Academic Gender Strategy Committee

29th November 2013
13.00 – 15.00
3.19 Faculty Building

Minutes

Present:  Professor James Stirling  Chair
Professor Maggie Dallman  Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences
Professor Dot Griffiths  Provost’s Envoy – Gender Equality
Ms Kim Everitt  Deputy Director, HR
Professor Jenny Higham  Vice Dean of the Faculty of Medicine
Professor Jeff Magee  Dean of the Faculty of Engineering

Secretary:  Ms Hailey Smith  Welcome Service Manager – Senior
Recruitment

Agenda Item  Action

Item 1 – Welcome and Apologies
1.1 The Chair welcomed the members to the first meeting of the
Academic Gender Strategy Committee. He explained that this
committee would be the first tier of a two tier committee structure, and
would receive reports from the Athena Committee (second tier),
chaired by Professor Griffiths.

1.2 The Chair said that he was delighted to chair the Academic Strategy
Committee and thanked all members for agreeing to take part.

1.3 Apologies were received from Professor Anandalingam, Professor
Kelleher (represented by Professor Jenny Higham) and Professor
Stephen Richardson.

Item 2 - AGSC Terms of Reference
(appendix 1: Terms of Reference v1 Sept. 2013)
2.1 The committee considered the Terms of Reference (appendix 1). Ms
Everitt noted that these Terms had been drawn up before the meeting
and changes could be made.

2.2 The committee agreed that achieving an Athena SWAN Institutional
Gold award should be a target, and the committee would provide
senior support and encouragement to such an application.

2.3 The committee agreed the Terms of Reference without change.
Faculty of Natural Sciences

3.1 Professor Dallman said that there was a good general balance between male and female students but that representation of female staff dropped off at postdoc level and beyond. Professor Dallman reported that the Faculty currently held four Athena SWAN awards: Chemistry (Gold), Physics (Silver) and Life Sciences and Mathematics (Bronze). She noted that Life Sciences had been through a period of change, but the support systems were in place to renew the Bronze award and that the Department were up for the challenge.

3.2 The Maths Department only has four female members of academic staff out of a total of 74 but, Professor Dallman said, they had very good mechanisms in place to support women. She said that the Department has never had a female professor.

3.3 Professor Griffiths asked whether Maths encouraged women to apply for vacant positions. Professor Dallman said that they did but that there were always fewer female applicants, as is normal for the field.

3.4 Professor Stirling said he understood from his visit that the Department knew that this was an issue and had addressed the gender balance of students in an analytical way, and this now needed to be done for staff. He said that he had spoken directly to postdocs in Maths about gender equality as they are the next generation of academics. He reported that there was suspicion about Athena SWAN, but he had explained to them it was not about enforcing quotas but about culture and day-to-day practice.

Faculty of Medicine

3.5 Professor Higham said that the Faculty’s Ambassador for Women was coming to the end of her term. The Faculty had recently appointed an Athena SWAN lead, Dr Victoria Salem, who was proving to be very effective.

3.6 Professor Higham reported that three departments currently held awards: Medicine (Bronze), NHLI (Silver), School of Public Health (Silver). She said that Surgery and Cancer had found it hard to get traction on an application but would now be applying for Bronze in April.

3.7 She said that the Medical Schools’ Council were worried about the number of awards held by medical schools, following Dame Sally Davies’ declaration that medical schools would need to hold an Athena SWAN award in order to be considered for NIHR BRC/BRU funding. She said that there were also issues regarding SWAN feedback and a lack of consistency between panels.

3.8 The Chair said that he had visited departments within the Faculty of Medicine, and had been inspired by Dr Sonia Saxena (Public Health). Professor Griffiths noted that the Department of Medicine had seen
the value of SWAN activity and were very active and engaged.

Faculty of Engineering

3.9 The Faculty of Engineering currently holds four awards: Computing (Bronze), Chemical Engineering (Silver), Earth Science and Engineering (Silver) and Materials (Silver). Computing was due to renew their Silver. Bioengineering would also apply for an award in November and Materials was considering whether to apply for Gold.

3.10 The Faculty Ambassador for Women was working closely with the Faculty’s Athena SWAN committees. The Chair said that he had had a very positive visit to Bioengineering and had been impressed by their work towards an Award. He said that Civil Engineering was considering applying and support would be helpful.

3.11 The Chair said that during his visits to College departments he had met Dr Anne Korre, who had later written to him (appendix 2) with some suggestions of what could be done to best support academic women and their careers.

3.12 Dr Korre had suggested women be encouraged to take on trainee leadership roles within the College. Ms Everitt noted that the College ran the Female Academic Development Programme, and other management development programmes for academic staff but, perhaps, Dr Korre was suggesting more hands-on experience.

