

“You Choose” Application December 2009

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A Workshop on *Group Support* to Accomplish Success in the Academic Environment, by Dr. Ellen Daniell, author of the book “Every Other Thursday”: Stories and Strategies from Successful Women Scientists.

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Abstract

Personal and professional challenges are better resolved by two or more people joining efforts as a team. That is the idea of Group support as a strategy for accomplishing success in the work environment. In the book, "Every Other Thursday", Dr. Ellen Daniell tells us about a group of women helping each other over the years to become highly successful individuals in different professional settings. The goal of this project is to learn more about the concept and benefits of having a group to resolve career-related issues. I propose to host a workshop led by Dr. Daniell, which would be open to all UM community involved in research, teaching and administration.

1. The Project: its goals and relationship to increasing the advancement of a diverse faculty in science and engineering

Having creative ideas, publishing papers and writing successful grants are a major challenge for everyone pursuing a career in science. Learning how to successfully accomplish these endeavors is critical for career advancement. But is this all? In my experience over the years neither of these has presented a career-threatening challenge. In fact, working in science and writing about it has been the easiest part of my work, most likely because it is what I enjoy the most. So why is our career progress so difficult? As for me, managing to stay afloat has been more about understanding human behavior and resolving work-related conflicts, as well as making good decisions or facing the fact when I don't with dignity and integrity. Some of these challenges have included avoiding conflicting relationships at work and understanding the complexity of the implicit rules of the system (I am referring to those rules that you learn after the fact...).

In addition to dealing with these almost daily dilemmas, one must keep on with a family life (in my case, a husband and a small child), fit into a different culture and balance your own emotions without losing your sense, to name a few examples. I strongly believe that having both a successful career and a rewarding life is the end result of having won those very many "chess games" that life brings you when you least expect. So, how do we go about making sense of what we do and make it worthwhile? Is there a strategy for success?

The book "Every Other Thursday: stories and strategies from successful women scientists" by Dr. Ellen Daniell, shed some light into this question: in the author's own words "it is about the power of *not* trying to go it alone".

In her book, Dr. Daniell writes about the idea of group support to help overcome difficult situations, achieve practical solutions and gain a broader perspective in the workplace and your personal life. For more than 25 years, Ellen Daniell and six other members have gathered every other Thursday to provide each other both practical and emotional support. On the basis of cooperation, empathy and open discussion, their professional problem-solving group has empowered its members to become highly-achieving individuals in different settings, such as academia, industries and administration. As an example, Dr. Daniell talks about how members of "Group" helped her overcome the fact of having been denied tenure at a prestigious institution. Over the years, the group has come up with strategies to deal with issues that we are all familiar with such as, managing time to handle a busy life, taking care of ourselves and loved ones, overcoming fear of criticism, anticipating changes and going through transitions... For a better reference of the range of the topics covered in Dr. Daniell's book, I have included the table of contents below.

Personally, I have found the concept and benefits of group support very inspiring and I wish that we could all hear about it from Dr. Daniell. I am therefore applying to the "You Choose" contest to seek financial and institutional support to sponsor a 1-day workshop led by Dr. Daniell. This workshop would be open to all UM faculty and staff involved in research, teaching and administration. An informal round table will be organized with the speaker for questions and answers that will give the attendees the opportunity to discuss their own experiences, challenges and goals.

2. How this project will benefit my career goals

I initiated my career as an independent investigator at the end of last year after being promoted to a non-tenure track entry level faculty position. Still pending is the Faculty's decision to let me stay or go. Major challenges for accomplishing a successful career in science still lie ahead. As for many of us I know that going through a career in science is not only about the art of doing science...

I hope that Dr. Daniell inspires us to seek support from those that are on our side and to take pro-active actions towards helping the ones we care for. Having an opportunity to learn about the stories and strategies of successful professionals is an invaluable resource and also an opportunity to foster new ideas to approach our career development.

3. Budget Justification

The requested funds are to support the accommodation and travel expenses for Dr. Daniell's trip to Miami, FL and some basic aspects of the Workshop's organization.

Airline Tickets and internal transportation: \$600

Hotel in Miami (2 nights): \$ 500

Per-diem and honorarium fee: \$ 1,000

Other expenses (photocopies, meals and refreshments): \$ 400

Total: \$2,500

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Every Other Thursday

STORIES AND STRATEGIES FROM
SUCCESSFUL WOMEN SCIENTISTS



ELLEN DANIELL

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