

Introducing Women in Cognitive Science Canada (WiCS-Canada): An Extension of “Women in Cognitive Science (WiCS)” from the U.S. to the Canadian Context

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Summary WiCS-Canada aims to build upon the impressive, long-standing achievements of WiCS in the United States to increase visibility and representation of women cognitive scientists, and to provide new opportunities for professional and academic success within Canada.

1. Relevance

We introduce the Canadian chapter of Women in Cognitive Science (WiCS-Canada), which builds upon the highly successful, NSF-funded Women in Cognitive Science group.

2. Aims & Objectives

The objectives of WiCS-Canada are to support and encourage women engaged in cognitive science careers, by creating opportunities for networking, mentorship, and professional development. WiCS-Canada also strives to raise awareness about systemic gender bias in STEM relevant to Canadian cognitive scientists.

3. Methods

In the two years since WiCS-Canada was established, we obtained a new initiatives grant from NSERC to support our activities and partnered with the Canadian Society for Brain, Behavior, and Cognitive Science (CSBBCS). We held workshops and panel discussions at the University of Ottawa and the University of Regina on the status of women within psychology and how gender roles affected their daily personal and professional lives.

4. Results

WiCS-Canada has established an active social media presence with the help of graduate and post-doctoral student volunteers in Canada (co-authors on this presentation) who find and circulate peer-reviewed and current events articles to over 880 Facebook and Twitter followers, transforming outreach and news into platforms of dialogue. Recently, our new Advisory Board of Canadian cognitive scientists, adjudicated the first WiCS-Canada mentoring award, which recognized the exceptional mentoring of women for one member of our community.

5. Conclusions

Going forward, WiCS-Canada will develop new initiatives to increase professional visibility of junior and senior female scientists. Other professional and networking opportunities will continue in partnership with CSBBCS, including travel awards for conferences and workshops, discussion panels on pertinent topics, and networking mixers.

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