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Society.

In my maniacal e-mailing at work I use the greeting "Gentlemen" more often than not. Our astute former Forum Technical Chairman and current Deputy Director – Vehicle Design, Daniel Newman, mentioned this in one of my frequent e-mails to the AHS Technical Council. He indicated that this didn't seem "right." As we are rapidly approaching and almost into 2005 it doesn't seem right to me either. And it hasn't been for a long time. The umbrella term is "diversity" but somehow that umbrella doesn't seem to be covering our vertical flight community. Of course, I have hesitated to bring this topic up previously, since despite being addressed as "Mr. Smith" on a daily basis, I am female.

Our AHS Board of Directors and Technical Council does not have a minority (or a woman) on either governing body. In my recollection, for more than eleven years there has only been one female on the Technical Council and none on the Board of Directors at least for the past decade. Strangely enough, when I worked at the Society in 1976-1978, there was actually a female executive director and a woman was one of the appointed members of the Board of Directors.

At the most recent Technical Council meeting, Dr. Mike Torok, AHS Technical Director, remarked that members should try to increase diversity within the Society and on the Technical Council. Certainly corporations have had to acknowledge this reality for a while. I had a friend who worked in the aerospace industry who was female and handicapped. She used to joke that she enabled her employer to fulfill two important check marks for their "quotas."

We do have several Technical Committee Chairs who are female and two Associate Editors for the *Journal of the American Helicopter Society*. There is also one female Forum 61 Session Chair and one Forum 61 Deputy Session Chair. And one woman was just appointed to be the University of Maryland AHS Student Chapter President. There are many great minority and women engineers that I have worked with over the years but their population is only a fraction of what it could be. So in the rest of this column I am going to focus on women, a distinct minority in our vertical flight

engineering community.

If you visit any law or medical school you will find that women comprise at least fifty percent of those enrolled. But according to a recent University of Maryland publication, *Engineering at Maryland*, "Less than 20 percent of undergraduate students in engineering schools today are female, and an even smaller percentage of women hold jobs in the private sector, according to recent studies funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF)."⁶

The A. James Clark School of Engineering at the University of Maryland was and is concerned about this disparity and they have developed programs to identify potential female students during their middle and high school years and help to recruit and retain them as they pursue engineering studies at all levels. Back in the 1970s, Marilyn Berman Polans, who later became the associate dean of the Clark School, launched Women in Engineering (WIE). A variety of programs are run though WIE to attract women to the field. The Keys to Empowering Youth program is directed at middle school girls. Once a semester, the school conducts a workshop for some 40 Maryland and District of Columbia girls to learn about the impact that engineering has on every day life. In one learning scenario, the girls participated in a program to make model roller skates so that they could learn about potential and kinetic energy.

Another aspect of drawing young women into engineering is mentoring. A web site has been created – MentorNet (<http://www.mentor.net>) – that connects female students with professional women in the field. Another program at Maryland pairs upper-level students with freshmen women in their respective field. Linda Schmidt, associate professor of mechanical engineering at the Clark School, put it succinctly and well: "There is a whole pool of women who are talented, but for whatever reasons have chosen other careers. We need the most talented individuals, both male and female, working on all of the world's problems, or we will not find the best solutions."

