



## Improving the Climate for Women in Academia

“At a time when the nation is concerned about training enough health care givers and research scientists for the coming decades, academic science and medicine appear to be in danger of wasting more than half of their capital—their women faculty,” concludes a recent report from the National Academies.<sup>1,2</sup> But perhaps needed change is coming. Many institutions are seeking ways to promote women’s advancement by creating a more favorable academic climate.

Some important recent efforts to understand and change institutional climates that may impede the careers of women scientists and engineers include:

- Thirty institutions have received National Science Foundation ADVANCE Institutional Transformation Awards, which seek “to develop systemic approaches to increase the representation and advancement of women in academic science and engineering careers.”<sup>3</sup>
- Five leading medical schools, along with Brandeis University and the American Association of Medical Colleges, have launched a landmark five-year study to explore and address the dramatic underrepresentation of women and minority faculty in leadership and senior positions in academic medicine.<sup>2</sup> This National Initiative on Gender, Culture, and Leadership in Medicine (also known as “C-Change” for cultural change) is supported by a \$1.4 million grant from the Josiah Macy, Jr., Foundation of New York.
- The University of Southern California received a gift of \$20 million to create the Women in Science and Engineering Program to increase the number of women in tenured and tenure-track faculty positions.<sup>4</sup>

One noteworthy and successful effort to assess and improve the academic climate for women (and for all faculty) is taking place at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF). The effort began when Chancellor J. Michael Bishop asked his top leadership to develop a Faculty Climate Survey and to include comparisons between women and men. Starting with questions that Nancy Hopkins and her colleagues had used at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, UCSF

officials developed a survey that was refined and administered by a professional polling firm in 2001.<sup>5</sup> A faculty committee appointed by the chancellor, with representatives from each of the four schools, analyzed the results and forwarded 10 recommendations to the chancellor in 2003.<sup>6</sup>

The chancellor accepted all 10 recommendations.<sup>7</sup> A Chancellor’s Council on Faculty Life was appointed in late 2003. Under the leadership of the vice provost for academic affairs (originally Dorothy Bainton, now Sally Marshall), the council is responsible for implementing the recommendations, thereby ensuring high-level support for these activities.

Some of the positive results so far include a change in tenure policy with respect to maternity, establishment of programs to support new and existing faculty, and institutional recognition of the importance of enhancing diversity.

One reform was an enhancement to the existing University of California systemwide policy under which the tenure clock automatically stops if a faculty member takes maternity leave. Now at UCSF the chancellor’s office compensates departments for the first six weeks of this paid leave. An additional six weeks of leave is available without such compensation.

In keeping with the recommendations of the committee that reviewed the faculty survey, several new programs are in place to support faculty. First, there are now both institution-wide and intradepartmental welcoming activities for all new faculty. A daylong program covers topics as varied as compensation and benefits, childcare, faculty review processes, mentoring, retirement, teaching skills, and managing difficult work situations.<sup>8</sup>

Another new program to support faculty is the UCSF Faculty Mentoring Program, which was established in 2006 with the goals of:

- Supporting the recruitment and retention of the highest-quality faculty
- Increasing faculty diversity through improved mentoring of underrepresented faculty
- Improving faculty career satisfaction and success.

Mitchell D. Feldman was appointed to the half-time position of director of faculty mentoring and is working closely with the Chancellor’s

**Some of the positive results so far include a change in tenure policy with respect to maternity, establishment of programs to support new and existing faculty, and institutional recognition of the importance of enhancing diversity.**

Council on Faculty Life to establish and oversee a mentoring program for all UCSF faculty. All assistant professors and new faculty have mentors; more than 800 have been matched to date. Mentors and their protégés meet at least twice a year to review the protégé's updated curriculum vitae and individual development plan. Each department has at least one mentoring facilitator, with almost 80 such appointments in place. Workshops are being developed to train both mentors and facilitators. Protégés are enthusiastic about the new program, saying, "I applaud the institutionalization of the mentoring program at UCSF," and "I think that the mentoring program is fabulous."

