

Committee on the Status of Women in Astronomy Strategic Plan for the 2020s

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Image: Pleiades in the infrared (NASA / JPL-Caltech / UCLA / Judy Schmidt)

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CHARGE

In June 1979, the Council of the American Astronomical Society (AAS) created the Committee on the Status of Women in Astronomy (CSWA) with the following charge: “CSWA recommends to the Council practical measures that the AAS can take to improve the status of women in astronomy and encourage their entry into this field.”

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to build an inclusive and self-sustaining community that supports gender equity and the success of women in astronomy. In the following, the CSWA interprets “women” to mean people who identify as female, including trans women, genderqueer women, and non-binary people who are significantly female-identified¹, and includes women with multiple, intersectional² identities, including race, ethnicity, class, disability, and more.

INTRODUCTION

The CSWA represents one axis of the AAS’s approach to addressing issues affecting our workforce, and we work in partnership with the other AAS diversity committees and working groups, including The Committee for the Status of Minorities in Astronomy (CSMA), The Committee for Sexual-Orientation and Gender Minorities in Astronomy (SGMA), and The Working Group on Accessibility and Disability (WGAD), as well as additional AAS and divisional committees and working groups who seek to achieve the same goals. Individuals at the intersection of multiple underrepresented identities are especially at risk from inequities in the system. We therefore view these collaborations with the other AAS committees as crucial to CSWA’s mission.

Since the 2009 CSWA Strategic Plan, the CSWA’s work has been critical in identifying key issues which led to recommendations aimed at attacking the root causes and symptoms of harassment, discrimination, and bias in astronomy. The following is a high-level overview of the accomplishments of this committee, and the impact it has had on transforming our community into a more equitable and diverse field. Over the last decade, the CSWA:

1. had a consistent and active presence at all AAS meetings and in non-AAS events, increasing awareness of and discussing issues of concern to the community through town halls, special sessions, special events, and discussion panels;
2. increased communication, raising awareness and building strong communities through a weekly email newsletter called AASWomen, the Women in Astronomy Blog, the bi-annual STATUS magazine, and a strong social media presence (Facebook and Twitter);
3. maintained and enriched the relevant AAS web page (<https://aas.org/comms/cswa>);
4. conducted and participated in multiple surveys assessing the status of the field;
5. authored a multitude of white papers that discuss barriers faced by women in astronomy;
6. initiated Climate Site Visits for Astronomy Departments;
7. participated in synergistic activities with other AAS Committees (e.g. SGMA, WGAD, and the CSMA).

The 2019 CSWA survey revealed that, although progress was made, the work of the CSWA is not completed, and more action needs to be taken in order to level the field. From

¹Geek Feminism Blog, <https://geekfeminismdotorg.wordpress.com/2014/03/19/language-for-trans-inclusive-events/>, accessed 12/27/19.

² Crenshaw, Kimberle (1989) "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," University of Chicago Legal Forum: Vol. 1989: Iss. 1, Article 8. Available at: <http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>.

professional challenges in seeking funding and telescope time, to sociological ones (e.g., compensation at all levels, the two-body problem, and the typically uneven distribution of dependent caregiving responsibilities), women are still expected to bear the weight of unrealistic expectations which discourage many exceptional individuals from following a career in academia, stripping our field of both talent and progress. Implicit bias is a common culprit; mentorship is vital and undersupplied, and the unique role of the AAS to establish policies and best practices becomes more urgent in order to improve the retention of women and minorities in astronomy. The 2019 survey also showcased that, although harassment is addressed and anti-harassment policies are in place, harassment and discrimination in astronomy is still a major issue, with new forms of harassment emerging as the field becomes more diverse. Our work is both relevant and necessary to promote and support Women in Astronomy.

VISION STATEMENT

The CSWA aims to encourage and support the creation of a professional astronomical community, including our committee, in which all people, regardless of gender identity and including those at the intersection of multiple underrepresented groups, flourish and are represented in proportion to their numbers in the general population.

CSWA'S ASSETS AND WEAKNESSES

The CSWA has many assets. In particular, the CSWA's reach is wide: the AASWomen newsletter reaches 1600+ people weekly, and the CSWA's website, Facebook page, Twitter account, and blog site reach an additional, large audience. The CSWA currently has 16 members, enabling it to undertake a broad scope of activities, as described in the committee's Working Rules³ (a document that has yet to be adopted).

