

Summary of the "ACTION for equality" action plan of the Faculty of Biology and Medicine of the University of Lausanne

Context

In 2012, the Rectorate of the University of Lausanne (UNIL) asked all faculties to prepare a plan of action to promote equality. The main aim of this project, called "50/50 Vision", is to tackle the "leaky pipeline" and ensure that by 2016, 40% of appointments to a professorial rank are women. The Faculty of Biology and Medicine (FBM) is particularly affected, being the UNIL's largest faculty.

In terms of equality, analysis of FBM statistics for 2012 shows that parity has been attained and even exceeded at Master, doctoral and post-doctoral level. However the trend is reversed at Senior Lecturer level. Only 28% of women are Senior Lecturers or Privat-Dozent Senior Lecturers and only 13% are in stable professorial positions (20% associate professors and 8% full professors).

It is mainly on the basis of this latter observation that the measures outlined in the FBM action plan "ACTION for equality"¹ were elaborated.

Framework for elaboration of the action plan

The Deanship of the FBM formed an "FBM 50/50 Equality" working group including representatives of the fundamental sciences section (SSF) and the clinical sciences section (SSC), whose task was to identify problems and propose solutions. The working group launched an internal survey² to take stock of the situation regarding academic succession and highlight priority measures to be taken. This work allowed the creation of the "ACTION for equality" action plan, validated by the Rectorate of the UNIL in June 2013.

Objective

The main objective of the FBM is to ensure that women represent 25% of candidates and all new appointments to professorial posts between now and 2016. The objective is ambitious, since it represents a doubling of the current rate.

ACTION: main themes and priority measures of the action plan

The ACTION plan in full is available on the website of the UNIL Equal Opportunities Office. Below, some of the key measures are presented in accordance with the plan's 4 main themes.

IMPROVE/ Creation of framework conditions making it easier to reconcile work with family life. The action plan focuses on 5 measures, principal among which are:

¹ "Action for equality" Action Plan of the Faculty of Biology and Medicine of the University of Lausanne in the context of the "50/50 Vision" project of the Rectorate of the UNIL. Sophie Martin, Anne Catagni-Kleiner. March 2013.

² Report of the survey on academic succession within the Faculty of Biology and Medicine of the University of Lausanne: the question of gender equality. Anne Cattagni Kleiner. April 2013

- Dialogue with the Rectorate of the UNIL to improve the situation regarding the shortage of childcare places;
- Allocate a support post for any woman pursuing an academic career who is on maternity leave;
- Adapt working hours for people with young dependent children.

GUIDE/ Mentoring, supervision and awareness-raising. Highlight the equality problem through 13 measures, such as:

- Include mentoring activities in evaluations of professorial staff;
- Consider the ratio of women invited to speak at symposia to obtain financial support from the Deanship;
- Create a page on the FBM website devoted to the gender question and measures taken by the Deanship, with a link to the UNIL Equal Opportunities Office website.

IDENTIFY/ Early identification of the next generation of female academics through 3 measures, including:

- Coaching of women with high academic potential by heads of department and services;
- Consideration of family obligations, the rate of activity, and more generally the life path in the context of applications for promotion.

SEARCH/ Proactive search for women candidates during the following phases:

- Before competitive selection: ensure that selection procedures are as open as possible, inform and train committee chairpersons;
- During the application phase: encouragement and assistance in the proactive search for female applicants, monitoring by the Deanship of the presence of female candidates, extension where necessary of the application deadline;
- At interviews: awareness-raising among committee members through the provision of checklists designed to minimise subjectivity.

Follow-up and conclusion

The FBM has been committed to promoting equality for many years, as witnessed by its "Pro-Women Committee" which has existed since 1992. This is composed of CHUV and UNIL representatives of professorial staff, intermediate staff, and administrative and technical staff.

Today it includes the chair of the "FBM 50/50 Equality" working group and plays a central role in coordination and communication with the Rectorate of the UNIL and the CHUV. It also provides support for the work and evolving tasks of the new project leader engaged on a part-time basis since 1st October 2013 to oversee implementation of the action plan (celine.zurbriggen@unil.ch, tel 021 692 50 54).