Establishing a Center for Gender Equity in Medicine and Science (GEMS) at the Keck School of Medicine (KSOM) of the University of Southern California (USC)

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Background and Significance

- Academic medicine has faced challenges related to sexual harassment in the context of subtle and overt gender biases and discrimination.
- To address challenges at the Keck School, an intentional, visible, and comprehensive initiative to improve gender equity was needed.

Objective

To establish a Center for GEMS focused on building infrastructure and developing policies and procedures to achieve a climate of gender equity and safety at the Keck School.

Approach

1. Obtain Dean commitment to establish the Center
2. Establish a working group to develop a charter and define Center goals
3. Create a governance structure
4. Develop a financial model and budget
5. Communicate charter and goals to the community at large
6. Identify consultants with expertise in organizational design, gender issues and culture change

Outcomes

The Center for GEMS has been established with the support of the Dean.

Charter: To achieve a climate of gender equity and safety for all at the Keck School of Medicine.

Goals:

- Advance gender equity across the career pipeline.
- Advocate for equal pay as provided by law.
- Facilitate career development with the goal of achieving equitable representation in leadership for all regardless of gender.
- Create a culture intolerant of sexual harassment and gender discrimination.

Financial support: Initial from the Dean; future support depends on success of this pilot.

Communication about the Center and its charter disseminated to all faculty, staff and trainees. Website: https://keck.usc.edu/center-for-gems/

Gender consultant retained to guide Center establishment and support Director.

Collaboration among the Dean, administration and KSOM faculty, staff, students and trainees.

Inclusive of all genders.

Discussion

The Center for GEMS will:

- develop a comprehensive approach to promote gender equity at the KSOM.
- collaborate and align with other groups leading culture change across USC.
- create transformational culture change that goes beyond regulatory compliance.
- become a national model to promote gender equity in academic medicine.

Research will be conducted to evaluate outcomes of processes implemented and metrics will be reported, tracked and reported to the KSOM community.

GEMS Working Groups' Leaders: Mark Frey, PhD, Rima Jubran, MD, Kevin Lohenry, PhD, PA-C, Parveen Parmar, MD, MPH, Daphne Walker, MD, Gabe Zada, MD, MS