Silver Pleiades Award Application – October 2018

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Introduction

Macquarie University’s Department of Physics and Astronomy hereby applies for the Silver Pleiades Award for 2018. Our Department hosts academics and researchers in the disciplines of astronomy, astrophysics, astrophotonics, photonics and laser physics, biophotonics, and quantum physics; and students in undergraduate and higher degree research (HDR) programs within these same disciplines. Teaching and research labs are supported by a professional technical team, and the Department is supported by an internal team of professional administrative staff. In all, we currently number 79 staff and 76 HDR students.

Since our successful application to the Bronze Award in 2016, the Department’s Equity and Diversity Committee and leadership team have continued to promote awareness and engagement with matters around diversity, equity and inclusion amongst our staff, students and community. We are proud of our progress on many fronts and our reputation for strong leadership in this area within the University. However, we are aware of the many areas of inequity and imperfect behaviour that persist, and the importance of building a culture of continual improvement to promote equity, diversity and inclusion.

Below we address each of the Silver Award criteria, illustrate our progress in the last two years in meeting the commitments made in our 2016 application for the Bronze Award, and identify key areas for future work.

Philosophy

P1. Examined conduct within the organisation and identified areas for improvement

Considering Departmental data on gender breakdown (Section O3.d), and results from a culture survey (Section O3.e), we make the following observations. Building gender-neutral research groups remains a challenge, with a low rate of female applicants for advertised academic positions, and modest increase in the proportion of female academics and researchers. While several equity initiatives have been implemented for staff, those for postdocs and students are limited. Access to existing training requires better promotion to increase staff and student uptake. Induction programs will allow us to establish expectations and promote our commitments to staff, HDR students and visitors when they commence with the Department. While sustained efforts to promote equity and inclusion programs in the Department have seen increased engagement with equity and inclusion practices, there is scope for improvement. Despite frequent communications, we note that the work of the Equity and Diversity Committee (EDC, see Section S1) towards Pleiades goals should be more visible within the Department, especially to students.

P2. Devised ways to measure the impact of initiatives within the organisation

The Department collects and tracks data on the gender of staff and students, of applicants to academic and professional positions, and of invited seminar speakers (see Figure 1 and Table 1). Current limitations in University systems prevent us from capturing all gender identities, but we will do so when this becomes possible. Our data are annually updated on our public Equity and Diversity webpage¹, and included in external documents such as our 2018 AIP accreditation submission. The recently completed culture survey has provided a detailed view of current issues. We plan to repeat this survey every two years, enabling evaluation of progress.

One measure of impact is our engagement and visibility with EDI within the University. The Department and EDC members are regularly identified within the Faculty and University leadership groups as setting the standard for other Departments to follow. We have had several instances of LGBTQI staff outside the Department and students within the Department reporting that our activity on LGBTQI issues made a personal difference to them. We will record such qualitative evidence in future, in addition to our quantitative surveys.

Strategy

S1. Established a committee within the organisation and planned relevant training
The Department Equity and Diversity committee (EDC) was established in August 2016. It currently has 13 members (5 female, 8 male), with representation across all staff and student groups, including undergraduate and HDR students, continuing and fixed-term academic staff at all levels, and professional staff. The Head of Department is an active member. The committee is chaired by the Department Manager. This reflects genuine buy-in from leadership and means that the committee can act swiftly and effectively to implement new policy.

The EDC is motivated, qualified and engaged. Our members variously: (a) chair the ASA IDEA Chapter; (b) serve on the Science and Technology Australia Equity, Diversity and Inclusion committee; (c) chair/serve on the Faculty Women in STEM committee; (d) serve on the University’s SAGE Self-Assessment Team; (e) chair/serve on the ASTRO3D Diversity Committee; (f) serve on the University ECR Network Advisory Committee; and (g) are part of the University Women’s and Queer Collectives. This engagement brings valuable connections within the University and beyond, facilitating information flow and influence.