Nonetheless, the CSWA also has many weaknesses. The CSWA is entirely made up of volunteers and has no formal budget. The CSWA was created as a single-issue group, and has sometimes struggled to keep up with the changing landscape of diversity, equity, and inclusion work and particularly the importance of intersectionality. Additionally, the CSWA is sometimes disconnected from other minority groups in AAS and its divisions and does not always leverage the strengths of these other groups when planning activities. These weaknesses can limit the CSWA in achieving its objectives.

CSWA ISSUES AS ETHICS ISSUES

Many of the issues that the CSWA plans to address as part of this plan are, at their heart, ethics issues and specifically related to conduct towards others. This view is echoed in the AAS Code of Ethics⁴. For example, Harassment & Bullying, and Peer Review are specifically mentioned in the AAS Code of Ethics. We hold that the ethics issues that we outline below should be handled accordingly and with similar importance to research ethics issues. Where appropriate in the document below we will outline the ethics implications of the various objectives.

FOCUS AREAS

The CSWA identified four major focus areas for committee work in the coming years. These are detailed in Wexler et al. (2020). Within each focus area, there are multiple high-level objectives. Specific projects are outlined in **Table 1**. In the following, the CSWA interprets "women" to mean people who identify as female, including trans women, genderqueer women,

³ Draft CSWA Working Rules: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Mp6BRFhJilq9RFIDm9gwEBkS501MrALVfNtiaZtIPXo/edit>.

⁴ AAS Code of Ethics: <https://aas.org/policies/ethics>.

and non-binary people who are significantly female-identified⁵, and includes women with multiple, intersectional⁶ identities, including race, ethnicity, class, disability, and more.

Focus Area #1: Harassment & Bullying

- 1.1 Objective (Policies and procedures): Work with the AAS Board both to develop policies and procedures that address and prevent harassment and bullying and to improve those policies that currently exist. These policies should treat harassment & bullying as ethics issues of equal importance to violations of research ethics.
- 1.2 Objective (Training): Increase the availability and effectiveness of training activities that work to prevent harassment and bullying and which provide an ethical framework for reacting to instances of harassment and bullying.
- 1.3 Objective (Advocacy): Build a framework in which targets of harassment and bullying can advocate for themselves and be advocated for by others.

Focus Area #2 Creating Inclusive Environments for an Ethical Workplace

- 2.1 Objective (Pipeline): Increase the percentage of women who earn doctoral degrees and who are represented at senior levels.
- 2.2 Objective (Two-body problem): Increase awareness of “two-body” problem issues and develop potential actions to alleviate these issues. We define the “two-body” problem as the attempts by individuals in a relationship to obtain employment in a geographical region(s) of their choosing.
- 2.3 Objective (Caregiving/maternity): Support caregivers of all genders to ensure equitable access for women to scientific opportunity and activities.
- 2.4 Objective (Accessibility): Work with the WGAD to improve efforts to advance inclusion and accessibility at AAS conferences and meetings to promote equitable access to scientific opportunity and activities.

Focus Area #3: Professional Development

- 3.1 Objective (State of the profession): Partner with the Employment Committee and social scientists to research the state of the profession.
- 3.2 Objective (Equitable awards and paper reviews): Advocate for an increase in equitable selection and review processes.
- 3.3 Objective (Employment): Work with the Employment Committee to improve equitable opportunities for employment and promotion, including developing a compensation database with a focus on graduate and postdoctoral compensation and improving the AAS Job Register to ensure that resources offered by AAS are accessible and informative for women.

Focus Area #4: CSWA Operations and Interactions

- 4.1 Objective (Intersectionality): The CSWA should work to improve interfaces and interactions with other AAS groups (e.g., other diversity committees, the DPS Professional Development Committee) to increase awareness of intersectional issues and emphasize the need for support of women with multiple minority identities.
- 4.2 Objective (Operations): The CSWA should have a written set of working rules and

⁵Geek Feminism Blog, <https://geekfeminismdotorg.wordpress.com/2014/03/19/language-for-trans-inclusive-events/>, accessed 12/27/19.

⁶ Crenshaw, Kimberle (1989) "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," University of Chicago Legal Forum: Vol. 1989: Iss. 1, Article 8. Available at: <http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>.

expectations of how it will operate as a committee both internally and externally. These should be living documents that can be adjusted as necessary and the Committee should include enough members to respond to AAS and Committee concerns/issues.

- 4.3 Objective (diversity work): Advocate for the AAS to establish a staffed and funded office to support diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts that are beyond the scope of the individual AAS committees. This office should also work with the chairs of the AAS diversity committees to improve how those committees coordinate their actions.

