



BRITISH FEDERATION OF WOMEN GRADUATES

REPORT OF THE BFWG COLLOQUIUM

FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION:

OVERCOMING THE BARRIERS - REAL OR IMAGINED?

11 MAY 2011

THE SENATE ROOM, SENATE HOUSE

THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Welcome and Introductions

Twenty senior academics and representatives from higher education-related organisations came together with members of the British Federation of Women Graduates in the Senate Room of Senate House to discuss **'Female Leadership in Higher Education: Overcoming the Barriers – real or imagined'**?

Marianne Haslegrave, IFUW and BFWG President, extended a warm welcome to everyone and referred to BFWG's role in Higher Education through the awards and grants made by BFWG's Foundation for Women Graduates and Scholarship Fund. Participants then introduced themselves.



First Session

Professor Joy Carter, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Winchester, Co-Chair

In her opening remarks, Professor Joy Carter drew attention to two recent articles from the *Times Higher Education* which pointed to continuing disparities in higher education in the United States with men being paid 26 percent more than women and far more men being appointed to senior positions. According to Professor Carter the situation was very complicated being cultural, societal and economic. The Colloquium would provide an opportunity to examine some of the complex issues affecting Female Leadership in Higher Education.



Professor Elaine Thomas, Vice-Chancellor of the University for the Creative Arts - Identifying the Barriers: the (former) 'Through the Glass Ceiling' Network

Professor Elaine Thomas summarised the history of the (former) 'Through the Glass Ceiling' Network which had been set up in 1990. Professor Thomas outlined her professional background and emphasised that there were no female role models for her to follow when she became a Dean of Faculty and entered a male-dominated world. It was a culture shock compared to her time when, as a fine art lecturer and then Head of Department, she had been welcomed and her skills valued. She had attended several 'leadership' courses including one led by John Adair that was based on a military model and another aimed at women, which she considered 'soft centred' – both proved unsatisfactory.



The 'Through the Glass Ceiling' Network came into existence with the involvement of several senior academics, including Professor Christine King CBE (now Vice-Chancellor of the University of Staffordshire). At the time, 1990, the very notion of a female Vice-Chancellor was very rare as was illustrated by the fact that there was only one female Vice-Chancellor in the UK. The 'Through the Glass Ceiling' Network acknowledged that there was a need for female academics to help and support each other and provided an opportunity for skills development in, for example, the field of finance.

The Network met three to four times a year and was seen as 'therapeutic and revealing'. It helped its members to increase their confidence and identify networks and role models and to help women to become Vice-Chancellors. It closed down recently as, in a sense, it had completed its work as 23 women had achieved the position of Vice-Chancellor in the UK, although the number has subsequently decreased to 18. Busy schedules, also, meant that the members found it difficult to attend meetings. There was a point when the Network thought that perhaps it was becoming too exclusive and that the members themselves were creating a barrier. The Network had, however, succeeded in filling a void. Quite a few of those in the Network were among those appointed as Vice-Chancellors – it certainly played a part in their promotion and had offered mutual support and created an expectation that women could achieve senior status in academia. Muriel Robinson said that maybe a blog should be set up to take the place of the Network. Other participants thought that a similar Network could be formed – it could 'energise' more women, which was very important as Professor Thomas commented that she was concerned that women's advancement had now reached a plateau.

There was general discussion on the power of networking and the need to 'identify the barriers'. The main points that emerged were that: women tend to create their own networks; they must recognise that it is not enough just to replicate what men do. Women of today find it difficult to be senior academics as they face many practical barriers particularly in terms of balancing family commitments with publication and conference attendance requirements both of which are necessary for promotion, thereby presenting them with what could be perceived as institutionalised sexism.

A further point was made that senior academic staff should offer more support and encouragement to junior staff not just to those already in middle management. Women are expected to bring their own skills to posts but these become less relevant as they climb the career ladder with the concept of different women having diverse skills. There are high expectations for women: women are less likely to be risk-takers and have less self-worth. Women, moreover, tend to lack self-esteem, even those that are gifted and they do not push themselves forward. However, until they become Vice-Chancellors or Heads of Department they are not in a position to effect change in their institutions. The question was asked as to whether women are going backwards in the UK in terms of female leadership, not just in the higher and further education sectors but also in the financial ('the City') and judiciary sectors. It was noted that the European Union is beginning to address these issues.

