GEP Highlights

A
fter three years of collaborative effort between the GEP and the Hunter administration, we are very pleased to report that gender equity benchmarks have been now been institutionalized at Hunter. What does “institutionalization” mean? It means that as of this year the Office of Institutional Research (IR), with assistance from the Department of Human Resources (HR), has taken over the annual responsibility of analyzing and posting data on hiring, progress through the ranks, and other measures of the advancement of men and women in the 11 science departments at Hunter. The 2004-2005 gender benchmarks can be viewed on the IR website (http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/ir/). Until this year, the GEP had obtained and analyzed data from HR and the Offices of the Provost and the Deans in order to report these benchmarks to NSF and the Hunter community. NSF required a commitment from Hunter to conduct and present the analyses annually. Thanks to the combined efforts of Joan Lambe, Director of IR, Kate Ho, Data Manager of IR, and Robert McGarry, Director of HR, Hunter is now leading the way in making hiring and retention results transparent.

The GEP’s multimedia designer, Monica Hopenwasser, has conducted, edited, and posted more video interviews with Hunter’s outstanding women scientists on the GEP website. Jill Bargonetti, Margaret Chin, Dana Draghicescu, Laurel Eckhardt, Susan Epstein, Dixie Goss, Vanya Quijtones-Jenab, and Marianna Pavlovskaya are current participants in this ongoing project. If you would like to be interviewed, please contact the GEP.

The GEP, together with the Provost’s Office, is preparing a new initiative to investigate overall quality of life for scientists at Hunter. The survey addresses issues of resource allocation, faculty influence, and faculty beliefs about the value and recognition of teaching, research, and service. Within the next few weeks Hunter faculty will receive information about participating in this confidential online survey. Everyone is encouraged to share their observations and judgments via the survey.

Highlight on Research

Penalties for Success: Reactions to Women who Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields

M
ale and female evaluators read background information about an Assistant Vice President (AVP) in an aircraft company. In half the cases, the evaluators did not know how well the AVP was doing on the job (ambiguous success condition). The remaining AVPs were described as being stellar performers (clear success condition).

- In the ambiguous success condition, evaluators rated the male AVP as more competent and more hostile than the female AVP. No gender differences were seen in likeability.
- In the clear success condition, evaluators rated the male and female AVPs as equally competent, but they rated the woman as much more hostile and much less likeable than the man.

Women pay a price for success in a male-dominated field; both men and women see a clearly competent woman as less likeable and more hostile than a comparable man.
Wenge Ni-Meister, an Assistant Professor in the Geography Department and associate in the GEP Sponsorship Program, together with three NASA and Harvard scientists, has received a three-year, $1,500,000 grant from NASA to develop ENT, a global dynamic terrestrial ecosystem model for terrestrial ecosystem-climate interaction studies at seasonal to century time scales. ENT is envisioned as a tool for understanding the conditions and signatures of habitability of the Earth and, ultimately, as a foundation for searching for life on other planets. Ni-Meister’s primary role on this project will be to develop a model to represent the interaction between vegetation and solar radiation, which drives the biophysical/biogeochemical functions of the terrestrial ecosystem.

Ni-Meister also recently received $80,000 from NASA to attract outstanding Hunter undergraduates to the study of Earth System Sciences. The award will allow Ni-Meister to fund students while providing them with the opportunity to conduct cutting-edge research using satellite remote sensing data.

Tutorials for Change: Gender Schemas and Science Careers

Virginia Valian, Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Linguistics and GEP Co-Director, has developed Tutorials for Change, a series of four web-based slide presentations with voice-over narration. A grant from the National Science Foundation to Valian supported the creation of these tutorials; a recent supplement from the NSF provides funding for the creation of additional tutorials. In her book, Why So Slow? The Advancement of Women (MIT Press, 1998), Valian asks why so few women are at the top of their profession. To provide an answer, Valian integrates research from psychology, sociology, economics, and neuropsychology. The data and theory from Why So Slow? are the starting point for the tutorials. Students and educators are largely unaware of relevant research concerning the role of gender in science. The goal of the tutorials is to remedy that lack. The tutorials provide undergraduates, graduate students, post-doctoral researchers, faculty, and administrators with current data and theory in an informative and accessible format. You can access the tutorials through the GEP’s web site at http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/gendertutorial or http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/genderequity/relatedlinks.html.

- Tutorial #1: Data and common explanations for sex disparities in salary and rank
- Tutorial #2: Gender schemas and evaluations of others
- Tutorial #3: Gender schemas and our evaluations of ourselves
- Tutorial #4: Remedies: What you can do

If you have data or theory to provide, relevant references, or suggestions for links – send an e-mail to gender.tutorial@hunter.cuny.edu

Faculty Development Survey: New Initiative

Hunter College is doing better than most schools when it comes to objective measures of gender equity. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that hidden problems concerning power and resource use and access may persist. Despite widespread acknowledgment of the importance of hidden and subtle gender inequities, few studies have attempted to quantify them. The GEP has developed an online survey instrument to address subtle and hidden gender inequity as well as overall quality of life for faculty in the social and natural sciences at Hunter College. The survey deals with how resources and responsibilities are assigned within departments; with whom faculty members discuss their research and teaching; how faculty interact with other faculty, students, and support staff; beliefs about the value and recognition of teaching, research, and committee work; commitment to and thoughts about leaving Hunter; productivity; individual advising.

We plan to publish our results, in this newsletter and elsewhere, and share them with the Hunter College administration in an effort to improve the overall climate at the college in general and gender equity in particular.

Sex Comparisons in the Sciences at Hunter

Prior to Hunter’s ADVANCE award, 27% of new natural science hires were women. During the first three years of the GEP this has increased to 46%. In the social sciences there has been no significant change.

Other Science Faculty in the News

Jill Bargonetti, Biological Sciences, was awarded $100,000 from the Breast Cancer Research Foundation to study estrogen influences on the p53 tumor suppressor protein in breast cells. The award will allow Bargonetti and her research team, PhD student Nicoleta Catalina Arva and research technician Kathryn Talbott, to explore a potentially new model for breast cancer prevention.

Juan Battle, Sociology, is president-elect of the Association of Black Sociologists. His research addresses the intersection of race, gender, and class on a variety of social phenomena.

Hiroshi Matsui, Chemistry, will participate in and organize the prestigious 2006 U.S. Frontiers of Engineering, an invitation-only meeting that will bring together outstanding young engineers to discuss leading-edge research. This is Professor Matsui’s second such nomination and selection – a fitting recognition of his pioneering contributions in the emerging field of biomanotechnology.

The Center for the Study of Gene Structure and Function was awarded a $13.2 million grant from the National Institutes of Health. The 5-year grant represents a 55% increase over the 2000-2005 award of $8.3 million. The Gene Center, founded in 1985 to foster inter-departmental collaboration in genetic research, currently includes 43 professors from departments ranging from chemistry to anthropology.

Be a part of our Fall 2006 newsletter. Submit your news by June 1, 2006 E-mail: gender.equity@hunter.cuny.edu