

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

A Sweet Tipping Point

When I sat down to write this column, I couldn't help but think of the SWE tagline: Aspire, Achieve, Advance. Three years ago a few of us aspired to be a strong and vibrant section. With your committed support & participation we were able to achieve that goal. We are now seeking every opportunity to advance our section's success to you, our members, local companies, and other professional organizations.

I believe we have reached the 'Tipping Point' at SWE Atlanta. Our membership has gone beyond a hundred; our executive committee is now seven women strong representing four major Atlanta companies, four engineering majors and three ethnic origins; we have regularly scheduled monthly meetings and a mentoring program; we have outreach programs for Girl Scouts, K-12 program; we have collaboration efforts with corporate women's groups and other professional societies.

I would like to improve our communications within the section. I commit to communicating with you monthly regarding our section and national news. I urge you to contact us with your ideas and feedback as well. We can grow as a section only when there is an open dialog among the members.

This summer we took a survey of the current members. Members who responded by July 15th were entered in a raffle. I am glad to announce that Arlene Hammond and Ramona McClain are the lucky winners of a SanDisk 512 MB thumb drive each! Let me summarize our findings below.

Of the members that came to at least half of our meetings last year, social events and personal development programs ranked the highest with professional development programs following closely. Some 75% of the respondents were fairly satisfied with the section while 25% remained on the fence. Almost everybody expressed an interest in participating in our outreach

## 2006-2007 Calendar of Events

August 15, 2006 (lunch)	Personal Development Communication Skills
September 19, 2006	Networking Wine Tasting and Jewelry Sale
October 17, 2006	Personal Development TBD
November 14, 2006	Professional Development Engineering Panel with GT section
December 12, 2006	Networking Holiday Party
January 16, 2007	Professional Development TBD
February 20, 2007	Personal Development TBD with GT section
March 20, 2007	Networking Student Upgrade Dinner
April 17, 2007 (lunch)	Personal Development TBD
May 15, 2007	Professional Development TBD
June 19, 2007	Networking End of Year Celebration

activities or in some committee. You also wanted us to keep the current mix of programs at different locations in the GA400 and I-85 perimeter area. Some of you asked for more frequent section communications. Some of our members in government and academia wanted more interaction with women from their fields.

I would like to assure you that we heard you. Please look out for our response to your requests and concerns. We will hold a few lunchtime meetings for those who cannot attend our regular evening meetings. We will celebrate the diversity within the section and create opportunities for you to network better.

I, along with the rest of the SWE Atlanta leadership team, look forward to meeting as many of you as possible this year - in our meetings, programs, and social activities.

Cheers,  
Sabrina

## When Women Lead

By Rana Foroohar

This should be a season of celebration. After all, by many measures, there's never been a better time to be a woman. In places like Scandinavia and Britain, a third or more of all corporate managers are now women. The number of female executive directors of FTSE 100 companies nearly doubled from 2000 to 2004. Latin America has seen a 50 percent jump in the number of women politicians in the last decade. Japan voted 26 new female parliamentarians into office this year. Of course, the jewel in the equal-opportunity crown was this fall's election of Angela Merkel--once nicknamed "the Girl" by Helmut Kohl--to Germany's highest office.

But as always, statistics tell a multifaceted story. Sure, it's no longer an anomaly to have a female CEO--but there are still only 17 female executive directors in the largest FTSE 100 companies. In the EU Parliament, only 23 out of 162 members are female. Yes, women represent more than 50 percent of students in higher education in many parts of the world. But as a recent report by Catalyst, a U.S. research firm specializing in women and work, noted, the representation of women in corporate leadership has been stagnant for the last several years. In Britain, studies show that women have never been more dissatisfied with the workplace. No wonder: the EU pay gap between men and women shrank only one point in the last couple of years, to 17.5 percent.

So where does all this leave us? With some big challenges that require more female leadership to solve. At some major companies--including Shell and British Telecom--women are combating the old-boys'-club atmosphere by starting their own networks, linking top female leaders with up-and-comers they can mentor. Labor flexibility is also on the agenda; in parts of Europe,

top female legislators have fought to give employees with children or elderly parents the right to ask for adjustable hours. Perhaps most important, there is an increasingly vibrant debate around work-life balance.

Study after study shows that it is a working woman's second full-time job--as caregiver--that makes it most difficult for her to stay on the career ladder. While extra benefits and longer maternity leave can help, they aren't a complete solution. New research shows that in places like Sweden, employers sometimes discriminate against women of childbearing age to avoid paying out costly benefits.

Clearly, some out-of-the-box thinking is required. And that's where women come in. In countries like Cameroon, Bolivia and Malaysia, greater numbers of women in public office have resulted in less spending on the military and more on health, education and infrastructure. Norway's woman-heavy Parliament recently passed a law mandating that 40 percent of directors on corporate boards be women. And in Germany, the archetypal outsider--a woman who grew up on the wrong side of the Iron Curtain--will likely take the helm in a country with virtually no other women in top positions of power. No longer "the Girl" but poised to become the chancellor, Merkel is a symbol of how far women have come--and the work that remains to be done.

## OPPORTUNITY TO GET INVOLVED

### Mock Interviews and Resume Critique

September 10, 2006

This is the third annual mock interview day at Georgia Tech.

Volunteers conduct mock interviews and critique resumes for Georgia Tech student members. This activity supports the professional development of the students within the GT section by helping them practice their interviewing skills while networking with professional members.



How you can help:

If you are a recruiter (or anyone looking for new hire engineers), this is a unique opportunity to interact with incredible female students at Tech and get an informal look at potential candidates.