It was suggested that perhaps Universities UK (UUK) could do more to support the Equality Challenge Unit in its work. Discussion followed as to whether one should 'mainstream' or 'target' gender. Nicola Dandridge of UUK suggested that the two concepts should be worked on together. The point was raised as to whether women should have ownership of these issues and about the role of men and society as a whole. The general consensus was that men should be involved in gender issues and that many men are supportive of women and what they are trying to achieve.

Nicola Dandridge said that she had discussed these issues when she had met her counterpart in the USA where women do have more ownership of these issues with male support. It was suggested that one reason why men in the USA are more supportive is that they are very concerned about the reputations of their institutions – it reflects well on their institutions if women are well-represented and involved in running them.

Concern was also expressed about head-hunters who appear to have a monopoly on the selection of senior academic staff; a point that was referred to again later.

Professor Mary Evans, The Gender Institute, LSE The Impact of Gender in the 'Academy'

Professor Evans in addressing the topic of the impact of gender in the 'Academy' said that we live in changing times. The curriculum of universities has been revolutionised over the last 20 to 30 years with the concept of humans/people meaning males largely disappearing. Although society has been gendered, women must not play 'catch up' with men. Over the years, the hierarchy of higher education has not altered very much. How will women have a voice now and in the future? Many changes are taking place in universities with the world of learning becoming more globally propelled by today's fast-moving technology which is taking ideas outside the university. The way universities operate and are administered does not match this revolution and the diffusion of ideas that is taking place today. Universities are in a new world. Furthermore, the cost of education today will also help to transform higher education. What part will women play and how will women fit in? Women must think not just about where they are now but also where they were going. Women must have a voice in higher education and their agenda must be taken forward, but in a different way. Women must change with the times.



Professor Evans also addressed the fact that in the education sector there exists a culture of restrictive practise including the 'Moses Syndrome' whereby men speak very assertively without putting forward a clear argument. When faced with this, women must challenge and ask them to provide the evidence to support what they are saying. Women have also embraced the 'Good Girl culture' that remains present and is a problem in the universities of today – it is a culture of compliance. The expectations of academics – publication targets, conference attendance, research and teaching - can ruin, not make careers. As Mary Evans said 'Following the rules often builds careers and seldom leads to the kind of creative and original thinking we so need'. Women must, and should, abandon the culture of compliance – they can achieve but they should say 'we do it differently' which is not saying women want 'an easier ride', or that they are second best.

Women must be more creative in their thinking; be more original; refrain from gendering everything; and stop internalising expectations. Women tend to have a 'being good' attitude but must realise that positive attitudes have positive advantages. In the same way as political diversity and diversity of thought are acceptable in most of today's society, women must recognise that dissent and difference is part of our diversity and that it is 'OK' for women to voice the issues they want to see on the public agenda.

Addressing the issue of mobility of universities, Mary Evans asked whether women/parents can participate in evening meetings and functions and in conferences. She was addressing not just geographical mobility but daily mobility as work-life balance is changing. She said that Scandinavia has started to examine these issues and many parents are now linking work and family, not just women but also men. One aim should be to organise equality of access for all in terms of meetings.

Mary Evans went on to say that life is long and that everything does not have to be completed by a certain time – women should think in terms of 'the career of life'. Senior women have made strides in medicine and law but the same problems that have been discussed today still exist in these sectors. Women graduates work in all fields – where do they go and why do they leave academia?

In the discussion 'institutionalised sexism', which impacts particularly on women at different stages of their careers, was examined together with the importance of recognising that there are different ways of working. A key issue that women have to face is whether they want to say they are the 'same' as men or that they want to do things differently. It was felt that women needed to be able to say that they wanted to 'be a woman and have children'. Instead, they suffer from a fear of 'falling behind' if they start a family – this should not be a barrier, it is part of life – it should not be seen as negative but it is, even by women. This has a negative impact even on young girls who are potential future graduates and academics.

The importance of 'being published' was discussed. It was recognised that the publications themselves are not always of a good standard but academics must write to get promotion. Indeed, the pressure to publish has reached new heights.

