

Introduction

Here we describe a novel "Departmental Liaison" (DL) outreach program initiated by our long-standing Women in Medicine and Health Sciences (WIMHS) Program at UC Davis Health. Our goal is to expand our centralized WIMHS program in order to better support women's careers across departments. Individuals selected to serve as WIMHS DLs will:

- Identify department-specific needs to guide WIMHS initiatives
- Inform the department of upcoming WIMHS activities
- Identify collaborative opportunities with home department
- Represent WIMHS at the department level for faculty recruitment

Background

The Women in Medicine and Health Sciences (WIMHS) Program at the UC Davis Health System was created in 2000 to support the careers of women in academia (1). The percentage of female faculty at UC Davis Health has steadily increased over the past 20 years and is comparable to the 2017 AAMC national average (41.6% female). However, gender diversity is concentrated in the non-senate series and women continue to be underrepresented at the rank of full professor (35% female) and department chairs (15% female). To address these ongoing challenges, WIMHS has developed a new "Departmental Liaison" (DL) program to expand outreach and better support women's careers in academic health across the 19 clinical and 7 academic departments at the UC Davis School of Medicine and the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing.

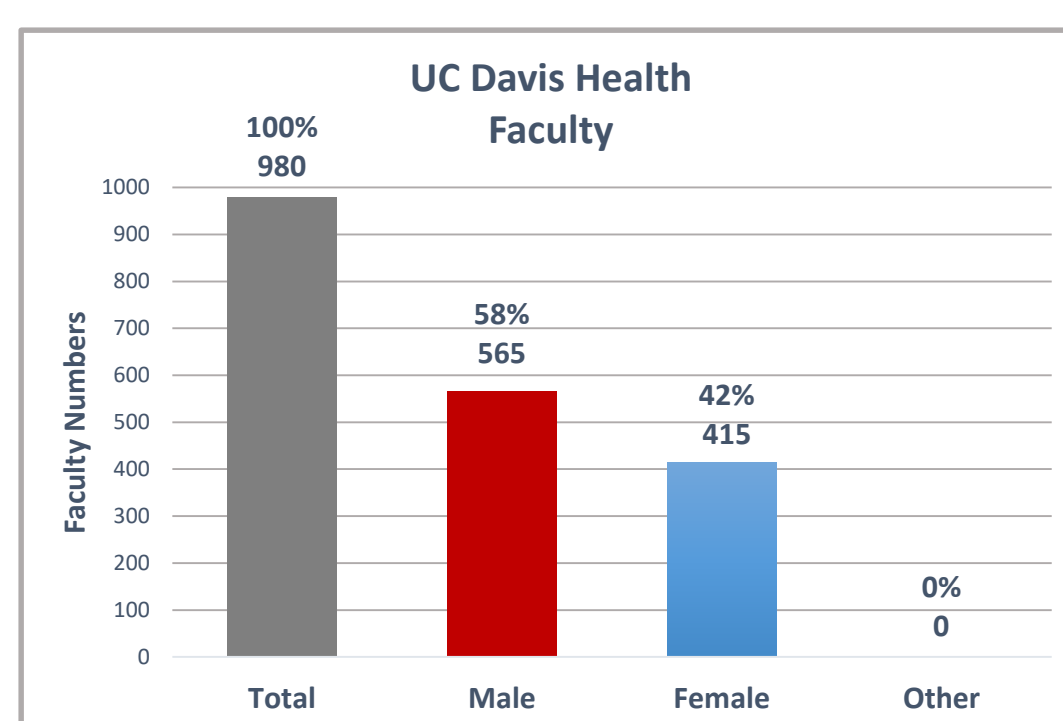


Figure 1: Women comprised 58% of the faculty at UC Davis Health in 2018-2019.

