



FASEB

Federation of American Societies
for Experimental Biology

Representing Over 130,000 Researchers

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Eve Higginbotham, SM, MD, ML, Committee Chair
Committee on Investigating the Potential Impacts of COVID-19
on the Careers of Women in Academic Science, Engineering, and Medicine
The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine
500 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001

Submitted electronically via MDahlberg@nas.edu

Dear Committee members,

The Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) applauds your recent [report](#), “The Impact of COVID-19 on the Careers of Women in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.” Dedication from the Committee to produce this resource in a timely manner is appreciated, and the immense effort has not gone unnoticed. Evidence gathered and thoughtfully analyzed clearly demonstrates an overall negative impact on women in academic science, engineering, and medicine during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. FASEB supports the report findings, and values the intersectional approach taken to highlight aspects specific to Women of Color.

[Chapter five](#) of the report, “Collaboration, Networks, and Role of Professional Organizations,” highlights scientific societies as valuable for assisting in collaborative networking and advocating for the needs of the scientific workforce. Although these are central benefits of society membership at all times, society staff took swift action during the pandemic to help mitigate loss of networking, as well as to communicate COVID-19 related policies from federal agencies to their individual members. Women are specifically vulnerable to pandemic related losses, and professional societies are committed to act as sponsors, promote inclusive environments, and drive gender equity.

Since 1989, FASEB has been proud to present the [Excellence in Science](#) award in recognition of outstanding achievement by women in biological science. This is the longest tenured award for women in biology, and in 2020 we expanded the opportunity to honor mid-career and early-career investigators in addition to lifetime achievement. The Federation understands the importance of women gaining national recognition, and FASEB is delighted to annually promote the visibility of outstanding women scientists to aid their career advancement and professional development.

Several FASEB member societies also sponsor efforts that promote women scientists (see appendix for list of Committees, special interest groups, and awards). Society of Toxicology sponsors several awards focused on elevating women, including the [Celebrating Women in Toxicology Award](#). Society for Leukocyte Biology’s [G. Jeanette Thorbecke Award](#) is presented to a young female investigator annually for contributions to the field. Similarly, the [Phoebe Leboy Award](#) from American Society for Bone and Mineral Research supports the professional development of young female investigators, with preference for those residing in an emerging or developing country. Genetic Society of America’s (GSA’s) [Rosalind Franklin Young Investigator Award](#) honors women in the first three years of an independent faculty-level

Full members: The American Physiological Society • American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology • American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics • American Society for Investigative Pathology • American Society for Nutrition • The American Association of Immunologists • American Association for Anatomy • Society for Developmental Biology • American Peptide Society • Association of Biomolecular Resource Facilities • The American Society for Bone and Mineral Research • American Society for Clinical Investigation • Society for the Study of Reproduction • The Society for Birth Defects Research & Prevention • The Endocrine Society • American College of Sports Medicine • Genetics Society of America • The Histochemical Society • Society for Glycobiology • Association for Molecular Pathology • Society for Redox Biology and Medicine • Society For Experimental Biology and Medicine • American Aging Association • U. S. Human Proteome Organization • Society of Toxicology • Society for Leukocyte Biology • American Federation for Medical Research • Environmental Mutagenesis and Genomics Society **Associate members:** The American Society of Human Genetics

position by providing substantial research funds. Finally, [American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology](#), [American Society for Nutrition](#), and [American Physiological Society](#) all feature family support travel awards to help defray the cost of family care, and GSA's [Conference Childcare Committee](#) helps make conferences more equitable to members with family support responsibilities.

Conferences are a mainstay for keeping up with the latest scientific discoveries in the field, as well as for networking, establishing new collaborations, and professional development. FASEB hosts [science research conferences](#) (SRCs) each summer, which are lauded as fostering a welcoming environment that allows for meaningful interactions, creating genuine opportunities for networking and establishing collaborations. In 2019, women constituted 49 percent of total participants and 39 percent of speakers for the FASEB SRCs overall. We still have improvements to make towards gender parity for speakers, but we are pleased to report steady increases over the past five years.

FASEB also pays keen attention to opportunities for early career scientists and ensures the attendees at SRCs are representative of all career stages. For example, across all 2019 SRCs attendees, 18 percent were graduate students, 18 percent were clinical fellows or postdoctoral scientists, and 19 percent were early career faculty. FASEB receives numerous qualitative comments that the diversity of represented career stages is valuable and creates an environment that is welcoming rather than intimidating. Furthermore, a feature of the SRCs is our "Meet the Expert" sessions, which actively encourages networking and professional development. During the 2019 lysophospholipids and related mediators SRC, the organizers hosted a [Women in Science panel discussion lunch](#) that was well attended, and feedback gathered after this SRC consistently had high praise for this session. Given the success of this event and FASEB's [commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion](#) (DEI), FASEB scientific meetings and conferences staff emphasize the importance of diversity in conferences. Organizers are provided a quick start guide on how DEI promotes stronger science. SRC organizers are made aware of their responsibility for achieving speaker and presenter diversity and provided strategies to help accomplish this goal.

In 2019 there were 32 FASEB SRCs, which allowed for robust data collection. Regrettably, the quick pivot to virtual conferences in 2020 was unforgiving. FASEB was fortunate to host six virtual conferences, but elected to forgo typical data collection due to the small sample size as well as to focus on ensuring a smooth virtual conference experience for all involved. FASEB is resuming usual data collection in 2021 and looks forward to making progress towards gender parity of speakers.

As a coalition of 29 scientific societies, representing over 130,000 individual scientists, FASEB commends the urgency with which the Committee addressed the pressing issues of gendered effects of the pandemic. The resulting report provides beneficial information and analysis to aid data-driven policy decisions. Scientific societies can serve as a conduit to help mitigate negative effects of the pandemic for our members. Noting many effects of the pandemic may be long lasting, FASEB pledges to operate with the most vulnerable individuals in mind.

Sincerely,



Louis B. Justement, PhD
FASEB President

Appendix

FASEB member societies all share a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, noting that diversity is necessary for quality science. Additionally, a subset of our member societies has initiatives that specifically focus on women. Below is a list of FASEB member society initiatives that emphasize the advancement of women in science.

- The American Association of Immunologists
 - Committee on the [Status of Women](#)
- American College of Sports Medicine
 - [Mentoring Women to Fellowship](#) Program
- American Physiological Society
 - [Women in Physiology](#) Committee
 - [Dependent Support](#) Travel Awards
- American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
 - [Leadership](#) Awards
 - [Child Care](#) Grant
- American Society for Bone and Mineral Research
 - [Women in Bone and Mineral Research](#) Committee
 - [Phoebe Leboy Award](#)
- American Society for Investigative Pathology
 - [Women in Pathology](#) community
- American Society for Nutrition
 - [Family Support](#) Grants
- Environmental Mutagenesis and Genomics Society
 - [Women in the EMGS](#) special interest group
- Genetics Society of America
 - [Conference Childcare](#) Committee
 - [Rosalind Franklin Young Investigator Award](#)
- Society for Leukocyte Biology
 - [G. Jeanette Thorbecke Award](#)
- Society for Redox Biology and Medicine
 - [Women in Science](#) Committee
- Society for the Study of Reproduction
 - [Women in Reproductive Sciences](#) Committee
- Society of Toxicology
 - [Women in Toxicology](#) special interest group
 - Women in Toxicology [awards](#)