Encouraging gender diversity in computing by supporting women's participation in conferences

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ABSTRACT
Since the first edition of the womENcourage conference, one of the authors has encouraged female students and staff in our department to participate, consistently being able to send a delegation of five or more participants thanks to the support of academics. This poster presents the processes that have supported a strong presence every year, and also offers a reflection of the benefits of such participation.

CCS CONCEPTS
• **Social and professional topics** → **Computing education**; *Women*;

KEYWORDS
Women in computing, action research.

1 INTRODUCTION

In the last years, various targeted conferences to women in engineering and computer science have sought to address concerns about gender imbalance, evident in education and employment, where women are severely underrepresented [1].

As part of the actions by the first author's university department in addressing the effects of lack of gender diversity, she has supported staff and students participation in all four editions of the WomENcourage conference. She has: promoted support networks of participants at various points in their career paths; organised writing workshops; sought complementary funding for attendance; and organised group travel in an effort to both lower barriers for participation and to create a community of mutual support.

Table 1: ECS participation in WomENcourage

Venue/Year	UG	MSc	PhD	staff	alum	P	A
Manchester'14	4		2	2		1	5
Uppsala'15	3		2			4	5
Linz'16	3	1	2	1		3	5
Barcelona'17	2	2	5	1	1	5	8?

2 THE EVENTS

Table 1 shows staff and students involvement in each edition of the conference. In 2014, a poster was accepted (col.P), and five women from the department attended (col.A) at Manchester. Two others also contributed in the preparations.

In 2015, the authors set up a writing workshop to help others to present their work. This was a positive intervention, as four posters were accepted, and five women attended at Uppsala, one of which had wanted to attend the year before and felt especially motivated on hearing how interesting and useful the conference was to those who did attend. Another who had attended the year before, seized the opportunity to present her first poster here. The department supported this participation once again, and publicised its success [2]. This success was repeated once more in 2016 [3] and in 2017.

3 CONCLUSIONS

The womENcourage event is a focal point in the year that stimulates community-building activities, fostering participation through the celebration of the achievements of our diverse community. This poster illustrates the journey of students and staff who have been involved in this conference. Where were these participants? How did they become involved? How did they benefit from the attendance to the conference? Where are they now? All of these questions allow us to reflect on the impact of the conference in our community, and offers a case for its sustainability. One individual can create lasting impact with the help of a wider community.

REFERENCES
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