tegic consultant specializing in materials science based in the Vigo Area of Spain, who has worked as a researcher in both France and the United Kingdom. She has noticed a "subtle discrimination on the part of male-dominated teams that are in charge of choosing between candidates for new positions."

Removing these blockades is a slow process. But there are examples that prove that when action is taken, positive results can follow, said Dickinson. Her department at the University of Auckland has achieved the rare success of raising the proportion of female students in the undergraduate chemical and engineering degree course to 53%. "One thing that seems to be working at my university and I have seen elsewhere are women support groups," she said. "By having a space for the women to discuss their issues, and to have support and ideas be provided by others, is a great way to strengthen each female by giving them the confidence to believe in themselves. They can work through their insecurities in a safe environment before having to deal with them in the 'real' world."

The ultimate challenge is to transform the culture in physical sciences and engineering from predominantly male into one in which women feel equally welcome and comfortable. Sujata Kundu, a materials chemist at University College London, said that she used to feel under pressure to be "less feminine." In the end, she realized that she had no choice but to unmask her personality. "I feel now that, if I can enjoy music, dance, shoes and handbags, and still push the boundaries of science, then that is something to be proud of. To stand against the stereotype, without the fear of not being taken seriously."

Angela Saini

Canadian composites industry receives C$9.8 million federal boost

www.composites.ubc.ca

The Composites Research Network (CRN) was launched in January with the announcement of a C$9.8 million investment by the Canadian government. Based at the University of British Columbia (UBC) Vancouver campus, the network is a pan-western Canada initiative, led by UBC materials engineering professor, Anoush Poursartip.

From its hub at UBC, the CRN will establish nodes in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba where composites experts will work with companies to enable them to become more competitive by bridging the gap between theory and practice. The network builds on existing collaborations and aims to bring in new partners from across Canada and internationally in the future.

Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification Lynne Yelich, who made the announcement, said, "By supporting this initiative, our Government is helping to provide western Canadian businesses with the means to capitalize on the evolving composites industry and the associated economic benefits."

The CRN aims to better translate academic knowledge into industry practice. Recognizing the challenge for industry to take advantage of engineering research advances, the core mission of the network is to produce a new family of knowledge-based best practice documents. CRN participants will be able to access these as well as training facilities, materials and events, and linkages to key national and international organizations and institutions.

"This investment in the Composites Research Network advances important collaborative research between researchers and businesses," said John Hepburn, VP Research & International at UBC. "These research partnerships drive innovation by developing and implementing manufacturing solutions faster and more efficiently than would otherwise be possible."

The Composites Innovation Centre in Winnipeg, a key partner in the network, welcomed the announcement. "The CRN will provide western Canadian industry with a significant advantage in further understanding and refining their composites manufacturing processes," said Sean McKay, executive director of the Centre. "Developing the necessary science and hence fundamental understanding of manufacturing issues and being able to assimilate them into everyday operations to reduce defects and improve efficiencies are essential to remain competitive in today's global marketplace." □

https://doi.org/10.1557/mrs.2012.136 Published online by Cambridge University Press