

May 6, 2020

Rita Colwell, PhD, Committee Chair  
Committee on Increasing the Number of Women in Science,  
Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine (STEMM)  
The National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine  
500 Fifth Street NW  
Washington, DC 20001

Submitted electronically via email: [abear@nas.edu](mailto:abear@nas.edu)

Dear Committee Members,

The Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) commends you on your recent report, Promising Practices for Addressing the Underrepresentation of Women in Science, Engineering, and Medicine: Opening Doors. Echoing report findings, it is apparent that there is no evidential basis for the notion that women in STEMM are underrepresented due to a lack of aptitude or ability; rather, systemic bias, harassment, discrimination, and inequity are key factors. Furthermore, FASEB appreciates the Committee's clear recommendations and related action items, which emphasize larger systemic issues rather than placing the onus of enacting change on affected individuals.

FASEB recently hosted two virtual events for our volunteer leaders that celebrated success of women in science and highlighted systemic and pervasive issues that women too often face. These conversations illuminated challenges women are forced to confront, and many of the speakers' personal stories and reflections are reiterated and underscored in the report.

Transparency and accountability are necessary to drive positive change, and FASEB applauds the weight given to these topics in the report. Recently, FASEB has [supported NSF](#), and [proposed NIH](#), changes in term of award conditions requiring grantees to attest they have not violated their institutions' code of conduct. Although this is specifically aimed at transparency regarding harassment, FASEB encourages federal agencies to build upon such policies to address gender disparities in recruitment, retention, and professional advancement.

To increase representation of and extend leadership opportunities for early career scientists, including graduate students and postdoctoral scientists, the FASEB Board of Directors approved the addition of three new Early-Career Representative positions on both the [Board](#) and [Science Policy Committee](#). In addition to incorporating perspectives of all career stages in our deliberations, FASEB is thrilled to extend critical leadership opportunities to early career scientists.

FASEB appreciates the Committee's call for additional data, particularly for individuals with intersecting identities, which is invaluable. We look forward to a new era of data collection, followed by policy implementation, that stresses an intersectional approach. Expanded data collection will help uncover broadly applicable environmental patterns – both positive and negative – and ensure consideration of institutional context in policy changes. This will require both quantitative and qualitative data, and this additional administrative effort can be balanced by regular reports assessing the impact on the STEMM workforce.

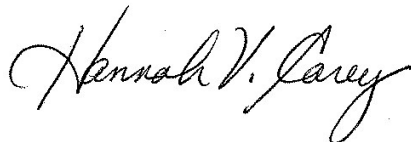
Action 7-D of the report is specifically aimed at professional societies and calls for creation of awards, demographic data collection of elected members, and policies for conferences that prohibit panels of speakers composed entirely of a single demographic. Since 1989, FASEB has been proud to confer the [Excellence in Science](#) award in recognition of outstanding achievement by women in biological sciences. This is the longest running award for women in biology, and we recently expanded the opportunity to honor mid-career and early-career investigators as well as lifetime achievement. Additionally, many of FASEB's individual member societies offer awards and fellowships for underrepresented minorities to support career development and career progression.

FASEB has not yet undertaken demographic data collection of our leadership and volunteers; however our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion [Committee](#) is engaged in nascent discussions to collect this information. Furthermore, we have collaborated with our member societies to initiate data-driven assessments. Several FASEB member societies already have data collection policies and procedures and we look forward to utilizing this report to strengthen current data collection practices among our societies.

Similarly, the Science Research Conferences hosted by FASEB require [strong commitment](#) from organizers to ensure diverse and equitable sessions. Organizers are to establish panels where the session chair and speakers have a high representation of women, international scientists, junior investigators, and scientists from underrepresented groups. In addition, we are exploring strategies to ensure diversity among conference organizers, recognizing this role is critical for establishing professional networks. Evidence in the report reaffirms these practices, and FASEB will continue running conferences with attention to an equitable environment.

As a coalition of 28 professional societies in the biological and biomedical sciences, FASEB represents only one segment of the stakeholders the report calls to action. Although only a few actions in the report are directed at societies, we resoundingly support all recommendations and are eager to see institutions, federal agencies, leaders in the community, and the legislative and executive branches of the U.S. government take these proposed actions into consideration. We look forward to working with these stakeholders to ensure cohesive implementation of the Committee's recommendations. Thank you for your dedication to this work; the resulting report is impactful and will drive change.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hannah V. Carey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Hannah V. Carey, PhD  
FASEB President