Authentic Participation
Inclusive Environments

Betty Shanahan
Executive Director & CEO
Society of Women Engineers
30 November 2012
The Society of Women Engineers

Founded in 1950, the Society of Women Engineers is the driving force that establishes engineering as a highly desirable career aspiration for women. SWE empowers women to succeed and advance in those aspirations and receive the recognition and credit for their life-changing contributions and achievements as engineers and leaders.
“Progress and Innovation Depend on Leveraging Differences”
Cognitive Diversity

♦ Key explanatory variable in levels of performance for complex tasks or tasks requiring creativity and innovation

♦ Dimensions
  • Diverse perspectives
  • Diverse interpretations
  • Diverse heuristics
  • Diverse predictive models
Cognitive vs. Identity Diversity

♦ Identity diversity doesn’t necessarily lead to cognitive diversity
  • For example, medical training leads doctors who are diverse in identity terms to become cognitively alike
  • Programs to “fix the women”

♦ Benefits of diversity depends upon people being able to work together effectively.
Implicit Bias

♦ Prejudice and discrimination are commonly understood as intentional, conscious, and harm drive. While this can be true, often it’s the exception.

♦ Psychological advances demonstrate that bias is often unintentional, automatic, and outside our awareness. It may also be contradictory to our conscious beliefs.

♦ Bias often exists within many well intentioned women and men of all different backgrounds.

♦ Men and women often exhibit the same bias trends
A “Big Ticket” Resource

♦ Numbers participating
♦ Maximizing the resource through authentic participation
♦ Maximizing the resource through inclusive environments