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The Gender Agenda: Getting the balance right with SAGE

Western Sydney University’s new Gender Equality Strategy 2015-2020 is an action plan to progress gender equality. A key focus of the strategy is improving the representation of women in leadership and in the STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine) Disciplines.

In 2015, our University, along with half the country’s universities and medical research institutions, signed up to the Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) pilot program, seeing it as an opportunity to improve the promotion and retention of women in STEMM. The project will require the University to carry out a thorough self-assessment of our gender equity policies and practices, and will also focus on developing strategies for promoting and retaining women in STEMM. The pilot program is based on the Athena SWAN Charter, a UK-based evaluation and accreditation framework focused on improving gender equity policies and practices in STEMM disciplines, which has been running for 10 years.

The SAGE project has a focus on female STEMM academics, but it will require us to go beyond gathering data and stats, and to start painting an in-depth, qualitative focus on how the University is managing any patterns of inequality, including the elimination of bias, the development of an inclusive culture, and any gaps between policy and practice.

It is anticipated the project will provide us with insights and initiatives which will flow beyond STEMM – into non-STEMM and across professional staff fields – and build up our collective SAGE wisdom.

Target Audience:
All professional staff at Western Sydney University

Take home message:
The University is taking part in the SAGE program; we will be self-assessing our gender equity policies and practices, and seeing how we can make real changes for the better.