The EDC ensures its members undertake EDI-related training available within the University. Seven members are accredited LGBTIQ Allies, two have received training in managing mental health in a tertiary setting, and four received cultural awareness training (during the 2017 ASA IDEA workshop). Four have undergone training in matters related to sexual assault and sexual harassment on campus, as part of Macquarie’s “Respect. Now. Always.” campaign. One member holds a degree in Gender Studies.

In 2017, the Department committed to develop a Person of Contact system for the informal reporting of concerns (such as equity, disability access, harassment or bullying) by any student or staff member within the Department. To date, we have not secured University-endorsed training for Persons of Contact to give them best practice and procedures for supporting students or staff with such concerns. Instead, the EDC is promoting targeted resources on best practice in these areas; this is a focus of effort before the end of 2018.

S1.a. Maintained a committed team to identify, monitor and implement change in the organisation
A summary of the EDC meetings and attendance is provided in Table 2. To date, only one scheduled meeting failed to reach a quorum (half the membership). All EDC meetings are appropriately minuted with action items and follow-up. Members are well-informed, endeavour to remain up to date with local and global initiatives and are active in identifying areas for further development within Department.

S2. Demonstrated a commitment to implement initiatives that promote equity and inclusion
Section O3.c describes our efforts over the last two years to implement a range of initiatives to promote equity, diversity and inclusion within the Department. These activities, including the adoption of our Workplace Culture statement, and regular communication of our progress towards stated goals and commitments, show our commitment to implement initiatives and demonstrate best practice. In the next two years we will continue to: implement new initiatives; seek and engage with best practice; consult with leaders and the Department; and implement our agreed action plan to address areas for development, as identified in our culture survey.

S3. Ensure all staff are aware of codes of conduct and processes for reporting misconduct
Macquarie has two comprehensive codes of conduct: one for staff that covers many areas, including a section on EDI; and one for undergraduate students, which addresses a variety of student-specific issues, (though not EDI specifically). There is no university-wide code of conduct for HDR students. Both the staff and student codes of conduct provide clear processes for reporting breaches of conduct. These resources are advertised at staff and Department meetings, linked from our Department Equity webpage, and are periodically circulated by email to staff and students. A link to the University’s “Respect.Now.Always” gateway, giving information on sexual misconduct and reporting incidents, is provided in Department newsletters.

S4. Provided safe avenues for staff to report issues and make suggestions (outside formal channels)
The Head of Department regularly invites input on EDI matters at Department staff meetings and advertises that staff can approach other senior members of academic staff, our Department Manager, or the Executive Dean of the Faculty in confidence as well as himself. At annual town hall meetings, the Head of Department outlines a process for HDR students reporting concerns about their supervisors or their workplace in general. This includes approaching in confidence a person they are comfortable with: associate supervisors, other senior academic

2 https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/code-of-conduct
3 https://students.mq.edu.au/study/getting-started/student-conduct
staff, the Head or Department Manager, and/or the Executive Dean of the Faculty. As in Section O2 below, we have recorded several cases where issues were reported informally, including by students, indicating their awareness of safe reporting avenues. The EDC has documented informal reporting guidelines on its webpage and as links on Department newsletters.

Outcomes

**O1. Announced commitment from the organisation head to achieving the goals set out here**

Our EDI priorities, initiatives, and Pleiades commitments are communicated regularly by the Head of Department, Prof. Michael Steel, at annual town hall meetings of the whole Department, and are a topic of discussion at approximately one in three monthly Department staff meetings. A focus on monitoring and improving performance in EDI is a core element of the Department’s strategic plan, with outcomes reported to Faculty Leadership each year. Prof. Steel frequently promotes the Pleiades system and our commitments under Pleiades to Faculty leaders in other disciplines as a model for those disciplines to pursue. The previous Head, Prof. Judith Dawes, chairs the Faculty Women in STEM Committee.