Focus Areas:	Objectives:	Example Projects:	Example Assessments:
1. Harassment & Bullying	1.1. Policies and procedures: Work with the AAS Board both to develop policies and procedures that address and prevent harassment and bullying and to improve those policies that currently exist. These policies should treat harassment & bullying as ethics issues of equal importance to violations of research ethics.	Make sure that the Wexler et al. is submitted and disseminated to the AAS Board and to appropriate committees and stakeholders.	Determine how well we communicated our recommendations to the AAS governance. Determine how effective we were in advocating for our priorities, as evidenced by whether our recommendations were successfully implemented by the AAS.
		Work with other committees, especially employment and diversity committees, to ensure that policies and procedures properly address intersectional issues.	TBD
		Work with the AAS to continually update the AAS Code of Ethics, anti-harassment policies, definitions, and procedures. Make sure different policies and documents are self-consistent, and use modern definitions of harassment.	TBD
		Work with the AAS to strengthen its harassment reporting, investigation, and sanctioning procedures, possibly including: a “bias incident response program” to respond to minor instances of harassment and bullying using a restorative approach; an escrow system for complaints; an online hub that AAS members can use to help them navigate reporting harassment.	TBD
	1.2. Training: Increase the availability and effectiveness of training activities that work to prevent harassment and bullying and which provide an ethical framework for reacting to instances of harassment and bullying.	Work with other committees, especially employment and diversity committees, to ensure that the trainings are implemented within an intersectional framework. This is important as individuals who are members of underrepresented groups and those at the intersections of multiple underrepresented groups are more often the targets of harassment.	TBD
	1.3. Advocacy: Build a framework in which targets of harassment and bullying can advocate for themselves and be advocated for by others.	Co-sponsor training sessions at AAS meetings and at institutions.	TBD
		In collaboration with the other diversity committees, encourage (perhaps, as a statement) the AAS to develop a restorative approach to minor instances of harassment and bullying and provide timely feedback on the proposed approach.	TBD
2. Creating Inclusive Environments for an Ethical Workplace	2.1. Pipeline: Increase the percentage of women who earn doctoral degrees and who are represented at senior levels.	Work with the AAS, the AAS Demographics Committee, the AAS Employment Committee, and any future AAS Diversity Officer to collect demographic data, specifically as it pertains to recruitment and retention, and paying attention to the impact on individuals at the intersections of multiple identities. One previously demonstrated method (J. Schmelz) would be to survey chairs, directors, and analogous supervisors within the astronomy workforce to evaluate the hiring, promotion, etc. of their supervisees.	Determine how effective we were in contributing to the awareness by assessing whether or not best practices have been developed and distributed. (Can compare to previous studies by CSWA, past articles Determine how effective we were in addressing gender disparity by an increase of parity in the statistics.(Can compare to previous studies by CSWA, past articles in Status?)
		Work with the AAS, SGMA, CSMA, Employment Committee, and other relevant committees to develop methods for attracting, hiring, retaining, and evaluating (including tenure and promotion) female-identified scientists, including those with intersectional identities.	TBD
		Reimplement the Women in Astronomy database, including the option to ask for self-reported demographic information that could be public.	TBD
		Take steps to improve the graduate and postdoctoral experience, including promoting recommendations of the graduate education task force report, particularly as they pertain to women.	TBD
		Use results of any study to work with AAS & Employment Committee to develop and distribute a “best practices” guide for both employers and candidates.	Assess any resources that provide recommendations on mitigation strategies.
	2.2. Two-body problem: Increase awareness of “two-body” problem issues and develop potential actions to alleviate these issues. We define the “two-body” problem as the attempts by individuals in a relationship to obtain employment in a geographical region(s) of their choosing.	Work with AAS and the Employment Committee to determine how the “two-body” affects the hiring and promotion of women in astronomy. One example might be through an NSF-funded project as described in the Wexler et al. BAAS paper.	Assess any data that have been collected about two-body prevalence and impact.
		Suggest to and potentially work with AAS to incorporate implementation of family leave and caregiving policies into the Code of Ethics, including protection against retaliation.	Determine if AAS has increased awareness of best practices.
		Work with AAS & Employment Committee to highlight (to employers via a “best practices” document) that adequate family-leave and caregiving policies and resources are ethics issues and that employees should be protected from retaliation for taking advantage of these policies. These best practices should be informed by social science research.	Determine if AAS has increased awareness of best practices.
	2.3. Caregiving/maternity: Support caregivers of all genders to ensure equitable access for women to scientific opportunity and activities.	Work with the AAS to ensure caregiving accommodations at meetings and conferences, including having AAS work with organizers of regional meetings and conferences to help them provide and support caregiving options.	Determine if AAS has increased accommodations.
