



Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee
the council of Australia's university presidents

**The Second AVCC Action Plan
for Women Employed in
Australian Universities
2006 – 2010**

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The Second AVCC Action Plan For Women Employed In Australian Universities – 2006 - 2010

"an organisation should reflect the social composition of the society it serves. As a result, the organisation understands what customers want, and customers feel that the organisation understands their needs. By employing a diverse range of people, the organisation adds to its credibility and success in the market."

Wendy McCarthy AO (2001)

Statement of Commitment

The AVCC supports ongoing effort across the sector to bring about improved employment equity and an inclusive culture. In an increasingly complex university environment it is vital that universities build on the equity achievements of past years, utilise fully the skills and capabilities of all the workforce and continue to address the challenges facing women who enter and contribute to higher education.

Background

Seven years on from the release of the first *AVCC Action Plan for Women Employed in Australian Universities* (1999 - 2003) and after the sector has achieved considerable success measured by increases in the numbers of women employed at all levels of both the academic and general staff, gender equity is still an issue. Women are still significantly under-represented especially at higher levels, and the rate of progress is slow. Furthermore, the landscape for universities continues to change and to present new challenges.

There are many challenges facing universities at the commencement of the second Action Plan. They include the level of public funding for universities, industrial reform, the ageing university work force, the introduction of the Research Quality Framework, the redefinition of 'university', and an increasingly competitive national and international higher education market. Success in meeting each of these challenges will depend upon the sector accessing the full breadth of abilities, skills and perspectives from its workforce. To achieve this, universities must draw more upon under-represented groups, particularly their women staff. They must attract, appoint and retain more women in professorial and management positions. They must improve the participation, success and leadership of women in research in order "to capitalise on the intellectual capital and potential of significant numbers of successful female undergraduates, honours students and research higher degree students"¹. They must develop their staff to take on leadership positions which involve management of significant financial and human resources and working in a competitive entrepreneurial and political environment.

In 2006, while recognising the sector's achievements during the period of the first Action Plan, universities must renew their commitment to making both quantitative and qualitative improvements. They must continue the effort by taking on the second Action Plan as vigorously as they took up the first Action Plan.

There have been demonstrable improvements from 1999 - 2005 at most classification levels, and significant ones at Level C academic staff. However, progress has been uneven and there are opportunities to achieve greater consistency of outcomes across universities. There is still a need to strive for accelerated rates of progress, particularly for women at more senior levels, and to

¹ S Bell and R Bentley, *Women in Research: Discussion Paper*, AVCC, November 2005, p. 25.

monitor the impact on women of the current challenges of the higher education environment. The AVCC is conscious of the gains made in the number of women Vice-Chancellors and of the need to ensure there is a strong and developing pool of potential leaders.

The AVCC appreciates the support and initiative of the Senior Women's Colloquium and will continue to work with the Colloquium to achieve the goals set out.

Five Priority Goals

Over the five years of this Plan (2006 - 2010) the AVCC priority goals are:

1. to continue to encourage all universities to integrate equity strategies and performance indicators into their institutional plans and to support the priorities in this Plan;
2. to improve significantly the representation of women in senior roles by encouraging equity initiatives in critical areas
3. to monitor the patterns of entry of women into academia and respond to barriers to sustained entry;
4. to improve the monitoring of gender equity in workforce data and access to information; and
5. to identify, and engage universities with, critical matters through research on gender equity issues and dissemination of good practice. This will include:
 - women in research and the impact of the Research Quality Framework (RQF);
 - conditions of university employment policy and practice that impact on women and the attainment of gender equity; and
 - identification of barriers to participation and leadership.

Critical Targets and Measures

Critical targets and measures for the period are:

- to increase women at Level E from 16% in 2004 to 25% by 2010;
- to increase women at Level D from 24% in 2004 to 35% by 2010;
- to increase the number of women academics with PhDs;
- to increase the number of women general staff at Level 10 to 50% by 2010;
- to increase the proportion of women in senior leadership positions as deans, directors and senior managers;
- gender ratios in enrolment and completion of PhDs and the breakdown by discipline; and
- gender ratios for all academic levels by discipline.

Reviewing the data published and the measures will be an action of the Second AVCC Action Plan.

Critical Activities – 2006 - 2010

AVCC leadership

The AVCC will continue to have a leadership role in:

- achieving gender equality in Australian universities;
- publicising the issues for women in universities;
- promoting the achievements of individual universities;
- monitoring and promoting fair and effective representation of women on all committees and external bodies to which it nominates members or representatives; and
- working collaboratively with government and other agencies and with universities.

Monitor, measure, report

The AVCC will encourage all universities in Australia to include gender equity performance measures in their corporate plans and quality assurance processes. It will particularly encourage universities to focus on the number of women at Level D and Level E and the number of women directors/senior managers. The AVCC will report annually on the results.

The AVCC will continue to publish data on the position of all women employed in higher education and will:

- review the collection to determine what additional data is required to allow universities to benchmark nationally and internationally;
- examine the feasibility of including data on the entry of women into academic careers and the completion of higher degrees by research by discipline; and
- publicise through links on its web site the analysis of data by individual institution such as the public reports of universities released on the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency.

Research

The AVCC will sponsor significant research projects relevant to the Action Plan on the recommendation of the Colloquium of Senior Women.

Develop

The AVCC will encourage leadership development for women by:

- providing leadership programs for senior staff and ensuring that all leadership programs incorporate gender equity issues;
- reviewing the Register of Senior University Women; and
- investigating with the Australian Colloquium of Senior Women the feasibility of a mentoring and information network for women preparing for executive and leadership roles.

Support

The AVCC will continue to support the activities of the Australian Colloquium of Senior Women:

- financing the activities of the Colloquium including its administration, the annual meeting and the research program;
- consulting the Colloquium on relevant issues; and
- assisting the Colloquium in the preparation of an annual report on the outcomes of the Action Plan.

Publicise

The AVCC will promote equity for women in universities by:

- publishing the plan on the 'Women in Universities' web site;
- providing information and recommendations to its members based upon the findings of research, particularly research sponsored under the Action Plan;
- developing fact sheets and guidelines for universities on matters identified as critical to the achievement of gender equality in Australian universities;
- disseminating through the web site information about issues relevant to University women and examples of good practice in policy and programs developed by individual universities in Australia and overseas;
- issuing press releases on achievements and best practice in gender equity; and
- liaising with government and other organisations including sector practitioner groups as appropriate.