**O1.a. Demonstrated commitment from head of the organisation to achieving these goals**

Prof. Steel is highly visible within the Department and University in promoting and addressing EDI goals. He actively engages in all EDC meetings, and played the lead role in proposing, developing and seeking Department endorsement for the Workplace Culture statement (Appendix A), and for a formal public statement in support of marriage equality (Appendix B, also adopted successfully in several other Departments).

Prof. Steel frequently promotes and explains key University policy documents related to EDI matters at various Department forums. Recent examples include the University’s Gender Equity strategy, Indigenous Strategy, Respect.Now.Always, and a guide on supporting trans staff. He personally monitors equitable representation in committees, brochures, newsletters, advertisements, and social media. He has worked for many years to improve the visibility and transparency of the Department’s workload allocation practices, monitoring and publishing workloads by gender and academic level.

Prof. Steel regularly advocates for gender equality and diversity issues at Faculty leadership meetings, and he promotes gender equality and the work of female staff and students on twitter. He introduced the Department’s annual “tweet storm” promoting research by female staff and students on International Womens’ Day. Through newsletters, emails, celebrations and internal awards, he has strengthened a culture of equitable celebration of success and excellent work in all areas: academic, technical and professional.

**O2. Established the number of reported misconduct cases and resolution effectiveness data**

The University Employee Relations office confirmed in October 2018 that there were no formally reported cases of staff misconduct in the Department for the last two years. The University Registrar confirmed in September 2018 that there were no reported cases of misconduct involving our students in the last two years.

Our staff and students are encouraged to contact Department senior leadership or any member of the EDC if they wish to report cases informally. At least two cases of misconduct have been reported in this way. Of these, one case in 2017 involved staff and HDR students, and another case in 2018 involved students employed casually within the Department. While resolution effectiveness for these informal cases is more difficult to establish, we can report that the first case was addressed swiftly with action taken in the immediate weeks after the initial report. The second case took approximately two months for resolution. In both cases complainants were given the option to carry the case forward formally and elected not to do so, requesting that the matter be addressed at Department level. In both cases, advice was sought from Macquarie HR leadership to determine the best approach to resolution and actions to take to prevent similar future cases.

**O2.a. Published the number of reported misconduct cases and resolution effectiveness data**

We commit in future to establish and publish annually (on our webpage) the number of formally reported cases of misconduct involving students or staff of this Department and the resolution effectiveness data. We will continue to inform Department-wide meetings of the number of informal cases of misconduct reported and include these numbers in the annual reporting of cases.

**O2.b. Demonstrated support for complainants in reported cases, especially in case of retaliation**

Department senior leadership demonstrated immediate and ongoing support for complainants in the informal cases noted above. No retaliation was reported and would not be tolerated in any formal or informal case.
O3. Publicised commitment to work towards best practice by circulating plans within the organisation

The Department’s Equity and Diversity webpage includes a range of resources supporting current best practice in EDI, including a list of available resources and support for students and staff wellbeing, counselling and cultural support. Outcomes of EDC meetings are shared with the Department, and proposed plans of action and commitments are communicated through the regular Department newsletter. Our Workplace Culture statement is available on our website and is displayed at the front of the Department in a high-traffic area, together with a physical EDI noticeboard posting EDC initiatives and resources. This Silver Pleiades application has been circulated to the Department within the required 2-week notice period; and resulting feedback from staff and students is reflected in the document where appropriate.

O3.a. Monitored the conduct of the organisation in respect to equity and inclusion

The EDC closely monitors Department conduct in EDI areas, and collates and publishes data on the gender profile of the Department and gender representation of seminar and colloquia speakers. The recently completed culture survey serves as the most comprehensive attempt to monitor our EDI conduct and climate; the results will inform Department plans for future actions and serve as baseline for future biennial surveys.

