



**AWIS-PHL
Strategic Planning
2021-2026
Conducted during 2020-2021**

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1. Introduction

In the summer of 2020, AWIS-PHL began working on a strategic plan to guide the Chapter's direction, focus, and programming for the next 3 to 5 years. The process involved all the elected officers (the Executive Board) and other chapter leaders and continued into the fall of 2020, during the height of the global pandemic.

This was the first strategic planning session for AWIS-PHL and it was designed to generate ideas to sustain the future of the Chapter. All plans will help to drive the organization and help the organization adapt to societal changes that may impact women in STEM.

The undertaking of the strategic planning session by AWIS-PHL leaders was three-fold. At the height of the global pandemic, the normal face-to-face activities/events were disrupted, requiring leaders to think outside of the box and pivot to ensure continuity of programming, networking, and mentorship. The global pandemic also required AWIS-PHL to support the emerging needs of our members. Secondly, AWIS-PHL leaders desired to not only adapt to the disruption but also emerge as leaders, remain relevant, and continue to advance the mission of the Chapter, to offer programs and resources to provide networking, mentoring, and leadership opportunities for women in STEM at all levels of their careers and education. The last goal of the strategic planning session was to solicit feedback and get all of the leadership involved in shaping the Chapter to meet the needs of its diversified membership for the future.

For all leaders, strategic planning is about understanding the challenges, trends, and issues; understanding who are the key beneficiaries or clients and what they need; and determining the most effective and efficient way possible to achieve goals. A good strategy drives focus, accountability, and results. The following information summarizes the key points discussed during the 2020 AWIS-PHL strategic planning session.

2. Brainstorming and Participant Responses

The first step was a general brainstorming session, which began with the question “What does it mean to be a woman in STEM?”. Figure 1 captures the responses to this question.

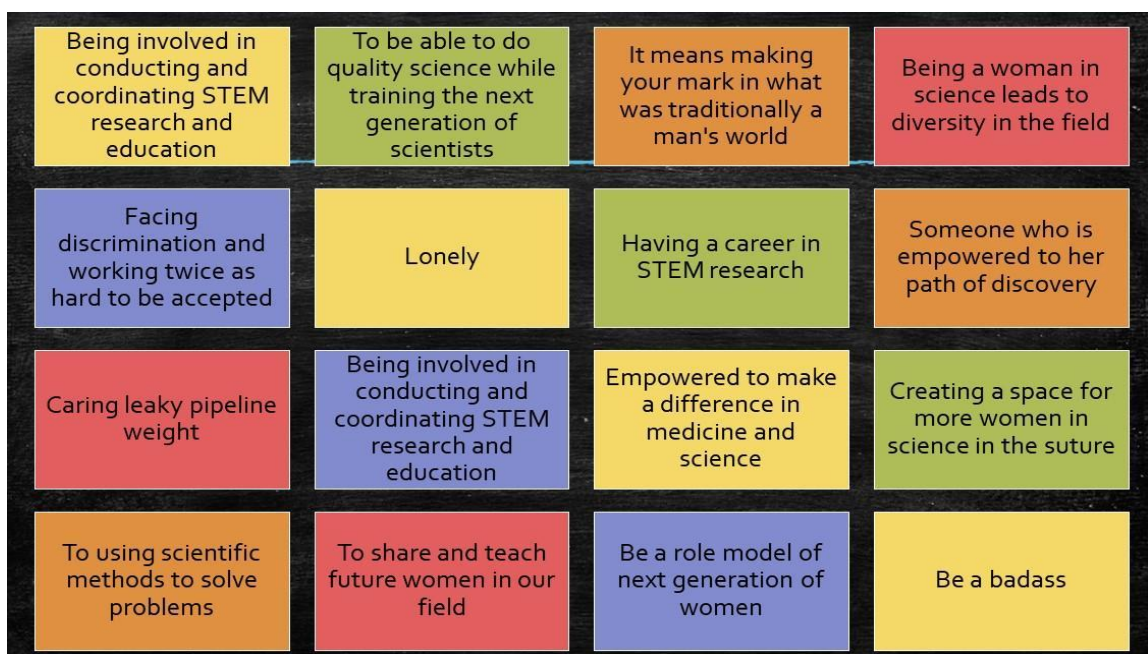


Figure 1: AWIS-PHL Leadership responses to “what it means to be a woman in science”.

