

Women offer tips to break glass ceiling

By ANN MARY LANDIS
Staff Reporter

Even though the idea of male and female roles are not as prevalent as they were three decades ago, Gretta Goodwin, a UNL graduate teaching assistant in economics, said many stereotypes still exist.

"For whatever reason, (people) think women are the only people supposed to be taking care of the kids," Goodwin said.

Goodwin was one of seven women panelists in male-dominated fields who said Wednesday night they had butted up against the glass ceiling and knew why many women would never break through it.

During a forum sponsored by the Lincoln-Lancaster Women's Commission and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Women's Center, the women said they have, for the most part, overcome an invisible barrier that can keep many women from advancing in their mostly male workplaces.

The third-annual forum was held in the Nebraska East Union.

Some of the women said the stereotype of women as mothers and as homemakers causes many women to fall into time management problems.

"I think the biggest drawback is balance. We have so many draws on our energy," said Nancy Muehling, who owns Muehling Construction. "Often we are not strong enough to say no."

Kathleen Rutledge, an editor at the Lincoln Journal Star, and pilot Chandra Clanton agreed women struggle to find a balance between their home and office demands.

But the Rev. Jane Heenan from the Church of the Holy Trinity said the biggest challenge for women is to communicate effectively.

"I think a lot of times if women expressed their thoughts in ways they would actually be heard, things would be much better," she said.

Women must pay attention to their audience, she said, and speak in a way that audience will best understand.

Goodwin, however, said a lack of financial opportunity holds many women down.

"Lack of economic empowerment is one of the biggest concerns facing women today," she said.

Some women said they would tell their daughters to succeed by living as proud individuals.

"State your own opinions and don't lean on someone else to back you up," Muehling said.

Others said women must be "true" to themselves.

"Find something that you care passionately about," Heenan said. "When you care about the people you work with more than your own ambitions, you can't fail."

Other women said success comes only to those with a strong work ethic.

"Be prepared to work extremely hard," Goodwin said.

Although all women panelists have succeeded in male-dominated fields, many said their first career goals were in more traditional fields for women.

At the age of 12, Rutledge said, she "wanted to be a teacher because that's what girls did."

Goodwin said she once wanted to be a math teacher.

The idea of female roles kept Joanne Bronson's childhood goals lower than her abilities, she said.

"I wanted to be a nurse and never dreamed I could be any higher than a nurse," said Bronson, who now works as a certified nursing midwife.

Muehling said she was older than the others and, therefore, was raised in a different generation. Growing up, she had an even more limited view of women's career opportunities than the others.

"My greatest aspiration at 12 was to marry a farmer and be the best cook in the community."

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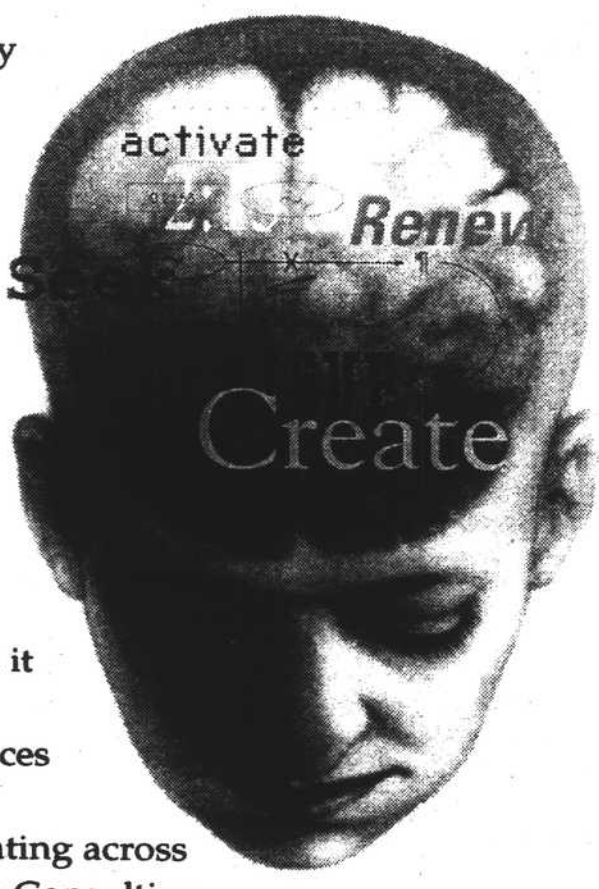
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When: Wednesday, February 4 at 6:30p.m.

Who: All Technology-Oriented Majors

Where: Room 185 in the W. Nebraska Hall

**Food and beverages will be served.
Casual attire is appropriate.**

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