



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO RESOURCES AND WORKLOAD

The Problem: Female scientists are often substantially underresourced compared to their male counterparts. Gender plays a significant role in who is hired – at all levels, female applicants are considered less competent and less hireable than an identical male applicant. Once hired, women receive lower salaries, as well as less lab and office space, disparities that are compounded by societal expectations about amenability and compliance resulting in penalties at hiring for women who negotiate assertively. Women also shoulder a disproportionate amount of service work, often taking on more “invisible” and uncompensated roles than their male colleagues. This additional service work leaves less time available for research, which, in turn, means that women are less likely to propose in funding competitions for which they are eligible. When these proposals are successful, awarded grants are smaller. In astronomy specifically, telescope proposals led by women are graded more harshly than those from male PIs. When TACs cannot see the gender of the PI, women’s proposals no longer receive lower grades. These gendered disparities impact women’s participation in, and enjoyment of, science; at the same time, they directly affect key metrics of “productivity” used in hiring, promotion, and awards, making bias in resourcing a significant systematic barrier to retention in science.

Recommendations:

- Departments should offer training in both negotiation and accurate and effective self-promotion. Similarly, departments should, where possible, make salaries and metrics regarding key negotiables (such as discretionary funding or lab space) available to facilitate more equitable requests from job candidates at the negotiation stage.
- Service expectations should be transparent, with minimum, average, and high workloads specified. Departments can also offer more recognition for service work, establishing its value within the institution, and in tracking who is doing what work, can more intentionally assign service loads to be equitable.
- Mentors and individuals sitting on hiring, promotion, and award committees should attend ongoing anti-bias training to improve the quality and efficacy interactions with, and evaluation of, mentees and job candidates.
- For faculty hiring and tenure/promotion, letters of references should only be requested at the final stage of the process if at all. Letters can create opportunities for biased gendered language to enter the evaluation without adding much to the overall package.

Picture an Astronomer: Best Practices for Retaining Talent in Astrophysics

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

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