Summary of First Session - Professor Joy Carter

In summing up Professor Carter emphasised the following:

- The impact of role models, support groups, networking, self-confidence issues;
- The inclusion of men to bring about change;
- The role of head-hunters;
- The future of universities;
- That children are not barriers;
- The importance of getting women into the 'Academy' at an early stage;
- Thinking in terms of life long careers;
- There are different ways of doing jobs; and
- All sectors share the problems that have been discussed today not just higher education.

She urged that the focus must be on women getting into academia and supporting them particularly at the post-doctoral stage, which is their most insecure period and the point at which many leave academic life. Those academics at the Colloquium were the successful ones, who could undertake mentoring and who have collective conceptualisation.



Second Session

Professor Muriel Robinson, Principal, Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln – Co-Chair

In introducing the session Professor Robinson pointed out that higher education is female dominated up to a certain point, but it was important to continue to encourage women into the sector.



Professor Teresa Rees, School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University The Career Path of Senior Academics/Gender Mainstreaming

Professor Rees will be joining the staff of Leadership Foundation for Higher Education as one of the Directors in the Autumn. Following six years as a Pro Vice-Chancellor, she is currently on sabbatical and is writing a book about the experiences of senior academic women, for which she asked those present to send her anecdotes about their experiences as leaders in higher education. She summed up the attitude of some women academic leaders by saying that ‘they don’t want to just be in the Academy, but to rearrange the furniture!’ She referred to the European Technology Assessment Network (ETAN) Report on promoting academic excellence in research by mainstreaming gender equality (Osborn et al 2000*). She said there is a ‘leaky pipeline’ in women’s careers in science at the post-doctoral stage where there is less transparency about recruitment and promotion, particularly in the sciences. Benchmarking and more transparent promotion procedures could help to address this. Equally important were double-blind peer reviewing, and gender audits of committees to ensure that women were represented in finance-related committees.



* Osborn, M., Rees, T., Bosch, M., Ebeling, H., Hermann, C., Hilden, J., McLaren, A., Palomba, R., Peltonen, R., Vela, C., Wies, D., Wold, A., Mason, J., and Wenneras, C. (2000) Science Policies in the European Union: Promoting excellence through mainstreaming gender equality Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities <http://cordis.europa.eu/improving/women/documents.htm>

The ETAN report showed that in the European Union, regardless of the economy of the country or its equal opportunity legislation, men are recruited disproportionately in the higher education sector at every rank and in every discipline. Across the European Union now, moreover, women account for 45 percent of doctorates; yet 20 percent of male academics are professors, while the corresponding rate for women is 7 percent!

Teresa Rees went on to explain 'gender mainstreaming' which is based on the theoretical concept of the 'politics of difference' and is about embedding a gender dimension into policies, processes, systems and structures. It turns attention away from individuals and their rights, and from groups and their disadvantages, and focuses instead on how policies and practices can, however inadvertently, reproduce patterns of inequality, including on gender issues. Gender mainstreaming aims to promote gender equality in an organisation, in the way it operates and in its culture.

Professor Rees echoed the earlier reference to the USA where recruitment procedures are more sophisticated and more transparent than in the UK and aimed at getting the best possible people for the job, regardless of gender. She went on to say that excellence must be promoted, not gender, and explained that Cardiff University had transparent promotion procedures whereby clear benchmarks had been set, mentoring schemes introduced, policies to counter sexual harassment and bullying in the work place developed and gender audits of all committees implemented, with excellent results.

Concern was expressed that some female Vice-Chancellors in the UK have recently retired but have not been replaced by women. Furthermore, head-hunters can rely on male networks for recommendations. There was agreement that head-hunters need to be 'educated' and at the same time women below the level of Pro Vice-Chancellor, in particular, need to be encouraged to get financial and management experience in order to be selected for senior posts.

Sarah Hawkes, Policy Adviser, Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) – The Athena SWAN Awards



Sarah Hawkes explained that the Equality Challenge Unit's Athena SWAN Charter recognition award scheme was established in 2005 to encourage higher education institutions to promote and encourage good employment practice in institutions for women working in science, technology, engineering, medicine and mathematics. Fifty-five from a possible 134 institutions have joined the Charter with 77 institutions and departments having received awards; the Department of Chemistry at the University of York being the only holder to date of a Gold Award. Areas examined by the assessment panels of Athena SWAN include:

- advertising policy;
- transparency;
- appraisal systems (if any);

- communication of ideas;
- career development, mentoring, the availability of flexible and part-time working hours, times of staff meetings, family friendly social meetings.

