

Paper for Track 1: Strategies of gender equality in higher education :
successes and dangers

***Creating Opportunities:
The difference a women's leadership programme can make***

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Abstract

The Leadership Development for Women (LDW) Programme aims to enable women at the University of Western Australia (UWA) to develop leadership skills and knowledge in order to increase their participation in positions of leadership and in the University's decision making processes, and to contribute to culture change in the University to encourage and welcome women's involvement in leadership and decision-making positions.

One hundred and seventy five women have participated in the core LDW programme since 1994. The programme consists of a two-day intensive workshop exploring leadership concepts and issues within the UWA context, followed by a series of leadership skills development workshops. Other components of the programme have included information sessions, network lunches and forums, a mentor scheme that is served by both male and female mentors, and the opportunity to undertake action-learning projects. Participants can maintain their involvement in the programme through a continuing programme that consists of occasional workshops, information sessions and networking lunches and forums.

The programme has been extensively evaluated and scrutinised, with the most recent evaluation, *Creating Opportunities*, taking both a qualitative and quantitative approach. The report clearly shows that LDW participants are more successful in achieving promotion than all other staff groups, and that retention rates are higher for all LDW groups in comparison to women who do not attend LDW and to men. While the quantitative statistics on promotion and retention are outstanding, participants also self-report many other significant changes including greater participation in networks, increased visibility, becoming mentors to other staff, participation in special projects, taking on secondments and increased committee involvement.

LDW women are enjoying greater success and are increasing their contribution to the University community.

Creating Opportunities:

The difference a women's leadership programme can make

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Leadership Development for Women (LDW) Programme is a major strategy introduced at the University of Western Australia (UWA) in 1994 in response to the continuing under-representation of women at senior levels of University decision making. In 1994 women constituted 22.0% of academic appointments and 56.6% of general staff appointments, with women being clustered at the lower levels in both cases.

The University of Western Australia is one of the group of eight 'traditional' Australian universities, and is the longest established of the four public universities in Perth, Western Australia. The Vice-Chancellor at the time of the programme's inception, Professor Fay Gale, was strongly supportive and instrumental in the development of the programme, and the programme continues to enjoy the strong personal support of the Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor. The programme is managed by a representative Planning Group, with the support of a part-time Co-ordinator based at the Centre for Staff Development.

LDW programme vision and mission

It is the vision of the LDW programme that the University environment be a place where all women aspire to and achieve leadership roles in diverse ways, and at all levels, thereby contributing to the success of the University.

The mission of the LDW programme is:

- to enable women staff at The University of Western Australia to develop the leadership skills and knowledge required to increase their participation in the University's decision-making processes and to facilitate their leadership at all levels;
- to contribute to a culture change in the University that encourages and welcomes women's involvement in leadership and decision-making matters, and;
- to encourage a management culture that recognises the value of self-development and reflection, and that encourages inclusive management styles.

The objectives or outcomes are twofold, incorporating outcomes for participants and for the University.

Expected outcomes for participants

It is anticipated that women who successfully complete the Programme will have:

- developed a broader understanding of the concept of leadership, leadership culture and the roles and expectations of leaders at the University;
- increased their knowledge and understanding about how the University functions as an organisation;
- acquired new strategies for accessing information;
- identified personal leadership development goals and needs, and developed plans to achieve these goals;
- enhanced skills and developed strategies that allow them to contribute more fully as leaders;
- increased their self-confidence in their leadership abilities;
- established access to a strong women's support network; and
- contributed to a better realisation of their potential within the University community.

Expected outcomes for the University

Over the longer term it is anticipated that the University will benefit from the contribution of

those women who have successfully completed the Programme through the:

- increased representation of women in leadership roles, both formal and informal, within the University;
- acceptance of a more diverse range of leadership styles;
- enhanced understanding in the University community of gender equity issues;
- greater utilisation of women's talents and contributions in University activities;
- improved quality of University leadership through the increased participation of skilled women leaders;
- encouragement of more representative decision making;
- establishment of an ongoing and well-documented development programme with links to mainstream staff development activities;
- creation of an established network of proactive women leaders and others concerned with supporting women's opportunities; and
- expansion of women's contacts amongst male and female colleagues, leading to new networks and a greater sense of community.

Over the longer term, participants and the University itself will benefit from broader cultural change within the institution.

THE PROGRAMME

Over the period from 1994 to 2000, 175 women have participated in the LDW programme -- 105 academics in teaching or research positions and 70 general staff.

