You want your work life to change, but you do not know where to start. According to Deirdre Ling, vice chancellor for University Relations and Development, you start by taking a risk. "Calculated risk taking that allows you to take a leap rather than baby steps," is the way to get where you want Ling told approximately 180 women at a recent luncheon meeting of the University Women’s Professional Network (UWPN).

When she was interviewed for her first job in admissions at a school in the West, Ling was asked if she could lift boxes and audio-visual equipment, and whether she would be able to handle eating alone at a truck stop while on business trips. "Eating alone was a small risk," she said. There were more risks to take later, such as applying for a job in New York that she was not completely qualified for, and accepting the offer.

"A woman," said Ling, "may feel she lacks 10 percent" of the job qualifications when looking at a possible new job, while a "man sees he has 60 percent" and assumes that he can pick up the rest on the job.

Leading and Participating

Vice Chancellor Ling cited Michael Maccoby’s three types of leadership: the independent crafts person or the Jeffersonian vision; the empire builders or the turn-of-the-century robber barons; and the gamesman who loves challenge, adventure, and has ambition, such as John F. Kennedy. But, she asserted, there is a new kind of leader today—one who is skeptical yet affirmative, a self-realizer who "participates with those she leads."

Power today, she said, is "the capacity to act, to get things done and to open the lines of communication. We can empower ourselves by participating with others." She mentioned innovation and brainstorming as a means to identifying a problem and transforming it into an opportunity. The problem of cleaning the University library, she pointed out, led to the innovative, brainstorming opportunity of Mass Transformation.

A bad boss is no excuse for not succeeding, the vice chancellor said, because doing something well reflects well on you and enhances your resume. "It is exciting to see problems resolve, and you will get visibility. People will be able to see what you did." If you lack ideas on how to go about solving a problem, she suggested asking for proposals from all organizational leaders. "If you don’t have people to brainstorm, build them," she said.

The UWPN

Building a network of people to brain-