Male
Female

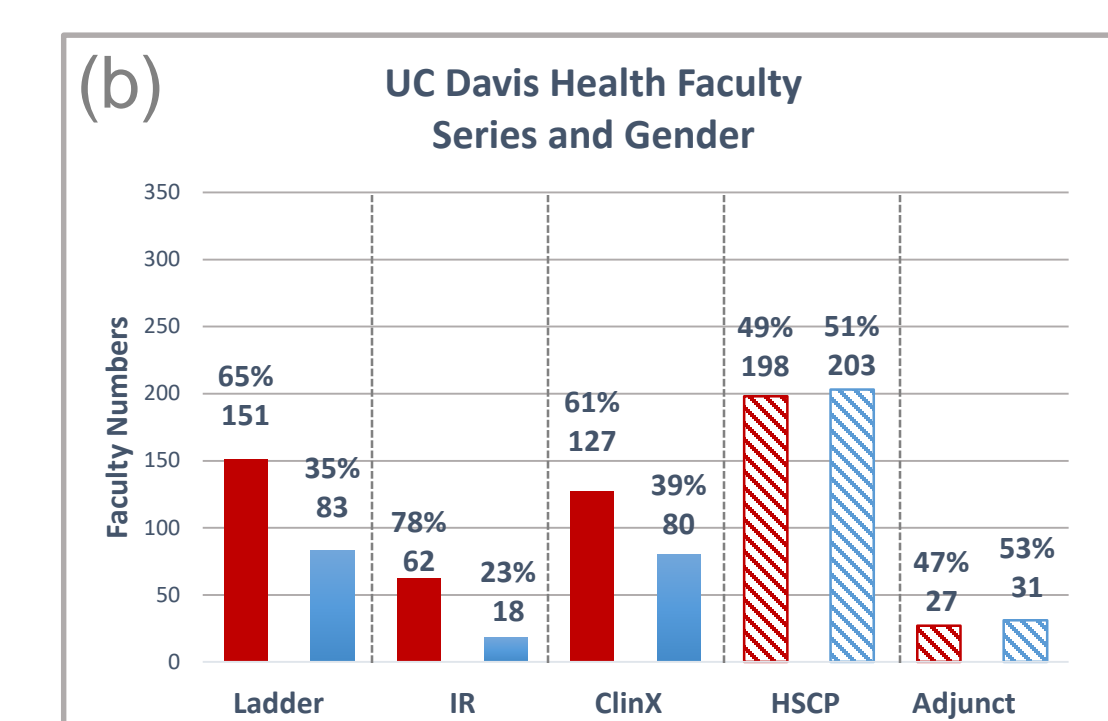
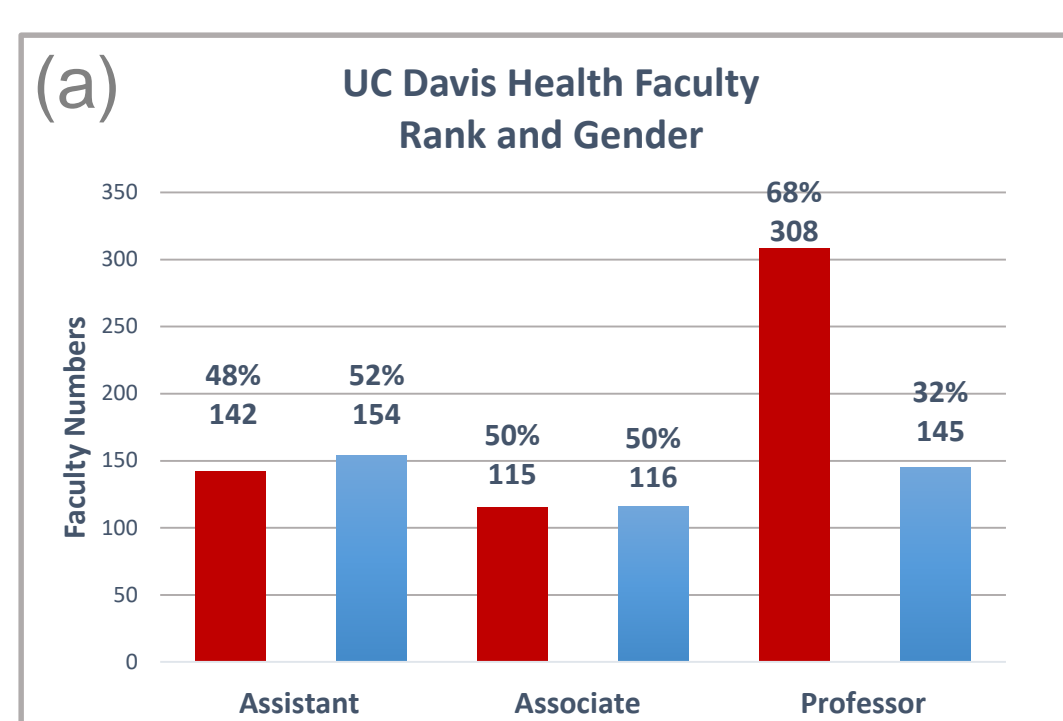
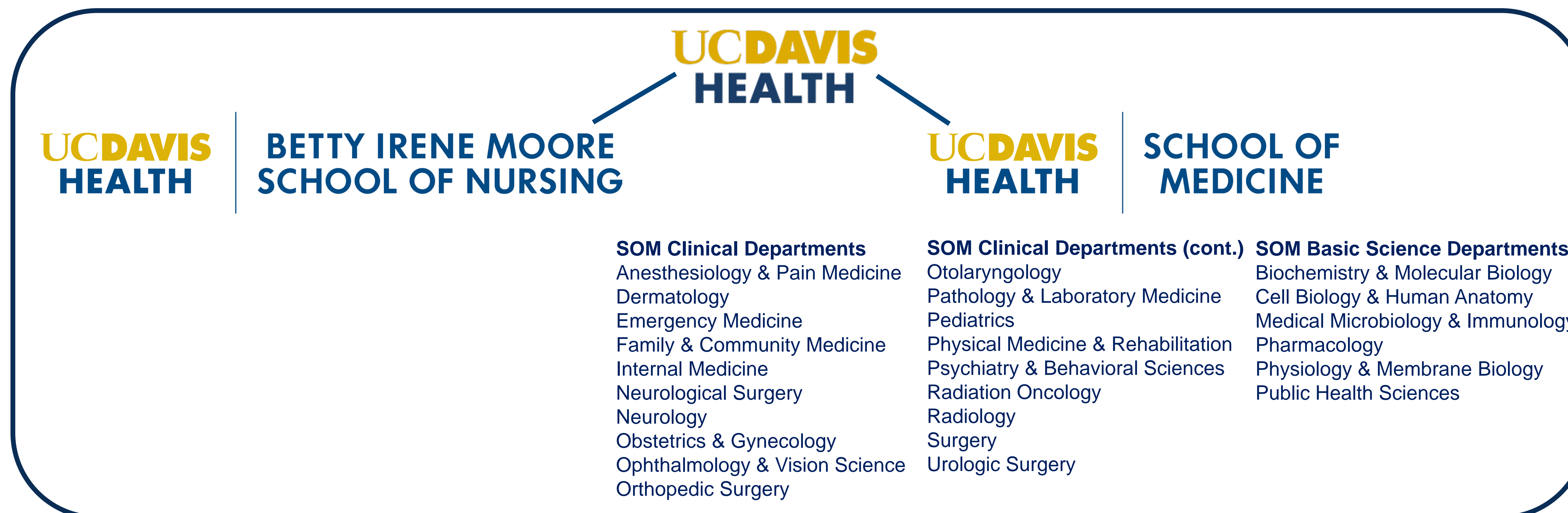


