

# W&D Workshop: The Art of Saying No!

The overall theme of this workshop appeared to be that no matter what stage we are in our careers, we all continue to struggle with the art and our choices of what to say no, and yes to.

Specific advice that came from these discussions included:

- Navigating the line between being assertive and being seen as 'bossy' or 'difficult' is tough but in the end you must never feel bad about advocating for yourself.
- Many times saying no to something did not have the bad consequences that were feared
- Even if saying no leads to guilt about lost opportunities or burnt bridges, that's ok too. We have to pick our priorities.
- If you are put on the spot being asked to do something you would like to say no to, try saying "I need a day to think about this". It will give you time to formulate your reply.
- Sometimes the 'no' is coming from someone else (e.g. you shouldn't apply for a certain job/grant) and you should always follow your gut and go for it if you disagree. Getting a second, outside opinion also helps.
- Get a mentor who can advocate for you (with you) if needed. Get multiple mentors to help navigate different aspects of your life/career.
- Pay it forward - be a mentor or advocate for someone at an earlier career stage.
- Remember, it's ok to have kids, and to have them be your priority! The NIH grant reviewers that were present all agreed that maternity and/or leave should be freely discussed in Biosketch personal statements.
- When you are the "only one", ie in the minority—you can be overloaded with committee activities that take time away from research; feeling pressure from Deans and how it is important to set priorities in these environments.

Final thoughts from Dr. Amanda Brown, outgoing chair of the Women and Diversity Committee: "Making the choice to advocate in different situations and understanding and perhaps welcoming the feedback that comes with that (which can be negative or positive) and then navigating that while trying as best possible to foster relationship building is important. It is through the back and forth of conversing that we really learn about each other and help one another grow, and importantly, move our shared goals and aspirations forward."