

# Annual Report

AY 2018-2019

## WFF@H Mission Statement

The Women Faculty Forum at Homewood [formerly called the Committee on the Status of Women] is a group of Hopkins faculty of all genders who work together to:

- **Expand** collaboration and leadership opportunities for women
- **Advocate** for equitable practices & policies for all faculty including those pertaining to work/life mix
- **Address** gender equity issues and challenges to the full participation of women faculty at Hopkins.

Please follow us at **@wffhop**  
and/or  
at our blog: **<https://womenfacultyforum.jhu.edu>**

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## WFF@H Members 2018-2019

[Anne-Elizabeth Brodsky](#), Co-Chair, Expository Writing Program

[Karen Fleming](#), Co-Chair, Biophysics

[Karen Beemon](#), Biology

[Yi-Ping Ong](#), Humanities Center

[Todd Shepard](#), History

## Ongoing Activities

### Social Media

#### Blog and Twitter account

Anne Elizabeth posts articles and links of interest to women faculty, and the blog currently has over 500 followers. In addition, the blog includes a File Cabinet of resources and JHU diversity and inclusion documents

#### Office of Institutional Equity

We have established an active, collaborative relationship with Kim Hewitt and Joy Gaslevic at the Johns Hopkins OIE and are working with them to highlight positive aspects of the work being carried out in their office.

## WFF@H Member Presentations

Presentations and participation on gender equity at outside universities and at international meetings (Karen)

Presentations on diversity and inclusion in the classroom (Karen and Anne-Elizabeth)

Workshop at Diversity Leadership Conference (Karen and Anne-Elizabeth)

## Activities Academic Year 2018-19

### Where We Stand Event

**Our focus at Where We Stand this year was on the NAS report—specifically, how to implement its recommendations on the Homewood campus.**

Toward that end, we assembled copies of the NAS report in binders (one for each table) and printed 50 copies of the summary. We created table tents to designate tables for specific recommendations, curated sources related to those recommendations, and cut butcher paper for people to write one. Vision 2020 binders and the 2017 Report Card rounded out the resources for each table.

We advertised in the usual ways and wrote individual email invitations to NAS members on campus; Bloomberg Distinguished Professors in the sciences; administrators in student life; chairs of science departments; new women faculty; graduate students and undergraduates.

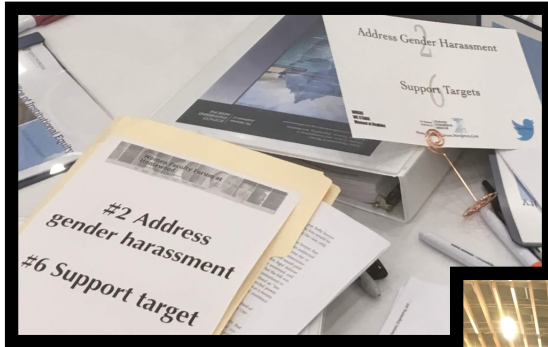
We met in advance with Kim Hewitt and Joy Gaslevic from OIE. Their annual report was coincidentally published the day of Where We Stand event. We provided copies at the event and we asked them to say a few words about their work.

## Blogpost #1 on WWS: NASEM Report on Sexual Harassment of Women

November 13, 2018 blogpost – In this post we summarized the materials, activities and organization of the Where We Stand event.

## Materials and Organization

At Where We Stand, we have themed tables with relevant resources, markers, and white butcher paper for notes. This year, with the focus on the NAS report on sexual and gender harassment, each table was focused around one or two of NAS's 15 recommendations.



## We combined the NAS findings with a presentation on JHU data. Professor Karen Fleming Remarks

Karen gave an overview of the National Academies Report. Slides are available on our blog through this link: [WhereWeStand\\_KarenSlidesForDistribution](#), and select slides are included in this report shown below.

### Five Factors Create the Conditions under which Sexual Harassment is Likely to Occur in STEMM

1. A perceived tolerance for sexual harassment in academia
2. Environments where men outnumber women
3. Environments with a hierarchical power structure
4. A focus on symbolic compliance with Title IX has resulted in policies and procedures that protect the liability of the institution but are not effective in preventing sexual harassment.
5. Uninformed leadership on campus that lacks the intentionality and focus to take the bold and aggressive measures needed to reduce and eliminate sexual harassment.