		Work with WGAD (e.g., by offering to assist and co-signing requests) and AAS to promote establishing accessible spaces and physical accessibility in work environments.	Determine if accessibility standards beyond requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act have been adopted.
3. Professional Development	3.1. State of the profession: Partner with the Employment Committee and social scientists to research the state of the profession.	Advocate for surveys of the broad astronomy and planetary science communities.	Get survey results. Identify best-practices and implement them.
		Work with the AAS to determine how prizes are awarded, and get a demographic analysis of past prize submissions and selections.	Evaluate whether or not there are statistical biases in who is nominated for, or receives prizes. Selection committee provide rubrics that standardize the selection process.
	3.2. Equitable awards and paper reviews: Advocate for an increase in equitable selection and review processes.	Work with the AAS to determine how press conferences are selected, and get demographic analysis of those who participated in previous AAS press conferences.	Evaluate whether or not there are statistical biases in who is involved with AAS press conferences. Selection committee provide rubrics that standardize the selection process.
		Work with AAS to determine how plenary talks are selected, and get demographic analysis of previous plenary talks to ensure gender and diversity balance in conference plenary talks.	Evaluate whether or not there are statistical biases in who gives conference plenary talks. Selection committee provide rubrics that standardize the selection process.
		Work to ensure women are nominated for AAS prizes and prize talks.	Evaluate whether or not there is a statistical increase in the proportion of nominations and awards of these prizes and/or talks who are female-identified scientists, including those with intersectional identities.
	3.3. Employment: Work with the Employment Committee to improve equitable opportunities for employment and promotion, including developing a compensation database with a focus on graduate and postdoctoral compensation and improving the AAS Job Register to ensure that resources offered by AAS are accessible and informative for women.	Improve AAS journal review processes by promoting dual anonymous peer-review and by recommending the release of article submission and acceptance data, including author and reviewer demographics.	TBD
		Recommend to the AAS Board the exploration and/or creation of a distance mentorship program, to assist in professional development across all career levels.	TBD
		Develop and implement professional development activities that are especially relevant to CSWA constituents. These could include workshops on public speaking, salary negotiation, interview skills. This could involve a budgetary request to aid in development of workshops by outside agencies.	TBD
4. CSWA Operations and Interactions	4.1. Intersectionality: The CSWA should work to improve interfaces and interactions with other AAS groups (e.g., other diversity committees, the DPS Professional Development Committee) to increase awareness of intersectional issues and emphasize the need for support of women with multiple minority identities.	Establish and formalize robust means for communicating between the different diversity committees (such as enlist diversity committee liaisons serving on multiple committees, regular email communications, etc.), keeping in mind that the burden of liaising between different diversity committees may fall disproportionately on people at the intersection of multiple identities.	Assess the frequency and level of interaction with activities across diversity committees. Assess that issues relevant across AAS diversity committees are brought to the attention of the AAS Board.
		CSWA will advocate that the AAS Board, and any future AAS diversity officer, organize regularly scheduled in-person meetings for members of CSMA, CSWA, WGAD, SGMA, and DPS PCCS during which we will develop and converge upon cross-committee goals (e.g., annual project list/budget, strategic plans) and develop plans for accomplishing those goals.	Evaluate that the meeting actually occurs. Review effectiveness of materials and blog posts Use surveys to assess the level and impact of communication with members and how to improve it.
		Work with other diversity groups to organize and coordinate workshops and activities at AAS-sponsored meetings with themes related to recruiting, promoting, and retaining women in Astronomy and science in general.	TBD
			TBD
	4.2. Operations: The CSWA should have a written set of working rules and expectations of how it will operate as a committee both internally and externally. These should be living documents that can be adjusted as necessary and the Committee should include enough members to respond to AAS and Committee concerns/issues.		
		In collaboration with the other diversity committees, strongly recommend establishing an AAS Office of Diversity and Inclusion. While the AAS diversity committees can provide recommendations to the AAS, they cannot directly implement those recommendations.	Evaluate how well the office has responded to CSWA needs
	4.3. Diversity Work: Advocate for the AAS to establish a staffed and funded office to support diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts that are beyond the scope of the individual AAS committees. This office should also work with the chairs of the AAS diversity committees to improve how those committees coordinate their actions.	Work with the AAS Ethics Committee to recommend that the AAS hire at least one professional who is trained as an advocate for and supporter of targets of harassment and bullying.	TBD

