

**Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Entrepreneurship
(WiSTEE)
opening event successfully took place on March 1st, 2013**

The opening event for the Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Entrepreneurship (WiSTEE) group that took place on March 1st, 2013 saw 36 women from 20 academic units across campus come together and discuss their expectations for the group. The presentation given by WiSTEE Founder, Chair Dr. Jie Qiao, scientist at the University of Rochester, set the stage for the gathering with an opening reflection on what it means to be a woman in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Entrepreneurship. She emphasized the need for stronger women leadership in these fields to provide role models for the new generations. Women scientists and engineers are shaped in schools and universities by the environment around them, and the lack of mid-career women role models could negatively impact the number of females in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields.



A group of women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Entrepreneurship came together at the WiSTEE opening event @ the Faculty Club of U of R, everybody was smiling!

WiSTEE's vision

Dr. Qiao shared her proposed vision of establishing WiSTEE to promote women leadership in STEE, and to provide a comforting socializing environment to increase the connectivity and informal mentorship among the women faculties, scientists, and engineers across disciplines. WiSTEE will also serve as a platform to intersect Science and Entrepreneurship since, in some sense, every faculty is an entrepreneur who balances project management, fundraising and human relations on a daily basis. Universities are playing an increasing role of filling the gap between

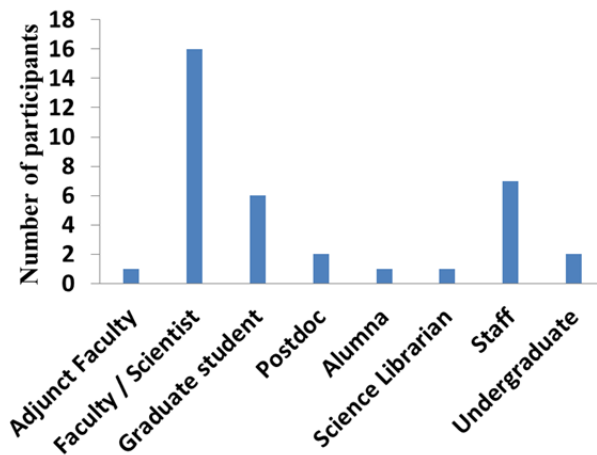
research invention and technology innovation, and there is a renewed interest in entrepreneurship among scholars and students.



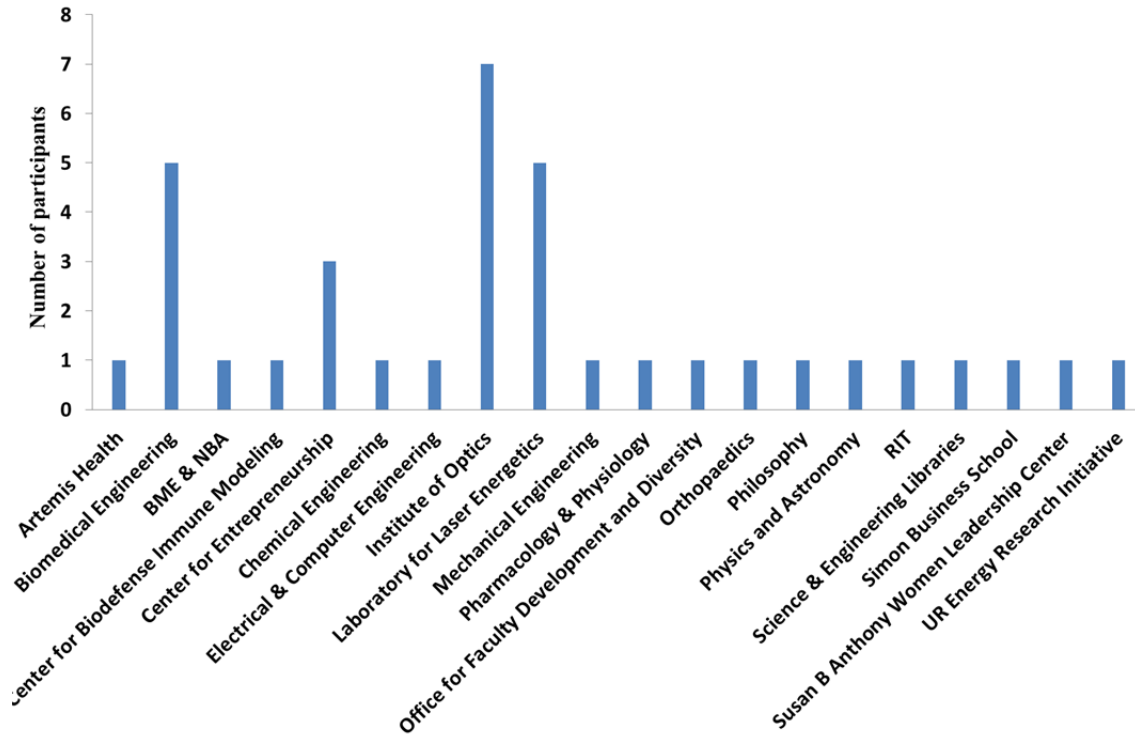
WiSTEE Founder and Chair Dr. Jie Qiao called for stronger women leadership in STEE and shared her vision of establishing WiSTEE to build cross-disciplinary connectivity, forge informal mentorship and collective advancement

WiSTEE brings together women from across campus

The cross-disciplinary connectivity function that WiSTEE means to serve was evident from the broad background of the participants to the opening event. The different yet continues career stages of the participants make WiSTEE a perfect platform for women in STEE to identify role models, connect with, and learn from them.