The programme has a number of components that form a comprehensive package to support leadership development. These are:

- **The Core Programme** - a two-day programme covering leadership concepts, issues and opportunities within the UWA context.
- **Skills Development Workshops** - held throughout the year, covering a range of areas nominated by participants, and building on the core programme.
- **Information Sessions** - focussing on aspects of University systems and processes, such as the budget process, decision-making structures and promotion systems.
- **Mentor Network** – matching with a senior male or female mentor to provide advice and assistance to support the ongoing career development of participants.
- **Action Leadership Projects** – the opportunity to participate in a special project, thereby extending skills and knowledge gained (not all participants undertake an Action Leadership Project).
- **Forums and Informal Networking** – opportunities to meet recognised UWA leaders through both the ‘Meet the Leader’ and ‘Women at the Top’ forum series as well as networking through lunchtime discussions and occasional dinners. These sessions form part of the continuing programme and women from all years attend.

EVALUATIONS

The LDW Programme has published three evaluations, *Leadership Development for Women Programme: Interim Report 1994*, *Evaluation of the Leadership Development for Women Programme 1996*, and *Creating Opportunities: An Evaluation of the leadership Development for Women Programme 1994-1997*. The 1994 report focussed on a needs-analysis that provided the basis for the programme rationale, and in particular the core programme and skills development. It highlighted both internal and external (to the individual) impediments to women taking on positions of leadership within the University. The 1996 report was based on a qualitative evaluation of the programme, involving 1994 and 1995 participants and various stakeholders. This evaluation found that the programme had been highly successful in meeting many of the outcomes originally specified, while noting that it was premature to judge the programme’s organisational impact after such a short period.

The *Creating Opportunities* report took both a qualitative and quantitative approach.

Qualitative data, exploring the changes that may have occurred in participants' working lives as a result of their participation in the LDW programme, was gathered by surveying the participants in the first three intakes into the programme. Results from this survey are reported in this paper. Quantitative data focussed on promotion and retention statistics for all LDW participants. The methodology employed in the original report allowed for this data to be updated yearly, data for 2000 is reported here.

PROMOTION AND RETENTION FOR LDW PARTICIPANTS

It is too early to include the current 2000 group in the promotion or retention statistics. Where data is reported for the whole group it is a total of 60 general staff and 90 academic staff.

Promotions

Promotional data reported here are based on changes to substantive positions only and does not include long-term higher duties. For academic staff, promotion is achieved through the promotion and tenure process or through application for an advertised vacancy. For general staff promotion is achieved through re-classification or through application for an advertised vacancy

Tables 1 & 5 focus on data for the 1994 group, while tables 2 & 6 summarise the equivalent data for the remaining four groups. Tables 3 & 4 show combined data for all groups.

The figures in Table 1 are based on a ‘snapshot’ picture of staff levels in 1994 and comparing these with levels of the same staff in 2000. This allows for a direct comparison with LDW participants, for whom the same snapshot picture of level can be taken at time of entry to the programme compared with their level in 2000.

TABLE 1: Comparison of the 1994 LDW cohort's promotional success with other female, male and total staff promotional success from 31 March 1994 to 31 March 2000

<i>Staff group</i>	<i>Employment changes</i>					<i>Total number</i>	<i>Percentage promoted</i>
	<i>Promoted</i>	<i>Same</i>	<i>Regressed</i>	<i>No longer employed</i>			
Academic							
1994 LDW group academic	14	2	0	3	19	74	
1994 Other female academic	38	57	3	103	201	19	
1994 Male academic	177	242	1	281	701	25	
1994 Total academic	229	301	4	387	921	25	
General							
1994 LDW group general	6	3	0	2	11	55	
1994 Other female general	203	134	13	540	890	23	
1994 Male general	151	104	27	403	685	22	
1994 Total general	360	241	40	945	1586	23	

The results indicate that 1994 LDW participants are almost four times more successful in achieving promotion than their non-participating female colleagues, and three times more so than men. General staff were more than twice as successful as non-participants, male or female.

TABLE 2: Comparison of LDW promotional success with other female, male and total staff promotional success from 31 March 1995 to 31 March 2000, for the 1995,1996,1998 and 1999 groups.