The National Academies of Science, Engineering & Medicine Identify  
Three Main Types of **Sexual Harassment**

**1  
SEXUAL  
COERCION**

- rape
- **quid pro quo** • unwanted sexual attention,
- groping** or stroking • threat of professional consequences unless sexual demands are met • unwelcome verbal or physical sexual advances • **sexual assault**
- promising professional rewards in return for sexual favors • unwanted sexual discussions • relentless pressure for sex • relentless pressure for dates

**2  
UNWANTED SEXUAL  
ATTENTION**

Water Line

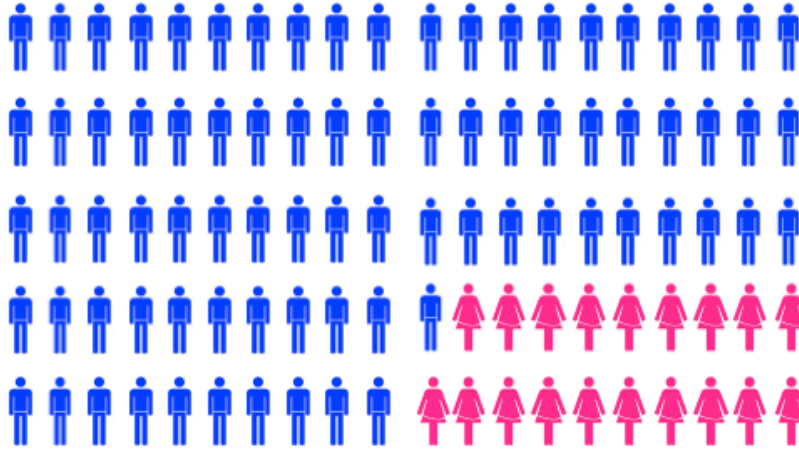
A broad range of verbal and nonverbal behaviors not aimed at sexual coercion but that nevertheless convey objectification of, hostility to, **exclusion** of, or second-class status about members of one gender • behaviours that communicate that women do not belong or do not merit respect •

**3  
GENDER  
HARASSMENT**

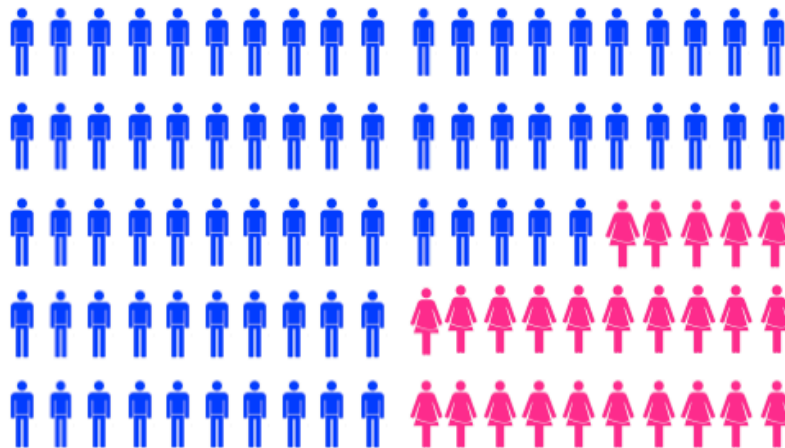
- put downs • mocking • **bullying** • **stereotyping**  
e.g. "she is an angry woman; she is aggressive or unpleasant; or she is emotional" • hostility towards women • **microaggressions**: brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or "negative" messages • microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations • **sexist hostility**: demeaning jokes or comments about women, insinuations that women do not belong in leadership or that women are not smart enough to succeed • nude images posted at work • sexually humiliating acts • sexual insults e.g. "for a good time call..." • calling someone a whore • offensive sexual teasing • sexist insults e.g. **women don't belong in science** • offensive remarks about bodies • obscene gestures • sabotage of women's equipment • vulgar name calling e.g. "slut", "bitch" • insults to working mothers e.g. "you can't do this job with small kids at home" • comments that denigrate women • gender slurs • patronizing comments & attitudes
- **marginalization of opinions and contributions of women**
- incivility •

Sexual Harassment of Women:  
Climate, Culture, and Consequences in  
Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine  
<https://www.nationalacademies.org/sexualharassment>

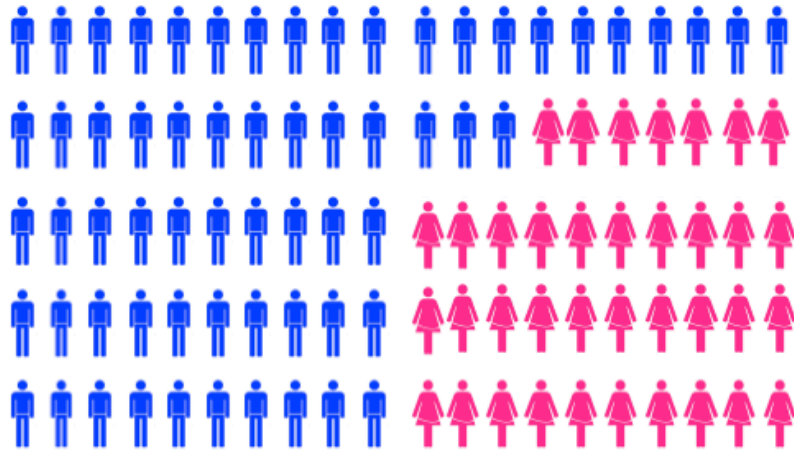
Hopkins Gender Distribution for Engineering Faculty  
(2016 Faculty Composition Report)



