I wish you all a very happy and prolific 2017! The year certainly got off to a harsh start when, last January, millions of women around the world felt compelled to march, alongside many men, to demand respect and equal rights. Unfortunately, research and science are no exception when it comes to inequity: there is increasing debate and commentary on gender disparities facing women seeking a professional career in academia. Numerous studies have revealed persisting inequalities in hiring, earnings, funding, citations, and patenting. These hurdles, along with subtler instances of internalized sexism, nurture the chronological decline in number of women that enroll, advance, and remain in the sciences. Data suggest that important factors driving these trends are the lack of female role models in the upper divisions of academia and the lack of policies or committees designed to increase women participation. Because the field of Reproductive Sciences needs to maximize its human intellectual capital to remain scientifically competitive, and because SSR is extremely supportive of equity-driven endeavours, we believe that a program such as WinRS fostering mentoring, international collaboration and awareness among the female membership of the Society will help level the playing field.

Since our first Breakfast in July 2016, the members of the WinRS Steering Committee have been hard at work to make WinRS a stronger subcommittee within the Society. We have encouraged and assisted in the nomination of women for major awards and executive positions within and outside the Society. We have promoted networking between SSR female members, and highlighted their achievements and careers through the WinRS Bulletin and social media. We have also been preparing our second WinRS Breakfast, which will take place during the Annual SSR Meeting in Washington, DC! The program for 2017 will feature a presentation by Dr. Sarah Kimmins on biases working against women in academia, followed by an open discussion on how to circumvent the latter. All members of the Society, regardless of gender or status, are welcome and encouraged to attend, provide input and share their experiences.

In this edition of the WinRS Bulletin, our former SSR President Janice Bahr gives us practical advice on how to help women transition from a non-tenured to a tenured position in academia, and trainees testify about how female SSR mentors made a difference in their professional and personal life. Make sure to stay tuned by following us on social media, and contact us at ssrwinrs@gmail.com if you are keen to contribute!

Dr. Océane Albert, 2017 WinRS Chair
Words of Wisdom

WinRS asked Dr. Janice Bahr, Professor Emerita in the Departments of Molecular and Integrative Physiology and Animal Science at the University of Illinois and former SSR President, to give us practical advice on how to help women transition to a tenured position.

My approach is to discuss how we can help women transition from the non-tenured faculty to a tenured position. There is a two prong approach—the junior faculty woman and we as mentors of female graduate students and postdocs.

Junior faculty woman

1. Be sure that you understand your appointment: percentage of teaching, percentage of research, etc. If your duties do not correspond to the percentage, speak with your head/chair;
2. Identify your goals and stay focused;
3. Select excellent graduate students;
4. Make yourself indispensable, e.g. be an excellent teacher;
5. Establish fruitful collaborations;
6. Seek help from your mentors;

Faculty as mentors

1. Prepare your female graduate students and postdocs for an academic position, i.e., writing grant proposals, teaching, mentoring undergraduate, knowledge of lab techniques and lab procedures. When the female graduate student or postdoc leaves our lab, she should be well equipped to be an independent faculty member;
2. Develop their communication skills;
3. Be a strong advocate for your female students: advise them when seeking a job, interviewing, preparing to accept a position offer/start-up package, etc.;
4. Inform the junior faculty member about important activities in the department, i.e. attendance at faculty meetings, etc.;
5. Promote the junior faculty member (appoint them to federal review boards and reviewer of manuscripts, cross appointed if necessary), and nominate them for awards;
6. Check with the junior faculty member regarding their progress towards tenure. Keep track of all of their activities: it is always good to let the head/chair know what the junior faculty have done;
7. Help promote the junior faculty (maybe an outstanding publication, grant): let the public know what they are doing. Increase their visibility.
WinRS asked trainees what difference SSR female mentors made in their professional and personal life. Here are a few testimonies!

