



News
—
Sports
—
Calendar/Events

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Women Offer Insight Into Balancing Work And Family

They were often the only females in their classrooms. They worked hard to "get out" of Georgia Tech. Then as women in the workforce, there were more obstacles to overcome.

Six women shared their stories during "The Changing Role of Women in the Workforce," a panel discussion hosted at the Georgia Tech Alumni/Faculty House as part of Homecoming 2002. The seminar coincides with the 50th anniversary of the admission of female students to Georgia Tech.

On the panel were Barbara Cass Wilson, Arch 59; Sally Lam Woo, ChE 66; Kelli Keb, IM 78; Andrea Arena, Mgt 89; Carmen Sidbury, PhD 96; and Mary Lynn Realff, TE 87.

Realff said she is more than an associate professor in textile and fiber engineering at Georgia Tech. "One of the things left out of the introduction is I have a 5- and 7-year-old, and this morning I spent two hours at the elementary school trying to understand some consequences for my 5-year-old, so I'm definitely trying to balance family and work."

She added that when juggling work and family, "it is important to have a supportive spouse. You can't make it otherwise."

Keb agreed that it is difficult to perform the work and family balancing act after children enter the picture. "It does change everything after that."

As a mother of four, Woo started her own Oriental art gallery in order to set her own hours. "A Tech degree gave me confidence. I was not afraid to try things."

Arena, owner of 2 Places At 1 Time, said Tech women were more prepared for the working world because of "the ability to compete head to head with men. We were usually the only women in the room so we were used to that."

Keb said it didn't bother her at all when she served as the only woman on the Trees Atlanta board. "Tech prepared us to go into those kinds of situations and not be intimidated."



Photo by Michael Schwartz

Kelli Keb, Andrea Arena, Carmen Sidbury and Mary Lynn Realff participated in the panel discussions.