



WHAT WILL IT TAKE: EQUALITY IN LEADERSHIP BY 2030

Medicine & Life Sciences Action Plan

The Transforming Women's Leadership Pathways event and the development of Plans took place online, and on Gadigal and Bidjigal land (Australia). We recognise the peoples of the Eora nation as the traditional custodians of the land (Australia). We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging and extend this respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We acknowledge that this land has long been a place of teaching, learning, and creating. Sovereignty has never been ceded.

Arizona State University's four campuses are located in the Salt River Valley on ancestral territories of Indigenous peoples, including the Akimel O'odham (Pima) and Pee Posh (Maricopa) Indian Communities, whose care and keeping of these lands allows us to be here today. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.



MEDICINE & LIFE SCIENCES WORKING GROUP ACTION PLAN

Aspiration 2030

Cultural change is needed, both at the leadership and at the grass roots levels. A sustained change in attitude and expectations would lead to recognition of a person's "whole output" and increased representation of women in decision-making positions. Bold and effective actions now will result in a sustainable 50/50 gender representation in executive leadership roles by 2030.

The current state of professions in medicine and the life sciences - key findings and power statistics

Attracting women into Medicine and Life Sciences is not a problem in the three PLuS Alliance countries (Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom). Women have made up the majority of new medical students in the US since 2019, Australia since 2017 and in the UK since the early 2000s (a fact that attracted very negative press at the time). Nevertheless, women remain significantly under-represented at the top. Women move up the ladder more quickly than men, but progress slows the closer to senior levels a woman gets and hiring at senior levels is skewed towards men. This has dual consequences because the industry plays a critical role in how women are perceived globally, and gender imbalance is evident in how women are portrayed in entertainment. Top management determines the stories that are covered, how they are covered and the language that is used, so it is essential that gender balance is achieved in C-suite roles (executive-level roles such as CEO).

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Although there has been progress over the last 10-20 years, it has been slow and data from the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index suggests that our three nations have made less progress in gender equity than others.

Barriers and opportunities



BARRIERS



Recent changes in the UK to reduce bureaucracy have meant that higher education institutions are no longer required to hold a Silver Athena SWAN Award to obtain National Institute for Health and Care Research funding. Although this was declared to be as the result of the success of the Charter embedding gender equality in higher education institutions across the board, it is believed that this will significantly undermine the sustainability of the progress achieved so far.



OPPORTUNITIES



The seismic change in the way we work under the cloud of the COVID-19 pandemic offers new opportunities to accelerate change and posed new barriers. Improved accessibility of decision-making meetings, the opportunity to present at international conferences from home and the flexibility of the daily work pattern have all benefited those with commitments outside of the workplace. However, the total workload has often increased, corridor conversations and networking opportunities have diminished considerably and isolation and lack of daily support can undermine confidence.

Recommendations



PUBLIC AND ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUITY

Government, Industry and Universities

- To effect real cultural change organisations must involve the whole workforce, both men and women.
- Opportunities to be provided for junior staff to hear female leaders (and those from other under-represented groups) describe their career paths, including the obstacles they have come across and how these have impacted on their productivity over time.



INCREASING THE PIPELINE

Government and Universities

- Women are over-represented in fixed-term contract roles at the post-doctoral and trainee levels, but are much less likely to attain tenure and hence reach leadership roles. Therefore, ensuring women are represented and supported early in the career pipeline is essential.

TRACKING AND PUBLISHING DATA/SETTING SPECIFIC GOALS

Government

- Governments to mandate equality metrics be met when funding public institutions and large research programs.

Government, Industry and Universities

- Annually collect, analyse and make publicly available a standard set of equality and diversity metrics (including staff satisfaction surveys and trial recruitment). Metrics to be used as key performance indicators, in order to benchmark against other institutions in the UK, USA and Australia and produce an annual action plan to accelerate change.

TRAINING AND MENTORING

Government and Universities

- Embedding a culture of “speaking out” and eliminating aggressive and undermining behaviour by training managers to better recognise and deal with these behaviours.

- Engaging in mentorship and sponsorship programs to increase opportunities for women to receive support and access leadership roles outside of their immediate sector.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Government

- Governments to legislate that parental leave can be equally shared between both parents and for universities and industry to facilitate this.

Universities

- Universities to adopt a 50:50 gender quota for recruitment of applicants into tenured positions and to support those with caring responsibilities and those returning from career breaks with flexible working patterns.

- Implementing best practice in the promotions process by including the Performance Relative to Opportunity Guidelines (ROPE) (including start-up time) when assessing promotion applications.

Government, Industry and Universities

- Unconscious bias in recruitment to be addressed through repeat training.

INCREASING VISIBILITY OF FEMALE LEADERSHIP

Government, Industry and Universities

- Initiatives that present strong female role models, raising the visibility of women in leadership positions

Working Group Lead



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