

Best Practice Recruitment Guidelines to Fast Forward the Advancement of Women in Australian University Executive Appointments

CASE STUDIES

University of Technology Sydney Recruitment of Academic Women in STEMM

Issues identified

Heavily male-dominated STEMM Fields, particularly at Levels D & E and the need to redress the overall balance while building a pipeline of talent.

Initiative undertaken

The School needed to recruit 5 continuing integrated academic roles. Two at level D/E and 3 at Level B, across 3 disciplines. The Convenor of the committee was committed to running a recruitment process that was fair and equitable and that also targeted suitable female candidates. They also ensured that this was front of mind for all panel members throughout the whole process.

- Design of PD used inclusive, gender neutral language with limited (8) number of selection criteria.
- Selection committee balanced regarding gender
- The use of gender-neutral language in the advert
- Advert copy started with UTS Equity statement and messaging around encouraging applications from female academics
- Sub-committee tasked with proactively sourcing female applicants in the respective discipline areas
- Focus of initial shortlisting conversations with candidates based solely on assessment of interpersonal skills and understanding of issues around equity and diversity. From these conversations suitable candidates were shortlisted for interview.

Impact achieved

Of the 2 senior roles 1 female academic was appointed at Level E, and of the 3 level B roles one female academic was appointed.

Lessons learned

- The need to ensure that applicants of all genders feel that they can explain their career gaps
- Panel members being more cognisant of their own unconscious biases
- Opening paragraph of the job ad to be rewritten to stress UTS commitment to diversity in a broader sense (not just gender), consideration of career breaks etc.

NB. Across all these processes and at the start of all meetings the Convenor reinforced the need to be mindful of equity and diversity issues to all panel member and reiterated the need to assess candidates relative to opportunity.

The University of Sydney

The Vice-Chancellor's Sponsorship Program for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Women

Issues identified

We know that culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women 'face a double jeopardy in leadership'. That is, their gender and cultural background combine to make it twice as difficult for culturally diverse woman to access leadership roles when compared with non-culturally diverse women or culturally diverse men. This is the finding of the research commissioned by the Diversity Council of Australia, '[Cracking the Glass-Cultural Ceiling](#)' Report 2017.

As a university we are making great efforts in creating diverse and equitable leadership and breaking down barriers to equality. We identified that to do this we needed to sponsor relationships between high-potential CALD senior advocates and the University Executive with the primary objective to accelerate CALD women's careers, and bolster leadership success at the University.

Initiative undertaken

The [Vice-Chancellor's Sponsorship Program for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Women](#) is a university-wide targeted effort to support culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women regarding the dominant culture at the university, who possess the potential to move into senior leadership roles at The University of Sydney.

This intense 10-month program targets high-potential women who demonstrate the potential to secure leadership positions. The program includes one-on-one sponsorship with a senior leader at The University of Sydney, a 360-degree Leadership Assessment to help shape participants' development plans for success, and mixed academic and professional cohort-based skills and career planning workshops.

Impact achieved

Sponsors and participants are provided with a best practice, targeted career and leadership program, tailored to the individual needs of the pairing. This sponsorship program helps create a level playing field for participants, setting them up for success by enabling them to take responsibility for their leadership journey. Sponsors are also provided with support, guidance and tools to assist them to be effective.

This targeted development programs increases awareness and understanding in how to mitigate unconscious bias and build inclusive leadership capability. In addition the key skill building workshops are run with a focus on increasing contemporary career development and leadership skills in the university environment. Leadership development and career planning forms an important part of the program foundations.

Lessons learned

This is the third year that we have run this program and one of the biggest learnings has been the need to provide an ongoing opportunity for the Alumni to continue to connect. With this goal in mind, we have developed an employee network for culturally and linguistically diverse staff called our Mosaic Network. Through this network our program participants will be able to continue to connect in formal and informal settings as they aim to pay it forward by developing initiatives that further support our CALD staff.

Wollongong University

Gender Neutral Job Descriptions

Issue Identified

University of Wollongong identified the need to provide gender neutral role specifications to attract women in STEM roles, given the difficulty they were experiencing in attracting applications from women, and that these roles tend to be heavily dominated by men.

Initiative Undertaken

The University's recruitment team reviewed a STEM-related position description for gender neutral language and removed any language with unintended bias in the role specification. They also added the University's diversity statement and commitments in supporting women in their careers in the advertisement.

