

Conference on Global Approach to the Gender Gap in Mathematical, Computing and Natural Sciences: How to Measure it, How to Reduce It?

Discussions by Discipline: Computer Science

Lundqvist Lecture Hall

Facilitator: Jodi Tims (Northwestern University)

Attendees:

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Session agenda:

- Introductions
- Input from regions on current situation (summarized below)
- Discussion of findings and recommendations in preliminary report
- Input on recommendations from CS. (summarized below)

Current Situation in Countries/Regions

- **Australia** (by Catherine Lang):
- Since 1980's there has been a huge gender inequality. Australia is a large country with a modest population (24 million) and 42 universities. There are conferences organized for encouraging girls, but not necessarily enough measurable goals or budget for this type of work. More strategic leadership is needed.
- **Africa**
 - **Zambia**
 - CS has deteriorated as a program. There are some initiatives to increase participation of women, but no role models. Mentorship is lacking and necessary for long-term success.
 - **Nigeria**

- CS is definitely a male dominated field (1 out of 5 full professors only one women). All decision makers are male and there are not many women professors. Those women who are there are near retirement and there are not females left to be leaders.
- **Ivory Coast**
 - Very, very few female students in CS
- **Tanzania**
 - Very few women in CS, especially in the upper levels. Initiatives to inspire young girls are needed. Some efforts are taking place, but more are needed.
- **University of Bologna**
 - 2 out of 12 CS PhD students are female, but despite the imbalance, females do not experience discrimination. Most of the lecturers are male.

Input of the attendees on the recommendations of the project

For Unions:

- Unions have a great role to play, however Computer Science does not have a global “union” so no connection worldwide.
 - Local unions:
 - Lack of impact
 - Need measurable smart goals
 - One size does not fit all, need measurable smart goals
 - Leadership is important
 - Unions should promote visibility
- Make sure the recommendations are written in “action language” - What are the action items that come from the recommendations?
- There should be a way to report and prevent discrimination
- Unions have to come together! Consistency among them may help the progress. Strong collaboration needed. Have to have general board meetings annually
- Unions should not only be active in the academic world, need to connect with the industry. Companies that are effective in influencing diversity can be labeled as ‘EMPLOYER OF CHOICE’
- Minorities at universities will not have access to bodies like unions

For organizations

- Major barrier for women in academia is the maternity leave and child care – perhaps organizations can better advocate for addressing this issue
- Successful women in the industry can serve as role models in academia – organizations can better facilitate industry/academia interaction
 - Organizations could learn a lot from CRA-W and similar existing CS organizations who are already doing this and already have best practices
- Existing best practices (like those within CRA-W and NCWIT) need to be used by other organizations instead of starting from scratch (perhaps the Gender Gap database project will help in this regard)

For funding agencies:

- Funding agencies need to be aware of implicit bias and ensure their processes are free of biased practices.
- Funding agencies can hold the carrot and force universities and industry to do the right thing
- Funding agencies should support work to develop educational programs that can impact the longer term solution.

For parents and instructors:

- Parents need to work with educators to develop educational programs that involve young women in computer science and not just focus on messaging aimed at avoiding gender stereotypes.