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Women in Leadership on Jesuit Campuses



Photo courtesy of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences.

Georgetown University alumna Megan Mylan (SFS '92) won the 2009 Academy Award for Best Documentary Short Subject. The film, *Smile Pinky*, chronicles the challenges of two children born with cleft palates in India. For more information on the film and her experiences as a student at Georgetown, please click onto the following link: <http://explore.georgetown.edu/news/?ID=40146>.

Hear Her Roar: A Fresh Perspective on Women's Leadership at LMU

By: Fred Puza, Staff Writer/Editor, Loyola Marymount University

The first bill that President Barack Obama signed into law, in only his second week in office, was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009. The law, which amended the Civil Rights Act and cancelled out a 2008 Supreme Court ruling, is named after the woman who pursued pay that was equal to that of her male counterparts years after learning she'd been discriminated against in the first place.

The bill signaled a move towards greater equality, but it simultaneously exposed the stark gender gap that still exists. While we are seeing more gender diversity in the workforce, in religious organizations and in other segments of society, it is becoming increasingly clear that more work needs to be done to empower women, especially young women. Loyola Marymount University is committed to helping establish new and innovative ways of promoting women's leadership for its students, faculty and staff members.

One of the most recent developments at LMU is the creation of a "Mentoring and Management" course. Members of the Women's Leadership Council, a philanthropic group aimed at increasing involvement and visibility of women in leadership roles within the university, were looking for more direct ways to develop a stronger relationship with current students. After meeting with Ellen Ensher, '87, associate professor of management and co-author of the book "Power Mentoring: How Mentors and Protégés Get the Most Out of Their Relationships," the council members agreed that the best way to connect with students would be to mentor them.

"Mentoring is one of the most natural ways to reach out and get in touch with the students," Ensher said. "People who have a positive role model in their lives will become more successful in their careers and are more apt to serve others in the future."

The course connects each student with a mentor who is working in a field that the student wants to enter. The pair then works together to create a development plan that documents the beginning, middle and end of their project, with a completed professional development project due at the end of the semester. Salita Mitchell, senior business administration major, is planning to work with Kellie Hawking, executive director of the Los Angeles City Commission on the Status of Women, on a program that helps at-risk young women, ages 16 to 18, get internships and job placements.

"It gives me hope and encouragement to see a woman who is not only successful in her career but who is so passionate about the work she is doing," Mitchell said. "I know that if I put my mind to it, I can follow her path and succeed at whatever I want to do."

Ensher stresses in her book that mentoring is a two-way street. Protégés, in addition to the invaluable experience and wisdom that they receive from their mentor, often make more money, experience greater job and career satisfaction, and have better work-family balances later on in life. But mentors receive many benefits as well, such as building support networks, freeing up time by having protégés take on projects, and enjoying the loyalty of the protégé.

Another vehicle at LMU that specifically addresses issues of concern to women is the Committee on the Status of Women (CSW). Gail Buck, director of the Office of Black Student Services, and Paige Edley, associate professor of Communication Studies, currently serve as co-chairs of the committee and are dedicated to creating solutions for empowering the female population at the university.

"One of my primary concerns is to hear the voices of women, specifically

women and students of color, and to have their concerns addressed," said Buck. "Women need to have more empathy for one another and learn from one another."

In October 2008, CSW co-sponsored a Women's Leadership Empowerment seminar that focused on providing women faculty and staff with the knowledge and communication skills to empower them in their daily work and career development. More than 40 women attended the seminar, which was conducted by Brenda Allen, associate dean and professor of communication at University of Colorado, Denver. Networking, recognition, and organizing events, such as mentoring and professional development workshops, topped the list of the ways to resolve these challenges.

"Women across campus need to be recognized, share in their successes and have the appropriate contacts to reach out when need be," Edley said.

CSW provides opportunities for outstanding women student leaders to better themselves and the university as a whole. To this end, CSW sends one female student leader to the annual College Women Student Leaders Conference hosted by the American Association of University Women and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators. The conference aims to provide female students with opportunities to build leadership, advocacy, networking, financial management and other skills necessary for campus leaders. In addition, CSW co-sponsors Hear Her Roar, an annual weekend event organized by sophomore, junior and senior female students to help first-year women adjust to campus life.

Another way CSW hopes to empower female students is through conducting relevant research. Buck and Edley are currently applying for a grant that will fund research on the culture of "hooking up"

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