Academic Gender Strategy Committee

12 June 2015

Minutes

Present:  Professor James Stirling  Chair
Professor Anand Anandalingam  Dean of Imperial College Business School
Professor Maggie Dallman  Associate Provost (Academic Partnerships)
Professor Dot Griffiths  Provost’s Envoy for Gender Equality
Ms Kim Everitt  Deputy Director, HR
Professor Jeff Magee  Dean of the Faculty of Engineering
Professor Tom Welton  Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences

Secretary:  Ms Hailey Smith  Welcome Service Manager – Senior Recruitment

Agenda Item  Action

Item 1 – Welcome and Apologies

1.1 Apologies were received from Professors Stephen Richardson and Gavin Screaton.

Item 2 – Minutes of the Last Meeting and Matters Arising

(Appendix 1: Minutes – 6 February 2015)

2.1 The minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the previous meeting.

2.2 Minute 3.9 would be amended to reflect the institutional ‘silver’ Athena SWAN application rather than ‘gold’.

2.3 (minute 2.8 – Recommendations re. Academic Promotions Procedures)
Professor Griffiths reported that she had reviewed the Academic Promotions procedure and guidance and noted that while they contained plenty of good practice guidance and recommendations, this may not be being acted on in some departments. She said that the next academic promotions round would be an opportunity to clearly and widely communicate good practice in academic promotions. Professor Griffiths would speak with whoever is charged with leading 2016 academic promotions round to further this communication.

2.4 (minute 2.12 – Childcare at Conferences)
The preparation of the Childcare at Conferences provision was in hand and it was hoped that the provision would be in place for the new 2015/16 academic year.
2.5 (minute 2.13 – Access to the Faculty Building)
Access to the Faculty Building for those who required it would be taken forward by the Deans of each Faculty.

2.6 (minute 3.7 – What Do Our Women Really Think?)
The Chair noted that Operational Excellence projects throughout the College were streamlining processes and removing unnecessary bureaucracy, and work was being done to clearly and widely communicate improvements to the College community.

2.7 (minute 3.15 – What Do Our Women Really Think?)
Professor Griffiths reported that she, Professor Richardson and Ms Smith had run a briefing and discussion session for early career academic staff. She said that the session had been well attended but its reception had been mixed. She said that the content had focussed too heavily on the journey from lecturer to professor, and the audience would be more interested in a detailed look at the probation process and advice on promotion to senior lecturer. Professor Griffiths said that a revised briefing would be held again in a year’s time as it was clearly a worthwhile endeavour.

2.8 (minute 3.17)
The Athena SWAN banner had been created and would be updated every six months. The banner is displayed in the foyer of the Faculty Building.

2.9 (minute 3.18)
Professor Griffiths reported that it was hard to gain a picture of the number of PhD students taking maternity leave because recorded data was sparse. It was thought that this might be because arrangements for maternity provision varied greatly between funders. Ms Smith would speak to Mr Dean Pateman (Academic Registrar) to find out what data existed within Registry. Examples of good practice from other universities would also be sought in advance of the next meeting.

2.10 (minute 4.2 – Academic Diversity Task Force)
Professor Griffiths reported that the Royal Society, having appointed only 2 female URFs in 2015, would now monitor the percentage of women considered to be in the ‘pool’ (i.e. eligible to apply), as well as the percentage of women appointed. Professor Griffiths asked if the College’s search committees considered the pool of female applicants and whether more could be done in this respect. The Committee asked Professor Griffiths to put together a paper on this subject so they could consider how these pools might be best identified.

2.11 (minute 4.7)
Ms Everitt said that the development of a ‘panel pool’ of staff trained in recruitment and selection was a continuing process. She would meet with Professor Richardson to discuss whether an appropriate incentive was required or not.
Item 3 – Athena SWAN Silver Renewal

3.1 Professor Griffiths explained to the committee that the application process for Athena SWAN awards had recently changed. Now the College could apply using the traditional application form – which, if successful, would allow the College to renew its institutional silver award for three years. Alternatively, the College could use the new application form and renew its award for four years. The committee agreed that the College should act as leaders and apply using the new application form, hoping to renew its award for a further four years.

3.2 Professor Griffiths informed the committee that it was expected that all College departments would have applied for Athena SWAN awards by April 2016. The Athena SWAN charter was also being opened up to Business Schools, and the Imperial College Business School was working on its Bronze application.

3.3 Professor Griffiths asked the committee for its agreement and suggestions as to who should make up the College’s self-assessment committee. The committee agreed that Mr Muir Sanderson would make an excellent addition to the self-assessment committee and Professor Griffiths would extend an invitation to him. Professor Griffiths

3.4 Further recommendations included representatives from the Faculty Ambassadors for Women and the College Consuls in order to provide a useful link between the self-assessment committee and the academic community. Professor Griffiths would also approach a student representative, a professional member of staff and Ms Liz Elvidge for her insight into the post doc experience. Professor Griffiths

3.5 The Chair thought that it would be important for the self-assessment committee to have its own nominated communications contact. Professor Griffiths

3.6 It was agreed that the self-assessment committee would report to the Provost’s Board, and would provide a short update at each future meeting. It was agreed that the Provost should also inform the HoDs about the institutional review at the next HoDs’ dinner. Chair

3.7 The application is due for submission at the end of March 2016, The Academic Gender Strategy Committee to review the draft application at the Spring meeting (24 February 2015).

3.8 The committee reviewed and made suggestions on the application in its early draft form. Professor Griffiths thanked the committee members for their input.

