Framing the future

By Kimberly Smith
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

In today’s rough-and-tumble business world, women who seek to move up the management ladder know the importance of having a well-honed set of leadership skills. Knowing the necessity of leadership acumen is a good first step, but gaining those skills can be challenging — unless you have a little help along the way.

For women executives or those who want to someday be one, events like the Women’s Leadership Forum can be a valuable resource for sharpening an existing skill set or learning the ropes of business leadership.

The Women’s Leadership Forum grew out of a 1998 initiative of the business school at Georgia State University, now known as the J. Mack Robinson College of Business, said Beverly Langford, clinical assistant professor of business communication programs in the Robinson College of Business Department of Marketing. She is also co-director of the Women’s Leadership Forum with colleague Maryann Wysor.

“The idea was to provide professional development, growth and mentoring for some of our female graduate students,” Langford said.

Langford, who specializes in written and spoken strategic communication, executive education message development and leadership development at GSU, has watched the event grow from a modest gathering of students four or five years on the GSU campus to a sizable public 14TH ANNUAL Langford Georgia State University Framing the future By Kimberly Smith CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Working in a woman’s world

► Seek out mentors. Career and personal mentors can be a tremendously valuable source of inspiration, wisdom, knowledge and support.
► Respect your colleagues and be open to new ideas from others.
► Network, network, network.
► Don’t be afraid to take thoughtful, calculated risks.
► Learn to say “no” to too many requests and demands on your time. Don’t spread yourself too thin.
► Never stop learning. Keep up with the latest developments in your field.
► Focus on the things that ignite your passion.
► Community service and nonprofit activities can be an important resource in times of career transition.

► See FORUM, 7B

14TH ANNUAL WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP FORUM

► Framing the future

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**Forum**
Continued from 1B

“Framing the Future,” the theme of this year’s forum, is aimed at helping women acquire the tools to achieve career goals, develop strategies and learn proven approaches for advancement from some of Atlanta’s most successful businesswomen. Executive panelists at the forum offer key insights to questions about the future for women in workplace leadership, strategies for success and issues regarding the existence of the glass ceiling as a barrier to advancement.

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**The future for women in executive positions is promising, and we’ll see more female CEOs at Fortune 500 companies as the business climate improves.**

Tamika Stokes Goins
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Masters [golf tournament]. A lot of people thought it remarkable that Augusta National did not admit women, but to a lot of people, it’s not remarkable that the CEO of IBM is a woman. It’s a great example of how things have changed.”

Emily Sanders, chairman and CEO of Sanders Financial Management Inc. in Norcross, said the glass ceiling still exists to hinder women who want advance to their career.

“Yes, there is still a glass ceiling,” Sanders said. “For example, there are 12 Fortune 500 companies that have women CEOs, which is less than 3 percent of total number of CEOs, compared to women being about 50 percent of the overall population.”

There’s no shortage of talented and ambitious women, she said. “Women who are breaking the glass ceiling are just doing it one at a time.”

Women tend to take more breaks from their careers or take extended leave for child-rearing or taking care of a family member, Sanders said, self-limiting choices that often result in negative career consequences.

The impact of more women in leadership roles will be strongly felt when there are more women at the top,” Sanders noted, “but the C-suite is still male-dominated.”

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