A post-doctoral forum is available that includes advice on how women can access grants and on schemes which allow women to undertake research. The Athena SWAN awards are having a positive impact in terms of women applying for new posts and are helping to make women 'visible'.

Nicola Dandridge, Chief Executive, UUK - Agenda for the Future

It was agreed that the post-doctoral period acts as the 'Crossroads' for women in academia. Women are reluctant to challenge the status quo. There are many issues that face women particularly those of childcare. Some women avoid confronting these issues while others that have 'overcome the barriers' choose not to share their experiences with other women. Changes are being implemented in the UK with regard to maternity and paternity leave. It is hoped that the UK will follow the example of the USA and some European countries whereby dual career paths are encouraged for both partners in the relationship.



Nicola Dandridge in summing up the meeting posed the question as to 'How are we going to bring all this forward?'

She said that these are deeply complex issues and there are many factors to consider including the fact that many women prefer to remain academics. Was this, she asked a 'real' choice or a 'conditioned' choice?

Nicola Dandridge added that the Athena SWAN Award Scheme is a wonderful programme and should be supported and used.

It was suggested that an evolved 'through the glass ceiling' type network, which dealt with general, personal and institutional issues, could be set up. However, the focus should be senior women in higher education, not the whole agenda. In particular Vice-Chancellors should keep in contact via electronic networks. A decision should be taken as to how this should be facilitated, possibly via the ECU or UUK

It was agreed that any future action must include engagement with male supporters so as not to be oppositionalist but to encourage working together rather than being divisive. These issues should also be examined internationally, particularly in relation to Europe and the USA as national barriers do not exist now to the same extent they did years ago.

Marianne Haslegrave returned to the question of head-hunters. Whilst the head-hunters must be 'educated', they also need to know who the senior women academics are who could fill the senior posts in our universities and colleges. In turn, women also need to acquire the skills that lead to promotion and to be given examples of success stories - information that could be researched in IFUW member countries. It was necessary to move away from the tendency in the UK to stream and compartmentalise everything.

The meeting returned to the theme of 'conceptualising a reality', the next step in making decisions as to what women want and what their aims are. Nevertheless account must be taken of the reality that a woman's role as a mother is not a barrier, but a part of her life, which ultimately enriches the lives of everyone.

Close of Day

The day concluded at 5.00pm with Muriel Robinson thanking all the participants. Thanks were extended to Marianne Haslegrave who initiated the idea of the Colloquium and to Anna Frost for organising the event.



Report:

Marianne Haslegrave

Anna Frost

Photographs:

Richard Huggard



**BRITISH FEDERATION OF WOMEN GRADUATES
COLLOQUIUM
WEDNESDAY, 11 MAY 2011
THE SENATE ROOM, SENATE HOUSE,
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON**

PROGRAMME

Female Leadership in Higher Education: Overcoming the Barriers – real or imagined?

12.30pm - 1.30pm	Lunch in the Jessel Room
1.30pm - 1.40pm	Welcome and Introduction Marianne Haslegrave, IFUW and BFWG President
1.45pm – 2.15pm	Identifying the Barriers/the ‘Through the Glass Ceiling’ Network Professor Elaine Thomas Vice-Chancellor, University for the Creative Arts
2.15pm – 3.00pm	The Impact of Gender in the ‘Academy’ Professor Mary Evans The Gender Institute, London School of Economics & Political Science
3.00pm – 3.30pm	Tea and Networking – the Jessel Room
3.30pm – 4.15pm	The Career Path of Senior Academics/Gender Mainstreaming Professor Teresa Rees, School of Social Sciences, University of Cardiff
4.15pm – 4.35pm	Agenda for the Future; to include the Athena SWAN Awards Sarah Hawkes, Senior Policy Adviser, Equality Challenge Unit
4.35pm – 5.00pm	Summary and Close of Discussion Nicola Dandridge, Chief Executive, Universities UK Co-Chairs - Professor Joy Carter and Professor Muriel Robinson