The group next reviewed their first experience(s) with AWIS-PHL and why they opted to take a leadership position with the chapter. Based on the responses, most leaders were exposed to AWIS national or AWIS-PHL through mentoring and networking events and had positive comments about the energy and enthusiasm of the people involved with the chapter. The participant’s responses to their first experience with AWIS national or AWIS-PHL included, but were not limited to:

1. mentoring circle program,
2. modeling lab coats in the Philadelphia Science Fair,
3. empowerment through the book club and collegial discussions,
4. local or national networking events/sessions,
5. connecting with like-minded women to explore ways towards a successful career path,

6. personal connection and engagement in a new city,
7. encouraged by an established member to explore AWIS-PHL events, and/or
8. attendance at a workshop focused on personal or professional development.

The participant's responses to why they took a leadership position with the chapter included but were not limited to:

1. recruitment by an existing board member,
2. to contribute to the high level of engagement and excitement within the AWIS-PHL chapter,
3. to be proactive to empower women in science,
4. to contribute and to make an impact or be the difference in STEM,
5. a desire to get involved professionally with other like-minded women in STEM,
6. to help create networking opportunities for women in STEM,
7. to nurture future women in STEM and give them a sense of belonging,
8. to gain experience in leadership,
9. to give back to a community of women in science, and/or
10. to sustain AWIS-PHL for the future.

Thereafter, there were general discussions on the programming initiatives and activities of AWIS-PHL. During these discussions, a brainstorming activity was conducted using electronic sticky notes to highlight areas of interest of the board members to inform future programming initiatives. A few examples are highlighted below:

1. How to be an active ally and to be an active bystander
2. Building or enhancing financial acumen, confidence, and work-life balance
3. Outreach in underserved communities in the Philadelphia area
4. Building or enhancing leadership skills
5. Building a personal brand
6. Support for mental wellness

The following programming themes were then identified from this brainstorming exercise (Figure 2).

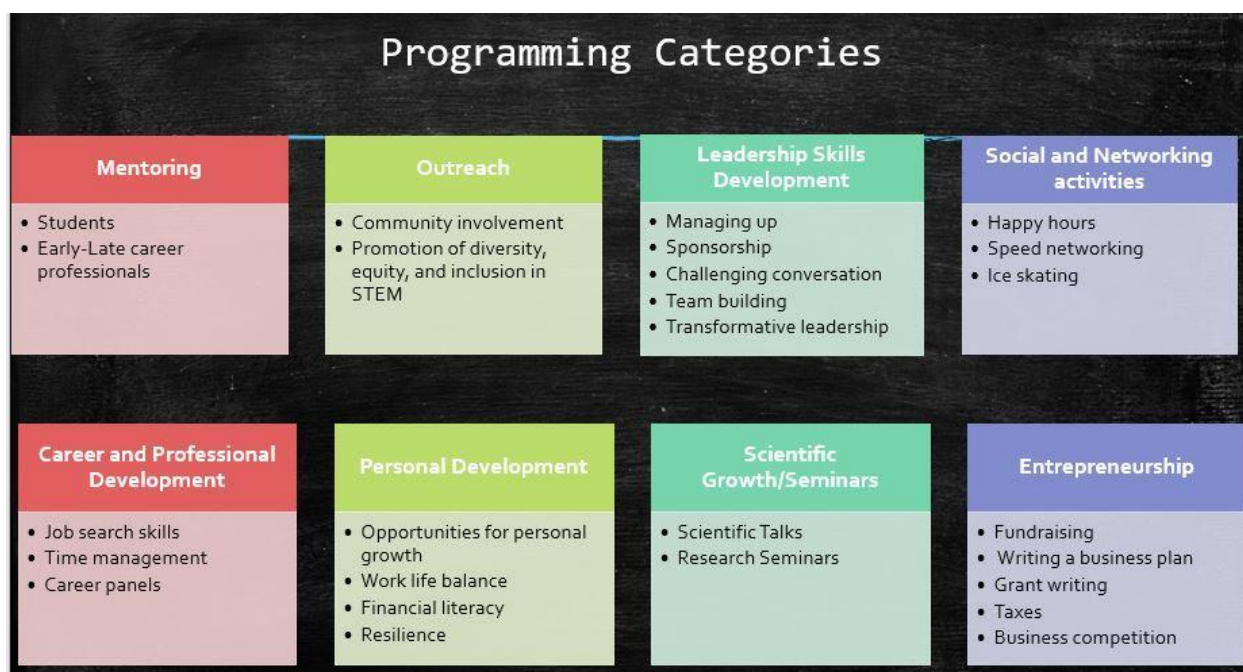


Figure 2. Programming initiatives of interest among AWIS-PHL leaders.

