Section 15.2
LEAF Focus Group Report on Professional Development Topics for Women at the University of Cincinnati Academic Health Center

Introduction:
Leadership, Empowerment, Advancement for Women STEM Faculty (LEAF) strives to increase the participation and advancement of women faculty in STEM disciplines and transform the culture of the University of Cincinnati (UC) to promote equity and professional success for women. As part of this effort several focus groups were held with women faculty across UC’s College of Medicine and Cincinnati Children’s Hospital and Medical Center to gather views on women’s professional development, gain perspective on the perceived support and/or bias with respect to women faculty, and hear suggestions for future changes which would make the most difference to the professional lives of woman faculty in the Academic Health Center. The goals of these recommendations are to determine the obstacles faced by women that potentially impede their success in order to then maximize the hiring, promotion, and retention of female faculty based on the principle that women and men deserve equal footing in all aspects of life at UC.

I opened each meeting by introducing myself and said that I was there to hear their voices regarding promotion and academics for women in the college. After listening to the issues, I aimed to focus the conversation on specific recommendations on how to improve climate, productivity, and retention. This process was to provide a safe and confidential space for women to discuss the best parts of their development, the worst parts of their development, and their vision for the future (rose, thorn, bud model of feedback). At times, I used the plural “they” below to reflect one or more voices to preserve confidentiality.

This report attempts to identify the key internal and external factors seen as important to achieving this objective.

COM Basic Science Women
There are a plethora of smaller issues, all of them leading to a lack of hiring and retention. The consensus of the women faculty is that there is a general lack of hiring of women and that women are not being given the same opportunities for leadership as their male counterparts. Additionally, the process by which the leadership positions are created and filled lacks both continuity and transparency. At times it is not clear what opportunities are available, and there is a feeling of inequity with regard to salary. Male colleagues are viewed as supporting one another and overtly not supporting work of female counterparts; an example of this is reading and supplying feedback for a male colleagues grant and not having time to do the same for a female’s grant, despite her having asked first. These differences give rise to a ‘boys club’ attitude among the faculty. In addition, when there are search committee recommendations to hire a female, women do not believe the committee’s recommendations (including for hiring senior faculty) are honored; other candidates are selected.

Some concerns go beyond gender. There is a sense of faculty struggling to support their own positions financially and that money raised (philanthropically or outside traditional NIH methods) is not appropriately directed back to the individual faculty. There appears to be a lack of recognition for non-revenue generating work (mentoring, service work, teaching, scholarship, dissemination, etc.). This
group recommends having information available to those interviewing at UC about the overall climate, state of the faculty union, and general budget and salary issues.

From this group, transparency and accountability are paramount to future successes. The group recommends that support (money, time, etc.) be available for professional development. Skills needed include guidance for negotiation, grant writing, leadership, CV creation, and workshops on socially negotiating basic gender differences in professionals. Skill development for senior faculty is also needed regarding mentoring of more junior faculty and attainment of leadership positions within UC. Women need more direction and encouragement to ask for and attain promotion.

Solutions posited by this group include developing a community for women faculty through creation of a Women in Science and Medicine Office (similar to the LEAF office or Women in Medicine and Science (WIMS)) that supports mentoring from and for women in leadership positions, across departments and supporting intradepartmental collaborations. Developing a women’s network can help with promoting women into leadership positions and create representation by giving other women a positive vision whereby they can see themselves succeeding.

According to the women surveyed, a successful Women in Medicine and Science Office needs several components: independent funding, to be located in Dean’s, Research Division, or President’s Office, and have connections with the AAUP. This office could support and oversee faculty development plans for women faculty, support transparency in salary and space allocations, and provide support for ‘equity’ reviews of current salaries and supported positions. There is a general census that funds from this office could also support small grants for women students, fellows, and postdocs, and could supplement programming from CCTST, as well as supporting the coaching of graduate students, postdocs, and junior faculty on interviewing and negotiations. They believe the office should have an internally developed leadership development program, for example Amy Buner’s Leadership class could be turned into a workshop series.

They believe that the Women in Medicine and Science Office should also have a voting member on all major search committees, helping to determine who the best candidates are for supporting women (recognizing that this could be a man). Most importantly, this office should develop cross-silo mentoring, sponsorship programs, and have workshops on personality (Meyers-Briggs test) and communication strategies. To garner interest for young woman, this office and UC at large need to promote STEM for women in grade school, middle school, and high school.

**COM Clinical Women**

Globally, there is a sense that UC is behind other institutions in regards to treatment of women in science and medicine. There is a very obvious lack of diversity amongst top leadership, and an obvious shortage of women in leadership positions. There is a general consensus that there are unequal expectations that women will take care of family obligations. (There is a specific case of a husband and wife at equivalent career levels, both faculty at UC. When their children get sick, she is expected to stay home, while he is expected to go to work. UC prioritizes his labor. As was remarked: “Institutionally we’re at the same level, but not really.”). There were comments that maternity leave is viewed as vacation (and sometimes is taken as actual vacation time). This group also echoed that search committees’ recommendations are often ignored by Deans who have the final say.