Impact Achieved

A re-advertised senior role in a male dominated STEM discipline resulted in an increased number of female applicants.

University of South Australia

Advertising for Female Only Researcher

Initiative Undertaken

The University of South Australia introduced a [new initiative](#) to [invest in female researchers](#) in 2017. It ran a campaign for the Future Industries Institute, where pursuant to Section 47 of the Equal Opportunity Act SA 1984, it advertised for female only researchers at Level A, B, D and E.

Impact Achieved

The appointment process resulted in three female researchers selected.

Edith Cowan University

Diversity and Inclusion Practices – Athena SWAN Parking Bays and Parenting Rooms

Issue Identified

Edith Cowan University (ECU) introduced gender diversity and inclusion initiatives to attract and retain women, and consequently established themselves as an employer of choice. Part of their strategy is to ensure an environment that is inclusive of parents' parental responsibilities, while assisting them in working towards advancing their careers as senior leaders.

Initiative Undertaken

To achieve these aims, the introduction of two [key initiatives to mitigate gender imbalance have been implemented at ECU](#). The initiatives were parking bays dedicated for parents doing school drop offs before work; and nationally accredited parenting rooms.

Swinburne University of Technology

Women in STEM Fellowships

Issues Identified

- Heavily male dominated STEM fields and open rounds of jobs often result in the hire of more men than women. The rate of change to gender profile of STEM departments is glacially slow.
- The need to call upon Special Measures provision of the 2010 Equal Opportunity Act to offer women-only positions in the Faculty of Science, Engineering & Technology (FSET) to help shift the dial on gender ratios.
- Fellowships offer dedicated time to establish a research profile. However, fellowships are often only for a few years and coincide with child bearing/child-rearing time for women in STEM. It is, therefore, difficult to navigate short term contracts when starting or raising a young family.
- Permanent jobs, generally in research & teaching, require a strong focus on establishing teaching programs in first few years.

Initiative Undertaken

- Offer [women-only STEM fellowships](#) in 2016.
- 3-year research fellowships to build research profile; followed by security of **ongoing** academic teaching & research positions which includes:
 - a mentoring program covering research, teaching and academic career planning;
 - team of fellows to ensure network; and
 - team mentoring (all fellows plus a team of mentors), which results in immediate networking across the organisation for women in STEM.

Impact Achieved

- Long-term positive impact on the lives of the [4 STEM fellows appointed](#).
- While there was some backlash in the Faculty, the amazing calibre of the fellows shifted the perception of 'women-only' applications and positions.
- Pride amongst staff that the organisation took such a bold and progressive step (seen in Swinburne University's 2017 staff survey results)
 - Your Voice results showed large increase in views by both men and women (strongly) in FSET that Swinburne supports diversity and gender equity – likely not solely due to fellowship, but this fellowship initiative did have positive impact on the results.
- An unforeseen impact was that some women were able to use the Swinburne women in STEM fellowships to leverage ongoing roles at their home institutes.
- Many applicants thanked Swinburne for offering such a great program and saw Swinburne as a progressive and supportive environment for women.

Lessons Learned

- Leadership needs to champion women-only positions.
- Following the fellowship round (which covered each of S-T-E-M and had almost 250 applicants), there were open calls for on-going teaching & research academic positions – also in S-T-E-M. Few women applied and success rate <50%. The lesson learnt was that women seem to apply in droves when you offer women-only positions and when fellowships are combined with an ongoing academic role.
- The need for other higher education institutes offering women-only fellowships, or women-only ongoing academic roles.
- Fellowship and ongoing academic roles offer something quite unique that really supports and potentially propels women's academic careers.

Swinburne University and La Trobe University

A Peer-Mentoring Program to Develop the Pipeline of Women to Professorial Levels

A grassroots peer-mentoring program was initiated at Swinburne in 2014, led by female academics, to grow the number of academic women promoted to professorial levels. At Swinburne, the program assisted the 2015, 2016 and 2017 promotion rounds, with over 80 participants in the first year (2015). The program was adapted at La Trobe University in August 2017, with over 150 participants. During the 2016 Promotion Round at Swinburne, six women were promoted to level E compared to an average one per year in the previous six years. The appointment profile changed after two years, with fewer level A and B women, and more level D and E women academics.