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## The Tipping Point

How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference  
Malcolm Gladwell, Review: Sabrina DeJoannis

For those who like to read about random topics, here is a page turner. This book talks about the huge impact small actions can have when triggered by three types of people. The connectors are social people who bring people together. The mavens have a large amount of knowledge that they pass on. The salesmen persuade the uncommitted.

Who in America doesn't know about Paul Revere's ride midnight run from Boston? Why is he talked about exclusively when he was one of a number of riders who formed a relay? Gladwell claims that it was because Paul Revere was a connector and a maven. The others were not as well connected as Revere and did not know how to convey the message (apart from announcing the obvious).

A small number of people can alter their behavior to create an outward ripple, causing other people to catch on until a critical mass or 'tipping point' is reached and a social phenomenon is changed. Along the way, Gladwell formulates several interesting concepts like the law of the few, the stickiness factor, and the power of context.

He uses entertaining examples from Hush Puppies, to teenage smoking to crime prevention in New York City to explain how these trends spread like the flu. It is a social science book and has a lot of statistics but it definitely holds your attention.

### Committee Positions Available!!!

We are looking for a few good women to help with the planning and execution of section activities during the 2006-2007 fiscal year. We have tons of things planned and would love for you to get more involved. Let us know what sort of things you are interested in and we'll see where your skills can fit in with SWE.

- Girl Scout Outreach – Contact Amy Hayes
- Corporate Support – Contact Molly Lipscomb
- Database – Contact Sabrina DeJoannis
- Family Issues – Contact Sabrina DeJoannis
- Leadership Conference – Contact Sabrina DeJoannis
- Newsletter – Contact Wendy Anderson
- Science Fairs – Contact Sabrina DeJoannis
- Space Campership – Contact Nancy Hunley

## Water

Directed by Deepa Mehta  
Review by Sabrina DeJoannis

I start this movie review with a bit of forewarning: the movie was set in early twentieth century India and things are vastly different now. However, the status of women in much of the world has much to go still.

The movie focuses on the marginalization of widows in 1938 Benares, "The Oldest City in The World". According to Hindu scripture a widow has three options: burn herself at the husband's pyre, marry the husband's younger brother if family permits it, or live a chaste life until death.

In those days it was common practice to marry a girl as young as 5 to a man of 50 or older. The girl would wait until puberty until she moved in with her husband. Naturally, a lot of child widows were the outcome of this practice- some of whom did not even know their husband.

The movie starts with the eight year old Chuiya. Just widowed, and with no recollection of her husband. Her relatives shave her head, put a white saree on her and take off all her jewelry & make up. She then must depart her family forever and move in to the local ashram - a Widow Home, run by a domineering old widow hardened by life.

To raise money for the ashram, the old woman uses some of the younger widows as prostitutes to the local nobilities. Thus the dignified and breathtaking Kalyani, who befriends little Chuiya, is the only widow exempt from the rules of keeping a shaved head. The pair are ostracized by most of the other women; Chuiya for her defiance and Kalyani for her shameful profession.

A glimmer of hope appears in the form of a young man full of idealism, influenced by Ghandi & the liberal college atmosphere. At first Kalyani avoids his courtship but gradually becomes convinced of his sincerity. But when he brings her home to meet his parents ... well, I won't spoil it for you.

Although this film is set in a cultural context that is unfamiliar to most of you, its driving themes are those religious & social conflict as well as love that are prevalent across cultures. In addition it brings to light a disturbing social practice that has only stubbornly given ground to modernity. Even today social norms are restrictive of women in many small villages across south Asia, which make me feel thankful for having been given the privilege of opportunity.

2006-2007 Mentor Program is forming now!

Contact Courtney Flores if you are interested in becoming a mentor or getting one.  
cmflores@pandqinc.com



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## Read what happened in the spring!!!

This year's SWE Atlanta Spring events provided a mix of professional and career development topics as well as some social networking functions. We had an above average turn-out for most events and were excited about the enthusiasm of all members including new and existing members. Thank you to all who attended and participated in the discussions.

Ø Doris Willmer, president of Willmer Engineering and member of Georgia's Professional Engineering Licensure Board was joined by Jill S. Tietjen, former SWE National President who had flown in from Colorado to discuss the importance of becoming a licensed Engineer once eligible. They discussed both the process of becoming licensed as well as the career advantages of having a PE in the state of Georgia and beyond.

Ø A panel of graduate school professors and admissions personnel joined us at Georgia Tech for a joint meeting with their student chapter. The panelists included Susan Gilbert - Director of the MBA program at Emory and the Associate Director of Women in Engineering at Tech, professor of Civil Engineering, Dr. Julie Swann - Professor of System & Industrial Engineering, and Allison Milanowski. Our moderator Tina Weatherman ensured that the conversation and discussion of the value of further education was helpful to both our professional members as well as the students.

Ø We joined with IEEE's Graduates of the Last Decade group to host Delores White, Compliance Manager for Georgia Power, as she spoke to us about Managing Change in our daily lives at work. Delores ensured that the group remained engaged in the topic and stimulating discussion ensued among the various types of Engineering disciplines represented in the room.

Ø In April, our group was joined by Casey Hawley, business writing and etiquette consultant and author of several great professional etiquette books. Casey gave a very compelling presentation of professionalism and how to conduct yourself in a way that behooves your career.

Ø Networking socials at venues such as the River Room, Garrison's at Perimeter Mall, and Dailey's in downtown Atlanta for Restaurant Week 2006 were very well received and attended by our section. Members were able to speak candidly with one another about their career experiences as well as interact socially to better get to know their peers in the Atlanta SWE section.

### Contact Us

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