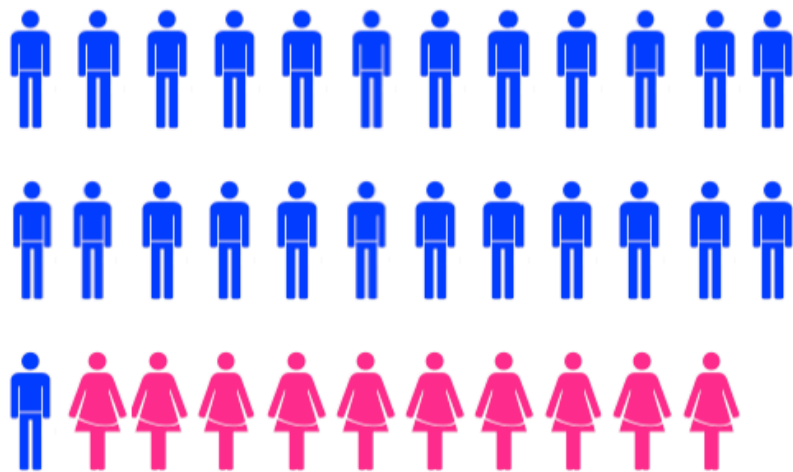
Hopkins Gender Distribution for Natural Science Faculty  
(2016 Faculty Composition Report)



### Hopkins Gender Distribution for Humanities Faculty (2016 Faculty Composition Report)



### Gender Distribution for Bloomberg Distinguished Professors (2016 Faculty Composition Report)



## **Vice Dean Toscano's remarks**

*Good evening. As we get ready to discuss the National Academies Report on Sexual Harassment, I'm honored to be here with colleagues ready to engage in what is probably some of our most important work at this juncture: that is, increasing gender equity in all aspects of our academic and work environments here at Johns Hopkins University.*

*We have made notable progress on some of the goals outlined in the Vision 2020 Report. The new parental leave policy recently put into place will help to enhance work-life balance. Additionally, the provost's office recently hired a dual career specialist who will focus on providing divisions with resources and services to maximize opportunities to recruit and retain dual career couples.*

*We have recently implemented two faculty initiatives at Krieger and Whiting – the Launch Program and the Master Mentor Program. Launch committees are designed to provide new junior faculty in STEM fields with advice and mentorship to facilitate early career success. Our Master Mentor program equips senior faculty to be better and more effective mentors for junior faculty, postdocs, and graduate students. While these programs are new, we are excited about their start and we believe that they have the potential to impact important aspects of our climate and culture.*

*Although we are proud of this progress, we also recognize opportunities for improvement that will better position us for institutional excellence. In order to create new knowledge that offers potential solutions to global and societal problems, it's critical that everyone has a place at the academic table.*

*In particular, we must explore ways to expand pathways to leadership for women faculty and staff. One of our goals is to improve our training, hiring, mentoring, and promotion practices. Currently, some of these systems and policies can make it challenging for scholars and academic leaders to fully develop their academic and professional pathways.*

*We also know from research that the more diverse a team is, the more innovative it is. That means that if we're not actively*



*solving issues of underrepresentation at all levels, and breaking down barriers, we are losing out on talent and the opportunity to innovate faster and better.*

*Lastly and perhaps most importantly, we must engage men who are part of the Hopkins community in our efforts towards gender equity. Men, particularly those in leadership positions, play an important role in breaking down barriers and promoting equity. We can't afford to place the burden solely on women or other underrepresented groups to change the status quo.*

*In this regard, we want to encourage men to increase awareness of actions and potential biases that impact the career success of women. For example, we encourage men who are chairs of academic departments to initiate discussions on ways to foster collegiality, collaboration, and an inclusive climate in their own departments – to fight what the National Academies Report refers to as “gender harassment” – that is, verbal or nonverbal behavior that conveys hostility, objectification, exclusion, or second-class status toward members of one gender.*

*As we begin to roll up our sleeves today and dig into this work, I'd like to envision the highest ideal – an environment and launching pad so inclusive that any student, postdoc, staff, or faculty member can reach for their heights without stumbling over barriers of any kind. So, let's begin to dive into what is needed to get us from here to there.*

