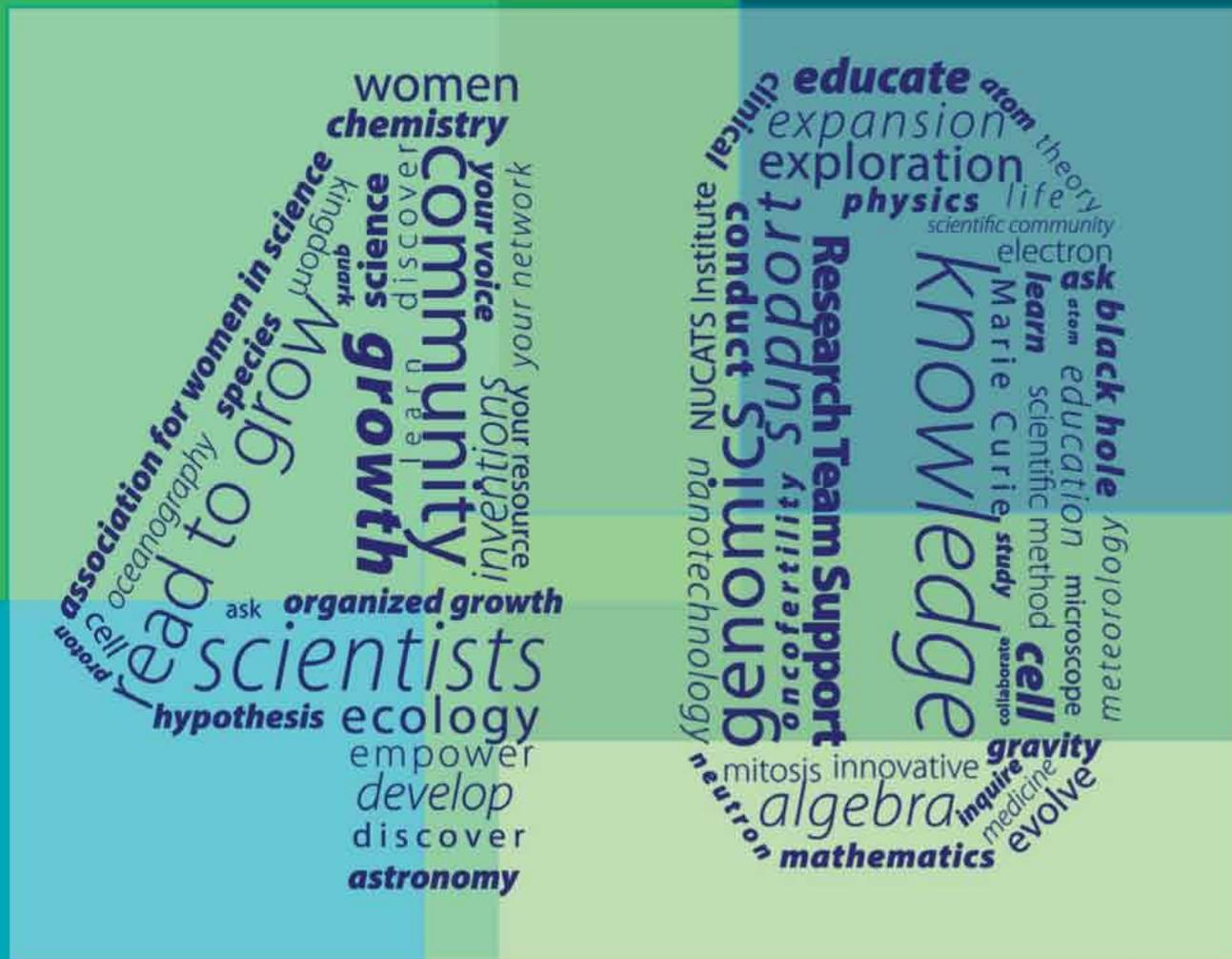


AWIS

ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCE

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Reflections from Supreme Court Justice Ginsburg
Creativity is Key to Organizational Growth
Connecting through Social Media
Embracing the Dual-Career (Ad)Venture

YOUR NETWORK, YOUR RESOURCE, YOUR VOICE

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Talking the Talk, Walking the Walk

By Faye Farmer

To say Holly Falk-Krzesinski is motivated fails to fully capture the depth of her experience and her commitment to herself and others. When she was not content in her post-doctoral research position, she decided to create a position for herself. When she was unable to find resources to support her new position, she created a professional organization.



Falk-Krzesinski, Ph.D., is currently a Research Assistant Professor and Director of Team Support and Development at Northwestern University where she has single-handedly established several key programs as well as a national professional organization. Her successful career is a result of regular evaluation of her desires, circumstances, and skills, and a willingness to embrace new opportunities. As a member of AWIS, she has regularly relied on the network

and voice it provides and has actively worked to support the organization. Her story serves as a model for women in science who are trying to find the job that reflects best their passion and those who are interested in spurring others to do the same.