O3.b. Demonstrated regular communication of goals and progress within the organisation

The EDC communicates with Department staff and students through its dedicated website; the Department’s Twitter, Facebook and Instagram feeds under the handle @mqphysastro, a number of individual twitter users (@magneticlemur, @jmdawes); the social media platforms of the entirely female-led Association for Astronomy (@MacAstronomy); and with articles in the regular Department newsletter. The EDC uses these communication platforms to: (a) advertise our seminars and events promoting women and minorities (recent examples include public lectures of AIP Women in Physics laureates: Dr Katie Mack and Dr Ceri Brenner, Women in STEM events, and the July 2018 Alison Levick Lecture presented by Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell); (b) to highlight the work of female researchers from the Department including as part of International Women's Day celebrations; and (c) to invite staff and students of the Department to participate in programs such as Gender Equality Week. These communication platforms were also used to advertise the statement in support of Marriage Equality, and formal adoption of our Workplace Culture statement in late 2017.

O3.c. Demonstrated implementation of initiatives and opportunities for improvement

The 2016 Bronze Pleiades application committed to initiatives spanning five related areas. The Department has been successful in implementing these initiatives where possible. Specifically:

Increasing accountability: Policies and acceptable behaviours have been widely advertised, both in public areas and by email. Our Workplace Culture statement was adopted in late 2017 and is included in all job advertisements. The Department also now de-identifies academic job applications for the preselection and shortlisting phases, using de-identified education history, scientific merits and bare metrics when ranking.

Engaging the community: We are working with the Macquarie University Widening Participation Unit to provide workshops and engagement experiences to students from culturally diverse backgrounds including students from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds, and from rural, remote or low-SES areas. On-campus activities include a Women in STEM Global Challenges workshop presented to female students from local high schools, and the 2017 ASA IDEA Workshop – a two-day event with around 50 participants, that featured talks on gender equity in STEM, initiatives to address inequality, and training on cultural intelligence and Indigenous engagement.

Raising awareness: The Department and the EDC have been very active in raising awareness within the Department staff and student cohorts as well as within the larger University community. This activity is described throughout this document: since raising awareness is central to all other initiatives, this has been a large focus for the Department in the last two years.

Embracing flexibility: The Department has continued its commitment to flexible working times and encourages staff to restrict the scheduling of regular formal meeting and seminar times to within the hours of 10 am and 4pm. The Department seeks to include child care support facilities at conferences and workshops organised by its staff, with on-site child care available to all attendees at no cost at the ASA IDEA Workshop. A range of support grants exist within the Faculty and University that research staff may apply for, including family travel funds to support access to childcare facilities when travelling to conferences.

Mentoring and leadership: The Department leadership and senior academics provide strong support for mentoring of grant writing and promotion applications by research staff at all levels. An ECR mentoring scheme
exists within the Department, but uptake has been slow, so needs better promotion. In addition, there is a conscious effort from the leadership group to distribute external speaking, prize nomination, and career development opportunities equitably amongst staff and students. Mentoring and opportunities for career advancement through secondments and training programs are made available to professional staff.

Further improvement for the HDR and early career researcher cohorts of the Department, is needed, particularly in mentoring and leadership. Other plans include: working closely with our Research Centres to increase awareness; continuing to address gender balance within the academic staff; including accountability for personal engagement with EDI practice in annual HDR reviews and staff Personal Development Reviews; holding events to highlight diversity and inclusion; and continuing to raise awareness and engagement of all students and staff members to contribute to a positive workplace culture.

O3.d. Measured the impact of initiatives within the organisation

The gender data of staff, students, applicants to academic positions, and invited speakers from 2016 to Oct 2018 are captured in Figure 1 and Table 1 below. From these data we can identify the following:

- Female representation in academic and research staff is stable at around 20%, compared to 50% for professional staff; initiatives to improve gender balance in academic staff are yet to show impact, but sustained engagement over coming years should see improvement.
- Only 8% of applicants to a recent continuing academic position within the Department were female: future advertised positions will allow us to identify trends.
- Female representation in undergraduate and HDR cohorts shows an upward trend; attributed to positive STEM initiatives in the Department and Faculty.
- The gender balance of seminar speakers has improved by more than 10% over 2016-2018; a positive impact of concerted efforts by Department to correct gender balance in this area.