*Thank you.*



## Blogpost #2 on WWS: What's next for gender equity at JHU?

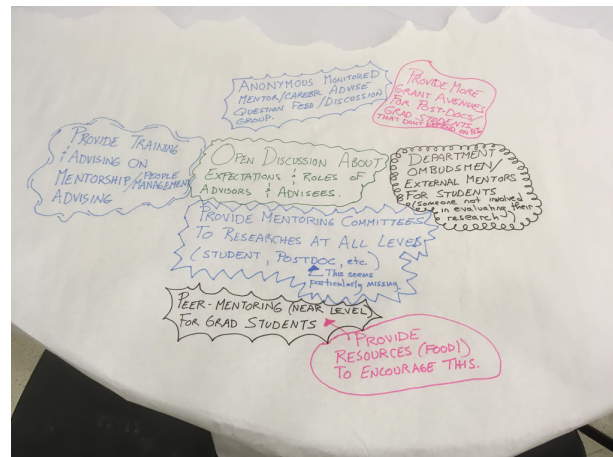
November 25, 2018 blogpost from the Where We Stand Event

At the [Where We Stand event](#) a few weeks ago, over 50 students, staff, faculty, and administrators brainstormed ways that KSAS and WSE can put the [National Academies of Science recommendations](#) into action.

The suggestions below seem to coalesce around three key themes:

Normalize the conversation around these kinds of problems:

- Make it normal in your department to just low-key call out someone who does something inappropriate
- Have OIE give out case studies that show what happened to a person who broke the rules. And then discuss the case studies.
- Rather than focusing on negative rules and prohibitions ("don't do this, don't do that"), **foster conversations about our values as an academic community.**



Foster flexibility & mixed-rank, mixed-department communication at all levels (student and faculty).

- Wriggle out of the fiercely vertical, hierarchal, and narrow organizational structure we are accustomed to.
- We hope you'll read through these ideas with your own department in mind, and that you will share the suggestions that might work for your own corner of Hopkins academic culture.

Hopkins Ideas concerning NAS Recommendations #1 (inclusive environments) & #15 (entire community responsible)

- Importance of training, like bystander training—for *all* departments
- Help students understand better how to report anonymously
- Have a clear, more transparent process when it comes to reporting transgressions
- Publish & make the campus aware of the different actions that the institution is taking part in when it comes to addressing issues.
- Provide faculty training on gender harassment
- Bring to light aspects of the culture that are derogatory, excluding, or bigoted, and explain why they can be harmful—especially things that are not clear at first glance.
- Better ways of reporting microaggression/minor sexist comments that don't lead to them being dismissed.
- Implement situations that enable pronoun sharing
- Peers can be in a better position to hold one another accountable because inappropriate behavior often isn't occurring in a formal setting
- Mandatory consent education and bystander intervention training for all students in all Hopkins programs
- Normalization of addressing issues (calling out problematic behaviors/pronouns)



## Hopkins Ideas concerning NAS Recommendations #2 (Address gender harassment) & #6 (Support targets)

- We feel uninformed—especially if a colleague comes to us, or if it's us. We have training on what to do with student concerns, but not faculty & staff situations
- Simplified version of these processes
- Advocate for target, *separate* from the investigator
- Publicize possible outcomes of these processes. People might not come forward bc they think they might ruin someone's career or get them kicked out of school. If you need to change your class schedule, how to do it. Show what mechanisms exist to get out of a bad situation.
- Improve advocacy for reporting students
- Skepticism about the effectiveness of OIE is prevalent
- We need ways to alter existing hierarchies (PI, instructor, supervisor)



## Hopkins Ideas concerning NAS Recommendation #3 (Move beyond legal compliance to address culture and climate)

- Facilitate & encourage and bottom-up approach. If I'm in lab, and someone says something uncool, I need to say something. Express to each other that we support each other. Once things start to change, we can push it toward legal barriers.
- By encouraging this change in our communities, we are able to encourage change to the legal system through our own environments.



- For example, a lot of students don't know the history of the person, Johns Hopkins. More discussions about that topic so more people understand and think about what THEY stand for.
- Sexual harassment gets weighted more than other things that same person might be doing. But if the sexual aspect is not severe enough, the rest of his egregious behavior gets overlooked because it's not in OIE's expertise. Thus the problem gets chopped up into very, very tiny pieces. This person then looks not as toxic as he actually is.
- We need a more holistic approach toward . . . professional bullying, sexual harassment, etcetera.
- Put another way: What about a person who does something that approaches sexual assault, among many other inappropriate, but not officially actionable, things. The assault is deemed not an assault. But it's awash in all these other actions that contribute to a hostile environment. What do we do?
- What are our values as an institution, and how do we cultivate them? How do we help these values thrive?