<i>Staff group</i>	<i>Percentage Promoted</i>			
	<i>1995</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>1999</i>
Academic				
LDW group academic	26	29	13	20
Other female academic	17	14	13	7
Male academic	23	21	13	8
Total academic	22	20	13	8
General				
LDW group general	50	30	29	13
Other female general	22	20	16	8
Male general	24	19	16	9
Total general	23	20	16	8

TABLE 3: Promotions achieved by the 1994, 1995, 1996, 1998 and 1999 LDW participants to March 2000

<i>LDW Programme year</i>	<i>Number of Promotions</i>		
	<i>General staff</i>	<i>Academic staff</i>	<i>Total</i>
1994	7	15	22
1995	6	8	14
1996	3	6	9
1998	4	2	6
1999	2	3	5
Total	22	34	56

Note. Staff who have since left the University were classified according to their position at the time of leaving. Staff who have achieved more than 1 promotion are only counted once.

A total of 56 women have achieved promotion, which is 37% of the overall group.

TABLE 4: Numbers of academic and general staff, by position or level at time of entry into LDW, who have received a promotion as at March 2000 (includes all LDW cohort groups)

<i>Academic staff</i>		<i>General Staff</i>	
<i>Original Position</i>	<i>No. of promotions</i>	<i>Original Level</i>	<i>No. of promotions</i>
		4	1
		5	4
Associate Lecturer	13	6	6
Lecturer	14	7	5
Senior Lecturer	5	8	5
Associate Professor	2	9	
Professor		10	1
Total	34		22

The largest number of promotions occurred at associate lecturer and lecturer level.

Retention

Statistics for the 1994, 1995, 1996, 1998 and 1999 groups, show that 49 out of a total of 60 general staff participants remain employed at UWA. Similarly of a total of 90 academic staff, 70 are still employed at UWA, as of March 31st, 2000. This is an overall retention rate of 79%. More detailed data for the 1994 group, showing the comparison of retention rates with other staff groups, is given below.

TABLE 5: Comparison of the 1994 LDW cohort's retentions rate (those still employed at UWA) with other female, male and total staff retention rates from 31 March 1994 to 31 March 2000

<i>Staff group</i>	<i>No longer employed</i>	<i>Total number</i>	<i>Percentage retained</i>
Academic			
1994 LDW group academic	3	19	84
1994 Other female academic	103	201	49
1994 Male academic	281	701	60
1994 Total academic	387	921	58
General			
1994 LDW group general	2	11	82
1994 Other female general	540	890	39
1994 Male general	403	685	41
1994 Total general	945	1586	40

Eighty-four percent of the 1994 LDW academic participants were still employed by UWA on 31 March 2000. This was 35% more than for non-LDW female academic staff and 24% more than for male academic staff. Comparing the general staff retention rates, 1994 LDW general staff participants had a retention rate over 40% higher than non-LDW female general staff or male general staff.

TABLE 6: Comparison of the LDW retentions rates (those still employed at UWA) with other female, male and total staff retention rates from 31 March 1995 to 31 March 2000, for the 1995, 1996, 1998 and 1999 groups.

<i>Staff group</i>	<i>Percentage Retained</i>			
	<i>1995</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>1999</i>
Academic				
LDW group academic	63	62	94	93
Other female academic	51	49	62	78
Male academic	63	67	80	87
Total academic	61	63	75	85
General				
LDW group general	70	70	86	93
Other female general	44	50	64	75
Male general	46	51	71	81
Total general	46	51	67	78

CHANGES IN WORKING LIFE

Changes that have occurred for the greatest number of LDW participants and which are clearly attributed to their LDW involvement are:

increased participation in UWA networks (81%),
increased visibility at UWA (79%),
commenced work on special projects (51%), and
involvement in women's networks (39%).

Respondents noted other changes have occurred for them such as *“increased confidence, more assertive, feel more valued, received overseas invitation for research collaboration, secured full-time work, more strategic, willing to take on greater challenges, better organised, more interest in larger organisation, assisted in carrying out head of department duties, and being more positive”*.

General staff respondents who noted changes in their working life indicated that LDW participation had the greatest influence upon their:

achieving secondment (100%),
being offered/applying for special projects (90%),
becoming a mentor (89%),
becoming more visible at UWA (89%), and
participating in UWA networks (89%).

For academic staff respondents who noted changes in their working life, the ranking is as follows:

participation in UWA networks (96%),
the quality of their applications for promotion (87%),
becoming a mentor (82%),
being offered/ applying for special projects (78%), and
becoming more visible at UWA (78%).

DISCUSSION

Promotion

The results clearly show that LDW participants have increased success in promotion as compared to both women who have not participated in the programme and men. The 1994 data reported here in detail is exceptionally strong in this regard. This success is also the case for all other general and academic staff groups with the exception of the 1998 academic women.

