Addressing Gender Equity

Virginia Valian
Hunter College – CUNY; CUNY Graduate Center
www.hunter.cuny.edu/gendertutorial
www.hunter.cuny.edu/genderequity

1. Why we would doubt that there is a problem
   a. "just world"
   b. awareness of own sincere commitment to meritocracy
   c. lack of knowledge about how schemas (gender; race) work

2. Scope of problem from observational data
   a. progress: men and women make roughly equal starting salaries at similar ranks (although science and engineering salaries remain a problem)
   b. remaining problem 1: the pipeline leaks women at every stage
   c. remaining problem 2: there are signs of early rank differences.
   d. remaining problem 3: advancement is slower for women than for men
   e. generality: occurring in all the professions

3. Subtle underlying causes (gender schemas + accumulation of advantage)
   a. gender schemas (cognitive representations of men as capable of independent action, focused on the task at hand, and doing things for a reason; representations of women as nurturant, communal, and expressive of their feelings) result in our overrating men and underrating women in professional settings
   b. the many small examples of overrating and underrating allow men to accumulate advantage faster and more easily than women

4. Implications for remedies
   a. no one-time solution (schemas resist change; Protestant minister example)
   b. understand that one is likely to make mistakes (e.g., fail to hear woman's suggestion); be open to self-examination and correction
   c. "gender-blind" and "race-blind" policies not currently possible (because people are not gender- or race-blind)
   d. policies and procedures must be inspected for unintended bias (e.g., letters of recommendation)
   e. no one's fault but everyone's responsibility
5. **Leaders must lead: leaders do have power**
   a. state commitment to equity and diversity in multiple places at multiple times
   b. articulate benefits of equity and diversity for institution
      i. *example:* gender as window on institutional effectiveness
      ii. *example:* diversity as contributor to innovation
      iii. *example:* continuous thread linking undergraduate students, graduate students, post-docs, and faculty
   c. use current status and improvement in gender equity as performance measure
      i. *example:* improved recruitment of women
      ii. *example:* improved retention of women
      iii. *example:* placement of women as heads of important committees
      iv. *example:* review of evaluations to assess for gender and race equity
   d. downgrade departments with where credible evidence exists of bias, discrimination, harassment, or insufficient attention to gender
   e. create women and minority leaders; support those in leadership roles

6. **Examples where institutional structure might shortchange women**
   a. searches
   b. start-up packages
   c. initial salary
   d. jobs women expected to do (institutional "housework"; institutional "labors of love")
   e. access to institutional resources
   f. access to power within department and institution
   g. support for women in leadership

7. **What-to-do principles**
   a. know the data; know the theory
   b. take experimental approach (with multiple working hypotheses)
   c. accept need for consistent long-term effort, built into procedures and policies
   d. educate: provide information about how to
      i. conduct an equitable search
      ii. write equitable performance reviews
      iii. construct equitable promotion and tenure packages
   e. educate students
   f. ensure accountability: use equity and diversity as a criterion for lines and space
   g. compensate work on equity and diversity
   h. support scholarly work on the subject matter