Academic Gender Strategy Committee

6th February 2015
10.00 – 12.00
Boardroom, Faculty Building

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 Dermot Kelleher Vice President for Health
           Professor Jeff Magee Dean of the Faculty of Engineering
           Professor Stephen Richardson Associate Provost (Institutional Affairs)
           Professor Tom Welton Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences

Secretary: Ms Hailey Smith Welcome Service Manager – Senior Recruitment

Agenda Item

Item 1 – Welcome and Apologies

1.1 Professor Tom Welton was welcomed to the Committee as the new Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences.

1.2 There were no apologies for this meeting of the Committee.

Item 2 – Minutes of the Last Meeting and Matters Arising
(appendix 1: Minutes – 11th December 2014 and Appendix 2: Good Practice in Departmental Academic Promotions Procedures)

2.1 The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the last meeting. Minute 4.20 would be changed to mention the creation of the ‘Committee for Gender Equity’ rather than ‘Gender Equality’ in the Business School.

2.2 (minute 4.8 – Recommendations re. Academic Promotions Procedures) Professor Griffiths explained that, during her interviews with professors in the faculties of Natural Sciences and Engineering, it became clear that academic promotions processes within departments were sometimes viewed as a barrier to their career progression.

2.3 Professor Griffiths had consolidated her research to propose revisions and improvements to departmental processes (appendix 2). She asked the committee for their comments on her recommendations.
2.4 One recommendation suggested that departmental professorial panels be replaced by smaller panels of staff picked by the department and agreed with the Faculty Dean. Ms Everitt noted that a small panel may exclude people from consideration just as much as a large professorial panel might.

2.5 Ms Everitt noted that the current guidance for academic promotions encapsulated many of the recommendations proposed, but a reminder to departments would be useful to ensure that they these good practices being carried out.

2.6 Ms Everitt said that she understood that some academics, especially those on medical campuses, could feel invisible when it came to consideration at promotions round, and that the guidance could be improved to better support those academics who were less visible due to the department’s size or location.

2.7 Professor Griffiths said that she had found that women were less likely to put themselves forward for academic promotion and suggested that mentors would be a valuable support, but that mentors were often not easy to find.

2.8 The Committee agreed that the recommendations for the promotions process should be reviewed and, where appropriate, incorporated into the promotions guidance in time for next year’s promotions round.

2.9 *(minute 4.12 – Childcare at Conferences)*
Professor Griffiths reported that she had created a process document for academic and research staff wishing to apply for childcare support to allow them to attend conferences. A maximum of £200 would be offered per application and should be funded at the Faculty and Business School level.

2.10 The committee agreed that support for childcare at conferences should be available to both female and male academic and research staff, provided that they held the majority responsibility for their child’s care. The provision would also be available to postdocs.

2.11 *(Post meeting note: Professor Griffiths has suggested that the funding be made available to academic and research staff (including postdocs) who have responsibility for eldercare also.)*

2.12 The process document would be formalised by HR before announcement and circulation. The uptake of the funding would be monitored and reported to the committee in a year’s time.

2.13 *(minute 4.15 – Access to the Faculty Building)*
The committee discussed how and to whom swipe-card access to the Faculty Building was granted. It was said that some academic staff reported feeling alienated by the restricted access to the building. However, security concerns meant that universal access could not be granted. Following discussion, it was felt that the matter was more an issue of communication between Faculties and their departments, rather...
than an issue of physical access to the building, and that those staff who should have access should be encouraged to get it.

2.14 (minute 4.18 – Women@Imperial Update)
Professor Griffiths reported that plans were well underway for the Women@Imperial celebration. Exhibitions will be held at the South Kensington and Hammersmith campuses from 9th to 13th March 2015.

2.15 A launch event would be held on the evening of 10th March, to which internal and external guests would be invited to view the South Kensington exhibition and meet members of Imperial's academic and professional communities and talk to them about their work.

2.16 A number of other events were planned for the Women@Imperial celebration, including a series of ‘Paths for Postdocs’ seminars run by the Postdoc Development Centre, a Google Hangout and a video project organised by the Imperial College Union. This year’s Women@Imperial celebration would culminate in the annual Athena lecture, given by Professor Dame Ann Dowling on 17th June.

2.17 Professor Griffiths said that the budget for the 2015 Women@Imperial celebration was in place but that there might be opportunity to seek corporate sponsorship for any future celebrations.

Item 3 – What Do Our Women Really Think?
A continuation of the discussion started in December, key themes from the Provost's Envoy's interviews and Ms Smith's research.