Notes

Presenters/Co-Chairs/The Venue

Professor Joy Carter

Professor Joy Carter was appointed Vice-Chancellor of the University of Winchester in 2006. Prior to joining the University, Professor Carter was a Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) at the University of Glamorgan. Joy is a Fellow of the Geological Society and a Chartered Geologist and has just stepped down as International President of the Society for Environmental Geochemistry and Health. She is a Board Member of Universities UK and GuildHE and she is on the Executive of the Cathedrals Group. National roles include membership of the Ministerial Advisory Group in Further Education and Skills and Chair of the Universities Vocational Awards Council.

(www.winchester.ac.uk)

Nicola Dandridge

Nicola Dandridge is Chief Executive of Universities UK (UUK) which represents the UK's universities with the aim of providing high quality leadership and support to its members to promote a successful and diverse higher education sector. Nicola became Chief Executive of UUK in 2009 and was previously Chief Executive of the Equality Challenge Unit. Nicola is a lawyer qualified in both England and Scotland and specialised in equal opportunities and employment law.

(www.universitiesuk.ac.uk)

Professor Mary Evans

Professor Mary Evans is a LSE Centennial Professor attached to the Gender Institute until 2013. Prior to joining the London School of Economics & Political Science as a visiting Fellow, she taught Women's Studies and Sociology at the University of Kent and in 1992 was made the first Professor of Women's Studies in the UK. Much of Professor Evans' work has been interdisciplinary and has crossed the boundaries between the Social Sciences and the Humanities. Her published work includes research on the general constraints on contemporary British academics and the gender divisions that exist within our universities. (www2.lse.ac.uk/genderinstitute)

Sarah Hawkes

Sarah Hawkes is a Senior Policy Adviser at the Equality Challenge Unit with responsibility for the Athena SWAN Awards. Prior to this appointment, Sarah worked as project co-ordinator of the Women's Advancement Initiative at King's College London, researching and coordinating the development of a number of inter-related projects to support the career progression of female academics. Sarah holds an MSc in Political Sociology from the London School of Economics and Political Science.

(www.ecu.ac.uk)

Professor Teresa Rees CBE

Professor Teresa Rees was a Pro Vice-Chancellor at Cardiff University from 2004-2010 and has been a Professor at the Cardiff School of Social Sciences since 2000 and previously at the School for Policy Studies at Bristol University. Her research interests include inequalities and gender mainstreaming, women and science policy in Europe and higher education funding policy. Professor Rees is a member of the HEFCE Equality and Diversity Advisory Group and was a member of the Steering Group to set up the Equality and Human Rights Commission and of the National Equality Panel. In 2003 she was awarded the CBE for services to higher education and equal opportunities. (www.cardiff.ac.uk)

Professor Muriel Robinson

Professor Muriel Robinson is the Principal of Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln. She has previously worked in higher education in Brighton and Birmingham as well as in primary school education in London. Her research interests are in the area of digital cultures and new media. Other professional roles include Vice Chair of GuildHE, a Trustee of the Colleges and Universities of the Anglican Communion and a member of the General Teaching Council and of the Lincolnshire Assembly Executive. (www.bishopg.ac.uk)

Professor Elaine Thomas

Professor Elaine Thomas is Vice-Chancellor of the University for the Creative Arts, Surrey. She was previously Rector of the University and Director of the Surrey Institute of Art and Design, University College and held senior management positions at the University of Ulster and Sheffield Hallam University. She is a Board member of the Quality Assurance Agency and of the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education. Elaine is a member of GuildHE, the UK Arts and Design Institutions Association and the Council for industry and Higher Education. She is also a member of the Burgess Implementation Steering Group which looks at ways of measuring and recording student achievement. A practising Fine Artist, Elaine also has experience in arts and museum policy. (www.uca.ac.uk)

About the Venue – Senate House, London

Senate House is the administrative centre of the University of London, situated in the heart of Bloomsbury, London. The main building contains the administrative offices of the University including the offices of the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor of the University as well as the entire collection of the Senate House Library (formerly known as the University of London Library), archives and seven research institutes. The Art Deco building was constructed between 1932 and 1937. William Beveridge, who held the post of Vice-Chancellor of the University for a time, described Senate House as 'A great architectural feature An academic island in swirling tides of traffic, a world of learning in a world of affairs'.