Figure 2: Gender diversity at UC Davis Health is concentrated in lower ranks (a) and non-senate series (b). Senate series (solid bars) includes Ladder, In Residence (IR) and Clinical X (ClinX). Federation series (hashed bars) includes Health Sciences Clinical Professor (HSCP) and Adjunct.

Aims

Our hypothesis is that by engaging women at the departmental level, we will (i) be more successful in developing relevant plans and disseminating information about WIMHS events, (ii) promote the academic development of the DL individuals and increase career success, satisfaction, and retention for those individuals as well as (iii) increase accessibility to other women in the DLs' departments to WIMHS resources. Target enrollment for the first 6 months was to fill DL positions in 10 of the 26 departments/schools. We developed a strategic plan that included (i) targeted recruitment, (ii) incentives, such as career development training and (iii) a program award to support department-level program activities.



Methods

Recruitment: i) Department Chairs were notified of the upcoming program at a Council of Chairs meeting, ii) a description of the DL program was sent to all female faculty members using our WIMHS Listserv, iii) women were encouraged to self-nominate, iv) the WIMHS director individually reached out to female faculty from under-represented groups to encourage a diverse applicant pool, and v) applications were reviewed by the director.

Activities: DL applicants were awarded a small program award (\$1,000) to support women's careers in academic medicine at the department level. The proposed projects included department-level social networking opportunities, conference attendance, invited speakers etc. Progress was tracked through individual meetings with the WIMHS Director.

Career development: WIMHS DL members were provided with an initial full-day career development training followed three months later by a half-day training session.

Results/Outcomes

The recruitment strategies were successful in identifying DLs in 17 of 26 departments/schools within the first six months of the program. The initial career development training sessions were well-attended and viewed positively by the DLs. All DLs have initiated department-level projects and have met individually with the WIMHS Director to review progress.