When asked “what attributes lend to the uniqueness of AWIS-PHL” the following responses were provided:

1. Diversity of meeting attendees
2. Depth of scientific opportunities geographically
3. Depth of leadership within AWIS-PHL and transfer of scientific knowledge
4. Wealth of STEM/biomedical institutes (academic and industry) in the region
5. STEM lab coat initiative developed and displayed by AWIS-PHL members during local science festival to increase public awareness of the contribution of women in STEM
6. Formal and informal mentoring
7. Longevity of the chapter

The next step was to look inward and outward to understand the issues facing the Chapter using a SWOT analysis. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. The SWOT analysis helps to summarize the perceptions of the Chapter regarding the internal strengths of the Chapter, internal weaknesses, external opportunities for potential pursuit, and the external threats to consider.

During the preliminary SWOT analysis, AWIS-PHL leaders evaluated opportunities that would expand our outreach and/or help us to focus on the future of the Chapter. The leaders identified key stakeholders (i.e., sister organizations/potential collaborators, local colleges/universities, early career researchers, AWIS-PHL executive board and members, local biotech/pharma companies, local community, undergraduate, graduates and postdoctoral students, future STEM scientists, women at any stage in their stem career, teach faculty, mentors/mentees, transitional scientists, women scientist re-entry the workforce, AWIS National) and explored resources that would be needed to fulfill our mission in the future and protect the Chapter from any potential threats.

Our primary mission is to empower women in leadership and STEM. Potential collaborators that can help us fulfill the mission and can help support the efforts to fulfill the mission are as follows:

- STEM organizations that support women in science or support outreach for future scientists that align with our mission include but are not limited to
 - Society for Women Engineers
 - Penn Women in Chemistry
 - 500 women in science
 - Women in Bio
 - ACS Women's Chemists Committee
 - Society of Professional Women
 - Girls Inc.
 - Girls Who Code
 - Philadelphia Area Girls Enjoying Science (PAGES)
- Another category is scientific societies that are potential co-sponsors for AWIS PHL centric events to help us realize our mission include but are not limited to
 - American Association for Cancer Research (AACR)
 - Society for Neuroscience
 - American Physics Society
 - American Society Cell Biology
 - American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
 - American Society for Microbiology
- Local Universities and Colleges that are represented among our members that can provide a venue for AWIS PHL events and where we can recruit members among students and faculty include

- Drexel University
- Thomas Jefferson University
- Temple University
- Arcadia University
- University of the Sciences
- Villanova University
- Rutgers University
- Rowan University
- We have an opportunity to expand our outreach and engage with underrepresented minority students attending local universities and colleges such
 - Cheyney University Of Pennsylvania
 - Lincoln University
- Local museums and non-profit organizations, outside of the academic arena where we can hosts outreach events or partner with them to such as
 - The Franklin Institute
 - Natural Academy of Sciences
 - The Mutter Museum

All leaders agreed that the mission of the Chapter would be better served by recruiting other AWIS-PHL members to volunteer for committees/interest groups and to be actively involved in advancing the objectives of the Chapter for future generations of scientists. Resources to further the mission were also identified, and included but were not limited to:

1. Financial support
2. Leadership development for the board members
3. Champions at local academic institutions and businesses
4. Resources for marketing, publicity, and advertising
5. Industry-sponsored events
6. Resources to continue to train our future leaders
7. Partnerships/collaborations/Chapter sponsors
8. Engaging graduate student and postdoctoral associations to advertise for AWIS-PHL
9. Can we engage the other local chapters to understand what resources are available so that we can maximize our outreach?
10. Engaging more faculty from the different stem departments at the universities

- 11. Membership buy-in
- 12. Branching out beyond biology/chemistry into mathematics, engineering, and education, etc

3. Strength Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

Prior to reconvening the leaders for further discussion, each member was asked to independently identify 3 strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with AWIS-PHL with supporting rationale. All of the feedback was collated and appropriately categorized and then leaders ranked the responses on a 1 to 7 scale, with 7 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree. The individual responses were then summated with a maximum of 35 points per category. The compiled results for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are as follows (figures 3 through 6):

