



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PICTURE AN ASTRONOMER

The Problem: Women are significantly underrepresented in the global astrophysics community, holding at most $\sim 30\%$ of permanent positions in any country and facing disproportionate attrition at each career stage. Many initiatives focus on “interesting” girls in science, but far fewer ensure long-term retention in STEM fields, even though the barriers are persistent and systematic. Women are still viewed as less competent and less hireable than identical male candidates, receive harsher proposal grades and fewer citations than comparable men, and are given fewer resources while carrying a greater share of service work.

(Some) Recommendations:

- **Use standardized rubrics.** Rubrics should be used in the classroom and in hiring and promotion processes to help ensure that evaluation criteria are applied consistently and objectively.
- **Provide meaningful training.** Departments should offer, or strongly encourage, in-depth training in teaching, mentorship, anti-bias, and bystander intervention practices, as well as pre-professional development such as negotiation and self-advocacy.
- **Track and value service work.** Service and committee work should be tracked and equitably distributed so that no one group or individual is overburdened. Departments should also meaningfully recognize service and teaching contributions.
- **Promote a growth mindset.** Instructors should incorporate active-learning strategies and emphasize that scientific success depends on effort and persistence, not innate brilliance.
- **Build networks and community.** Strong social and professional networks support belonging and retention. Promoting peer and near-peer mentorship, affinity groups, and counterspaces can help build community for underrepresented scientists.
- **Enforce clear codes of conduct.** Codes of conduct should be clear, enforceable, and accompanied by transparent support and response procedures. Members should also be trained in how to intervene when violations occur.
- **Ensure equitable leave access.** All department members should understand institutional leave policies and available benefits. When possible, graduate students and independent postdoctoral fellows should be hired as employees so they can access these protections.
- **Support caregiving and accessibility.** Meetings should be scheduled during typical school or daycare hours when feasible. Asynchronous participation can reduce burden in international collaborations. Conference organizers should support accessibility for international participants, flexible childcare funding, and hybrid participation.

Picture an Astronomer: Best Practices for Retaining Talent in Astrophysics

<https://arxiv.org/abs/2512.24465>

<https://pictureanastronomer.github.io/whitepaper>