In order to identify areas to be targeted for improvement through the DL program, we invited the DLs to participate in a validated survey measure, Culture Conducive to Women's Academic Success (CCWAS) (2). Briefly, CCWAS is a higher-order culture factor indicated by four dimensions of culture for women's careers: support for work life balance, equal access to opportunities, freedom from gender bias, and chair/chief support. The measure consists of 45 items rated on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating a more supportive department/division culture.

Our objective was to assess for trends within our institution of department/division culture with the goal of identifying which of the four dimensions could benefit most from a group programming standpoint to improve the experiences of women faculty at UC Davis. 19/20 DLs completed the survey (95% response rate). The results of the survey revealed that culture does vary across departments; when evaluating each of the four dimensions in sections, the dimension that showed lowest median response rate across all DLs reflecting lower culture was freedom from gender bias, and the dimension showing the highest median response rate reflecting higher culture was chair/chief support. In spite of the small sample size, these results provide targeted focus areas for our emerging DL program.

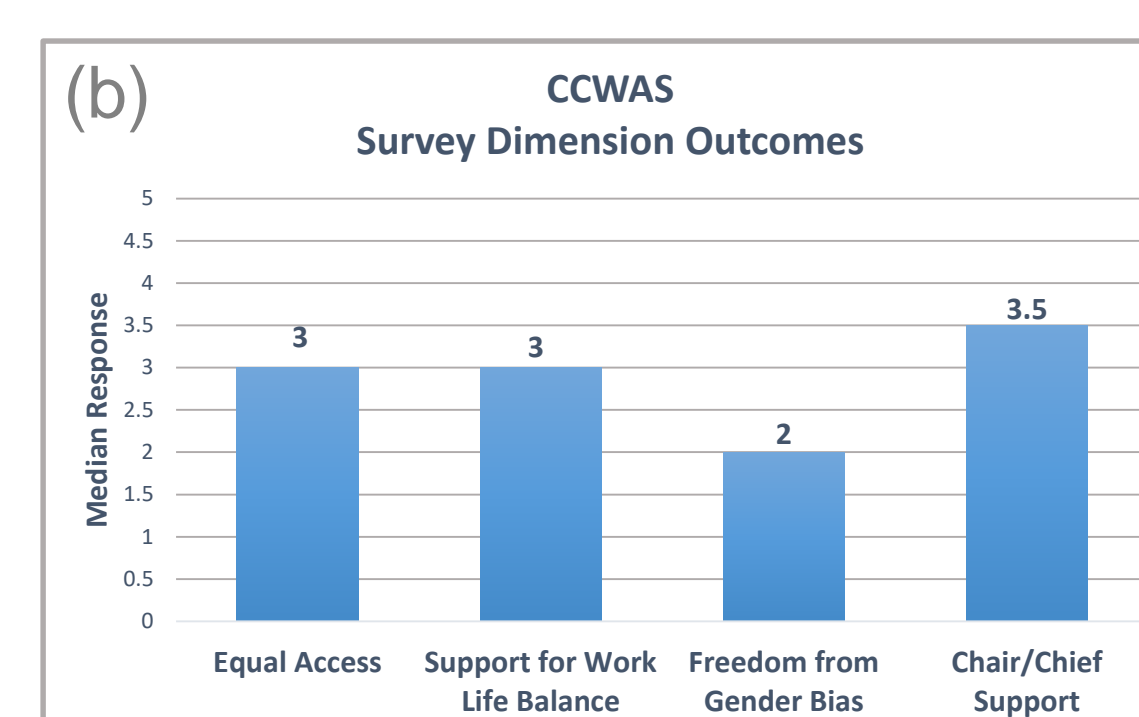
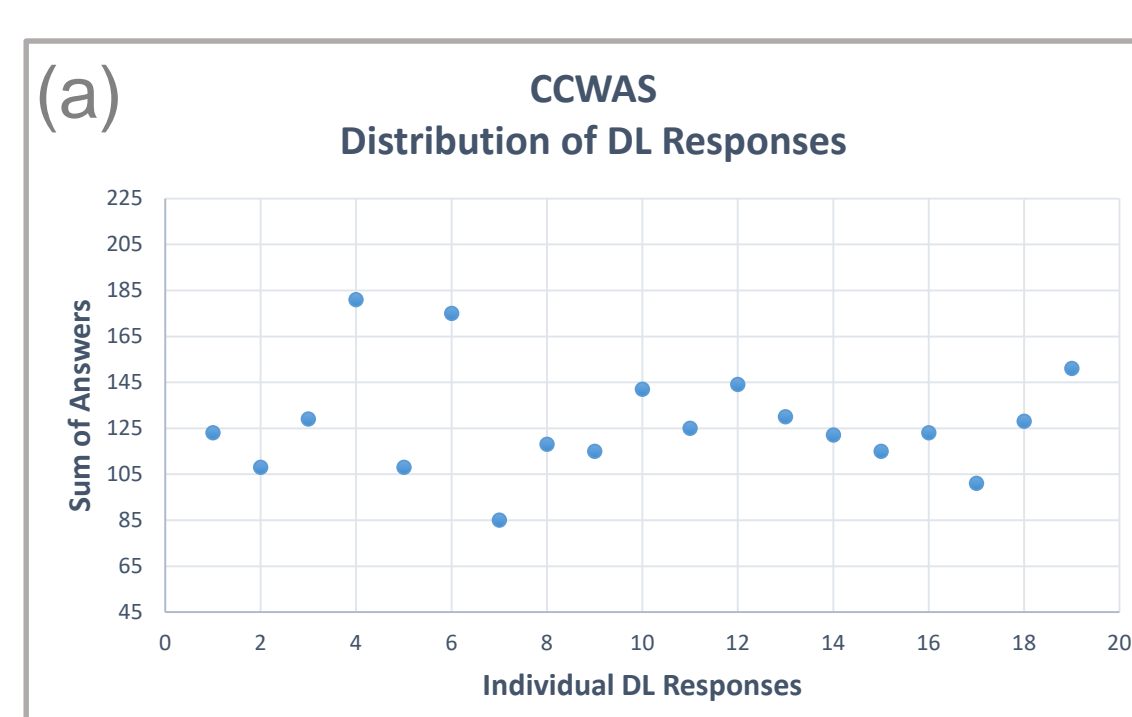