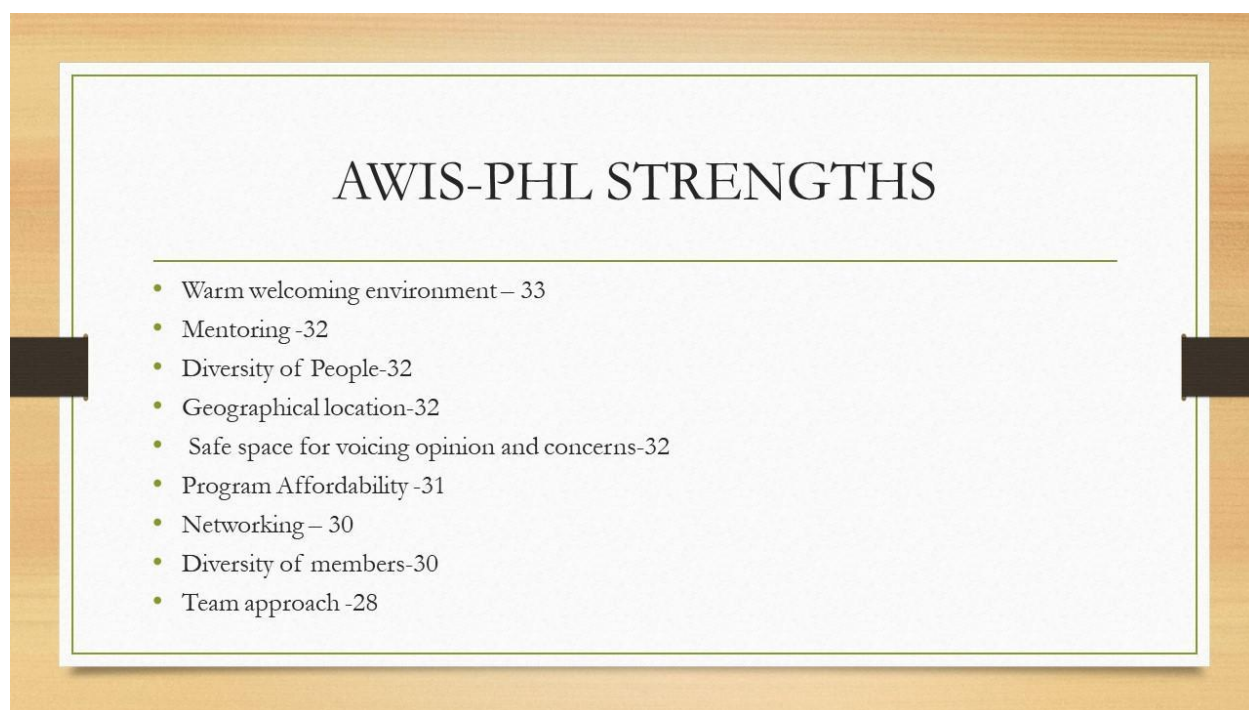


Figure 3. Summary of AWIS-PHL Strengths

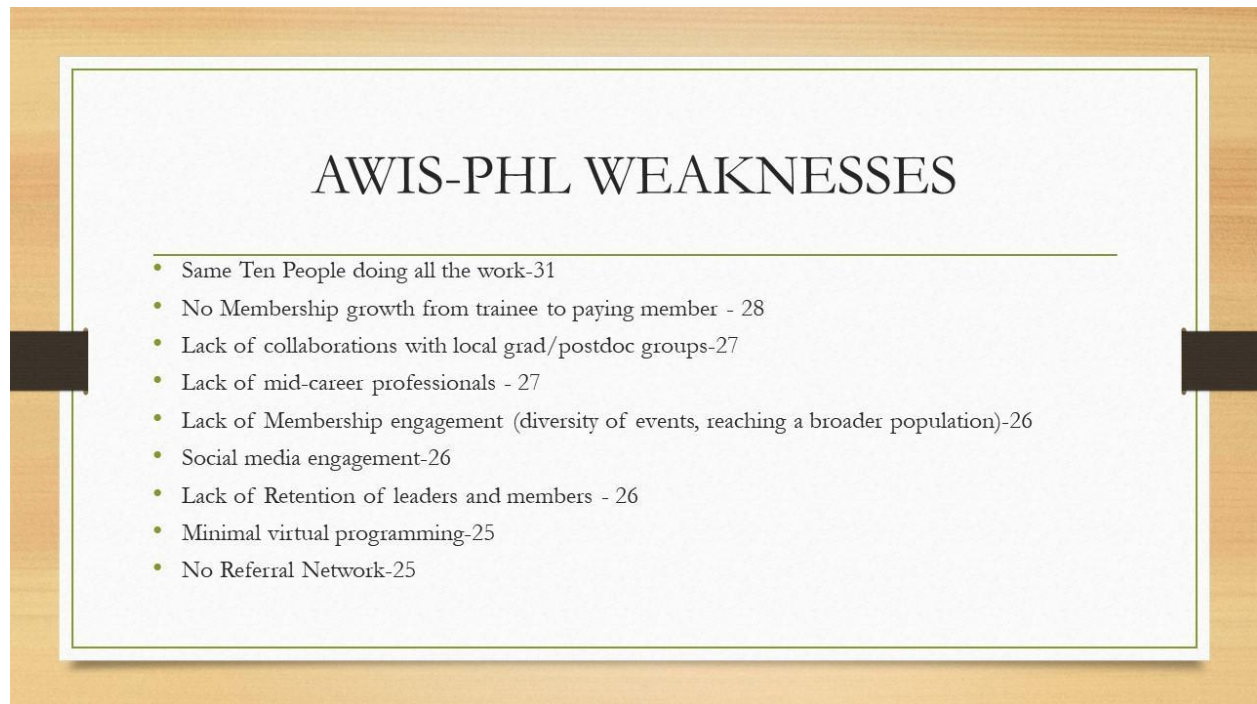


Figure 4. Summary of AWIS-PHL Weaknesses



Figure 5. Summary of AWIS-PHL Opportunities



Figure 6. Summary of AWIS-PHL Threats

One of the opportunities identified in SWOT analysis was enhancing our programming, specifically workshop-style programs to better engage with our diverse members who are in various stages of their academic training or their career and on different career paths. From here we engaged in the discussion on how we can use our programming to attract different members and raise awareness of non-members and the local community of the society, the chapter, and our mission. We ranked our programming based on the type of programming our leaders thought was the most impactful professionally and personally to focus our chapter's efforts. Each participant ranked various program categories on a scale of 1-7 (1 being the most important) and then scores from all participants were summated to reveal the aggregate rankings. The following figure summarizes the results.



Figure 7: Program categories ranked from the most important (from top to bottom).

4. Strategic Objectives

The results of the leadership's efforts in 2020 resulted in the identification of the top 5 strategic objectives for the Chapter:

1. Expand the mentoring program to include undergraduate students, career changers, and other micro-communities.
2. Raise awareness of the chapter activities through local and regional collaborations and expanding social media presence.
3. Increase our focus on diverse, equitable, and inclusive leadership, membership, and programming.
4. Grow, retain, and engage our membership.
5. Foster allyship and sponsorship of women in science through education and recognition of active allies and sponsors.

