Reach for Commercialization: Inspiring Female Entrepreneurship

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Explaining the Entrepreneurial Gender Gap

• Women are more risk averse (Brindley 2005; Langowitz & Minniti 2007; Stephan & El Ganainy 2006)

• Women are not as comfortable with self-promotion (Stephan & El Ganainy 2006; Singh et al 2002)

• Women choose areas of research that are less amenable to commercialization (Stephan & El Ganainy 2006)

• Women have smaller networks (Forret & Dougherty 2004)
Addressing the Entrepreneurial Gender Gap

• All of this contributes to women having less opportunity to learn about or pursue commercialization efforts.

• Project CEOS addresses this by:
  – Introducing numerous pathways to entrepreneurship
  – Providing a supportive network of female entrepreneurs
  – Connecting women with resources on campus and
  – Supporting industrial networking connections
Pathways to Entrepreneurship

• From discussions with female faculty, it was clear that women:
  – Lacked knowledge about the variety of options for commercializing research
  – Conducted their research with an eye toward broader social impact, which many felt would not be strengthened by entrepreneurial activity

• As a result, the first step in supporting female entrepreneurship was to demonstrate how numerous pathways existed for generating social impact.
Traditional Pathways to IP Dissemination
Alternative Pathways to IP Dissemination
Two Approaches

• Project CEOS adopted two approaches to creating supportive networking opportunities that connected women to campus resources, industry liaisons, and each other:
  – Campus Cohort Approach
  – National Conference Approach
Twelve women in each cohort (24 women total) participated in a series of workshops on:

- Visioning Social Impact from Research
- Building Awareness and Skills for Collaboration
- Capitalizing on Ohio State Tech Transfer
- Stepping Out and Building a Network for Impact
National Conference Approach

• a diverse planning team
  – Technology Commercialization Office
  – Project CEOS
  – Center for Clinical and Translational Science (College of Medicine)
  – Fisher College of Business

• generated an agenda focusing on three main topics:
  – Learning the Landscape
  – Building a Team
  – Finding Funding
National Conference Approach

50 attendees from across the STEM disciplines and at all levels of the career ladder attended the two day program in September 2012
National Conference Approach

- Speakers included national names, such as Lydia Villa-Komaroff and Scott Shane
- Industry speakers, university tech licensing officers, and academicians with entrepreneurial experience
Outcomes

• Reactions to both formats were generally positive.

• Surprisingly, the campus cohorts attracted a number of women with previous commercialization experience, suggesting the need for concerted, ongoing support for these women.

• Conference participants were especially appreciative of the personalized feedback that was provided.
Outcomes

• Pre- and post-testing demonstrated that both formats resulted in increased confidence that participants understood the tech transfer process.
• Immediate post-program testing demonstrated increased connections with industry contacts and increased industrial monetary support among the campus cohorts.
Next Steps

• Follow-up with all program participants to determine if the benefits of the programs are long-lasting and what additional support may be necessary.
  – e.g., one year post-program follow-up with the first campus cohort demonstrated that despite increased industry contact and industrial funding, women were less confident of their own abilities than they had been when leaving the program. A quarterly luncheon has been established to support participants in an ongoing fashion.
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