3.9 The Committee considered and agreed to the new Athena SWAN charter principles. Professor Griffiths would arrange for them to be signed and returned to Athena SWAN.
**Item 4 – Academic Advisers**  
*(Appendix 8: Guidance Note for Academic Advisers & Appendix 9: Guidance Note for Lecturers and Senior Lecturers on Probation)*

4.1 Professor Griffiths explained that there was variance in the quality of academic Advisers that were matched with new members of academic staff. She said that the Adviser function was an important match to get right. Academic Advisers should be proactive mentors to their mentees through the probation period. While some academic Advisers carried out the job exceptionally well, some were less effective and attentive.

4.2 The committee reviewed the guidance supplied to both Academic Adviser and mentees. The Chair noted that it was not necessarily that the guidance was lacking in good practice and information, rather the good practice might not be being acted upon.

4.3 Professor Welton said that the Department of Chemistry had reviewed the academic Adviser function a few years ago. Following the review, he said, the department had moved toward 'cascade mentoring', where mentees were matched with a mentor who had recently been through a similar transition, so that they could share the wisdom of their experience with their mentee.

4.4 The committee noted that the Adviser role was a formal one and it should be treated appropriately. The committee considered how Advisers might be better motivated. Professor Dallman said that the role, and associated successes, needed to be better recognised. Professors Dallman and Griffiths would review the Academic Adviser guidance and reward mechanisms for the opportunity of improvement.  

4.5 It was also thought that termly Adviser’s meetings should be held to thank Advisers as well as facilitating knowledge sharing.

**Item 5 – Maternity Support for PhD Students**  
*Item was discussed under matters arising. Data would be sought from Registry for discussion at the next meeting of the committee.*

**Item 6 – Provost Envoy’s Report**  
*(Appendix 10: Provost Envoy’s Report & Appendix 11: The Gender Summit)*

6.1 The annual Athena Lecture would be given on 17th June by Professor Dame Ann Dowling. The Chair said that he would approach Fabiola Gianotti following this year’s lecture in order to secure a date for her to give the lecture in 2016.  

Chair

6.2 Professor Griffiths said that she had visited BP and KPMG for knowledge sharing purposes about supporting women within organisations. The Chair thanked Professor Griffiths for her work and for representing the College externally too.

6.3 Professor Griffiths said Women@Imperial had been a fantastic celebration of women at the College past and present, but that next
year’s Women@Imperial event would seek to be more proactive. Professor Griffiths proposed a Gender Summit which would provide opportunity for open discussion of issues that the College’s women and men felt had an impact on their working and home lives and their experiences of College (it was noted that these issues may not be gender specific).

6.4 Professor Griffiths explained that she planned to hold a series of round table discussions open to different groups of staff (both women and men). She said that a list of key questions about careers and experiences at Imperial would be agreed in advance and put to each group for their thoughts. Staff would have the opportunity to feed in comments separately too.

6.5 She said that the focus groups would be held in the Autumn term, after which a College response would be drafted drawing on key themes, comments and concerns from the discussion. The response would be launched by the President and Provost at an event to tie in with Women@Imperial week in March 2016.

6.6 Regarding the College response, Professor Welton noted that it would just as important, in order to enhance the transparency of decision making processes, to explain the reasoning for not taking a suggestion forward as it would be to announce the backing of other suggestions.

6.7 The Provost said that a listening project such as this was a fantastic idea, and a logical next step from the inaugural Women@Imperial celebration. He said that the staff survey had shown that a significant proportion of staff felt that they were unable to express their views and this might offer a forum in which they felt able to. Professor Anandalingam said that it would be important for the focus groups to be well facilitated and structured to encourage participation and keep to the task. Professor Griffiths agreed and said that she would be engaging a professional facilitator. She also said that she would meet with each member of the committee separately to devise a set of core questions to be posed in the focus groups.

6.8 Professor Welton suggested that the text comments from the staff survey might be an additional source of information on the concerns and suggestions of the College’s staff.

Item 7 – Research Project following the Varsity Issues – update

7.1 The committee members were aware that a research project following the Varsity issues was being led by Professor Debra Humphris. The committee agreed that it would review the report once it had been published.

Item 8 – WISE

8.1 Ms Everitt shared information on the WISE Awards which sought to reward individuals and organisations who were leading the way for women in STEM. The deadline for nominations was August 2015.
8.2 The committee discussed and agreed that it would like the College to be a more active member of WISE, and participation in these award nominations would be a good step towards this. The Chair and Professor Griffiths would review the award categories and consider suitable nominations.

Chair and Professor Griffiths

8.3 The committee also considered WISE’s Knowledge Sharing Events. It was suggested that the College could co-host such an event with WISE. Ms Everitt suggested that an event could be based around the theme of innovation, following the success of the Althea programme, including how the College produces and supports innovators. Ms Everitt said that she would speak to WISE about the possibility of collaborating on such an event.

Ms Everitt

Item 9 – AOB and Date of Next Meeting

9.1 Professor Griffiths told the committee that she had been contacted by the BBSRC as a review of their data demonstrated that the College’s women were applying for fewer awards and were being less successful in achieving them. Professor Griffiths said that she had formed a small committee to review the College’s own data in close detail. It was uncertain whether this was a problem unique to the College or whether other universities also experienced this. The Chair invited Professor Griffiths to feed back to the Academic Gender Strategy Committee with the group’s findings in due course.

Professor Griffiths

Date of the Next Meeting
23 October 2015
12.30 – 14.30
Boardroom, Faculty Building