3.1 Continuing on from the December 2014 meeting of the committee, Professor Griffiths spoke to members about the findings of her research, in which she interviewed all female professors, and a selection of male professors, in the Faculties of Natural Sciences and Engineering about their experiences of their academic careers.

3.2 Professor Griffiths reported that participants had spoken about the difficulty they faced in moving between a postdoc and a permanent academic post. Professor Kelleher said that this was also a problem for women in clinical training. He said that the need to travel around the country while on rotation may be especially difficult for women, considering that women still hold proportionally greater caring responsibilities than their male colleagues.

3.3 Professor Griffiths asked Professor Kelleher what the College might do to help their clinical staff. He said one method of support might be increased flexibility in taking maternity and other breaks during a PhD.

3.4 Professor Stirling spoke of a meeting he had attended with the College’s Postdoc Representatives, a good proportion of whom were female. He had also sat on a panel at the Hammersmith campus to discuss the impact of role models, which had been especially aimed at women in the Faculty of Medicine. He said that both these occasions had been useful in allowing the exchange of ideas and experiences. He
noted that it would be good if more events of these kinds could be held across the College.

3.5 *(Post meeting note: a further Faculty of Medicine discussion panel was held at the South Kensington campus as part of the Women@Imperial celebration.)*

3.6 Professor Griffiths is to speak to Ms Liz Elvidge, Head of the Postdoc Development Centre about a follow on event to the Paths for Postdocs seminars (held as part of Women@Imperial), and how best to encourage the line managers of postdocs to ensure postdocs make use of the training and development opportunities on offer.

3.7 Professor Griffiths told the committee that both male and female participants had been critical of the bureaucracy that they felt surrounded teaching. The committee noted that Operational Excellence was streamlining College processes and the College was always looking for ways to be more efficient, however, it was thought that more could be done at College and faculty level to communicate why certain processes exist and increase transparency.

3.8 Professor Griffiths said that Athena SWAN was well recognised across the College and the benefit of the good practices it rewarded was felt beyond the female academic community. She added, however, that it was important that Athena SWAN activity did not become a box-ticking exercise.

3.9 The committee would consider the College's institutional Action Plan and draft Athena SWAN gold application at the next meeting.

3.10 The committee discussed how best to share good SWAN practice between departments. Ms Everitt said that good practice was frequently shared between those coordinating applications. The committee thought more could be done to increase good practice sharing and collaboration at a Head of Department level.

3.11 Ms Smith spoke about her own research into the ‘leaky pipeline’ of women in academic careers. She said that her research findings, which were drawn from interviews with women and men at different stages of their career, echoed the findings of Professor Griffiths's interviews with professorial staff, suggesting that the barriers felt by those at the top of the academic hierarchy were recognisable to those early on in their careers too.

3.12 Two key findings from Ms Smith’s research were:

1) Female academics felt that the weight of administrative and teaching work within their departments fell more heavily on them than it did on their male colleagues.

3.13 Professor Griffiths noted that this was something that had been apparent in her research also. She suggested that it might be of interest to the committee to examine the different workload models that existed around the College. *(The E&DC also considered that this review should be undertaken and so it will be taken up and reported)*

Ms Everitt
2) Both female and male participants had reported mixed experiences of the Academic Adviser support mechanism. While some advisor/advisee relationships had been positive and useful to academics at the start of their careers, other participants had reported poor matching and advisers who were disinterested in supporting new members of staff.

3.14 The committee agreed that, when well-matched, the Academic Adviser provided an important source of mentorship for new academics, and it was a role that should be taken seriously by all it is entrusted to. The committee said that it would like to review the guidance about the Academic Adviser role that was provided to new lecturers, to departments and to Advisers themselves at the next meeting. (The E&DC was also interested in the quality of the support available and endorsed the view that this should be assessed and recommendations made to improve it).

3.15 Professor Griffiths informed the committee that she, Professor Richardson and Ms Smith would hold a briefing meeting for recently appointed lecturers in March. The briefing, known as ‘The Rules of the Game’, would provide attendees with information about how to get on in their academic career at Imperial, and provide them with the opportunity to feedback any concerns or questions. Feedback from this briefing would be brought to the next meeting of the committee.

3.16 The Chair posed the question of whether the ‘leaky pipeline’ was more the result of recruitment or promotion processes. Professor Griffiths said that both had their own pitfalls, but not casting the net widely enough when recruiting was a barrier to attracting more female applicants. She said that a broad search needed to become habitual for the College when recruiting.