In the survey questionnaires women acknowledged that LDW influenced both their decision to apply for promotion, (several stated that they had previously not known they were eligible or felt they had been impeded by their head of department) and the quality of their application for promotion. But they did not necessarily attribute their success in achieving promotion to LDW. The women said that while LDW encouraged and supported them to apply for promotion, it did not necessarily make them more 'promotable'. They felt they were promoted on their merit. However, the importance of that encouragement should not be underestimated. Some women have experienced UWA as having a "climate of discouragement", while the LDW programme creates a climate of encouragement. Participants in the 1994 group testified about how much encouragement they took from each others' successes.

The University's statistics indicate that academic women are under-represented, particularly at the lecturer level, in applying for promotion and are waiting longer than men before applying for promotion. It is therefore particularly pleasing to note that 13 participants were promoted to lecturer and 14 lecturers to senior lecturer. Women now make up 44% of staff at lecturer level (30.5% in 1994) and 20.9% of senior lecturers (11.4% in 1994).

In general at UWA the higher the level or position of a staff member, the greater their involvement in decision making and leadership roles is likely to be. The success of LDW participants in achieving promotion has increased the number of women at higher levels in both the general and academic staff, and therefore, the participation of women in decision making.

Retention

LDW participants are more likely to remain employed at UWA than women who have not participated in LDW, or men. This is true across all years for general staff, where retention rates are at least 15% to 25% higher than other staff groups. For academic staff retention rates are higher for the 1994, 1998 and 1999 groups (varying from 6% to 35%). Retention rates for LDW women in the 1995 group are equal to that of men and higher than for non-LDW women. The retention rate for 1996 academic women is 13% higher than for other women, but 5% lower than for men.

Retention rates are of particular concern for an institution wishing to redress gender imbalance and are a useful indicator of a culture in which women feel they belong and are able to contribute. The higher retention rates for most groups of LDW women would indicate that these women are finding their place at UWA and are committed to the institution. The promotion and retention statistics combined would indicate that LDW women are experiencing greater career satisfaction at UWA.

Other Changes in Working Life

The leadership literature is clear about the importance of special projects in career development. It is gratifying to see that 28 participants (51% of respondents) have been involved in special projects to date and that 82% of these participants attribute their project opportunity to LDW.

Mentoring has become more widespread at UWA, and it is encouraging to see that LDW women are exercising leadership through becoming mentors themselves. Mentoring is crucial to creating a climate of encouragement for staff.

Increased visibility is an important precursor to being offered opportunities such as special projects and secondments, which are clearly linked to career development. Visibility also results in increased opportunities for committee involvement whereby women can contribute to the decision-making processes of the institution.

Expanded networks is one of LDW's desired outcomes for both participants and the University. Clearly the programme is successful in facilitating this. This networking is much broader than women's networks alone, with 39% of participants reporting involvement in women's networks and 81% of participants having increased networks generally.

CONCLUSION

At an individual level, it is clear that LDW is having a positive effect on the participants' working lives. This is evident not only in terms of promotion and retention, but in the number of opportunities for special projects, secondments, committee involvement, increased networks and so on. Participants clearly state their more positive feelings about themselves, their performance, their contribution and the workplace.

At the institutional level, opportunities are being created for the University to capitalise more fully on the talents and potential of its female staff. LDW women are clearly contributing much more to the University as a result of their LDW participation.

The Leadership Development for Women Programme has been very successful in its stated mission to enable women at the University of Western Australia to develop leadership skills and knowledge in order to increase their participation in positions of leadership and in the University's decision-making processes. It is assisting the University to redress the current gender imbalances for both general and academic staff, and is making a very significant contribution to the achievement of one of the University's primary objectives: attracting, developing and retaining the highest quality staff.

***“Whenever I come to an LDW session like this
it makes me feel like
the University is serious about equity.”***

Biographical details.

Jennifer de Vries currently works at the University of Western Australia (UWA) Centre for Staff Development as a Senior Staff Development Officer. She co-ordinates the Leadership Development for Women programme. She is actively involved in women's networks and lobby groups across campus. Jennifer has a facilitation role in the other leadership and management programmes at the Centre; including co-ordinating and facilitating an extensive mentoring programme for senior staff. Other interests include facilitating Postgraduate Supervision workshops, working as Executive Officer to a current working party examining academic workload allocation, and developing a staff development programme to enhance committee participation and skills. Her previous work at UWA included working as Manager, Equity.