

Women in Business Networking



Interview with Debra Wilburn, Administrator, Wright State University



WiBN: How long have you been in your position at Wright State University?

Debra: I am in my 16th year of service at Wright State, and my 14th year in Career Services at Wright State. I assist students and alumni in developing and planning their career path, acquiring relevant experience, and mastering job search strategies. Assistance for employers is available in the form of on-campus recruiting and interviewing; a résumé database for review by registered employers; and job postings for off-campus generalist positions, co-ops and internships, and career employment. Combined with similar service at another institution, I've been in this field for 20 years.

WiBN: What is the one thing that you want our readers to know about Wright State University?

Debra: It is a growing, dynamic institution with opportunities for students, but also for businesses. Through on-campus offerings and affiliated programs, there are many opportunities for students to enrich their educational profile and their career path. Career Services offers an entry point for businesses to explore partnerships with the university.

WiBN: What are some personal skills that have helped you become who you are today?

Debra: With respect to career advising, active listening is essential to my effectiveness. Relevant resource referral requires the ability to creatively combine information from a variety of sources and a broad knowledge base. Another valuable skill is the ability to assess the true issues that clients bring to our meetings, beyond their stated issues. Being able to sensitively and tactfully initiate conversations about a client's various professional and personal challenges helps the client gain a new understanding of their situation and move forward in meaningful, significant ways.

WiBN: At any time during your life have you had a mentor?

Debra: It has often been my good fortune to have strong mentors. Early in my career in college administration, I had an exceptional mentor who had many years in program administration, who had worked for a time in a policy position in Washington, D.C., and who – as a supervisor – developed individual's strengths to create a strong team environment. That mentor had a great deal of compassion, a straightforward communication style, and a wonderful sense of humor.

WiBN: In your opinion, how can, or how does, networking benefit women in business?

Debra: Networking has so many benefits! When developing non-profit startups and starting my own small business, I have needed various service providers. Networking helps me find credible, professional assistance with people who fill business needs and who are great matches for my personality and style. In my role as a representative of Wright State and as a career adviser, networking allows me to share information in mutually beneficial ways, develop a base of knowledge from which to build future partnerships, and generate ideas and initiatives that meet community needs.

WiBN: What has been the biggest challenge in your position at Wright State University?

Debra: In all my professional endeavors, I would appreciate more time and more resources – as opposed to wishing for fewer ideas and fewer clients!

WiBN: What inspires you the most?

Debra: What a great question! I'm inspired daily, and I cannot attribute that to any one source. My mind is very open to inspiration.

WiBN: Share with us how you balance your work life and family life?

Debra: Asking how I balance work and family assumes they are on opposite sides of the scale with which I measure my life. My work is an integral part of my family life and how I define myself. In addition to my role as a career services advisor, I have dedicated significant time to entrepreneurship and community service. Effective time management and setting clear priorities have been key skills in accomplishing my goals. Aiming for an enjoyable, fulfilling lifestyle that presents opportunity for growth has been a helpful mindset. Being dedicated to laughing a lot surely hasn't hurt.

WiBN: What is your favorite thing to do in "taking care of you"?

Debra: Taking off my shoes!

WiBN: What leadership skills do you have that you feel contributes to the success of your position with Wright State University?

Debra: Thinking 'outside the box.'

WiBN: How did you hear about WiBN?

Debra: Through the Small Business Development Center at Wright State University.

WiBN: What motivated you to join WiBN?

Debra: The women I meet at WiBN events are achieving interesting goals, and dreaming of more to come. They are accomplished, motivated, eager to learn, interested in networking and collaborating, and supportive of other women in business. They are looking for new opportunities and partnerships. They have interesting stories to tell. I wanted to get to know them personally and benefit from their camaraderie, and from a professional standpoint I thought I might have resources to offer them through our employer services in Wright State University Career Services.

Contact Information:

Debra Wilburn

Email Address: debra.wilburn@wright.edu

Website: <http://career.wright.edu>