

The University of Tromsø (UiT) leads European science institutions in adopting genSET Recommendations for Mainstreaming Gender in Science as the guiding principles for development of new gender action plan.

LONDON, UK, 18th October 2010 - The University of Tromsø (UiT) announces that The Board of Directors has decided on a new gender action plan, which aims at raising the percentage of women in the highest academic category from the present 23% to 30% by 2014. The plan, resolved in a Board meeting on 14th October 2010, adopts the genSET Recommendations for Action on the Gender Dimension in Science as the guiding principles for UiT's gender equality work.

UiT is the first European Institution to adopt in full the Consensus Report produced by European science leaders in June 2010. UiT has six faculties, each of which will extend the gender action plan for its own context, including work on the inclusion of gender and sex perspectives in teaching and research.

The University has a particular focus on increasing the number and percentage of women at the rank of professor.

– “There are two paths to becoming a professor in Norway, and our plan addresses both of them”, says Professor Curt Rice, Vice President for Research and Development, at UiT. Professor Rice also served on the genSET Science Leaders Panel.

The first path is for an Associate Professor to apply for a personal promotion.

– “We see gender differences in this area, whereby men apply as soon as they think they have a chance of promotion, while women tend to wait until they are very confident. Hence, women tend to spend more years as an Associate Professor. To encourage women to apply, we will implement a trial evaluation process, which simulates the promotion process, thereby leaving women candidates more confident before applying for promotion”, says Professor Rice.

The second path is through direct announcement of positions.

– “Although we are not allowed to earmark positions for women, our Board has now asserted that all advertised positions will have search committees specifically charged with finding women applicants”, says Professor Rice.

The Board's decision also states that a successful search will result in a gender balanced applicant

pool. It will no longer be acceptable when the applicant pool for any particular position has fewer than 40% women.

Says Professor Rice: – “We believe this will encourage departments to adopt broader job descriptions and to more actively search for qualified women”.

The Recommendations for Action on the Gender Dimension in Science report includes an overall gender equality strategy and 13 specific ways in which science institution can take action. They are the product of a three-month period of deliberation, consultation and examination involving research evidence from over 120 research reports and a comprehensive dialogue between science leaders and world-renowned gender experts. Conducted as part of the 7th Framework Programme, Science in Society funded project, genSET, the report and all the supporting evidence are available on the project website, www.genderinscience.org

The genSET consortium is led by Portia Ltd, a not-for-profit UK organization with over 14 years of experience in addressing gender issues in science, and promoting greater involvement of women in all areas and at all levels of science, engineering and technology.

- “The research evidence supporting the importance of the gender dimension in science is very large and overwhelming”, says Dr Elizabeth Pollitzer, co-founder and director of Portia. “The body of scholarship already available repeatedly demonstrates how integration of gender and sex factors can improve the research process, advance application of research for commercial and societal innovation, and increase communal capacity to address mission-oriented problems that face Europe today”.

Says, Elizabeth Pollitzer: - “Europe is facing important societal and environmental challenges. Technological change and human wellbeing need to go hand-in-hand. Increasing female representation at the highest levels of decision-making across European science institutions is an essential condition for ensuring that the needs of society and of the science enterprise community are addressed fully and effectively, and for expanding the potential for innovation within the European Research Area and across the EU 2020 targets.”

INFORMATION FOR EDITORS:

The University of Tromsø is an institution with approximately 9,000 students and 2,700 employees.

For more information about UiT, please contact:

Professor Curt Rice, Vice President for Research and Development, the University of Tromsø

Phone: +47 77 64 42 61 / +47 46 41 46 35 (cell)

Email: curt.rice@uit.no

A photo of Professor Rice is available under the Creative Commons license at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/uitfoto/3833287958/in/set-72157621947779355/>

Details of genSET project

Project number: 244301

Project acronym: genSET

Project full title: Building Institutional Capacity for Action on Gender Dimension in Science

Starting date: 1st September 2009

Duration: 30 months

Project website: www.genderinscience.org

Further information can be obtained by contacting:

Dr Elizabeth Pollitzer, Director, Portia Ltd, Phone : +44 207367 5348/ +44 7798 842 263 (mobile)

Email: Elizabeth@portiaweb.org.uk