The Senate Room and Jessel Rooms (together with the Court Room) were built to be the premier meeting rooms of the governing bodies of the University: the Senate and the Court. These rooms with fine portraits, wood panelling and high windows fill the rooms with a sense of history and occasion.



BRIEF NOTES ON ALL GUESTS – COLLOQUIUM – 11 MAY 2011

Dr. Alexandra Blakemore

School of Public Health, Imperial College, University of London

Reader in Human Molecular Genetics

Chair of BFWG Academic Awards Committee which makes financial awards for academic excellence to women research students entering into their final year of PhD study.

Professor Tanya Byron

Chancellor, Edge Hill University, Lancashire

Psychological clinician, journalist, author, broadcaster

First Chancellor of Edge Hill University which was granted university status in 2006

Professor Joy Carter

Vice-Chancellor of the University of Winchester. Prior to joining the University was a Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) at the University of Glamorgan. She is a Board Member of Universities UK and GuildHE and she is on the Executive of the Cathedrals Group. National roles include membership of the Ministerial Advisory Group in Further Education and Skills and Chair of the Universities Vocational Awards Council.

Nicola Dandridge

Chief Executive of Universities UK (UUK) which represents the UK's universities with the aim of providing high quality leadership and support to its members to promote a successful and diverse higher education sector. Previously, Chief Executive of the Equality Challenge Unit. Lawyer qualified in both England and Scotland and specialised in equal opportunities and employment law.

Professor Mary Evans

LSE Centennial Professor attached to the Gender Institute until 2013. Prior to joining the London School of Economics & Political Science as a visiting Fellow, she taught Women's Studies and Sociology at the University of Kent. First professor of Women's Studies in the UK. Research: interdisciplinary and has crossed the boundaries between the Social Sciences and the Humanities. Published work includes research on the general constraints on contemporary British academics and the gender divisions that exist within our universities.

Dorothy Garland

Director of Professional Networks, Association of Commonwealth Universities. Oldest and one of the largest inter-university networks in the world. Innovative programmes to meet the needs of today's universities; fosters collaboration between developed and developing country universities.

Dame Julia Goodfellow DBE CBE

Vice-Chancellor of the University of Kent, Board member of UUK. University of Kent is the UK's European University and has a campus in Brussels. Scientific career. Dame Julia was the first female Chief Executive of any of the UK's Research Councils.

Dr. Janet Hanson

Policy Adviser – Higher Education Better Regulation Group (UUK)

Supports regulation in the higher education sector. Promotes positive regulation that is transparent, accountable, proportionate, consistent and targeted where action is needed.

Sarah Hawkes

Sarah Hawkes is a Senior Policy Adviser at the Equality Challenge Unit with responsibility for the Athena SWAN Awards*. She has worked as project co-ordinator of the Women's Advancement Initiative at King's College London, researching and coordinating the development of a number of inter-related projects to support the career progression of female academics.

* Athena SWAN Awards - A membership and awards scheme to promote and recognise good employment practice for women working in Science, Technology, Engineering, Medicine and Mathematics). ECU works to further and support equality and diversity for staff and students in higher education across the UK

Dr. Helen James C Eng FIMechE

Chartered engineer and prior to working in higher and further education, worked in the shipbuilding, armaments and space industries. Primary interests: higher education, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and widening access to education. 2005 Welsh Woman of the Year for Science and Technology.

Professor Sue Law

Director of Academic Practice – The Higher Education Academy. She has strategic responsibility for the Academy's work in relation to raising the status of teaching and the use of evidence in enhancing professional practice. The Academy supports the sector in providing the best possible learning experience for all students. Develops and disseminates evidence-informed practice and acts as an independent broker to facilitate the sharing of expertise.

Valerie Marshall

Deputy Chair – Committee of University Chairs

Representative body for the Chairs of UK universities.

Dr. Maureen Meikle

Head of Humanities, Leeds Trinity University College

Attending in place of Professor Freda Bridge, Vice-Chancellor

Professor Gill Nicholls

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Surrey. Was Pro Vice-Chancellor of Salford and Durham Universities. Research includes higher education policy, professional development, teaching and learning environments.