O3.e. Performed a culture survey to identify equity and inclusion issues within the organisation and developed an action plan to address those issues

Our first workplace culture survey was conducted over 10 days in late September 2018. The survey was designed in consultation with the University Office of Workplace Equity & Diversity (OWED). The results were collected online and analysed by expert staff within OWED to ensure anonymity. This survey is a pilot for a University-wide survey in early 2019. The survey was open to staff, HDR students, visiting scholars and academic honoraries of the Department and attracted responses from 103 (64%) of 172 potential participants; 22 respondents identified as female, 52 as male, and 29 chose ‘prefer not to say’ (PNS). The survey offered other options for gender identity. However, OWED did not provide results against other gender identities, possibly due to low numbers. We expect further insights from the University-wide survey.

The preliminary analysis of the results examines the responses according to identified gender and/or role (academic staff, professional staff, student). More work is required to determine the statistical significance of differences in responses from these cohorts, so we can prioritise responses. Overall, responses from the PNS cohort are somewhat less positive than responses from those identifying as male or female.

A large range of issues were addressed within the survey including: awareness of mechanisms for career advancement manager support and mentoring; availability of training; impact of parenting, caring or part-time work; fairness in allocation of resources and workloads; manageability of workloads; perception of the Department’s and its leadership’s performance on equity, diversion and inclusion; experience of negative behaviours ranging from undermining work, to sexual harassment; staff perception of management responses to misconduct; and potential impact on someone making a report.

Key positive insights from the initial analysis include:

- Most staff felt supported in seeking training and development opportunities (9% disagreed) and most staff felt able to discuss career progression with their manager (9% disagreed).
- There was strong agreement that staff are treated fairly and equally in relation to areas including recruitment, promotion, pay and workload allocation (at most 18% disagreement in any area).
- All but 12% of academic staff understood what was required to be successful in promotion. The female cohort was uniformly positive in this respect.
- All groups agreed that there is a clear commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion at all levels in the University (less than 20% disagreement).
• Reports of having witnessed or experienced sexual harassment in the previous 12 months were generally low. However, there was a concerning level of incidents in two categories: suggestive comments or jokes, and inappropriate staring or leering.

Negative insights or issues from the initial analysis that require action include:

• Professional staff, particularly male staff, report both poorer understanding of how to progress at Macquarie, and lower belief in opportunities for advancement than academic staff. Furthermore, 75% of male professional staff disagreed that their workload was manageable, a result we had not anticipated.

• Few female students (25%) agreed that casual work opportunities are distributed fairly. Although we already have strong and effective monitoring of equity in the allocation of laboratory demonstrators, there may be inequity in recruitment of tutors or research assistants.

• Female students perceived a much weaker commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion from senior University leaders. The University Executive has been active in this area in the last 18 months, but this work may not be visible to students. We will share this finding with the University leadership.

• While 81% of male HDR students found Departmental social events welcoming and inclusive, only 26% of female students did. We will invite suggestions from our female students, anonymously and through focus groups.

• There are some areas of concern regarding workplace comfort and behaviour:
  o Almost 60% of female and PNS cohorts reported occasionally having witnessed work being devalued or undermined in the previous 12 months; 40% had occasionally witnessed someone being shouted at.
  o 28% of male, and about 50% of female and PNS cohorts reported occasionally having been ignored or excluded in the previous 12 months.
  o 35% of male and 40% of female cohorts reported having witnessed suggestive comments or jokes, and 15% of female cohort reported having experienced inappropriate staring or leering.

These are issues on which we already frequently communicate expectations through a range of channels, but clearly more work is needed. This will need further consideration, but our planning includes training seminars and other resources from the University staff and student equity offices.

Our overall plan and timeline for responding to the results of the survey is as follows:

• By mid-October 2018: OWED to complete the statistical analysis of the survey, to be shared with the full Department by email and a lunchtime meeting.

