Peer Review Policies and Practices at NSERC and CIHR

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Natural Sciences and Engineering
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Conseil de recherches en sciences
naturelles et en génie du Canada

Canada

Canadian context for gender equality

- Overall legislative and societal context around gender equality in Canada

- NSERC and CIHR wish to ensure there are no barriers to participation of women in research

- This includes ensuring a peer review system free of bias

- Within NSE there have been greater challenges with regards to representation, therefore presentation will focus on NSERC experience to date
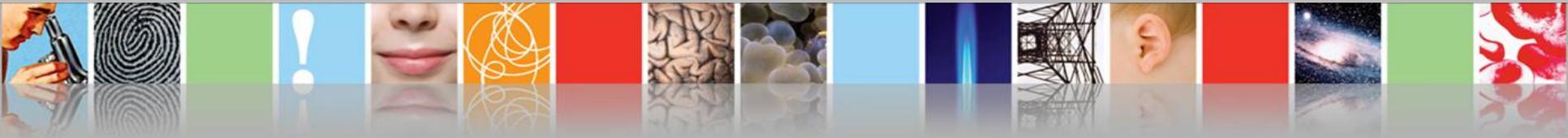
Task Force on Women in Science and Engineering, 1993

Recommendations made towards reducing barriers to the participation of women in S&E

- Adoption of an overarching Policy Statement
- Programs
  - Expansion of Chairs for Women in Science and Engineering
  - Women Faculty Awards
- Policies
  - Peer Review
  - Use of funds
  - Extension of grant or deferral of instalment or next application following extended leave
  - Parental leave for students and postdoctoral fellows

Policy Statement (Revised 2011)

NSERC believes that all Canadians should have every opportunity to participate fully in science and engineering and strongly encourages both women and men to consider entering careers in these fields

NSERC's programs and peer review system are designed to ensure fair treatment of all applicants. NSERC is committed to monitoring for gender bias in the evaluation of any submission.

NSERC recognizes that challenges remain in achieving the full participation of women in science and engineering careers. It is committed to identifying and eliminating barriers that may exist within its own programs and working together with other stakeholders, when appropriate, to do the same.

In addition, NSERC will partner in special initiatives to encourage and assist women in reaching full participation in all disciplines.

Policies – Peer Review

Guidelines Governing Membership on Selection Committees and Evaluation Groups

"2. Each committee should reflect the gender balance of the community it represents and, as a minimum, include two women and two men."

- ☑ Discovery Grants Evaluation Groups – women represent 20% of members, ranging from 4 - 8% in some of the engineering and mathematics fields to 26 - 28% in biology and geosciences

- ☑ Scholarships and Fellowships Selection Committees – women represent 35% of members, ranging from 15% to 60%

Policies – Peer Review

Orientation Sessions for New Members

- Discussion of the Canadian Human Rights Act
  - NSERC's obligations extend to peer review committees

- Peer review is about assessing <u>impact</u> of the contributions on the field
  - ☒ it is not about the number of papers published, h-index or journal impact factor

Policies – Peer Review

Applicants can explain delays in research and dissemination of results

- Instructions to peer review committees: *"Research productivity and contributions to training may be disrupted during periods of pregnancy or early child care (parental leave), or as a result of special circumstances. In these cases the applicant's productivity would be assessed over the active period (i.e., excluding the period of leave)."*

- Specific challenge – some applicants do not avail themselves of this option to the extent they could

Practices – Peer Review

Reporting on Application Outcomes

We monitor competition outcomes (success rate and average funding) by gender

- Data disaggregated by academic rank

These statistics are now posted on our webpage annually

Discovery Grants Results, 2010-13
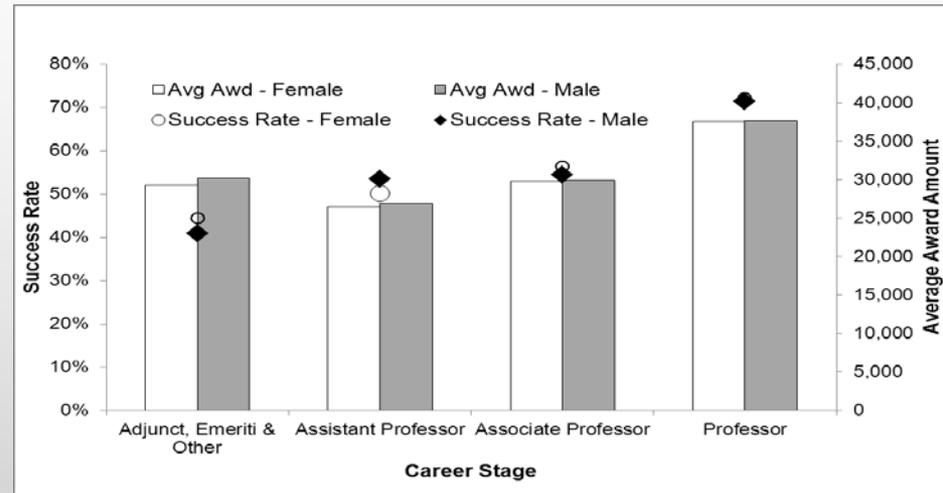
Scholarships & Fellowships Results, 2013
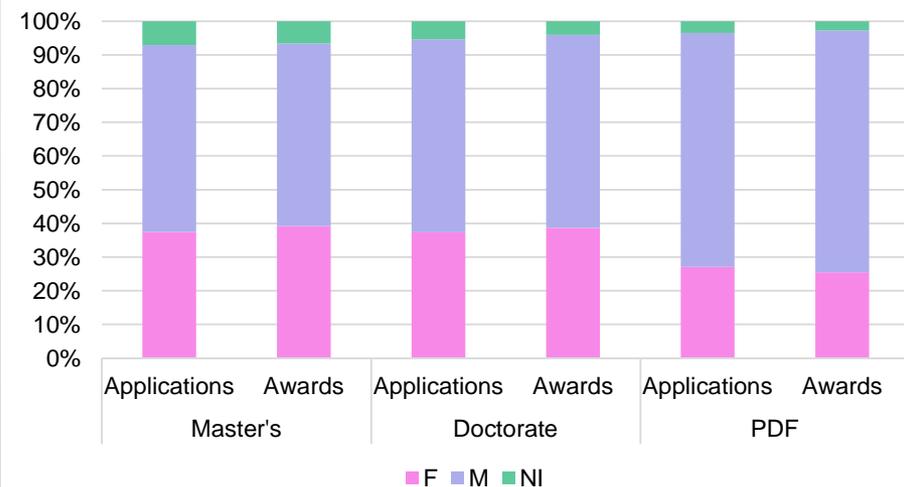
Towards the future - What more can be done?

- Continued collaboration with CIHR and SSHRC and other granting agencies to assess impacts of policies and practices, such as peer review, on gender equity

- Further training/orientation of committee members about recognizing and reducing bias

- Maintain the dialogue with academic institutions and the research community

- Encourage researchers to integrate gender dimensions in research and training activities

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