#### Hopkins Ideas concerning NAS Recommendation #4 (transparency & accountability) & #7 (strong, diverse leadership)

- Communicate about ways faculty are held accountable
- Suspension w/o pay
- Losing people for your lab
- Losing space, moving your office
- Taking away equipment
- Taking away role (ex, DUS)
- Length of time for OIE to address a case is too long.
- What if you are KSAS but your PI is SOM?  
Answer: OIE serves everyone.
- How do 3<sup>rd</sup> party reports work? Answer: OIE reaches out to the person who experienced it, and sometimes they respond, or not.



#### Hopkins Ideas concerning NAS Recommendation #5 (Diffuse the hierarchical & dependent relationship between trainees and faculty)

- Train faculty on how to advise/mentor
- Have an open conversation with grad students about expectations and roles—but not written as a contract. Instead, make it a flexible document to get conversations going
- Establish mentoring committees for people at all stages
- Ensure that there is more than one person for a grad student and postdoc to go to.
- More money for junior people, like postdocs and grad students, so they depend less on their PI
- Peer mentoring – advanced grad students working with grad students earlier in their careers
- Department ombudsman to go to, someone who would not be writing letter of rec
- What are some creative ways to implement accountability? Take away money in response to bad behavior?
- Have conversations about roles, typical paths, power dynamics, and so on that normalize the discussion
- In person training (around sexual harassment or discrimination, for example)—not online
- Back away to say, this is everybody's work and everybody's responsibility



## Faculty Coffee Hour on Graduate Student Advising

### Invitations and Organization

Individual invitations were crucial to the success of the faculty coffee hour. We were thrilled with the turnout and discussion. We wrote to deans and members of the Provosts' office; department chairs and DGS's; members of NAS; BDPs with appointments at Homewood; and members of Academic Council. Our invitation included the recommendations that participants in our Diversity and Inclusion Conference presentation came up with, as well as links to our blog (including the File Cabinet of relevant resources) and the NAS report.



The coffee hour was held, with Formithia's help, at the Hopkins Club in the sunny Nobel Room. For over 2 ½ hours faculty and administrators came and stayed as they could.

### Materials for this Event

**Graduate Student Advising** was the discussion topic for in our November 2018 coffee hour. Here is a working list of resources.

1. ["Three research-based lessons to improve your mentoring" \(Science Mar 2019\) and "A CV of Failures" \(Nature\)](#)
2. [November 2018 Faculty & Admin Coffee Hour on Graduate Advising: Notes](#)
3. [Suggestions for how to "diffuse the hierarchical and dependent relationship between trainees and faculty" at JHU \(October 2018\)](#)
4. [Mentoring Grad Students: Advising Statements \(Chronicle\)](#)
5. [Drew Daniel on vulnerability and responsibility for advisors, particularly in the humanities job market \(bullyblogger\)](#)
6. [K.A. Amienne, "Abusers and Enablers in Faculty Culture" \(Chronicle\)](#)

7. [Leah H. Somerville, "What Can We Learn from Dartmouth?" \(Science\)](#)
8. [Kathleen E. Grogan, "How the entire scientific community can confront gender bias in the workplace" \(Nature Ecology & Evolution\)](#)
9. [Leonard Cassuto, "On the Value of Dissertation Writing Groups" \(Chronicle\)](#)
10. Kathryn R. Wedemeyer-Strombel, ["Graduate School Should be Challenging, Not Traumatic" \(Chronicle\)](#)
11. Allison Antes, ["First law of leadership: be human first, scientist second" \(Nature\)](#)
12. [Dana Bolger, "Betsy DeVos's New Harassment Protect Schools, Not Students" \(NYTimes\)](#) [quick stat: 34% of sexual assault victims drop out of college]
13. [Rape, Assault, Harassment, and Discrimination: Entitlement at Dartmouth](#)
14. [JHU Ten by Twenty](#) (see goals #4 and #5)
15. [What It's Like to Be a Woman in the Academy \(Chronicle\)](#)
16. ["How a Department Took on the Next Frontier in the #MeToo Movement" \(Chronicle\)](#)
17. National Women's Law Center, ["Three Reasons Why Betsy DeVos's Draft Title IX Rules Would Hurt Survivors"](#)
18. [Lucy Taylor, "Twenty Things I Wish I'd Known When I Started my PhD" \(Nature\)](#)
19. Alexandra M. Lord, ["Ex-Academics Still Aren't Being Consulted on Graduate-Education Reform" \(Chronicle\)](#)



## Blogpost: Notes on Graduate Student Advising Coffee Hour

January 20, 2019 blogpost

On November 26, 2018, 25+ faculty members and administrators from KSAS, WSE, and the Provost's office gathered for over two hours to discuss the challenges and opportunities of graduate student advising—particularly in light of the recent NAS recommendations.

