committee has launched the WICB Network, an alliance of ASCB members who wish to support, learn about, and perhaps participate in our various activities and initiatives.

History of WICB and the WICB Network Concept

WICB began in the early 1970s as a group of women cell biologists, sensitized by the women's movement of the time, who noticed the under-representation of women in academia in general and cell biology in particular. A mimeographed newsletter began circulating, and ad hoc meetings were held at ASCB meetings, with notices posted in women's washrooms.

Two engaging histories of these pioneers and their adventures are found in the August and October 1996 WICB columns (www.ascb.org/careers/wicb.html). Recommended as well is Elizabeth Marincola's recent article (December 2005 *ASCB Newsletter* WICB column) on why WICB continues to be relevant.

In 1992, the ASCB Council invited WICB to become a standing committee of the ASCB, and during the past 14 years we have expanded our framework. While retaining our focus on women, we also consider and nurture the "human side" of being a cell biologist: the personal, social, and societal facets of training, career, family, and community.

Having a small working committee is essential for getting things to actually happen, but we have often been asked by interested ASCB members whether there was a way that they could "join" WICB. In discussing this phenomenon at our May 2005 meeting, Committee member Elizabeth Marincola suggested that we expand WICB along the lines that the Public Policy Committee expanded its activities when it formed the Congressional Liaison Committee (CLC) to facilitate science-policy advocacy by ASCB members. Marincola initially proposed that the expansion be called "Friends of WICB," but this was later deemed

infelicitous in that it suggested a fund-raising venture, which it is not. However, it captures the spirit of what we have in mind: an alliance of those who support what we do.

So what does WICB do? And how might members of the WICB Network support and participate? Described first are our year-round activities, followed by those that occur during the Annual Meeting.

Website

We maintain a detailed website (ascb.org/committees/wicb/) containing information and links for women and men at all stages in their scientific trajectories. Topics include women's issues and education, career planning and advice, award opportunities, and many others. We would encourage WICB Network members to inform us of new material that we might post, and to offer feedback on what we've posted, so that the website serves as a fresh, in-depth, and up-to-date resource for the biological community.

WICB Columns

We publish a monthly column in the *ASCB Newsletter*

on WICB-related topics (refer to ascb.org/committees/wicb/ for links to this and other Committee activities), and are in perpetual need of ideas for compelling columns and for people willing to write such columns. WICB Network members might elect to become involved in both capacities. For example, someone might volunteer to submit a column, or might hear an interesting talk or read an interesting article and forward a recommendation, with contact information on the speaker/author, to the WICB Column Editor. All such input will greatly enrich our column offerings.

Speaker Referral Service

Of key importance to WICB is that women be fully represented as speakers at conferences, university seminar series, and the like. We often contact organizers of venues where this goal has been egregiously under-achieved and ex-

... a group of women cell biologists, sensitized by the women's movement of the time, ... noticed the under-representation of women in academia in general and cell biology in particular.

[S]omeone might volunteer to submit a column, or might hear an interesting talk ... and forward a recommendation ... on the speaker/author, to the WICB Column Editor.

press our concern. However, this is usually too late for any correction. We have therefore established a Speaker Referral Service (see www.ascb.org/committees/wicb/index.cfm) that allows conference planners to request speaker suggestions early in their planning process. WICB Network members would be enormously helpful, both in making this service known to the community, and in volunteering to respond to requests for suggestions in their areas of expertise.

Ongoing Responsiveness to Women's Issues

WICB regularly considers national-level practices and policies related to women in science. Recent examples are the all-male roster of NIH Pioneer Award recipients in 2005 and the remarks by Harvard President Larry Summers about women. We would encourage members of the WICB Network to call such matters to our attention and to consider joining us if we decide that a formal response seems appropriate.

WICB-List

To facilitate responsiveness, WICB Network members will have the option to receive occasional emails that describe current nodes of concern, WICB initiatives, and requests for assistance (e.g., table leaders at the Annual Meeting Career Discussion Lunch). In addition, members may elect to sign up for a moderated email list called WICB-List. This will provide an ongoing forum for raising and discussing issues, asking questions, and otherwise being in communication about WICB-related topics.

Junior and Senior Awards

The ASCB community has from the outset been deeply involved in nominating candidates for our Junior and Senior Awards. Criteria are found at our website, and a call for 2006 nominations has appeared monthly in this *Newsletter* since January 2006. The deadline for nominations was March 31. We hope that members of the WICB Network will be particularly active in the future here, following through on identifying outstanding candidates, putting together their nomination packets, and cheering the awardees at our presentations at the Annual Meeting.

Evening Program at the Annual Meeting

Following the Annual Meeting award ceremony we offer an evening program on some topic germane to being a scientist, with such ti-

des as "The Imposter Syndrome," "Becoming Visible: Effective Self-Promotion," "Publication Follies," and "Dealing with Difficult People and Situations." These typically begin with a short series of off-the-wall skits to illustrate the topic, and are followed by from-the-floor comments and questions fielded by a panel. Members of the WICB Network would be encouraged to suggest future topics, volunteer their acting skills, and line up at the mike during the floor discussion.

Career Lunch Table at the Annual Meeting

We organize a program during the Annual Meeting at which persons lead small lunch table discussions with attendees on such topics as teaching at liberal arts colleges, the shift from academia to biotechnology, dual-career partnerships, getting a postdoctoral position, and so on (see www.ascb.org/committees/wicb/). WICB Network members might offer to lead tables, and would be asked to help us identify table leaders with expertise in non-traditional topics (e.g., patent law, science museums).

Workshop at the Annual Meeting

During the Saturday afternoon prior to the Annual Meeting, we sponsor a professionally led workshop that helps develop skills related to science careers, such as leadership and conflict management/resolution. Suggestions for leaders and content would be welcomed.

Other Projects

We anticipate that WICB Network members will convey to the Committee ideas for additional ways that we can provide information and services to ASCB and to the entire scientific community.

How to Sign Up as a WICB Network Member

If you are interested in joining the Network, please send an email to wicb@ascb.org. In the near future you'll be sent a level-of-interest mailing where your options will include:

1. registering generic-level support
2. receiving email announcements on key issues
3. signing up for WICB-List
4. volunteering for particular activities (e.g., Speaker Referral Service contact)

We plan to hold a gathering at the ASCB Annual Meeting in San Diego, and will go from there! ■

—Ursula Goodenough

We have therefore established a Speaker Referral Service ... that allows conference planners to request speaker suggestions early in their planning process.