



## Diversity and Inclusion at the Faculty of Science, Universiteit Leiden

In 2015, the Diversity Officer of the Universiteit Leiden, Dr. Isabel Hoving, analyzed the climate of diversity and inclusion at the Faculty of Science. This was done at the request of the Faculty Board. The analysis aimed to identify the challenges at the Faculty in realizing a climate of diversity and inclusion. It provides insight in the current climate and gives recommendations for the future. For the analysis, interviews were held with individuals and groups, in total 48 staff and students of the Faculty. Surveys held prior in two institutes at the Faculty were also included.

### *Numbers*

The data shows that (at the end of 2013), the Faculty of Science in Leiden occupies a middle position when it comes to the gender balance in higher positions (full professor, UHD, UD), with 18%. Comparable faculties in Utrecht, Groningen and Amsterdam have a higher percentage of women in higher positions than the Faculty of Science in Leiden. Results of a report on work climate at the Faculty showed that the difference in work climate experience between man and women is minimal. The only significant, though small, difference is on the balance between work and private (which women evaluate as being better). In the student body, currently 21% is from a non-western background.

### *Perspectives on diversity*

Based on the interviews, it becomes clear that the predominant perspective on the current gender balance in the faculty is that the lack of women in higher positions is a problem. The main argument is that because of the lack of women, the Faculty is missing out on their talent and contribution to innovation. Female staff specifically indicated that measures should be taken urgently to improve the balance.

Most staff members agree on the current homogeneity of staff. Female staff in majority points to 'implicit bias' as the main cause of this. For instance, some female staff indicated they are hesitant to request for facilities to allow them to find a better balance with their care duties, because of fear of the request being seen as showing lack of dedication. Also, women take risks in different ways than men do. While both male and female scientists take risks, the way men take risks is more often seen as 'excellent' (for instance, focusing on a competitive research area), while the risks female scientists take (for instance, focusing on a small, less visible research area) are evaluated negatively.

Most interviewees agreed to the open, non-hierarchical and cooperative atmosphere. However, female staff also indicates that the styles of communication and behavior suit men's needs more than women's. Also, the competitive element in the working climate is seen as related to difficulties in combining family life and work, to fostering competition within teams as opposed to between teams, and to a lack of transparency, and possible implicit bias, in the evaluation of performance. As women feel they do not quite fit in the majority (male) culture, they feel they have to adapt constantly. Research shows this could lead to underperformance.

### *Possible causes*

The interviews also focused on the possible obstacles for women in attaining higher positions at the Faculty. Staff presented the following possible obstacles (in addition to implicit bias and an atmosphere favorable to men):

- Women would be more modest, hence more often doubting their suitability for a position
- The competitive culture would not be attractive to women, though female staff specified this further and explained that *certain types of competitiveness* would discourage women. Female staff considers competition *between* groups as productive, but does not flourish in competition *within* research groups.

- The lack of job security would be seen as a problem by women more than by men.
- The (international) competition to hire women is seen as very high. Some interviewees added that given the facilities and salary, the Faculty does not provide a competitive offer for female scientists internationally.
- The presence of only one quite specific career path (tenure track), which includes a stay abroad. The stay abroad can be difficult to realize for female staff.
- Facilities for a healthy work-life balance would be lacking or legally impossible ('stop the clock' for instance). Also, the Faculty doesn't have a solution for the 'spouse problem', (spouses of high level female scientists don't find employment).

With regards to the student body, the bioscience part of the Faculty (IBL, CML, LIC and LACDR) has a more gender balanced student population than the fundamental research part of the Faculty (LION, MI, LIACS and the Observatory).

Cultural diversity was discussed as well; staff and students identified the following challenges for diversity in the student body:

- At some institutes, mostly for fundamental research, female students feel like a visible minority.
- Language (mostly a problem for international students)
- A sense of exclusion: because someone is visibly a minority (female students) or because of difference in social customs (for instance: after work drinks)

There is an increasing number of students with special needs (especially autism). Staff indicated they have a lack of knowledge and tools to support students with autism optimally. Staff also mentioned to hardly have any insight in the position of LGBT-students and staff. The two students representing a LGBT-group said that they had never met negative responses within the Faculty.

#### *Gender aspects of research*

With regards to research, several institutes (LACDR, IBL, to a lesser extent LIC) have integrated gender aspects in their research already. In other institutes, this has not happened yet or is not relevant. Some researchers choose to work with male animals for testing to avoid that variations are caused by hormonal differences.

#### *Recommendations*

- The first recommendation is to improve the gender balance numerically, by bringing more female top scientists in. After 2016, this should be broadened to other underrepresented groups.
- With regard to the predominantly male culture, it is noted that research shows that a certain critical mass is needed to change this culture and make the minority (female culture) feel more 'at home'. A percentage of 30% is mentioned.
- It is recommended to draft an action plan and to regularly gather new data on diversity.
- With regards to implicit bias, it is recommended to do a systemic analysis of evaluation procedures, and to bring in expertise for recruitment procedures, to reduce implicit bias.
- To further improve the inclusiveness of the workplace, it is recommended to launch a women's network at the faculty.
- Evaluate the existing career paths (tenure track), and work towards more flexibility (for instance: allow working in an international company as substitute for working abroad).
- Appoint one person to be the lead in establishing a support structure for students.
- Adopt existing good practices like Girlz@LIACS and Physics Ladies' Day.
- Stimulate study- associations to cater for all students.
- Integrate diversity awareness in teaching and research, work on awareness faculty wide.