Our conversation was wide-ranging and lively; the notes below don't begin to do it justice. What they try to do, though, is represent the ideas discussed (whether or not everyone agreed on them) and to inspire further discussion of this on the Homewood campus.

For resources on this topic, please visit our [file cabinet](#).

### Conversation Topics

#### Mentoring: How? When?

- One challenge is the question of how to inspire faculty to take on mentorship roles
- Once inspired, we need to learn how best to mentor
- One program already in place is the [Master Mentoring](#) is for faculty who are mentoring junior faculty, and the skills learned in this program should also be applicable to mentoring grad students.
- When and where should mentorship happen for graduate students?
- Some advocate mentorship at every stage of graduate school
- Additionally, mentorship isn't limited to one's home institution. There are networks across schools, in disciplines, for example:
- Chemistry: grad student mentorship network for underrepresented grad students/faculty called [Chemwmn](#), funded by NSF
- EPS: physical oceanography community [MPOWIR](#) and [Earth Science Women's Network](#)

#### Establishing community values & cultural norms

- How can the institution best use orientation (with particular consideration for international students coming from different cultural contexts) to set a supportive, professional tone for academic life at JHU?
- After orientation, how can we as an academic community sustain and normalize conversations about professional, respectful, inclusive interactions? Some ideas:
- Small group discussion with case studies: such-and-such happened in the lab or grad student workroom, what would we do?
- Regular lab/cohort meetings with scenario of the month?
- Use the concept of the “safety moment” common to chemistry lab meetings? Call this the “inclusive moment” and have examples of inclusive behavior?
- Ask grad students take the lead in discussions and inclusive practices, as long as they have full support from their PI/advisor?
- Can the university provide resources/case studies for this effort?

### Defining the faculty/grad student relationship

- Collaborative relationships are most productive
- Vocabulary matters: think and speak of students as colleagues who are not as far along in their careers as we are—rather than, for example, as our employees (casting the relationship as boss/employee creates problems in attitude on both sides)
- Some junior faculty need help adjusting their expectations, particularly of first- and second-year grad students. They may have themselves been extraordinarily independent, savvy grad students and may expect all of their students to be just as amazing. They may not realize what guidance they received and therefore not be cognizant of what guidance they need to give.

### What the NAS recommendation to “diffuse the hierarchical and dependent relationship between faculty and trainees” means in practice

- Diffusing power is not the same as disavowing power. We do not help students by giving up the power that comes with our positions

- We can, however, clarify our status as mere mortals—for example, by inviting students to comment on drafts of our work; by telling them about times when we’ve run into stumbling blocks, etc.
- Ensure that grad students and postdocs develop the independence to meet their deadlines. A grad student should not depend on an authority figure to get them to meet a deadline, nor should deadlines be disregarded
- Talk to each other about systems that work and adopt/adapt those systems as appropriate.
- It seems that different departments handle graduate student advising quite differently, and we as faculty do not necessarily know what other departments are doing. For example: In biophysics & biology, there is a committee of faculty for each graduate student and yearly meetings throughout graduate school. In EPS, grad students have to meet with advisor before they can register for next semester
- Feedback is important for both the adviser and the advisee. In some places, graduate students have to write a letter to their advisor/DGS about their goals & their progress; faculty had to do the same. Then, based on this exchange, faculty advisors can adjust, give them internships, redirect according to new interests, etc.
- Some parts of JHU have individual development plans (IDPs). I believe these are required by NIH training grants. Should these be universally required?

## Challenges of writing letters of recommendation

- It is important to recognize that these are inherently biased; we as faculty should pay [close attention to language](#). We discussed various approaches for minimizing bias:
- Have students write a paragraph for the letter
- Have students make a bulleted list of talents, etc., and have their peers help them do it; train students to be more proactive about articulating and advocating for their accomplishments and strengths.
- Show examples

- Share the literature on this with faculty and grad students alike (see Gender Equity in Science bibliography)
- Ask students for CV and give them feedback on their own professional presentation.
- Ask students for the cover letter
- GRO used to have an active committee on professional development; their website may be of some help
- During department orientation, offer best practices for how to ask for a letter of recommendation

## Concerns about graduate student mental health & job market

- National statistics make it clear that most students will not end up in tenure-track academic jobs in almost every field.
- Concern about high rates of depression among graduate students' pressures, especially in humanities, is sometimes unbearable.
- CUNY Graduate Center made astounding foray into what it would mean to appoint somebody whose single job was to organize workshops for nonacademic careers.



