

**Year 2 Public Description of Work for
Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education**

Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory

Addressing Gender Bias in Faculty Recruitment

Relevant Rubric Item(s):

Embedding the Values of Diversity, Inclusion and Respect into Recruitment, Hiring, Admissions, Retention, Promotion and Advancement

Leadership Education and Skill Development

SUMMARY

The 2018 NASEM report recommended that institutions work towards improving gender and racial equity in hiring and promotions as an important step in transforming institutional culture. At the time of that report, only 21% of CSHL tenure-track faculty were women, a statistic acknowledged by leadership as being unacceptable. Our overall strategy for addressing lack of gender diversity at CSHL was to first take time to identify and assess best practices related to faculty recruitment, promotion and retention, and then to slowly build needed infrastructure and implement institutional changes to execute them. Concrete steps towards improving this actually started in the fall of 2018, with the convening of a small meeting at the CSHL Banbury Conference center on gender diversity in biosciences, and establishment of a new Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI). In 2019, a Faculty Gender Diversity Task Force was established to review recommendations from the Banbury meeting and establish short and long-term plans to address gender inequities at the faculty level. One of the top priorities was to review faculty recruitment processes and to establish new policies and mechanisms to ensure that gender bias in faculty searches was minimized. This led to several changes, including: training for search committees, assignment of a diversity representative to faculty searches, improved communication when recruiting candidates, increased transparency on decisions, and increased administrative support for search committee chairs. CSHL is a relatively small institution, with only 1-2 faculty searches each year, but in 2019-2021, three out of five of the faculty openings were filled by women. With improved processes and infrastructure in place, we are able to better assess and make any additional changes to our faculty recruitment processes.

BACKGROUND

Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory (CSHL) is a private, nonprofit biomedical research institute with 56 research labs, a small biomedical sciences graduate school, and an extramural Meetings & Courses Program. The total number of faculty, students, and employees at CSHL currently is around 1100. Organizationally, the institution does not have separate departments, but rather has a centralized and very lean administrative system and a generally “flat” structure. Faculty recruitment is overseen by the President and Director of Research, and typically involves search committees composed of faculty in the area being recruited into, with occasional opportunistic hires that happen outside of an open search. There are usually only 1-2 open faculty slots per year. The percentage of women faculty at CSHL has hovered around 20% for many years and is a topic frequently discussed by faculty, senior leaders and external advisory groups. Sustained efforts over the past several years using existing processes and support resulted in roughly equal offers made to men versus women faculty, but women candidates turned down offers at a much higher rate, resulting in no overall improvement in faculty gender diversity at CSHL.

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TIMELINE and STEPS TAKEN. This was a multi-year effort that was new to our organization. It started December 2018 and was implemented since April 10, 2020.

- **IDENTIFY BEST PRACTICES.** To identify best practices, strategies and innovations in this area, CSHL held a meeting at its renowned Banbury Conference Center titled “Increasing Gender Diversity in the Biosciences”. This meeting was held in December 2018, and brought together experts to identify institutional and extra-institutional approaches that promote and support the advancement of women in science and to develop recommendations and practical solutions. Discussions at the meeting were impacted by the NASEM report that was published a few months earlier identifying sexual harassment as a serious issue in academic science that significantly impacts the experiences and careers of women scientists. The Banbury meeting resulted in a white paper published in *Science* magazine (Greider et al., *Science* 08, Nov 2019) that highlighted gender-specific barriers that women encounter in science, and specific approaches and policies that institutions and government agencies can take to counteract these barriers. It also provided actionable items for internal committees to pursue regarding Gender Diversity of Faculty, particularly recruitment.
- **INITIATE DEI OFFICE.** Also in the fall of 2018, we created an Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) as part of our efforts to address infrastructure support and resources. The DEI Office is charged with integrating and overseeing efforts across multiple functional areas, including faculty hiring and development, to promote equitable and inclusive working environments on campus. The office started small (the Director at 25% effort), but in two years grew to a full time Director plus a 50% coordinator. Starting small allowed the office to integrate with existing institutional groups that were already doing some of this work and to leverage it into a strategically coordinated effort. Several committees were set up, including one on Faculty Hiring and another on Faculty Development. The Director also completed Search Advocate training through Oregon State University (<https://searchadvocate.oregonstate.edu>) to bring best practices in fair and unbiased search processes into CSHL faculty searches.
- **ASSESS EXISTING FACULTY RECRUITMENT.** In 2019, an internal “Faculty Gender Diversity Task Force” was formed to assess existing faculty recruitment efforts over the last several years, which in turn would provide a starting point/baseline and identify any trends or concerns that should be immediately addressed. In addition, this group reviewed the recommendations from the Banbury meeting described above and worked to implement recommendations from this meeting as well as other sources of advice and strategies related to Faculty Recruitment. The work of this Task Force was then taken up by the newly established DEI Faculty Hiring and Faculty Development committees. Some of the specific actions taken:
 - Review historical data on faculty searches and offers;
 - Review existing faculty search policies;
 - Review the interview process, particularly the experiences of women and racial/ethnic minority candidates;
 - Review communication and information between CSHL and faculty candidates at all stages.
- **ACTIONS.** Based on the assessments and recommendations from the task force and committees, the below changes were implemented starting with 2019-2021 faculty searches. These changes were a collaboration between multiple departments at CSHL, including Research, HR and DEI. Faculty and senior leadership were heavily involved and fully supported these

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efforts, which was an important element in getting changes through quickly and effectively.

Adjustments/changes included:

- New application portal for faculty applications to allow improved tracking and demographic analysis, and consistent experience for candidates;
- Diversity recruitment strategy developed to widen the pool of applicants;
- Implicit bias training for search committees;
- Improved/standardized communication between CSHL and candidates, including clear list of benefits of being a CSHL Faculty member and information about interview components/process;
- List of talking points distributed to all faculty and staff meeting with candidates to ensure accuracy and consistency of information;
- Increased transparency on decisions by search committee;
- Increased administrative support for search committee chairs;
- Require a diversity and mentoring statement as part of the application materials.

CONTINUING EFFORTS. In addition to the above items specifically geared towards searches and search committees, we are also engaging the entire CSHL community to ensure a work environment that is welcoming to a diverse faculty and workforce. This has involved enrolling faculty and staff in courses offered through the AAAS Sea Change program, viewings of “Picture a Scientist” offered to all employees (currently required for all new hires), CIMER mentor training for faculty, multiple training opportunities on implicit bias and bystander intervention, initiation of a DEI journal club for faculty and broadening the training on implicit bias during searches to all faculty.

RESULTS. CSHL is a relatively small institution, with only one or two faculty searches each year, but in 2019-2021, three out of five of the faculty openings were filled by women.

NEXT STEPS. Now that we are more accurately collecting applicant information, we can better assess who is applying (or not applying) and can redirect our recruitment efforts accordingly. Recruiting a diverse faculty is just the beginning – attention to retention and promotion is also needed, as well as continued training and implementation of fair, equitable and transparent processes to achieve our long-term goal of creating an inclusive working environment.

Website for further information: <https://www.cshl.edu/about-us/dei/#initiatives>

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