Issues Identified

- The need to address the potential promotion blockages for women moving to professorial levels and identifying how career breaks are considered in the context of performance and promotion.
- It was identified a program needed to be developed that would help build the confidence levels of female academics to promote their potential as well as performance when making a compelling case for promotion to professorial levels.

Initiative Undertaken

- A grassroots peer-mentoring program was initiated at Swinburne in 2014, led by female academics. At Swinburne, the program assisted the 2015 and 2016 promotions rounds, with over 80 participants in the first year, 2015. The program was launched at La Trobe in August 2017, with over 150 participants. The program gained support from Senior Academic Executives acting as advocates for the program.
- The key components to the program are: targeted monthly professional development sessions about discussion topics relevant to promotion; 'group mentoring' by more senior academics, as well as academics applying for promotion for the same level; women are actively tapped on the shoulder to join as mentees or mentors; and review of promotions application process and how to best articulate performance relevant to opportunity (information from reviews enabled a refresh of resource).

Impact Achieved (at Swinburne University)

- In the [2015 Annual Promotions](#) round:
 - a record number of women applying for promotion, and promoted; and
 - near parity in the number of applications from women compared to men, although staff profile is 1/3 women and 2/3 men.
- In the 2016 Annual Promotion round:
 - fewer applications from women, but new record number of women promoted as success rate increased significantly;
 - both promotion committees commented that the "calibre of female applications was quite superior"; and
 - significantly, 6 women promoted to level E (average 1 per year in previous 6 years).
- Appointment profile is changing already after two years, with fewer level A and B women, and more level D and E women.
- Number of women retained remained constant over this time.

Lessons Learned

This [program is being implemented at La Trobe University](#).

University of Southern Queensland Aspire Leadership Program

At the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) a conscious effort was made to advance women's careers, leading to the creation of a [Women's Development](#) Program. The *Aspire: Inspiring Women's Career Advancement at USQ Program* was introduced in 2011. The inaugural program included two main streams, "Executive Women" and "Future Leaders", supported by general workshops designed to raise awareness of gender equity issues and empower staff to manage their own careers. The program produced more than 130 graduates, who capitalised on the opportunity by: raising their profiles in their areas of expertise; developing their networks; and progressing their careers. The focus on developing internal talent resulted in a significant improvement in women in senior executive positions, with 33.95% of these positions held by women in 2018, compared to 14% in 2010.

Issue Identified

In 2010, concerns were raised about the number of women in senior leadership positions at USQ. At the time, women were significantly under-represented in senior positions. While women made up 55% of the total workforce, only 14% of senior executive positions were held by females. USQ's statistics were significantly lower than the sector average of 35.6%.

Initiative Undertaken

A conscious and significant effort was made to increase the advancement of women's careers at the University, leading to the creation of a Women's Development Program. Combining significant consultation and industry benchmarking, the [Aspire: Inspiring Women's Career Advancement at USQ Program](#) was introduced in 2011. The inaugural program included two main streams, "Executive Women" and "Future Leaders", supported by general workshops designed to raise awareness of gender equity issues and empower staff to manage their own careers.

Impact Achieved

- Since 2010, the program has produced more than 130 graduates, many of whom have capitalised on the opportunity by raising their profiles in their areas of expertise, developing their networks through meaningful and productive connections, and progressing their careers within the tertiary sector.
- The strong focus on developing internal talent has resulted in a significant improvement in women in senior executive positions, with 33.95% of these positions currently held by women.
- In December 2016, USQ was also awarded its first WGEA Employer of Choice for Gender Equality citation.

Lessons Learned

- Dedicated programs focusing on high performing internal talent not only build a culture that fosters inclusivity and diversity, but also increase the capability and confidence of program participants and their peers.
- Flow on effects can be observed through increased female participation and success in a range of initiatives not directly connected to the program, but which contribute to the upwards career trajectory of women through the entire talent pipeline.
- To ensure continued success and momentum, these development programs need to constantly evolve and adopt refreshed formats to reflect the changing nature of work, participant needs and organisational strategic priorities.

Griffith University

The Leneen Forde Future Leaders Program

The Program was named in honour of the Honourable Leneen Forde AC in recognition of her outstanding contribution to Griffith and to the status and progress of [women nationally and internationally](#).