Image Credit: Professor of English Drew Daniel's blog post "Hands on a Hard Body: Remarks on Graduate Advising as Emotional Labor" <https://bullybloggers.wordpress.com/2018/08/23/hands->

- Students in the humanities (?) have 5 years of funding, but median time to complete the PhD is longer, so what are they supposed to do?
- There is excellent movement at the Career Center, with many good things happening, but we must advertise and support the opportunities there IN the department; if we don't talk about the career center in our academic programs, students will perceive it as second class.
- One way to think about career planning for graduate schools is to disavow the notion that only academics is the only career track for

*“successful students,” i.e. “There are no alternative careers. There are only careers.”*

How to institutionalize changes in how we approach graduate training? What is the path toward turning some of these good ideas into requirements?

### ***Incentives***

- We cannot keep doing the “same old thing” or we will attain the “same old result”.
- University of Michigan uses launch committees ([ADVANCE](#)) for new faculty during their first year. The convener of the committee receives \$1,000 in their research account to attend and organize the meetings.
- Institutional change will require changing how we do things, which will require changing how we encourage and reward faculty for these kinds of contributions.
- Reward teaching and service more explicitly in tenure review. This will set the tone for valuing teaching, mentorship, etc. Currently, teaching serves as a “hygiene factor” in tenure decisions—above a certain level, it makes no difference. Carl Wieman (Nobel laureate in physics who now focuses on science education) would not get tenure today.
- Valuing teaching, advising, and mentorship is good for all students. This is particularly important for diversity and inclusion, and it is critical in courses at the introductory level because those students are new to college and coming from very different levels of high school preparation.

### ***Potential stumbling blocks***

- Putting something out as best practices helps good faculty become great faculty. But the challenge always is: what happens when faculty either get busy & forget the best practices? Or what about faculty that simply abuse their power?
- Departments don’t always carry out guidelines they are given. There will be different levels of advocacy, implementation, etc. A

lack of consistency fractures the larger community, and the best practices cease to become a policy, which undermines the community.

- Faculty fatigue.

## **Follow-Up on Student Evaluations of Teaching Coffee Event from May 2018**

In February 2019, Dean Joel Schildbach sent an email to faculty explaining how the SET summary process works and outlining a process for responding to bias in the summaries. His email and our response to it, which he acknowledged, are below.

### **Letter From Dean Schildbach**

*The Homewood schools are implementing a new procedure regarding the summaries of course evaluations. As you are likely aware, the Registrar routinely has student open-form comments from course evaluations summarized, with the task performed by an outside vendor. These condensed summaries are posted on a webpage that is accessible to students [here](#). Some of these data are also included in [Semester.ly](#), which students routinely use for course planning.*

*There have been some instances, however, where the summary provided by the contractor has included inappropriate or clearly biased assessments or is otherwise problematic. Starting with the Fall 2018 teacher course evaluations, we are establishing a formal process for faculty to review and, if warranted, contest these summaries prior to publication. You will receive an email from the registrar informing you that your evaluation summaries are ready for review. If you believe there is a problem with the summary for your class, you are encouraged to bring the issue to the chair/director of your department/program. If the chair/director agrees with your concern, they will endorse and forward your concern to the registrar at [ASENCourseEvals@jhu.edu](mailto:ASENCourseEvals@jhu.edu) for further consideration. If the registrar feels that the requested change or redaction is inappropriate they will bring the concern to me to adjudicate.*



*We hope that this new procedure helps lessen bias in the course evaluation summary process. Student course evaluations are an important way in which we engage students in evaluating our educational efforts. I look forward to discussions as we develop additional methods to more robustly assess our educational effectiveness. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.*

## **WFF@H Response to Dean Schildbach**

*March 4, 2018*

*Dear Joel,*

*On behalf of the Women Faculty Forum at Homewood, thank you very much for the announcement that faculty can vet their student evaluations comments for bias before they are published. As you might remember, WFF@H hosted a happy hour on the issue of SETs last May, and many faculty members expressed concern about the ways biased evaluations can harm their reputations and paths to promotion. The step that your office has taken—to remove biased comments from public circulation—is assuredly in the right direction. Thank you.*

*Although we appreciate this important step towards achieving less biased evaluations of teaching, we are writing to express some concerns about this first implementation and to offer some ideas for moving forward.*

*First, we're concerned that the proposed requirement to involve a chair or director in the redaction will not work for some faculty members. For instance, why would an untenured faculty member call their chair's attention to a negative student comment—no matter how unfair the comment is? Or, in a different situation, what if a faculty member doesn't trust the chair with a question around bias and feels stuck with the negative comment? What if a chair doesn't agree that a comment is biased and declines to forward the concern to the registrar: What rights does the faculty member possess? What step should the faculty member take, and at what potential cost? Further, are chairs and directors trained in identifying bias? We wonder if the Associate Dean for Diversity*

would be a more appropriate adjudicator, or a small group of experts.