**Dr. Steven Jones on Dr. Martine Culty, University of Southern California**

I owe a great deal to Dr. Culty; her continued support and encouragement, excellent training and infectious dedication to scientific research have been instrumental in my career path. I was interested in basic research, with a particular focus on human reproductive health and how it can be shaped by our environment. Dr. Culty was well established in the field of early germ cell development and had also conducted extensive toxicology research on the early life effects of environmental endocrine disruptors. I interviewed with Dr. Culty in fall 2012 and immediately knew both the supervisor and lab environment would be a great fit. She provided several options for research programs and collaborations and the balance of guidance, independence and flexibility I was looking for. The lab environment was very well equipped and interactive. Students and staff gained independence working on their own research projects while also collaborating and collectively advancing key grant funded research areas. Dr. Culty saw the importance of training young scientists and continually accepted undergraduate honours and foreign exchange students. Our lab was actively engaged in scientific exchanges both inside and outside of the university. I was encouraged to hone my presentation skills and participate in numerous local, national and international symposiums. Dr. Culty had an open door policy and was always available for discussion, advice and guidance. Outside work, key events such as degree completion, lab departures, holidays and birthdays were celebrated and greatly contributed to comradery and a positive team environment. The training and confidence I gained during my Ph.D. was instrumental obtaining my current position as an Evaluator and Toxicologist within the Canadian government. I believe that Dr. Culty is an excellent scientist and mentor and feel privileged to have been part of her research team. On a personal level I could not have asked for a more kind and supportive Ph.D. supervisor.

*She provided the balance of guidance, independence and flexibility I was looking for*
Lundi Ly on Dr. Jacquetta Trasler, McGill University Health Center

Dr. Jacquetta Trasler exudes many qualities which make her an exceptional mentor. Her dedication to trainees, towards both those directly under her supervision and not, is exemplified in her willingness and enthusiasm to ensure student preparedness. From repeated presentation rehearsals on the weekends, to multiple draft revisions in the evenings, Dr. Trasler has always gone well beyond the expectations of a supervisor. In the same breath of preparation, Dr. Trasler has always treated the interests and aspirations of her students and trainees with the utmost importance. She has continuously acted as a valuable mentor by supplying the guidance and means required for them to achieve their career ambitions. Her willingness to provide guidance, combined with a wealth of experience and approachable nature make Dr. Trasler an extraordinary advisor. With that said, Dr. Trasler demonstrates an outstanding ability to lead and prepare students by developing their independence, which ultimately fosters their growth as trainees and puts them in positions to graduate towards their chosen professions. With all this in mind, the single best advice given to me by Dr. Trasler was to arrange my vacations first, and then to work my experiments around those dates. You will never lack in motivation or inspiration under her tutelage, but Dr. Jacquetta Trasler will always emphasize the importance of work-life balance!

Keith Siklenka on Dr. Sarah Kimmins, McGill University

I am proud to be trained by one of Canada’s leaders in epigenetic research and by such a strong advocate for gender equality in science. Sarah’s mentoring style has helped me to push new boundaries in the lab and within myself. I think that the key behind this success is Sarah’s belief in her students’ ability to grow when challenged, combined with an understanding when things don’t go as planned.
This formula has made my Ph.D. process feel exciting and rewarding. It has been a pleasure to be part of the lab over the last years, and now as I witness the recent expansion in both size and ambition, I’m confident the new trainees are in good hands.

Dr. Kimmins and her research team, including Keith Siklenka, Ph.D. candidate (second row, left)

“She has helped me to push new boundaries in the lab and within myself.”

WinRS would like to thank Steven, Lundi and Keith for their great contributions! If you would like to give your own testimony about your mentor’s guidance, gender-neutral policies or pieces of advice, send us a message at ssrwinrs@gmail.com!

It’s nomination time!

The WinRS keep an eye on upcoming deadlines for major awards within and outside the Society. Whether you are a trainee or a regular member, nominating a fellow scientist can seem redoubtable or time-consuming. But fear no more! A nomination is by nature a collaborative work, and the WinRS steering committee is here to assist you! If you need help reaching other members of the Society or setting up a nomination package, send us an e-mail at ssrwinrs@gmail.com.

The FASEB Excellence in Science Award is given in recognition of outstanding achievement by women in biological science. Recipients are women whose career achievements have contributed significantly to further our understanding of a particular discipline by excellence in research. **Deadline: March 1st, 2017.** [Click here for more information.](#)

Election as a Fellow of AAAS is an honor bestowed upon members by their peers. Fellows are recognized for meritorious efforts to advance science or its applications. **Deadline: April 26th, 2017.** [Click here for more information.](#)