



NIH Working Group on Women in Biomedical Careers

The NIH Director created the NIH Working Group on Women in Biomedical Careers in 2007 to examine issues raised in the National Academies report, *Beyond Bias and Barriers: Fulfilling the Potential of Women in Academic Science and Engineering*, and to respond to the challenges issued to government funding agencies to maximize the potential of women scientists and engineers. The Working Group (WG) has carefully considered the recommendations in the report and has developed innovative strategies and tangible actions that are being implemented to promote the advancement of women in research careers both within the NIH and throughout the extramural research community.

The WG, which is 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 representatives of NIH intramural and extramural staff. Under the leadership of the new NIH Director, 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.

Examples of the Working Group's efforts include:

Extramural Activities:

- 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 fourteen R01 awards were made in 2009 with contributions from 11 ICs and 4 OD offices (\$16.8M over 4 years). Topics 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, and the economic factors related to gender disparities in science. Factors which specifically impact the career paths of women of color will also be examined (<http://womeninscience.nih.gov/funding/index.asp>).
- The allowed period of paid parental leave for Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Awards trainees has been doubled to sixty calendar days (equivalent to eight work weeks).
- The NIH reentry supplement program, which provides opportunities for fully trained researchers to reenter careers in science after a hiatus due to family or other responsibilities, has been expanded to include postdoctoral researchers (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-08-191.html>).
- 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.
- The application for NIH Conference Grants has been amended to require that applicants describe plans to identify resources for child care and other types of family care at the conference site (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-10-071.html>).

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 intramural trainees to eight weeks;
 - Extension of the tenure-clock for NIH intramural scientists by one year to accommodate family leave;
 - Establishment of a program to enable NIH intramural principal investigators to hire a temporary lab manager to continue lab operations while they are on extended leave;
 - Implementation of an NIH leave bank (<http://hr.od.nih.gov/beneits/leave/vlbp/default.htm>);
 - Construction of an additional child care center on the Bethesda campus, which will increase overall capacity by 130 children when completed in early 2012, and other child care services available from the Office of Research Services (<http://does.ors.od.nih.gov/childcare/>).
- Focus groups of NIH principal investigators, staff scientists and clinicians, and postdoctoral fellows were held to garner insights and recommendations for improving the NIH climate for all scientists. A report on these focus groups has been presented to intramural leadership.
- The recommendations of the Trans-NIH Mentoring Committee regarding career development for NIH trainees, evaluation of mentoring by investigators as part of their review, minimizing mentor-mentee conflict, and recognizing outstanding mentoring at the NIH have been posted and are being implemented (<http://sourcebook.od.nih.gov/ethic-conduct/Mentoring%20Goals-final.pdf>).

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. Reports and other resources are posted on the WG website (<http://womeninscience.nih.gov/workshops.asp>).
- ORWH co-sponsored the National Academies Committee on Women in Science, Engineering, and Medicine conference entitled *From Doctorate to Dean or Director: Sustaining Women through Critical Transition Points in Science, Engineering, and Medicine Workshop* (http://sites.nationalacademies.org/PGA/cwsem/PGA_045065).

Electronic Resources:

- The WG website continues to be expanded, including links to over 200 news articles and reports relevant to women's careers, as well as resources from the NIH, other federal, and professional societies and other organizations (<http://womeninscience.nih.gov/resources/index.asp>).
- The WG, with the Office of Extramural Research (OER), has analyzed data on the participation of women in NIH extramural grant programs. These data are available on the WG and OER's RePORT websites (<http://womeninscience.nih.gov/pdf/InvolvementOfWomenInResearch.pdf>).
- The WG, in conjunction with OER, has prepared and posted a list of FAQs which present relevant information related to NIH policies regarding the use of grant funds for parental leave and child care (http://grants.nih.gov/training/faq_childcare.htm).
- ORWH released *Women in Science at the National Institutes of Health 2007-2008*, highlighting the accomplishments and career paths of over 280 doctoral-level women working at the NIH (http://womeninscience.nih.gov/women_science_book/index.asp).
- The NIH helped establish the Mid-Atlantic Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (M-A HERC), expanding the job placement resources available to spouses and partners of current and potential NIH employees (<http://www.midatlanticherc.org>).
- An e-newsletter highlighting the WG's activities, relevant reports and information on women's careers in science, examples of successful programs throughout the country, and profiles of women scientists reaches over 600 subscribers (<http://womeninscience.nih.gov/listserv/index.asp>).