



Photo credit: limitless pursuits.com [Megan Hine Photography](#)

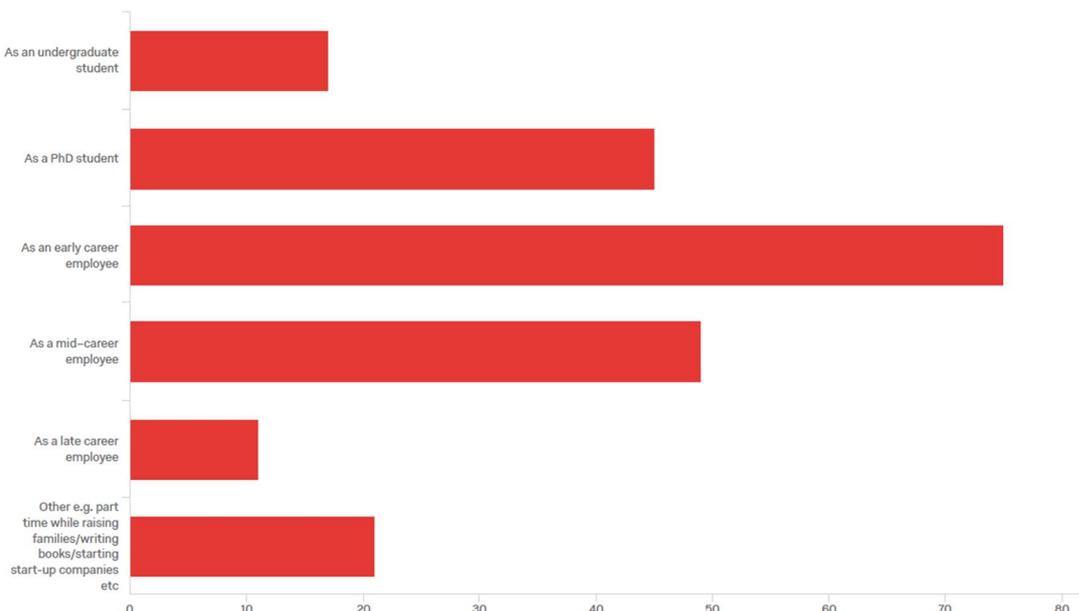
Mapping our Careers and learning from the journey

This month I was fortunate to host a *Career Mapping* workshop as part of a research program capturing qualitative and quantitative data about women's experience in STEM careers. Associate Professor Tonia Gray, School of Education Western Sydney University and Chair of the Australian Tertiary Outdoor Education Network (ATOEN), was the facilitator and is the research coordinator for this grant and project. Our research project has two components – an online survey that takes about 20 minutes, and optional participation in a face-to-face workshop.

The online survey is open to anyone interested to participate and can be found at [THIS link](https://surveyswesternsydney.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0lbgMfzvcEPTohl) (https://surveyswesternsydney.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0lbgMfzvcEPTohl Password EWHE) – we would love to have as many people as possible participate in the survey, which will be open until 21 September. The survey captures things like the time you have spent in academe, where you are at in your career, whether you have had breaks in your career for travel, children, or various other reasons, whether career changes have been by choice or the result of a grant or contract finishing, whether changes have been to a different institution, employer, industry, city or country, and the number of times you may have experienced such changes through your career. To date we have had over 200 responses.

Why is this sort of research important? People's experiences at different stages of their career impact retention, turnover, and influence the industries people end up working in – be it academia, private sector or public sector. Many organisations trying hard to attract and retain STEM professionals, particularly women, find there is a propensity to lose early career professionals. Our understanding of people's experiences in their

Q14 - What has been your most rewarding career stage to date?



careers and what is driving decision making about directions and changes provides the opportunity to provide different support and engagement to people at different stages of their career to make their work experiences more fulfilling. Our preliminary survey results are highlighting some interesting trends in the degree of satisfaction people are feeling about their careers at different stages, amongst many other things (see graph).

The face-to-face workshops are a more interactive and diagrammatic exploration of the same themes. What would your career journey look like if you were to draw it, or map it? Some people had elaborate mind-map-style layouts, others Venn Diagrams, others had key people as mentors, bosses, colleagues charting their career journey. One example was a diagram of a stream with sharp bends, periods of meander, episodes of rocky rapids, periods passing through quiet forests, others cutting through cities and towns.

The career journey emerged as a real theme of the month for me. As part of the Homeward Bound Program I participate in Life Style Index surveys (my own self-assessment, and that done by 8 colleagues for me). We get assigned a career coach who then goes through these results and helps us frame a development program.



Photo credits: [Megan Hine Photography](#)



The very first homework I got from my career coach was to write my CV as a narrative. She explained this was not a version I would ever use in a job application or to win a project proposal. However, it was the version that acknowledged the bumps, challenges, changes in directions and that gave us a fuller sense of what we have achieved through time and what the factors shaping our decisions and experiences had been. Too often we attribute our success applying for a role, or getting a promotion, being offered a challenging project to just being 'lucky', being in the right spot at the right time, like it was anyone and everyone's opportunity for the taking. Instead it is often a very unique series of events, circumstances and preparation that have positioned us for an opportunity. The career mapping narrative is supposed to make the relationship between our success and position more explicit and create a greater sense of having earned or worked for the outcome, rather than happened into it.

Megan Hine is a female survival expert that scouts for television shows for the likes of Bear Grylls and challenging expeditions for celebrities and groups. Megan often ends up leading expeditions of women to accomplishments in very physically challenging environments or expeditions, whether it be to the summit of Kilimanjaro or to explore the underworld of the jungle caves in Vietnam. The difficulty and the sense of achievement people are able to gain often give them a different perspective on other things they have achieved in their lives. [Megan says](#) "Often the female clients I guide are high-flying, powerful women working in corporate environments. From the outside, they have everything. But often, they have worked so hard and overcome so many hurdles to get to where they are that they haven't had a chance to look around them and enjoy where they are." Perspective on what we have achieved, what we have earned is often hard for us to distinguish from the journey it has taken to get there.

It is timely to consider what brings us to particular opportunities and cross roads in life. It was a year ago that I applied for Homeward Bound, thinking I might be lucky enough to succeed. Being chosen to participate in the third cohort was beyond my wildest dreams and felt more than a bit about luck. But I have been thrilled to have been selected as the first spatial scientist from the Surveying and Spatial Science community. Taking on the role as a SSSI Ambassador to try to encourage greater spatial participation has been a terrific challenge and made me advocate for all that our industry can bring to this enterprise, as well the importance of our future participating in Antarctica. And I'll let you in on a secret..... we have been successful! Watch this space for my introduction next month of future women leading the charge for Spatial in the Homeward Bound arena.

About the author: Mary-Ellen Feeney is undertaking an expedition to Antarctica to promote STEM at the end of December 2018. She is the first woman from the Spatial and Surveying Industry (and [SSSI](#)) to participate in the ten-year Homeward Bound Program. She does so as a [SSSI Ambassador for STEM](#). You can follow her journey [here](#) where she will publish articles each month about her preparation for and her experiences from the expedition or on Linked In at [SSSI](#) OR [Mary-Ellen Feeney](#)