Table 1: CSWA Strategic Plan Traceability Matrix, showing Focus Areas, Objectives, Example Projects, and Example Assessments.

APPENDICES

History of the CSWA

In 2009, on the 30th anniversary of the formation of the CSWA, the committee developed a new strategic plan. The 2009 CSWA Strategic Plan⁷ enlisted the committee to “educate our community to understand the challenges faced by women of one or more intersections in order to facilitate a more inclusive [astronomical] community.”

Since the 2009 CSWA Strategic Plan, the astronomical community has been rocked by revelations of harassment in high-profile academic environments and abuse of power by senior male astronomers, which led to intense discussions on how to eliminate such behaviors in all professional environments. The specific cases brought to light by community members, including past and active CSWA members, have caused many academic disciplines beyond astronomy to look inward and to confront issues of harassment as well. If not anything else, this highlighted the urgency for action against perpetrators, protection of victims, and the need for proactive action from entities such as the AAS. The CSWA’s work was critical in identifying key issues which led to recommendations aimed at attacking the root causes and symptoms of harassment, discrimination, and bias in astronomy.

As we embark on a new strategic planning process, we first take a critical step back to reflect on the CSWA’s accomplishments during the fourth decade of its activities, which will help us to gain clarity on the next step(s) of our work. The following is a high-level overview of the accomplishments of this committee, and the impact it has had on transforming our community into a more equitable and diverse field. Over the last decade:

1. The CSWA had a consistent and active presence at all AAS meetings, increasing awareness of and discussing issues of concern to the community. CSWA members led town halls, special sessions, special events, and discussion panels on a variety of issues, including data-based discussions educating the community on issues such as harassment (and its various forms), discrimination, workplace bullying, stereotype threat, and impostor syndrome. The CSWA invited active participation of allies (e.g., 217 AAS town hall, “How Men Can Help Women in Astronomy”). The CSWA encouraged strong support groups through mentoring (e.g., 218 AAS discussion “Transforming Cultural Norms: Mentoring/Networking Groups for Women and Minorities” and multiple mentoring sessions at subsequent AAS meetings)
2. The CSWA increased its active presence and participation in non-AAS events/meetings, discussing harassment in scientific disciplines and examining common challenges with communities worldwide. These activities aimed to increase awareness, highlight challenges, and propose solutions.
3. The CSWA helped organize and participated in the Women in Astronomy III and IV conferences, which addressed the topic of women in astronomy and space science with a focus on gender, generation, and minorities. Outcomes of the June 2017 conference “State of the Profession,” included several white papers representing the field, which were submitted to the 2020 Decadal Survey on Astronomy and Astrophysics. An additional white paper was published separately in the *BAAS*.
4. The CSWA increased communication with community members, raising awareness and building strong communities through:
 - A weekly email newsletter called AASWomen providing news items about women in science, focusing on women in science, announcements of honors and awards given to women in science, information about programs and

⁷ 2009 CSWA Strategic Plan: https://aas.org/sites/default/files/2019-09/CSWA_StratPlan_2009_0.pdf