Issues Identified

- Benchmarking data have revealed Griffith University is above sector in the representation of women academic staff; as well as senior academic staff at Level D (Associate Professor) and above. In the higher education sector, Griffith has the third highest representation of women staff at D (Associate Professor); and ninth highest representation of women at E (Professor), as cited in the *2016 Selected Inter-Institutional Gender Equity Statistics* Universities Australia (2017).
- Griffith identified the need to build on these successes by focussing on the further progression of women into leadership roles. *The Leneen Forde Future Leaders Program* was established to address this need.

Initiative Undertaken

Launched in 2014, [The Leneen Forde Future Leaders Program](#) engages participants in:

- two high-quality experiential lunch events where participants have the opportunity to meet and interact with senior leaders;
- a career planning session with a senior member of the University;
- a formal sponsorship arrangement;
- 360 degree feedback; and
- participants also access central University funding (up to \$3,000 for each participant) to attend leadership development activities or implement a leadership project. This central funding may be supplemented further by the Groups. Each Program runs for two years.

Impact Achieved

- Of our inaugural cohort of 15, 10 (66.6%) of the participants were successful in gaining promotion to a higher level or a more senior leadership role, such as Head, Deputy Head (for example, [Learning and Teaching], [Research]), Director, Deputy Director and Associate Director. Other participants have been recognised in national and state awards.
- The pilot program has not had a significant impact on roles such as Pro Vice Chancellor, Dean and Head of School. It is envisaged that we will see an increase in the proportion of women in these roles as
 - more women complete the program;
 - progression to leadership positions 'beneath' these roles increases; and
 - the broader Griffith gender equity strategy continues to impact.

Lessons Learned

- Outcomes of the pilot program illustrate the importance of a multi-faceted approach to leadership development. Griffith sees senior executive sponsorship as vital to the further progression of already accomplished women – providing greater visibility and access to opportunities.
- Embedding a self-directed component to the program enables women to have agency over their further development.

Murdoch University

Talent Spotting and Fostering Female Academic Success using the Women's Professor Group and LEAD

Although Murdoch University has seen an increase since 2008 in the number of women represented at the level of Associate Professor (currently 38.2% women) and Professor (currently 25% women), the numbers are still not in proportion with male colleagues. Through the Women's Professor Group and the recently established [Learning Excellence Academy \(LEAD\)](#), Murdoch University aims to support female academics applying for promotions as they progress along their career pipeline, with a particular focus on Levels C-E. Special attention will be given to reviewing promotion processes, as well as providing support to academics in non-research focused pathways, for example in learning and teaching, or clinical practice roles.

Issue Identified

The appetite for applying for promotion has been very low amongst female employees with an average of less than 3% for Associate Professor and no applications for Professor at all in 2012, 2014 and 2016.

Initiative Undertaken

Through the recently established Learning Excellence Academy (LEAD) the university aims to support female academics going for promotions as they progress along their career pipeline, with a particular focus on Levels C-E. Special attention will be given to providing support to academics in non-research focused pathways, for example learning and teaching or clinical practice roles. This will be achieved through:

- a review of the probation and promotion practice to develop a career pipeline for our academics, where expectations are clear and consistent throughout employment, where talent is fostered, and all are provided with continuing professional development opportunities to meet these expectations;
- Talent Spotting Program utilising the university's Female Professor Group and LEAD;
- Women's Academic Mentoring Program Pilot with the goal of encouraging women to successfully apply for promotion;
- a new Continuing Professional Development Framework (L&T) to support career progression;
- early Career Research Program is in place to support new academics;
- an exercise is in place to assess policies and practices to identify gaps which could cause women to be disadvantaged; and
- an increased focus on improving support and flexibility for staff with family and caring responsibilities is in place

Impact Achieved

- The University is in the process of setting Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for this initiative which will initially focus on increasing the number of promotion applicants for Levels C-E, and then progress to increased success rates for these Levels.
- Additional impact measures will include revised probation and promotion processes which will provide a framework that allows for recognition across all areas of contribution at the university (education; clinical; industry; leadership, service and research). This model acknowledges the different pathways for promotion and by allowing academics to change their direction throughout their career with different options for achieving promotion with an evolving profile.
- Retain top and aspiring talent by providing targeted CPD and mentoring opportunities through talent spotting program in conjunction with the Female Professor Group.