There are some issues that go beyond gender and they include: having no time to do any administrative work, or anything outside of clinical work. One member of this group stated clearly, “Everything has to be done on the side.” Most alarmingly and, in my opinion, clearly fraudulent, is that protected time isn’t being protected, e.g. negotiated academic time or research time clearly delineated on grants is not
being honored. In fact, the lack of support or recognition for activities that are not clinical is so pervasive that some attending faculty do not attend their own lectures. The tripartite mission is essentially reduced to a single mission – clinical productivity. Professional development is discouraged. Events are announced too close to their occurrence, without enough time to clear clinical schedules, even if that were permitted, and occur consistently at challenging times. Finally, one faculty member has not had a one-on-one faculty review with her supervisor, which determines if her academic advancement is on track, in twelve straight years.

Solutions identified include having a mechanism for equity review for salary and supported position. They believe that there needs to be transparent pathways for promotion. An office for women, according to this group, is essential.

This office needs to support professional development training, including training in negotiation, CV writing, curriculum development, teaching skills, grant writing, and mentoring skills. The women surveyed recommend that this office should also be a resource center and include a library on negotiating, provide training in work life integration, leadership, CV development, and asking from promotion. An Office for Women in Medicine and Science should provide monetary support for AAMC leadership development programs and ELAM.

It is recommended that opportunities for cross-silo mentoring be established. The office should develop and incentivize senior mentorship, creating a cadre of well-trained senior mentors who are well suited to help junior faculty achieve academic success. CCHMC was cited as a model for faculty development and for a mentor pool. The desire is that mentoring programs be scaled up and include individuals across the UC community.

The women recommend that across the institution, there needs to be RVU forgiveness, salary support and recognition for mentorship, lectures, and training students. It should be it not only acceptable but encouraged to participate in professional development.

In general, UC needs to have an emphasis on work-life integration. This is essential for promoting and sustaining mental wellbeing. This group also recommends that no official departmental or divisional meetings should occur outside normal office hours.

**Department Heads**

Two attended, though many more RSVP’d.

Their general opinion is that climate concerns are justified and while probably not gender-specific, the belief is that overall climate concerns probably impact women more. There is agreement that women are doing a disproportionate share of child-care. In addition, they conceded that much of the academic work is done in the evenings taking time away from family. While there is more pressure for women to have family responsibilities, there is less time for them to work from home, leading to the outcome where they will not get promoted as quickly. There is no culture of paternity leave. Maternity leave often comes from vacation time.

College-wide funding has dropped, and there is not much recognition or support for anything non-RVU or clinical revenue generating. They claim that to be competitive in the marketplace they have to pay their faculty a competitive amount. While there are faculty positions that are 100% clinical, the tenure/academic faculty also command salaries competitive with private practice. The greatest deterrent for maintaining the tripartite mission is that faculty who are over the NIH salary cap must take a salary cut to have supported research time. There is no mechanism or budget to backfill any salary gaps. For example, if someone attains a grant that pays 20% salary support, 20% of his or her
salary will only be at the NIH cap. It is hard for these faculty to keep the missions in balance and because they are competing with private practice, the academic mission is lost. One said, “We’re not in a desirable place.” The non-RVU funds are woefully insufficient or nonexistent; the dean’s tax is only 2%. In return, faculty will take vacation time to be in meetings or support their academic endeavors. The system needs to have some fundamental changes and incorporate a different kind of funds flow. The global climate simply does not respect the tripartite mission.

Ideal solutions include having an office that supports and develops academic skills and develops mechanisms for senior female faculty to mentor junior women. The climate needs to be such that it is okay for males to participate in necessary family activates (sick care, parent teacher conferences, etc.) There needs to be top down support to create a climate whereby faculty development would be acceptable.

**Summary**

In general, there are some serious global issues. The tripartite mission has been lost and clinical productivity is paramount. There is at times a lack of accountability (nonexistent annual reviews, questionable use of governmental research dollars, and disrespect of protected time). There is no existing budget or support for academic development or individual faculty academic time. The dean’s tax is insufficient to support the gaps that exist in research and development. The faculty are eager and interested in personal growth and development. There is fantastic programming currently available, but inaccessible to some faculty due to clinical pressures.

**Recommendations**

Prompt and significant actions are needed to remedy the problems identified in this report and to maximize the hiring, promotion, and retention of talented woman faculty. The following recommendations are designed to address the areas most in need of attention:

- **Create an office for women.** This office should provide education and faculty development, and resources for academic advancement.
- **Promote an institutional culture of equity.** The equal treatment, promotion, and retention of women should rise to the level of an essential mission.
- **Achieve and maintain salary equity.** An analysis of faculty salaries should be performed. Department directors should be required to rectify all salary discrepancies that cannot be justified based on objective criteria.
- **Promote the careers of women faculty.** Provide an infrastructure to:
  - Oversees the annual salary analysis and meet with department chairs to assure that salary equity is achieved and maintained.
  - Ensure that department directors or division chiefs conduct annual reviews with each faculty member.
  - Monitor faculty promotion rates to ensure that both male and female faculty are being put up for promotion in a timely manner, and to investigate concerns about slow promotions.
  - Encourage and monitor the inclusion of women in formal and informal decision-making groups, such as search committees. Deans and Chairs need to respect decisions of committees.
- **Reduce Barriers to Inclusion.** The scheduling of meetings and conferences outside the hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. should be discouraged.

**Monitor progress.** A faculty survey should be administered in three years to assess the progress in achieving the goals outlined here. I also recommend that the focus group process be repeated after initial changes have been implemented.

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