Professor Margaret Noble

Principal, University College, Plymouth. Background: Urban History and Geography. Current research: assessing the impact of widening participation initiatives and work-based learning and employer engagement.

Professor Teresa Rees CBE

Pro Vice-Chancellor at Cardiff University from 2004-2010 and has been a Professor at the Cardiff School of Social Sciences since 2000. Previously at the School for Policy Studies at Bristol University. Research interests include inequalities and gender mainstreaming, women and science policy in Europe and higher education funding policy. Member of the HEFCE Equality and Diversity Advisory Group and was a member of the Steering Group to set up the Equality and Human Rights Commission and of the National Equality Panel.

Professor Muriel Robinson

Principal of Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln. She has previously worked in higher education in Brighton and Birmingham as well as in primary school education in London. Research interests are in the area of digital cultures and new media. Other professional roles include Vice Chair of GuildHE, a Trustee of the Colleges and Universities of the Anglican Communion and a member of the General Teaching Council.

Dr. Lesley Rollason

Head of Policy and Planning – Effective Business Unit

University of Staffordshire

Professor Elizabeth Slater

School of Archaeology, Classics and Egyptology. Honorary Senior Research Fellow – University of Liverpool. Chair of the Board of Trustees of the BFWG Charitable Foundation which offers grants to women in their final year of a PhD or DPhil.

Professor Elaine Thomas

Vice-Chancellor of the University for the Creative Arts, Surrey. Previously, Rector of the University and Director of the Surrey Institute of Art and Design, University College and held senior management positions at the University of Ulster and Sheffield Hallam University. Board member of the Quality Assurance Agency and of the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education. Member of GuildHE, the UK Arts and Design Institutions Association and the Council for industry and Higher Education. Member of the Burgess Implementation Steering Group which looks at ways of measuring and recording student achievement.

Professor Christine Williams

Pro Vice-Chancellor University of Reading (Research and Innovation).

Previously, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Enterprise).

BFWG Press Release: *Leading academics to “challenge” gender barriers in higher education*

Britain's leading women academics are to this week debate the barriers faced by women in the higher education sector at a British Federation of Women Graduates (BFWG) Colloquium - Female Leadership in Higher Education: Overcoming the Barriers – real or imagined?

Recent figures from the Higher Education Statistics Authority show that of the 181595 academic staff in UK institutions in 2009, 79900 were women, though only 3,320 (19.1 per cent) were employed as professors.

The Colloquium, which takes place on May 11 at Senate House in London, will see some of the UK's leading women academics discuss the barriers faced by women in higher education and what the next steps need to be.

Marianne Haslegrave, International Federation of University Women and BFWG President, says:

“Rather than simply be a talking shop to share our individual challenges, the Colloquium is designed to look at the barriers all women face in academia.

“Clearly, as statistics show, there are barriers. The Colloquium can act as a starting point for how we overcome and challenge those barriers. Sadly, there is still a sense that academia is male dominated, which has a knock on effect for the potential higher education stars of tomorrow.

“The speakers attending will provide rich content which we hope will invigorate further debate on this important topic. The UK's higher education sector has a great deal to be proud of, but in terms of how the profession is made up there remains work to be done.

“Attention has been largely focused on the changing landscape of how higher education is funded, but there also needs to be a change in ensuring the sector is more representative and that a wider pool of talent is tapped into.”

Guest speakers at the event include:

- Professor Mary Evans - The Gender Institute, London School of Economics & Political Science
- Professor Teresa Rees - School of Social Sciences, University of Cardiff
- Professor Elaine Thomas, Vice-Chancellor of the University for the Creative Arts, Surrey.
- Nicola Dandridge, Chief Executive, Universities UK

To find out more about the event visit

http://bfwg.org.uk/bfwg5/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=211:colloquium&catid=1:latest-news

Ends

Notes to editors:

The British Federation of Women Graduates (BFWG) is an organisation of women with degrees or equivalent qualifications working to:

- promote women's opportunities in education and public life;
- improve the lives of women and girls worldwide.
- foster local, national and international friendship; and
- BFWG collaborates with other organisations and is a member of the Six-O Group of the largest women's organisations.