Figure 3: CCWAS results including (a) range of responses regarding supportiveness of their respective departments, and (b) survey dimension data highlighting "Freedom from Gender Bias" as the lowest median response across DLs (See Box 1).

Sample question: Dimension of CCWAS "Freedom from gender bias"

The extent to which women are able to work in an environment in which they are able to voice concerns regarding subtle and overt gender biases.

In general, in my department...

- Women faculty members are comfortable raising issues about the supportiveness of the work environment for women.
- Women are encouraged to raise concerns about biases against women, even if those biases are subtle.
- When women faculty raise concerns about gender issues, they are seen as "whiners." (reverse score)

Conclusions/Implications

The successful launch of our WIMHS DL program may serve as a template for other centralized Women in Medicine/Sciences programs seeking to expand departmental outreach and grow their program.

WIMHS will continue to evaluate success of the DL program through quantitative (CCWAS) and qualitative assessments (see DL quotes below).

"I am so excited to be a part of the WIMHS DL program. My first impression of our first gathering was that I was surrounded by an incredibly diverse, strong, and talented group of women leaders who want to improve mentorship for all women in academic medicine and health sciences. This is just the beginning of women coming together to be role models and make the paths better and brighter for other women in academics. I am proud to be a WIMHS DL!"

"The WIMHS DL program has provided an opportunity to grow a community of women leaders within our institution, offered important leadership training, and served as a vehicle to connect to other women academicians within our department."

"It has been really helpful to "crowdsource" creative solutions to specific issues within our departments via the DL program. On the one hand, it has made me appreciate my department and leadership more, and on the other hand has given me more interdisciplinary ideas about how to push efforts for equity forward within my department."

Future Directions

- We are actively recruiting DLs for the remaining 9 departments/schools.
- We will continue to host quarterly DL meetings and offer professional development trainings.
- DLs will prepare an annual report on the department level activities and will share this information to guide future projects.
- At the end of the first year, DLs will be invited to continue to serve for a second year or to identify a replacement DL. This strategy will allow us to continue to grow our WIMHS network.
- The survey results will be used by the DL program to guide programming efforts, including targeted training on freedom from gender bias. Re-administering the CCWAS to the same cohort of individuals can provide feedback on the effects of our program.

Acknowledgements

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**2019-2020
WIMHS Departmental Liaisons**

References and Contact

- (1) Bauman et al. The Women in Medicine and Health Science program: an innovative initiative to support female faculty at the University of California Davis School of Medicine. *Acad Med.* 2014;89(11):1462-1466.
- (2) Westring et al. A culture conducive to women's academic success: development of a measure. *Acad Med.* 2012;87(11):1622-1631.

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