Our second concern has to do with positive comments that are rooted in bias. How should this this new process address comments like “this [male] professor is brilliant” or “this [female] professor is kind and supportive”? In fact, research shows when comments for women professors highlighting “communal characteristics” migrate into letters of recommendation, they hinder women rather than help.

Third, we wish to respond to your point that this new process will help reduce bias in the course evaluation summary process. We disagree. This new procedure will censor offensive comments and thus lessen the public expression of bias, which is quite important. But this new procedure will not remove the bias that informs the evaluations, which means that bias is still implicitly expressed in the numerical scores.

This leads to our final and most important point. Simply put, the SET system needs to be redesigned. As you know, research shows that a SET format like ours is not only biased but also consistently fails to correlate to student learning. We urge Hopkins to turn its attention to a SET system that captures efficacy in faculty teaching as it relates to student learning.

Particularly at the undergraduate level, Hopkins needs to create an instrument that minimizes opportunities for distortion due to bias, bears some relation to student learning, and collects information that faculty can actually learn from.

Some ideas: Perhaps you are familiar with work at University of Oregon right now (reported in the Chronicle here), where a new SET format “has students select, from a list, teaching elements that were most beneficial to their learning and those that could use some improvement.” They are also using mid-term evaluations that only the instructor sees (two questions: what’s going well and what’s not)—so that faculty can adjust along the way.

As you may know, we have quite a few articles/resources on SETs in a section of the file cabinet on our blog. Many of these spell



*out the shortcomings of traditional evaluations, but there are also some ideas for improvements.*

*Eliminating bias is essential for inclusive excellence; learning how to name and reduce bias (our own and others') is crucial work. We understand that institutional transformation we need in this dimension could be slow and hard to measure.*

*We are curious to learn more about the discussions you mention in your letter, and we hope you will convene a committee of diverse faculty who are concerned about this issue.*

*Thank you again for your efforts on improving SETs here at Hopkins. We look forward to a more effective process.*

*Sincerely,*

*Women Faculty Forum at Homewood*

*Anne-Elizabeth Brodsky and Karen Fleming, co-chairs*

*Karen Beemon*

*Yi-Ping Ong*

*Todd Shepard*

## **Recap of Happy Hour from May 2018**

### **Context & Summary**

To establish context for the exchange between Dean Schildbach and the WFF@H, we provide a recap of the May 2018 faculty happy hour that took place in Mudd Atrium to discuss Student Evaluations of Teaching.



We were delighted that Dean Wendland, teaching faculty, tenured faculty, and pre-tenure faculty were all represented at the discussion. We began putting relevant articles in the File Cabinet (below) before the event, and we have continued to add sources periodically.

### **Materials**

**Student Evaluations of Teaching (SET)** were the discussion topic for our happy hour in May 2018.

1. Kristin Doerer, "Colleges Are Getting Smarter About Student Evaluations. Here's How." (*Chronicle* 2019)
2. Nancy Bunge, "Students Evaluating Teachers Doesn't Just Hurt Teachers. It Hurts Students." (*Chronicle*)
3. Leah Wasburn-Moses', "We Make Tenure Decisions Unfairly. Here's a Better Way." (*Chronicle* 2018)
4. Kristina M. Mitchell and Jonathan Martin, "Gender Bias in Student Evaluations," (*PS: Political Science & Politics*). See also Mitchell in *Slate*: "Student Evaluations Can't Be Used to Assess Professors" (2018)
5. Victor Ray, "Is Gender Bias an Intended Feature of Teaching Evaluations?" (*Inside Higher Ed* 2018)
6. Nobel Laureate Carl Wieman has a lot to say about teaching effectiveness; here's an excerpt from a 2016 [article](#) on his work
7. In 2015, Ben Schmidt created a webpage called [Gendered Language in Teaching Evaluations](#), where you can search for terms used at [ratemyprofessor.com](#) and sort for gender.
8. Bob Uttl, Carmela A. White, Daniela Wong-Gonzalez, "Meta-analysis of faculty's teaching effectiveness: Student evaluation of teaching ratings and student learning are not related" (*Studies in Educational Evaluation* 2017)
9. The Innovative Instructor's post "[Learning from Student Evaluations](#)" (April 2017) draws on recent work from Carl Wieman and Sarah Gilbert on STEM [teaching practices inventory](#) and links to a helpful [guide to SETs](#) from Vanderbilt.
10. David Kember, Doris Y. P. Leung & K. P. Kwan, "Does the Use of Student Feedback Questionnaires Improve the Overall Quality of Teaching?" (*Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Ed* 2002)
11. Yining Chen & David B. Hoshower, "Student Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness: An assessment of student perception and motivation" (*Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Ed* 2003)

## Attendance

Attendance was not taken at this event, however we estimate that there was a steady state of 15-20 faculty over the two hours for this event.

# End