It is anticipated that leadership will continue to be asked to give input in a variety of ways (e.g., surveys, focus groups, discussions) as we dig deeper into specific aspects of the Strategic Plan.

Now that we have formulated a strategic plan it is up to the incoming executive board to implement, review and adjust the plan to ensure its effectiveness. Annually, Leadership will be responsible for evaluating the Chapters' ability to set the right goals and consistently achieve them. The initiatives of each committee will need to align with the strategic objectives throughout the calendar term, and they should contribute to delivering the strategy. The initiatives must be able to produce a clear and measurable impact on the objectives to which they are aligned. The performance measures, as described above, indicate the success of the initiative(s) by displaying impact and achievement for the objective.

5. Contributors

1. Natalie Chernets - President
2. Elise Lewis - President-Elect
3. Kimberly Scata - Past President
4. Roshell Muir - VP of Programing
5. Tracey Popielarczyk - Treasurer
6. Dolly al Koborssy - Secretary and Program Chair & Diversity Officer
7. Akshata Almad - Membership Chair
8. Battuya Bayarmagnai - Grad Student and Postdoc Liaison
9. Ellie Brown - Communications Chair
10. Ellie Cantor - Webmaster
11. Ankita Patil - Mentoring Co-Chair
12. Megan Wright - Mentoring Co-Chair

6. Acknowledgments

We appreciate the active participation of AWIS PHL Board members and Committee Chairs for their active participation and candid feedback during this strategic planning session, especially given the personal and professional challenges during the global pandemic.

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2020-2021

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