3.17 At the suggestion of Professor Griffiths, the committee agreed that a banner would be produced to display the institutional and departmental Athena SWAN awards, which could be renewed every six months.

3.18 Following discussion at the Athena Committee, it was agreed that maternity provision for postdocs and PhD students would be placed on the agenda for the next meeting of the Academic Gender Strategy Committee. Data relating to the uptake of maternity leave would be sought for these groups to support the discussion.

Item 4 – Academic Diversity Task Force (ADTF) Update
(appendix 5: Academic Diversity Task Force Update – Progress Report, appendix 6: College Consul Sign-Off Form and appendix 7 – JRF Equality Data)

4.1 The committee reviewed the Academic Diversity Task Force Report (appendix 5).

4.2 Ms Everitt explained that the Academic Diversity Task Force Report suggested that the College Consuls perform the role of arbiter in deciding whether a post has drawn a suitably wide pool of diverse applicants, and whether recruitment can progress. The current ‘Consul
Sign-Off' form was shared with the committee and Ms Everitt asked for any suggestions of improvement that members might have.

4.3 Professor Dallman suggested that the recruiting manager should be asked to declare the proportion of applications from received from female, BME and disabled applicants on the sign-off form.

4.4 The Academic Diversity Task Force Report suggested that ‘panel pools’ be created, to allow recruiting managers to call upon staff trained in recruitment and selection and/or equality and diversity to be called upon to participate in recruitment processes, offering additional opportunity for recruiting departments to diversify their recruiting panels.

4.5 Professor Welton suggested that those taking the College’s equality and diversity or recruitment and selection training could be asked if they would be happy to form part of the ‘panel pool’.

4.6 Professor Anandalingam noted that women in the pool might feel the burden of frequently being asked to sit on recruitment panels, and that attention should be paid to the labour created by participation in the pool.

4.7 The committee thought that an incentive could be offered to reward those members of staff who contributed to the College’s panel pool. Professor Richardson and Ms Everitt would work together to devise an appropriate incentive if appropriate.

4.8 The committee reviewed data depicting the gender diversity of the Junior Research Fellowship scheme, demonstrating the gender difference in applicants to those accepted on the scheme.

4.9 The committee noted that, although the number of applications varied each year, the percentage split by gender, both of applications and acceptances, changed very little. With women making up 31% of applicants on average over the last five years and 34% of fellowships awarded on average.

Item 5 – Female Candidates for Consul Elections

5.1 Ms Everitt informed the panel that the terms of Professor Myra McClure (Consul for the Faculty of Medicine, non-clinical) and Professor Richard Jardine (Consul for the Faculty of Engineering and the Business School) would be coming to an end on 31 August 2015, therefore a call for nominations for each position would be held.

5.2 Ms Everitt said that she would write to the Deans formally, but she encouraged them to think about potential female candidates within the faculties who might be encouraged to stand for election.
Item 6 – Julia Higgins – Medal and Awards 2014-15
(Appendix 8 – Julia Higgins Award Nominations)

6.1 The committee reviewed the nominations for this year’s Julia Higgins Medal and Awards. Professor Griffiths informed the committee that one medal was awarded per year, but there was flexibility on the number of awards given in order to recognise outstanding contributions to matters of gender equality at the College.

6.2 Professor Griffiths said that eight nominations had been made this year, more than ever before.

6.3 Following review of the applications the committee agreed that the Julia Higgins medal would be awarded to Dr Liz Elvidge, Head of the Postdoc Development Centre. Julia Higgins awards would be given to:
- Dr Karen Makuch (Lecturer in the Centre for Environmental Policy)
- Ms Su Nandy (Senior HR Manager for the Faculty of Engineering)
- Dr Lesley Rushton (Reader in Occupational Epidemiology, School of Public Health)
- Dr Vicky Salem (NIHR Clinical Lecturer, Department of Medicine)
- Dr Emma Watson (Education Manager, National Heart & Lung Institute)

The medal would be awarded at the Post Graduate Award Ceremony in May. The awards would be given out at the Athena celebration in the autumn term.

6.4 Ms Smith

Item 7 – AOB and Date of Next Meeting

7.1 It was noted that this would be Professor Dermot Kelleher’s final meeting of the Academic Gender Strategy Committee. Professor Griffiths led the committee members in thanking Professor Kelleher for his contribution to the committee and all that had been achieved for advancing gender equality in the Faculty of Medicine.

Date of the Next Meeting
12 June 2015
10.00 – 12.00
Boardroom, Faculty Building