

Info_BYTE



To: All staff and HDR candidates

From: Professor Sandra Harding, Vice Chancellor and President

Date: 14 April 2021

Dear Colleagues

At the end of 2020 JCU was awarded a SAGE Athena Swan Bronze Award.

This recognition was awarded to JCU because we had undertaken a significant self-assessment project investigating our processes and procedures, and their impacts on the achievement of gender equity. In identifying a number of areas for improvement, we developed an Action Plan with 39 different Actions scheduled to be implemented between now and 2025 to shift the dial.

So the SAGE award was in recognition of our commitment to action - to making change. The hard work, of course, begins now. It is easy to identify what can be done better, it is harder to do better.

Our self-assessment work demonstrated that there are barriers to women's success that don't exist in the same way for men. Crucially, women are underrepresented in senior academic ranks and, as a group, women pick up more unrecognised and undervalued work at work and at home, and this translates to fewer career opportunities compared with men as a group. These are gendered considerations. Sharing the work evenly and effectively will mean that men and women can share the opportunities and successes more evenly as well.

Many of the 39 actions that JCU has committed to undertaking deal with these gendered realities with a view to improving life at our University.

To support this work, and to ensure the actions are effective, the Gender Equity Action & Research (GEAR) team was established last year, and met last week for the first time in 2021. The GEAR team will meet four times a year, and their role is to support JCU's senior managers who are accountable for implementing the Actions. You can find out more about GEAR [here](#).

The GEAR team is a representative team of diverse staff from different parts of the university, both academic and professional and technical, as well as full-time, part-time, and continuing, with HDR representation too. The team is supported by Theresa Petray, Kristin Perry and Ryl Harrison, who act as Coordinators, and provide the liaison point between the GEAR team and Action Owners, and the GEAR team and the JCU community.

You can contact any [member](#) of the GEAR team if you wish to bring something to the attention of JCU. The GEAR team, through the coordinators, are also hosting [GEAR Forums](#) for JCU women. These forums, like the GEAR meetings, will also happen four times a year, and the first one, attended by over 80 women, was also held last week.

The purpose of the forums is for the GEAR team to provide an update to women in the JCU community on JCU's actions, and to provide a space where women are welcome to raise and discuss equity issues that are important to them. Discussion at the forums is treated confidentially, with only de-identified and general matters raised in the forums reported back GEAR and to Action Owners as a mechanism to continue to inform JCU's work in this area. You can read the first Forum Report [here](#).

At the GEAR meeting last week, the team reviewed progress on those actions that are due for completion in the first half of 2021, in particular, recruitment strategies in the College of Science and Engineering, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy. The Team also discussed ways that the Equity Contact Officer network and HDR candidates can be engaged in implementation activities. Other topics covered included new resources to assist the development of policies, meetings and training; the establishment of casual talent pools to provide more transparency and opportunities; support for recruitment panels to ensure their processes are not biased towards male recruitment, and more support for assessing achievement in context of opportunity (for use in both recruitment and promotion).

Finally, you may have attended the '[Picture A Scientist](#)' film hosted in March by HR and GEAR. This film provided a powerful insight into the experiences of women, particularly those working in STEM. There will be more opportunities to view this film – with a joint JCU and TWIST (Townsville Women in Science and Technology) and NQWIT (North Queensland Women in Technology) screening being planned. Screenings can also be hosted in your work area, you can contact gear@jcu.edu.au to arrange.

It has been my pleasure to provide this update to you as Chair of GEAR. I encourage you to take the opportunity to discuss the work that is happening to progress gender equity in your own work areas, and to engage with the actions that are being implemented, and with the GEAR team.

Sincerely

Sandra

Professor Sandra Harding
Vice Chancellor and President

Chair of GEAR

For more information, please contact gear@jcu.edu.au



Have feedback? Email feedback@jcu.edu.au