At key intersections of her career, Falk-Krzesinski has been able to clearly delineate what skills she has, those she needs, what she wants to achieve, and what she needs to get there. Her early career was influenced through her work at Abbott Laboratories as an undergraduate student, and her exposure to both academic and industrial scientific environments as she completed a Bachelor's Degree at University of Illinois at Chicago. After much discussion with a colleague, Falk-Krzesinski decided that she wanted something different than what a bench science job would provide. She wanted to be involved in scientific strategy and leadership, while encouraging others to pursue their desires. Recognizing that she would need graduate training to accomplish those goals, she enrolled in a doctoral program in microbiology and immunology at Loyola University Chicago, Stritch School of Medicine.

After graduating with her Ph.D. and working to complete a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Illinois at Chicago's medical school, Falk-Krzesinski found herself at yet another critical juncture in her professional life. She completed the same exercise she had done prior to graduate school: evaluating her skills, needs, and goals. She describes her journey in the

2004 AWIS Magazine, seeing it as highly translatable to other women in science (1). Guided by her interests and supported by her qualifications, she was hired as Assistant Chairperson of the Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, and Cell Biology (now Molecular Biosciences) Department at Northwestern University. As an administrative faculty member, she was required to think broadly about strategy, bring scientists together to form new research initiatives, gain access to resources and equipment, and pursue large, federally sponsored funding opportunities.

Five years later, in addition to her original position, she was overseeing one of Northwestern's life sciences graduate programs. She had found a successful niche managing research and developing research training grants across scientific disciplines and honed her skills as a listener; Falk-Krzesinski was constantly asking her faculty and students what resources they needed to be successful. The discussions regularly returned to creating opportunities through institutional infrastructure that would support and incentivize faculty to pursue large, strategic initiatives. Falk-Krzesinski pitched the idea for forming Northwestern University's Office of Research Development (ORD) to a receptive, recently hired Vice President of Research, C. Bradley Moore (now at University of California, Berkeley). She became ORD's founding Director. The mission of this office is to amplify cooperative and collaborative faculty-led research and the collective research enterprise activities within Northwestern and with inter-institutional partners, and to expand Northwestern's capacity to pursue major multi- and interdisciplinary research initiatives that garner national and international recognition. Once again, Falk-Krzesinski recognized that she needed to further augment her management skills, so she completed a professional certificate in nonprofit management from Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management.

Always looking for opportunities to leverage existing knowledge and experience, Falk-Krzesinski performed Google searches to identify similar positions to hers at other academic institutions. By December of 2008, she had spoken to 32 colleagues, each for an hour or more, about the emerging



field of research development (2, 3). While individual conversations were enlightening, it was not a sustainable approach to developing a community. A listserv was created, followed by a conference at the University of Maryland in June 2009. Seeing a place where she could use her education and skills to develop a professional organization, Falk-Krzesinski found herself listening again. This time, she initiated a conversation with Neena Schwartz, Ph.D., someone with experience that Falk-Krzesinski, herself, did not have. Schwartz is Professor Emerita at Northwestern University, author of *A Lab of My Own* (4), and one of the founding members and first co-president of AWIS. Falk-Krzesinski was motivated by Schwartz's experience with a small group of women who filed an injunction against the National Institutes of Health for the discriminatory practices of holding review panels that did not actively include women (one of AWIS' first actions as an organization). The message that motivated Falk-Krzesinski: a small group can catalyze significant change.

Seizing an opportunity again, Falk-Krzesinski became a founding member of the National Organization of Research Development Professionals (NORDP). The organization, established in 2008 as part of a grassroots movement to build a peer community of Research Development professionals, is now over 328 members strong, with members from 171 institutions in 8 countries around the world. The organization has an active listserv, has recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit status, and has planned its fourth annual national conference in Washington, DC. Falk-Krzesinski is past president of the organization and now serves as membership chair and co-chair of the enhancing collaboration working group.

Once again, she is poised to start developing her next initiative one that combines her passion (science) and her skill set (science, management, and collaboration). She is creating two interdisciplinary, team science training resources (5), including a graduate-level Team Science course and TeamScience.net, an online learning tool. She is also currently developing a workshop series focused on leadership and team science, and she chairs the Annual International Science of Team Science (SciTS) Conference slated for April 2012, through which she is developing a strong, interdisciplinary community of practice for SciTS.

Falk-Krzesinski credits her AWIS mentors (Schwartz and Brenda Russell, Ph.D., at University of Illinois, Chicago) for the guidance they provided during critical transitions in her career. She also recognizes that her husband and daughter have kept her focused and determined through all of the challenges inherent in her career choices. Falk-Krzesinski is acutely aware that she is creating a legacy that includes women in science, research development professionals, those who participate in team science, and perhaps most importantly, her daughter. This keeps her motivated. ■



Honors

Received the inaugural Distinguished Service Award (2007) AWIS Chicago Chapter, in recognition of service for the advancement of women in science in the Chicago area and beyond.

Received the inaugural National Organization of Research Development Professionals Service Award (2011) – re-named the Holly Falk-Krzesinski Service Award.

Publications

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