

## Communication and Engagement Fellows End of grant report

### Grant Details

Funds were sought to deliver a six month training program for female identifying early to mid career researchers within the College of Science, College of Engineering and Computer Science and the College of Health and Medicine. Recruitment occurred via the deans and heads of department within each College and 20 women submitted an expression of interest to participate; all of which were accepted. Eighteen of the women participated.

The aim of this program was to create a cohort of female-identifying early to mid-career researchers who are confident, articulate ambassadors for their research, their disciplines and ANU.

### The Program

Recruitment was completed in April and the first meetings were held in May. Not all participants were available for every session so some sessions were run twice, others were held virtually. The program was delivered as follows:

- **May** – first meeting, getting to know you. Workshop/discussion on the stereotypes applied to women who publicly communicate their work and how to ‘flip’ those stereotypes to make them positive.
- **June** – interactive science communication workshop. Learning skills to translate science to make it relevant, understanding and engaging to audiences.
- **July** – an online session on how to write a better bio.
- **August** – ANU Media Training one day workshop.
- **September** – In studio interview training with Lish Fejer from ABC Canberra.
- **October** – presenting research visually for social media with James Walsh from ANU Science Marketing.

In between the sessions, I shared relevant articles with the group on women in STEM and some of the things that we should stop doing i.e. <http://www.oprah.com/inspiration/what-to-say-instead-of-im-sorry> and sometimes the participants asked each other for advice or feedback on something they were working on such as short summaries of their work for job applications or competitions.

### Impact

Participants were asked for feedback at the end of the program, and some provided it via email unsolicited. Typical comments were:

*“I wanted to pass along my appreciation for all your hard work over the past several months in organising such a fantastic program. It’s been incredibly rewarding to be involved with such a great group of academics, and I’ve learned heaps of useful skills that are already having an impact on my career and my ability to communicate my work.”*

*“The program has made me think more about my communication and engagement activities, and forced me (in a positive way) to be more proactive about approaching opportunities for communication/engagement.”*

*“Since the very first session I have stopped apologising in my emails (unless I really made a mistake) and tried to be more direct in what I ask for. I have started to build and test different analogies to describe my work to non-specialist audiences.”*

*“This was a fantastic course. My confidence and communication skills have increased enormously. Thank you.”*

There was a desire for more tangible outcomes, such as actually creating a social media profile for work or getting more a chance to put some of the interviewing or media skills into practice. For some of the women they struggled to find time to implement the skills learned into their day to day work requirements. For one participant the course clarified for her that media was not where she wanted to devote her energies; mentoring was her preferred form of outreach and engagement.

The majority of participants have amended their online profiles and added themselves to the ANU Expert guide. A specific comment related to the bios was received:

*“I’ve created a couple of bios (a more general one for some upcoming field work, and for the ANU website), and recently met with a scientist at another university who commented who said he read my bio and how interesting my background is - which is great because I didn't have a bio online before.”*

The timing of the program worked for some participants, but others would have preferred something shorter and more intensive. Given the roles of all of the participants and the demands on their time, any program will be challenging to accommodate into their schedule. It may be possible that doing this program in future over the course of two days during a teaching break, perhaps with a follow up session either online or face to face later in the year, may be a preferable format.

### **Outcome**

Aside from the personal growth and experience of the participants, there has been interest from other areas. Notably:

- The SAGE project team are keen to use the Fellows in their communication activities
- Lish Fejer has asked for the contact details of the Fellows to add to her pool of contacts for interviews in future
- Jamie Kidston and I are exploring how a program like this could be scaled up across the ANU to increase the media participation of early to mid-career researchers, particularly women.

The participants are more visible, and more confident to pursue communication and engagement opportunities in the areas that interest them.

Thank you for supporting this initiative.