



The Honorable Jackie Speier

November 4, 2015

U.S. House of Representatives
2465 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Speier:

Thank you for your letter of November 3, 2015. Gender bias, sexual harassment, and assault against women or other underrepresented groups in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) are abhorrent, unacceptable, and inconsistent with the long-standing values of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). We remain committed to building upon our lengthy history of inclusiveness by providing broader leadership to empower women in STEM fields.

Your letter supports my view that even with all that AAAS is doing to advance the careers of women in STEM fields, we can do more. As you noted and I am personally aware from my own experiences, women in science fields have long been subjected to underrepresentation, bias, harassment, and abuse, and even now, shocking instances of discrimination remain alarmingly common. The National Science Foundation (NSF) has reported that the numbers of women entering STEM careers, including faculty positions in academia, has been slowly growing. This inequality has been particularly persistent in engineering, computer science, and physics, where women with doctoral degrees represent only about one-fifth of the workforce.¹ But even with the rise in numbers in some fields, women in STEM are woefully underrepresented in leadership roles in our academic institutions, our government laboratories, and industry. Racial and ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities remain underrepresented at all levels, even as our population is growing in racial and ethnic diversity.

Innovation and discovery requires participation and leadership that is inclusive of the creative ideas from a broad spectrum of the population, with different experiences and ways of approaching problems. This is about more than equity—it's about innovation.

In response to your previous letter of July 11, 2014, the association took immediate action to examine this issue within our own institution, even as we have launched new programmatic activities to better support, recognize, and reward women in STEM fields. We acknowledge and deeply regret *Science's* error in publishing the June 1 advice column that you mentioned. As you noted, it was promptly retracted, and we took strong steps to prevent any such errors from happening in the future.

AAAS has demonstrated its commitment to this issue in many ways over the years, with our most recent examples being the establishment of the Marion Milligan Mason Awards for Women in the Chemical Sciences, for early career scientists; the creation of a new video series, "The XX Files," to highlight the importance of research being conducted by women in science; and the administration of the highly visible L'Oréal USA Fellowships for Women in Science as well as the Mentoring Women in International Research Collaboration in STEM initiative. Our EntryPoint! program for science and engineering students with disabilities is now celebrating its 20th anniversary. The predominantly female senior-management team at AAAS offers many positive role models, too, including Education and Human Resources Director Dr. Shirley Malcom, winner of the Public Welfare Medal of the National Academy of Sciences, who this year received the UCLA Medal, and then offered a TEDx talk on the urgent need to empower women and minorities in science. Our high-impact AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellowships Program has become a very popular career path for women who want a career with influence beyond the traditional laboratory-research setting. The current class of AAAS S&T Policy Fellows is 60% female and 40% male.

As an update since your 2014 letter, we instituted a new Code of Conduct policy for the AAAS Annual Meeting, which makes explicit our intolerance for any form of harassment. We also completed an analysis of gender representation among *Science* authors, advisors, and peer reviewers. We found that women are better-represented within *Science* than across the scientific community, but further progress is needed. We recognize that our results may not be representative of the community as a whole, and scientific publishers can gain important insights by sharing information. For this reason, AAAS will now move forward to seek an appropriate venue to hold a national forum on bias in peer review as it affects both publication and grantmaking.

AAAS strives to serve as a voice of scientific leadership for the worldwide research enterprise. Your letter drives us to do even more to be the voice for all in the scientific enterprise, especially those such as women and underrepresented groups whose voices are often not heard. On behalf of AAAS and its *Science* family of journals, we look forward to discussing with you how we can further our ongoing, earnest efforts to promote inclusiveness, dignity, and fairness in the practice and application of science, both internally and throughout the global science community.

Sincerely,

Geraldine Richmond
AAAS President
Presidential Chair and Professor of Chemistry
University of Oregon

cc: Miriam Goldstein

¹Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities in Science and Engineering, National Science Foundation, 2015.
<<http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/2015/nsf15311/digest/nsf15311-digest.pdf>>