BFWG is the voice of women graduates in England and Wales and communicates its views to Government at the annual Westminster Seminar and also by Members lobbying their MPs after Resolutions are adopted at the National AGM. Through IFUW's consultative status at the United Nations and through UWE in Council of Europe BFWG also makes its concerns heard in the international and European arenas.

Contact details: Marianne Haslegrave IFUW/BFWG President: mh@commat.org

Tel: 07767 313032

or

Anna Frost BFWG Vice-President/event organiser: afrost@bfgw.org.uk/

Tel: 07507 020625

www.bfgw.org.uk

10.05.2011

Times Higher Education: 'Good girls' don't rise to the top

19 May 2011

By Matthew Reisz

Women told to be more assertive when scaling the barriers of sexism, writes Matthew Reisz

Female academics would be aided by the introduction of gender-blind peer review and an end to the culture of compliant "good girls" in higher education, a conference has heard.

The argument was set out last week at a British Federation of Women Graduates colloquium on "female leadership in higher education", at which Elaine Thomas, vice-chancellor of the University for the Creative Arts, paid tribute to the work of the now-defunct "Through the Glass Ceiling" network, which was set up in 1991.

It was about this time that she had become a dean of faculty, she said, and "truly entered a world of men in suits". The leadership courses of the time were either militaristic or, when aimed at women, soft-centred, with participants asked to describe their favourite colours or goddesses, she recalled.

The network, by contrast, had proved a breath of fresh air, pinpointing role models and networks. It had also helped overcome low expectations, where women did not put themselves forward despite "seeing confident but mediocre men rising to the top".

Although things had changed greatly, Professor Thomas said, she worried that we had now reached a plateau.

Meanwhile, Mary Evans, centennial professor in the Gender Institute at the London School of Economics, said the curriculum has been "revolutionised" over the past 20 to 30 years. Yet when ideas and universities were changing so fast, it was crucial that "women don't just play catch-up and try to occupy the positions that men have today".

Universities were full of men suffering from "Moses syndrome", according to Professor Evans, which consisted of "speaking very assertively without argument". Women, she advised, should avoid becoming "good girls" who embraced "a culture of compliance" because "following rules often breaks rather than builds careers, and seldom leads to the kind of creative and original thinking we so need".

The colloquium also heard of the practical barriers many women faced, such as parental responsibility, and the way that the publication requirements of the research excellence framework could be seen as institutionalised sexism.

Teresa Rees, pro vice-chancellor (research) at Cardiff University, said that across Europe 45 per cent of PhDs are done by women, yet 20 per cent of male academics are top-grade professors while the corresponding rate for women is only 7 per cent.

The pipeline tended to leak at the postdoctoral stage, where hiring decisions were often in the hands of individual professors, she said, but benchmarking and more transparent promotion procedures could help address this. Equally important, she said, were double-blind peer review and gender audits of committees, particularly to ensure that women were represented in finance.

matthew.reisz@tsleducation.com.

BRITISH FEDERATION of WOMEN GRADUATES

Affiliated to IFUW: International Federation of University Women

BFWG – the Voice of Graduate Women

The British Federation of Graduates (BFWG) is the voice of women graduates in England and Wales. It is an organisation of women with degrees or equivalent qualifications working to promote: lifelong education for women and girls; women's opportunities in public life; better lives for women and girls worldwide; and local, national and international friendship.

BFWG works through: its local associations and regions; national level activities; the International Federation of University Women (IFUW); and the University Women of Europe (UWE).

Founded in 1907, BFWG has been providing Scholarships for women in their final year of study for a PhD since 1912. Its wholly owned subsidiary charity, Funds for Women Graduates (FfWG), makes awards to help women graduates while undertaking postgraduate study or research. BFWG collaborates with other organisations and is a member of the Six-O Group of the largest women's organisations.

Through IFUW's Consultative Status at the United Nations and through UWE in the Council of Europe, BFWG also makes its concerns heard in the International and European arenas.

BFWG
4 Mandeville Courtyard
142 Battersea Park Road
London SW11 4NB
United Kingdom

Telephone: 020 7498 8037
Email: office@bfgw.org.uk
www.bfgw.org.uk

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