• By mid-November 2018: EDC to categorise the results in terms of areas of low, medium and high concern; and propose potential responses for each area. Depending on the category, these responses may include better availability and visibility of data, staff/student mentoring, clearer statements and promotion of expectations, and training seminars.

• By mid-December 2018: EDC to develop a plan prioritising areas to address, emphasising the most serious problems, and areas that may be quickly addressed. This will allow us to demonstrate early positive outcomes from the survey while also placing focus on the most important areas. The issues of concern listed above will be highly prioritised. The plan will describe formal and informal methods of monitoring progress consistent with our overall Pleiades strategy. The plan will be circulated for feedback from all Department members and then adopted formally.

• January-June 2019: Initial implementation phase. Actions identified in the plan to be overseen by the HoD and Department Manager with EDC support.

• July 2019-July 2020: Continuing implementation and monitoring with regular analysis by EDC and partnership with the University equity offices.

• August 2020: A new workplace culture survey to be compared against present results. This analysis will be included as part of our 2020 Pleiades application. A demonstration of significant improvement in most areas of concern would support our case to progress to a higher Pleiades status, if appropriate.
Supporting data and material

Figure 1: Female representation in MQ Physics and Astronomy (2016-2018)

Table 1: Data of gender representation in MQ Physics and Astronomy by staff, student or other category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2016 Total Number</th>
<th>%Female</th>
<th>2017 Total Number</th>
<th>%Female</th>
<th>2018 Total Number</th>
<th>%Female</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Staff</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Staff</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Staff</td>
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<td>40%</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>All Staff</td>
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<td>25%</td>
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<td>27%</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>27%</td>
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<td>25%</td>
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<td>HDR Students</td>
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<td>29%</td>
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<td>34%</td>
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<td>28%</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>-</td>
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</table>

* In 2016 only data for speakers invited to Department colloquia were captured; data in 2017-2018 include speakers invited to research group and research centre seminars also.
Appendix A: Workplace Culture statement

Our Workplace Culture statement was formally adopted by the Department in November 2017. The statement and the commitments that accompany it are copied below.

The Department of Physics and Astronomy pays respect to the original custodians of the land on which Macquarie University resides and to indigenous staff and students who study and work among us.

We embrace Macquarie University's commitment to principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion. We recognise these principles as core to our mission of fostering excellence and increasing impact in our research, teaching and community engagement.

We aim to be welcoming and supportive of all staff and students regardless of gender and sexual identity, ethnic and cultural background, disability, age, family/carer responsibilities, political affiliation, and religious belief. This commitment underlies our approach to recruitment, mentoring, promotion and celebration of success, and extends to all Department members: academic staff, professional staff, students and visitors.

We commit to an ongoing culture of improvement, measuring and reflecting on our progress, active pursuit of internal feedback and external assessment, and promotion of these values within our Department, to the University and in our wider academic community.

Following from this statement we make the following commitments:

- The Department will take reports of workplace concerns and misbehaviour seriously and will support individuals in dealing with the University's equity and complaint processes.
- We will institute training resources for staff and postgraduate students in unconscious bias and positive workplace environments.
- We will develop a Person of Contact system for reporting concerns.
- We will develop a statement of mutual expectations for our undergraduate students.
- We will monitor our web pages, social media and seminar series for gender balance and diversity.
- We will remain informed about best practice in equity and diversity from physical sciences schools and institutions around the world and evolve our processes in response.

Appendix B: Marriage Equality statement

Our statement in favour of marriage equality was formally adopted by the Department on 11 September 2017. The statement was published to our Equity and Diversity website and the Australian Marriage Equality website (http://www.australianmarriagediversityequality.org) on that same day. The statement is copied below.

The Department of Physics and Astronomy at Macquarie University supports equality under the law in all circumstances. This includes the right of any adult and their consenting adult partner to have their relationship recognised equally under Australian law, regardless of gender.