3.13 Dr Korre had also noted that a tendency to recruit in one’s own image could disadvantage women in being appointed and progressing within the College. Ms Everitt noted that the College had responded to such a concern by previously setting up the Academic Diversity Task Force, chaired by Professor Magee. The Task Force had made a number of recommendations accepted by Management Board, and progress was being made, although action was long term.

3.14 Dr Korre had noted that gender inequality is experienced regardless of whether female academics have a family or not.

3.15 Ms Everitt said that she would contact Ms Korre to meet with her.

Item 4 - Athena – Institutional Silver Feedback

(appendices 3 and 4)

4.1 Professor Griffiths shared the written feedback on the College’s silver application with the committee. She noted that the verbal feedback she had received had been very positive. She said that a criticism had been that data could have been divided into departments with and without awards.

4.2 The Athena panel had also commented that the College’s application had not explained in detail how an EPSRC grant had been used to benefit women. Professor Griffiths said that a portion of the funds had been used to support departments in their applications, some had been used to help women to attend conferences after returning from maternity leave, and some had been used to fund a position in the Postdoc Development Centre.
4.3 Professor Griffiths said that the Athena panel had been pleased with the work done to embed good practice across the College. The Chair said that, in January, the College will start to consider its overall strategy and this committee would have a significant role to play in embedding gender equality into the strategy.

4.4 The committee considered the College’s Athena SWAN Action Plan. It was agreed that a clear criteria for Gold needed to be known; Professor Griffiths said that guidelines were expected next year.

4.5 Professor Griffiths said that funding for Athena activities needed to be found; she suggested that this form part of the HR planning round.

4.6 The committee felt that the Action Plan needed to be revamped to best suit ‘Going for Gold’ efforts.

4.7 It was discussed that the work of the Academic Diversity Task Force and Staff Survey had found that the way in which people are managed, and the degree of transparency in College practice, had a great impact on the staff experience.

4.8 The Chair said that he had met with the Postdoc Development Centre and it was agreed that the College needed to support its postdocs better.

4.9 Professor Griffiths noted that 10 days training per year for postdocs was the established norm. However, this needed to be embedded as some PIs were still reluctant.

**Item 5 - Athena Committee Meeting Feedback**

(appendix 5: Terms of Reference v2 Oct 2013)
(appendix 6: minutes of the first meeting held on 24 October 2013)

5.1 Professor Griffiths said that the Athena Committee had discussed feedback from departmental Athena applications. It had also been decided that the committee would peer review each other’s applications. Professor Griffiths hoped that this would both be helpful and encourage different departmental Athena SWAN committees to engage.

5.2 Professor Griffiths said that Chemistry would speak about their experience of applying for, and being awarded, a Gold award at the next meeting. Professor Dallman said that Professor Tom Welton had been invited to speak to the Faculty about Chemistry’s success.

5.3 Ms Everitt said that Mr Rob Bell, Athena SWAN Coordinator, was focussing on the Athena applications of three departments due at the end of November. Following this, he would be working on drawing good practice together.

5.4 Professor Griffiths said that the Athena Committee had discussed the College’s ‘Pledge to Academic Women’, and asked whether the College wanted to continue using the pledge and, if so, what more could be done to publicise it.
5.5 Mr Everitt said that the pledge used to be included as a postcard into the New Starter packs of all female academic staff and this could be reinstated.

5.6 The Provost asked if it could be used in the College’s recruitment material, as in the way Imperial Expectations are used. Ms Everitt and Ms Smith would explore this.

5.7 Professor Griffiths said that the Athena Committee had had a good and productive first meeting.

5.8 The Chair asked for a webpage to be set up for both committees, to include terms of reference, dates and membership of the committees.

**Ms Everitt, Ms Smith**

Ms Smith

**Item 6 - Review of REF Equality Data**

(appendix 7:indicative data as at 1 Oct; final data available end Nov.)

6.1 The committee had been provided with the indicative REF equality data (appendix 7) and would use the next meeting of the committee to consider the finalised data and reflect on REF.

6.2 The Chair said that consolidation of the REF5s had produced a complete picture of the College’s research. The data could be used to gain an understanding of gender-related issues

6.3 The Chair noted that there had been strong references to Athena SWAN involvement in the College’s REF submissions.

**Ms Smith**

**Item 7 – Other Matters**

7.1 It had been previously suggested that gender equality be discussed at a HoDs’ meeting. It was agreed that this should be arranged. Ms Smith would determine the dates of possible dinners and make arrangements.

7.2 Professor Griffiths said that there were no portraits of women on display at the College, and to rectify this, a portrait of Dame Julia Higgins had been painted to be hung in 58 Prince’s Gate. It was agreed that an unveiling should be held in the summer along with the Julia Higgins medal and award ceremony.

7.3 Future dates of the committee are to be delayed by thirty minutes to allow a gap between Provost’s Board and the start of the committee meeting.

**Date of the Next Meeting**

28 February 2014
13.30 – 15.30
Faculty Boardroom