

Efforts to Support and Advance the Careers of Women in Biomedical Careers at the National Institutes of Health



National Institutes of Health, Office of Research on Women's Health
and the NIH Working Group on Women in Biomedical Careers

Background

In January 2007, the Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) established and became co-chair of the NIH Working Group on Women in Biomedical Careers (WG) in response to the recent National Academies report *Beyond Bias and Barriers: Fulfilling the Potential of Women in Academic Science and Engineering*. That report concluded that women face institutional and environmental barriers to advancement at all career stages and called for broad, innovative action from universities, professional societies, and government funding agencies.

The Working Group, which is now co-chaired by NIH Director, Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D., and Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH) Director, Vivian W. Pinn, M.D., includes NIH Deputy Directors and Office of the Director (OD) senior staff, Institute and Center (IC) Directors, and other men and women representatives of NIH intramural and extramural staff.

The NIH intramural community is comprised of scientists and physicians who support and carry out research on the NIH campuses. The NIH extramural community is comprised of NIH employees who administer and manage NIH grants policies and operations, and NIH grantees at institutions throughout the Nation.

Under the leadership of the NIH Director and ORWH, the members of the Working Group are continuing to work towards even greater accomplishments, acknowledging that this will be a long journey and recognizing that sustaining advancement of women in biomedical careers will require persistent attention. This poster summarizes the primary activities and accomplishments of the WG to date.

Women in Science at the NIH 2007-2008

ORWH recently released *Women in Science at the National Institutes of Health 2007-2008*, a publication highlighting the accomplishments and career paths of 289 doctoral-level women scientists, administrators, and leaders at the NIH. In the profiles, the women

shared their educational background, research interests, pivotal career events, insights on mentoring and work/life balance, and advice to women and men pursuing careers in science. Copies may be ordered and downloaded at the WG Web site.



Resources on the WG Web site

- Links to over 250 news articles and reports relevant to women's careers
- Data on the participation of women in NIH extramural grant programs are available on the WG and Office of Extramural Research RePORT Web sites
- A list of FAQs which present relevant information related to NIH policies regarding the use of grant funds for parental leave and child care
- NIH, other Federal, and professional societies and organizations resources
- An e-newsletter featuring information on women's careers in science, highlights of best practices for supporting women in science, and profiles of junior women scientists which reaches over 600 subscribers

<http://womeninscience.nih.gov/>

Workshops

Two workshops, the *National Leadership Workshop on Mentoring Women in Biomedical Careers* and the *Women in Biomedical Research: Best Practices for Sustaining Career Success*, were held.

The recommendations continue to inform the activities of the WG and NIH policies.

ORWH also cosponsored the 2008 National Academies *From Doctorate to Dean or Director: Sustaining Women through Critical Transition Points in Science, Engineering, and Medicine Workshop*

Mid-Atlantic Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (M-A HERC)

The NIH helped establish and continues to play a leading role in the M-A HERC, which expands the job placement and other dual career resources available to spouses and partners of current and potential NIH employees by forming a network with over 50 colleges, universities, professional societies and other Federal agencies in Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, DC. The members of the M-A HERC meet twice a year to share best practices on recruiting, diversity, and other issues. The Web site also hosts a CV/resume bank and a unique feature which allows dual career couples to search for two positions at all member institutions simultaneously. <http://www.midatlanticher.org>



Extramural Activities

- The allowed period of paid parental leave for Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Awards trainees has been doubled to sixty calendar days.
- The *Research on Causal Factors and Interventions that Promote and Support the Careers of Women in Biomedical and Behavioral Science and Engineering* grant program was established and 14 R01 awards were made in 2009 with contributions from 11 ICs and 4 OD offices (\$16.8M over 4 years). Topics being studied include:
 - The roles mentoring and funding support play throughout women's academic careers;
 - The impact of family-friendly policies in retaining women in the scientific workforce;
 - The economic factors related to gender disparities in science;
 - Factors which specifically impact the career paths of women of color.
- The ORWH Re-entry Supplement Program, which provides opportunities for fully trained researchers to re-enter careers in science after a hiatus due to family or other responsibilities, has been expanded to include postdoctoral researchers.
- The WG, with funding from ORWH, is developing an online platform to provide a forum for interaction and collaboration between students, researchers, and policy makers interested in supporting the development of a diverse scientific workforce and to provide networking, mentoring, and career development opportunities for women of color in biomedical careers.
- The WG is finalizing a proposed series of mechanisms by which NIH leadership can recognize and promote excellent mentoring in the extramural community.
- In January 2010, the NIH Support for Conferences and Scientific Meetings (Parent R13/U13) was updated to require that applicants "Describe plans to identify resources for child care and other types of family care at the conference site to allow individuals with family care responsibilities to attend. That information should allow attendees to make arrangements for family care as needed" and that this be used as a review criterion
- The Office of Extramural Research, with input from the WG, is currently developing a mechanism to allow applicants to explain breaks in their publication and employment record on NIH grant applications.

Committees of the NIH Working Group on Women in Biomedical Careers

- Committee on Communication and Public Outreach
- Committee on Evidence Development and Institutional Change
- Committee on Extramural Activities and Mentoring Programs
- Committee on the NIH Intramural Research Program
- Committee on Integration of Women into Bioengineering Fields
- Committee on Women of Color in Biomedical Careers
- National Library of Medicine Programs

Intramural Activities

- A thorough review of intramural programs, practices, and policies resulted in a series of initiatives that may serve as models that other institutions might implement. These include:
 - Extension of the period of paid parental leave for NIH trainees to eight weeks;
 - Extension of the tenure-clock for NIH scientists by one year to accommodate family leave;
 - Establishment of a program to enable NIH investigators to hire a temporary lab manager to while they are on extended leave;
 - Implementation of an NIH leave bank which provides NIH employees with access to paid medical leave if they or a family member becomes sick or is seriously injured, and for the birth of a child, after the employee has exhausted all of his or her own leave;
 - Construction of an additional child care center on the Bethesda campus, which will increase overall capacity when completed, and other child care services available from the Office of Research Services.
<http://does.ors.od.nih.gov/childcare/>
- Three focus groups of NIH investigators, staff scientists and clinicians, and postdoctoral fellows were held to garner insights and recommendations for improving the NIH climate for all scientists. The data from these focus groups has been analyzed and a comprehensive response and series of implementable actions have been approved by NIH Intramural leaders.
- The recommendations of a Trans-NIH Mentoring Committee regarding individual development plans and annual reviews for NIH trainees, evaluation of mentoring by investigators as part of their review, and exit interviews for all NIH are being implemented, with provisions for accountability by NIH leadership.
- To enable intramural researchers to find all of the policies related to their position in one place, as well as demographic data on the intramural program, the Office of Intramural Research has add a "Everything you need to know about your intramural position (but were afraid to ask)" section to its Web site. <http://sourcebook.od.nih.gov/>



Summary

The NIH has become a leader among Federal funding agencies in developing initiatives to maximize the potential of women scientists and engineers. The WG is committed to making the NIH a model for achieving the highest caliber of science by capitalizing on the perspectives, talents, and energies of a diverse and well-rounded workforce.