Academic roles of the participants to the WiSTEE opening event



Departmental affiliations of the WiSTEE opening-event attendees

During the view-point sharing session, more than a dozen of people shared their experiences, resonated with the concern for women leadership, and expressed across-the-board desires to connect with others. Several comments described the feeling of loneliness that often accompanies highly technical positions. The experience sharing from the participants was enjoyed by everyone, especially the junior faculties, and graduate and undergraduate students. The attendees showed appreciation for the platform that WiSTEE provides to connect women beyond departmental boundaries, forge cross-disciplinary fertilization and informal mentoring. The participants enjoyed the nice refreshment and further small-group discussions during the networking session.

We gratefully thank the sponsorship from Stanley Byrd, Human Resources-Organizational Development and Staff Diversity, the support from Catherine Cerulli, Susan B Anthony Women Leadership Center, and Mr. Eugene Kowaluk for photographing the wonderful moments shared by WiSTEE members at the opening event.



After her opening presentation, Dr. Qiao invited participants to share their view points on WiSTEE vision and being a woman in STEE.



Dr. Valerie Newman, a UR alumna and previous URCM faculty, shared her experience and views on female faculty advancement. She envisions WiSTEE as a platform to forge cross-disciplinary fertilization and open new paradigms of optimal female networking and cooperative advancement.



Ms. Amy Rigatti, optical manufacturing group leader at the Laboratory for Laser Energetics, shared that, as a mother, she supervises her two daughters' school and extracurricular activities, and she deeply cares about their outlook and women's growth in STEE field. She also expressed that she is juggling the demand from managing a group and being there for her daughters.



Ms. Lan Gao, a senior Ph.D. student in the Mechanical Engineering Department, shared her desire to learn from other successful women about possible career paths and receiving advice on how to handle multiple very demanding tasks in front of her.



Dr. Jannick Rolland, Professor at The Institute of Optics and WiSTEE advisory group member, participated in the event regardless of the fact that she was under a pressing deadline to preparing a mega-grant proposal that has was due imminently. She shared her experience of having a phone conversation with a male colleague who was surprised when she answered the phone, as he was expecting her to be a man because of her role as the director of a center. As a leader of her field, she inspired many graduate students and junior faculties with her energy and passion.



Mr. Andrea Cogliati, Ph.D. student in the ECE department, expressed a male student's perspective and commented on how the dynamics of a male-only group change noticeably as one or two women join the group, but eventually, as the number of females and males even out, a new equilibrium is reached.



Dr. Alice Quillen, Professor at the Physics and Astronomy Department, shared her recent success of being awarded a highly competitive NASA research grant, which gained a round of applause from everyone!



The participants enjoyed the lively conversations and nice food during the following networking session.

Additional feedback received

A survey on WiSTEE's opening event and its proposed vision has been conducted. A number of enthusiastic comments about the shared vision, opening event, and suggestions for future meetings were received, here is a small sampling:

- “I would like to meet other ladies who do research in science, engineering and technology to learn and share the experiences and views of women's role in these areas. Also would like to learn how to be professional and have leadership as a woman in these areas.”
- “Everything said on Friday was wonderful. Looking forward to learning more about diversity and how things change in industry vs. academia.”
- “There is enormous opportunity to develop new paradigms of optimal female networking and cooperative advancement.
- “I was very deeply impressed how well-organized, well-attended, and valuable this opening event was. Bravo! I also was enormously impressed by the remarkable quality of this gathering of women, and found myself engaged in very stimulating and satisfying discussions.”
- “It was great the way people there were asked just to say something. It made you feel like you knew something about the person speaking and so it made it easier to try to talk them later. I would really like to network more, and I find it hard to talk to complete strangers. But having everybody have time to say something helps get over this.”
- Comment from a senior graduate student: “Thank you very much for the exciting event. I learnt a lot from listening/talking to so many successful women in STEE and am looking forward to the next gathering!”
- “So many of us began our careers thinking gender inequity was irrelevant to us in this modern era with our willingness to prove ourselves by any standards, only to find ourselves subtly hindered, and this subtle bias is much more systematic with dramatic correspondingly strikingly low percentages of female faculty advancement.”
- “Although I have been treated fairly in my career thus far, knowing that there can be a double standard in the workplace requires that I network with other women to know how I can handle future situations.”
- “I hope that I can use this group as a networking tool, especially as I look for more opportunities to get involved in the community. This will also allow me to keep my options open in the business world, since it is something that I don't have much experience in. Knowing people who know how to handle business is very useful.”

WiSTEE's mission and future events

Mission statement:

- Promote, advance, and develop WiSTEE members as leaders, achieving their full potential and making a profound difference in the academic units and communities they serve
- Develop strategic thinking and networking skills for WiSTEE members
- Provide a socializing networking environment for WiSTEE members to understand the academic culture, the campus environment and grow into their professional lives
- Provide an anchoring point for University of Rochester to strengthen its strategic diversity positioning
- Grow and generate regional & national recognition.

WiSTEE is a forum for women to discuss their struggles and successes with fellow professionals who have shared many of the same battles. It is the place to make new friends, develop mentoring relationships, and keep the mind nourished. WiSTEE is planning to hold monthly meetings, with an informal discussion format, and guest speakers from different backgrounds and different points in the career path. If you are interested in joining WiSTEE please respond to this survey:

[WiSTEE survey](#)

Your input will help us make this group what YOU are looking for!

Sincerely,

Cristina Canavesi, WiSTEE Secretary

Jie Qiao, WiSTEE Chair

<http://www.rochester.edu/diversity/affinity/wistee/index.html>