A third new program to support and advance faculty careers is a substantive new-faculty leadership development program launched in 2005. Funded by the Chancellor's Council on Faculty Life, the UCSF Faculty Leadership Collaborative was developed by the Coro Center for Civic Leadership, a nationally recognized leadership training organization. The program is designed for UCSF faculty who want to build community awareness and knowledge as well as their personal and professional leadership skills. More than 60 individuals have already received this training, which will be offered periodically.

Finally, a faculty enrichment pilot program aimed at stress management and reduction has recently been completed, and the initial results are positive. This program supplements the many supportive resources available through the UCSF Work-Life Portal.<sup>9</sup>

Nurturing and enhancing diversity is now recognized as an important component of the UCSF strategic plan.<sup>10</sup> A faculty search ambassador position, initially established two years ago, has been made part of a broader, UCSF-wide diversity initiative. J. Renee Navarro was appointed director of academic diversity in August 2007 to lead UCSF's efforts to nurture and enhance diversity among faculty and trainees, who include students, residents, and postdoctoral scholars.

To test whether these interventions have improved the climate for all faculty, and

especially for women, UCSF plans to repeat the 2001 Faculty Climate Survey in a few years. "I am very pleased with the results of the programs instituted by the Chancellor's Council on Faculty Life through the Office of Faculty Development and Advancement," says Vice Provost Marshall. "It has been a great experience—from the initial support by Chancellor Bishop through the active participation by our faculty and their appreciation of the programs."

Clearly, to facilitate women's careers we must reform what the National Academies report calls "gender and racial/ethnic bias and outmoded 'rules' governing academic success." However, with efforts like those at UCSF and other institutions, women can be and should be encouraged to pursue careers in all branches of academic science and medicine, without fear of becoming part of the "wasted capital." ■

—W. Sue Shafer

*Consultant, Women's Careers In Science*

## References

- <sup>1</sup>Committee on Maximizing the Potential of Women in Academic Science and Engineering, National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, and Institute of Medicine (2007). *Beyond Bias and Barriers: Fulfilling the Potential of Women in Academic Science and Engineering*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press
- <sup>2</sup>[www.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/2007-03/bu-arf032707.php](http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2007-03/bu-arf032707.php) (retrieved 9/24/2007).
- <sup>3</sup>[www.nsf.gov/crssprgm/advance/itwebsites.jsp](http://www.nsf.gov/crssprgm/advance/itwebsites.jsp) (retrieved 9/21/2007).
- <sup>4</sup>[www.usc.edu/programs/wise/about](http://www.usc.edu/programs/wise/about) (retrieved 9/24/2007).
- <sup>5</sup>[chancellor.ucsf.edu/cwf/contents.htm](http://chancellor.ucsf.edu/cwf/contents.htm) (retrieved 9/24/2007).
- <sup>6</sup>[statusofwomen.ucsf.edu/resources/climatefaculty.php](http://statusofwomen.ucsf.edu/resources/climatefaculty.php) (retrieved 9/24/2007).
- <sup>7</sup>[chancellor.ucsf.edu/responsetotaskforce/chancellor.htm](http://chancellor.ucsf.edu/responsetotaskforce/chancellor.htm) (retrieved 9/24/2007).
- <sup>8</sup>[academicaffairs.ucsf.edu/welcome2007/SFGH2007.php](http://academicaffairs.ucsf.edu/welcome2007/SFGH2007.php) (retrieved 12/14/2007).
- <sup>9</sup>[www.ucsf.edu/wrklife/](http://www.ucsf.edu/wrklife/) (retrieved 12/14/2007).
- <sup>10</sup>[strategy.ucsf.edu/strategic\\_planning\\_final\\_plan\\_contents.aspx](http://strategy.ucsf.edu/strategic_planning_final_plan_contents.aspx) (retrieved 12/14/2007).

*The online version of this article was updated on February 15, 2008.*

**[W]ith efforts like those at UCSF and other institutions, women can be and should be encouraged to pursue careers in all branches of academic science and medicine, without fear of becoming part of the "wasted capital."**