Notes from Women Professors Network launch event

12ᵗʰ June 2014

Professor Colette Fagan facilitated the session and highlighted some key statistics from across the University and individual Faculties. Colette noted both the number of female Professors (172) and the overall proportion (22%F) has increased significantly since the Women in Leadership Project, and this increase has been achieved through both recruitment and promotion. Colette spoke about the number and proportion of female Professors in each Faculty; EPS 8%, FLS 17%, HUM 28%, and MHS 30%, and how initiatives such as Athena SWAN are supporting these disciplines.

Nancy shared her thoughts about the importance of the WPN and how the University is committed to supporting women into leadership and management positions. Nancy explained that not all our Schools have female Professors; there are none in MACE, and in a number of Schools you will only find one or two. She talked about her own progression, the encouragement she needed to become the President, her mentors (men!) and asked the WPN to think about how the University can address the development needs of women professors to help best support them.

Katharine spoke a little about the Women in Leadership Project and noted that many of the recommendations from the Project are now integrated into staff training and development programmes, mentoring schemes and informal seminars where gender-specific experiences could be shared. There are however still some recommendations that have not yet been adopted and work continues to ensure these are not forgotten. Katharine highlighted that more still needs to be done to ensure women hold senior leadership and management positions stating that until the percentage of women in senior leadership positions reaches about 30%, it will be very difficult for the women in such positions to have a significant impact. Katharine believes the WPN will be driver to help reach this target.

The WPN was asked to work in groups to share ideas about how they would like to see their network develop and how the University can help support their developmental needs. A number of themes have stemmed from discussions: supporting those with caring responsibilities, asking for clear guidance on policies and practices, group networking/informal gathering, training and development needs, mentoring issues, general observations and some identified 'quick-fixers'.

Comments from group discussions:

Caring responsibilities

- More nurseries – proportional to staff
- Child support for going to invited international meetings
- Encouraging men to take up paternity leave

Clear guidance asked:

- Is it always necessary to have x position on a committee (e.g. Head of X) – what about work-shadowing, deputy roles? Are there rules/recommendations from the University about this?
- Children in workplace – is it allowed? What is the policy? – need to challenge (review) policy on not allowing kids into the University. Different practice in different areas – sometimes an issue for building with atriums – FLS has a document form though to allow children – is this available elsewhere?
- Do promotion panels need to have one woman on them?
- Policy to promote women on School/Institute SMT
- Need promotion policy for part-time employees – need formal written document – are there data policies on part-time working and promotions?

Group Networking/Events

- Networking Dinner (for example Broomcroft Hall in the summer)
- Annual event – inspiring speakers
- Regular (3 per year) meetings to discuss specific issues
- Afternoon available once a month
- Informal system for meeting/gathering – anyone free for a coffee Friday?
- Scope for senior common room (one not available anymore)
- Buddy scheme – groups of 4/5 women to offer focussed support

What we can do … quick wins!

- Celebrate women honorary degrees/doctorates
- Female external examiners
- Athena SWAN team must contain men
- Organise and assist staff to attend unconscious bias course
- Giving good notice for meetings, Careful timetabling of meetings (10-4) – use of 'core hours'
- Promoting flexible working for senior men
- Raising awareness of issues related to part time staff

Training and Development

- Headstart has nothing on gender/ethnicity – 1980s mindset, Headstart is management NOT leadership
- Multiple routes to Headstart
- Possibility to self-nominate for Headstart
- Informal workshops on 'how to influence a meeting' – nice politics
- New sessions for Women in Leadership – making your case, negotiation, self-presentation
- Continuation of previous sessions for Women in Leadership
- Better support for career planning

Mentoring

- Mentoring network (up/down) - Restart the mentorship programme
- Mentoring the next generation – mentored by male and female
- Formal or informal mentoring

Suggestions/Observations

- Get Manchester more friendly towards women
- Could we also ask senior NON academic Female leaders to join, we may gain a lot from their experience, they have got to lead without impact factors to help them.
- In Edinburgh there was a scheme to provide 1 min videos of academics entitled research in a nutshell. (see here for details- http://www.nutshell-videos.ed.ac.uk/) We could consider doing the same here and have the WPN as the first trial.
- So it would raise the profile of women AND also provide a way to network. Of course it should not be only for women, but just to start with it might be a good trial group.
- 'Stand up to' and make others aware of aggressive behaviour (in meetings)
- What are the evening dinner meetings? Is this bias against women?
- Email free weekends
- Athena SWAN negative impact? – if few women = increased workloads
- Whether there is institutionalised sexism (and other kinds of inequality), how to deal/cope with it