Workshop on Gender Equity in Recruitment

Prof Marlene Zuk gave a seminar and workshop on Gender Equity in STEM Recruitment to a diverse group from the Faculty of Science and Engineering and other Faculties and Offices in the University. Prof Zuk is an Evolutionary Biologist, and is the Dean of Faculty at University of Minnesota.

She presented a talk on Gender equity in STEM to about 30 people from several Faculties. Her talk covered a range of topics on gender equity and she related the observations in the US to similar data from Australia’s SAGE program. Some highlights:

- Marlene observed that women take up more than 50% of uni degrees, but not 50% of senior faculty. The scissor diagram is widely used to illustrate this measure. Perhaps this could have been attributed to lower historical enrolments of women, but this distribution has not changed over decades.
- The “leaky pipeline” is not appropriate – not all women or men want to become professors.
- There is a gender paygap – even for new Bachelors graduates, and it widens for senior faculty.
- Awards in Science are not equitable – some selection committees are skewed, or the process is opaque, with loose guidelines. (Marlene quoted a study that showed in 10 / 13 science disciplines, % female prizewinners is much less than % female professors)
  - To address this problem: use recognition not recall: Marlene recommended making a list of eligible people and then selecting from it, rather than inviting panellists to recall potential awardees.

Unconscious Bias exists but is difficult to measure properly or to address – eg test yourself using the Harvard test.

Marlene also discussed the effect of cumulative disadvantage.

To promote “active learning”, Marlene ran a workshop: she grouped the audience in tables of 4 and gave us a Case study script of a conversation in a hiring panel.

In our groups, we discussed why this panel was dysfunctional and what the panelists could do.

Measures that we can take to acknowledge and address these problems.

- Good intentions are not enough
- Make evaluation criteria as explicit as possible – “Quality” is subjective
- Take enough time
- Motivate why diversity is important – improves environment and performance of all
- Use the social science research

Social norms: unspoken rules about what is normal. People behave according to social norms, but may misperceive social norms.

(e.g. Students overestimate others’ sexual activity, false reporting of rape, what is “normal” drinking. Students underestimate others’ willingness to intervene and their tolerance of diversity).

Bystander behaviour – empower yourself to intervene if you see something that should be addressed.

“I wondered why somebody didn’t do something. Then I realised that I am somebody”.