- meetings, and postings for internships and jobs.
 - The Women in Astronomy Blog (started in 2008) aiming to reach out to a younger and broader audience. The blog features news articles and discussions of issues of current interest. Although the blog’s focus overlaps with that of AASWomen, it also provides a forum for discussion and community engagement. In response to criticism that the blog was too focused on the perspective of straight, cis-gendered, white women, the CSWA worked on soliciting contributions from a more diverse set of bloggers which enriched the discussion with topics such as intersectionality and the various ways it is manifested, and the importance of scientists making their voices heard.
 - The bi-annual STATUS magazine, discussing items of interest.
 - A strong social media presence (Facebook and Twitter), which, among others, advertised and shared content of the AASWomen newsletter and the blog.
5. The CSWA maintained and enriched the relevant AAS web page (www.aas.org/cswa) with links to other sites and to on-line articles of interest. A notable new feature is the “Resources” section which includes a full set of resources that detail the benefits of diversity.
 6. The CSWA conducted and participated in multiple surveys assessing the status of the field, such as the CSWA 2013 Demographics Survey, a survey on dual-career academic couples (2013-2014), and “The CSWA Survey on Workplace Climate” (2015), and the survey “Facing the Future: The CSWA Seeks Your Input on Our Community Needs in the 2020s” (2019) . Survey outcomes were shared with the community, discussed extensively, and used to guide further actions on policy and information.
 7. The CSWA authored a multitude of white papers that discuss barriers faced by women in astronomy and are disseminated worldwide.
 8. The CSWA initiated Climate Site Visits for Astronomy Departments (2012), aiming at increasing the committee’s knowledge about problems experienced nationally by women students, postdocs, and faculty in astronomy, work with departments to identify problems, suggest means by which the department might solve those problems and improve the climate for women. This activity led the AAS to form the Site-Visit Oversight Committee (SVOC) was later also formed, charged with overseeing “climate” site visits to departments and institutes, with emphasis on issues faced by all marginalized groups, and developing procedures for those visits. A “best practices” document was developed, which was approved for release by the AAS Board at its June 2018 meeting.
 9. The CSWA participated in synergistic activities with other AAS Committees (e.g. SGMA and the CSMA). Some notable activities included:
 - The CSWA co-sponsored events that addressed unconscious bias and issues affecting the career advancement of women and minority scientists in all astronomy environments (not only academia).
 - The CSWA participated at the 2015 AAS Diversity Summit, during which a CSWA sub-group defined the group’s short-term goals: “to promote a safe environment conducive to the success of women in the astronomical sciences and to work toward the ultimate goal of parity at all levels; To engage and participate in intersectional feminism and ensure we are representing more than one marginalized group; To conduct and disseminate research about women in science; To advocate for and give a voice to women; To be a resource for and to coordinate concerns; To leverage our visibility to assist fellow committees, fellow US professional societies, and international astronomical societies.”

- The CSWA participated in a House Bill introduced by Representative Jackie Speier (D-CA), H.R. 6161, “Federal Funding Accountability for Sexual Harassers Act.” This Bill was introduced on Sept. 22, 2016. The CSWA worked on suggestions for revisions to the language in late 2016, and submitted those to Rep. Speier’s office through Miriam Goldstein. The bill was tabled in 2017.
- The CSWA sponsored/co-sponsored meetings and events, such as the Indigenous Knowledge in 21st Century Science special session, and supported the AAS sponsorship of the 2018 Maria Mitchell Women in Science Symposium.

Leading to the end of this decade of activity, in the spring of 2019, the CSWA surveyed the astronomical community to assess the effectiveness of actions that the AAS can take to reduce harassment and advance career development for women in astronomy. The outcomes of this survey led to two white papers⁸ and a forthcoming policy paper presenting the current status of women (and minorities) in the astronomical community and the community’s criticism of specific actions. The latter is of particular significance, as it also included data to support these recommendations from the National Science Foundation, the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, academic literature, and white papers on diversity and inclusion written by astronomers. A review of this literature found that progress towards gender parity between men and women in doctoral degree earning is slowing, that women are overlooked for tenure-track positions in academia, and that women tend to drop out of research at high rates. These data indicate that intervention is needed to support women as they pursue scientific excellence.

The 2019 survey also revealed that although progress was made, the work of the CSWA is not completed, and more action needs to be taken in order to level the field. From professional challenges in seeking funding and telescope time, to sociological ones (e.g., compensation at all levels, the two-body problem, and the typically uneven distribution of dependent caregiving responsibilities), women are still expected to bear the weight of unrealistic expectations which discourage many exceptional individuals from following a career in academia, stripping our field of both talent and progress. Implicit bias is a common culprit; mentorship is vital and undersupplied, and the unique role of the AAS to establish policies and best practices becomes more urgent in order to improve the retention of women and minorities in astronomy.

The 2019 survey also showcased that although anti-harassment policies are in place, harassment and discrimination in astronomy is still a major issue, with new forms of harassment emerging as the field becomes more diverse. In the white paper, the CSWA recognized that the new decade will bring along new challenges for women and minorities, and proposed “19 specific actions the AAS can take to help end harassment in astronomy, advance career development for women and other under-represented groups, and improve the climate and culture of and participation at AAS meetings.” A starting point would be to adjust and correct language in all AAS’s relevant documents, and ensure that they are up-to-date and consistent. Furthermore, a more active involvement of dedicated AAS staff (if not the formation of an Office of Diversity and Inclusion) would ensure efficiency of the relevant AAS’s efforts, establish points of reference within the AAS (thus warranting continuity of its relevant work), better support the work of this volunteer-driven committee, and increase the AAS’s impact in the field.

⁸ https://113qx216in8z1kdevi404hgf-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/169_zellner.pdf
https://113qx216in8z1kdevi404hgf-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/170_zellner.pdf