



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PICTURE AN ASTRONOMER

The Problem: Women are significantly underrepresented in the global astrophysics community, holding at most $\sim 30\%$ of permanent positions in any country and facing disproportionate attrition at each career stage. There are many initiatives aimed at “interesting” girls in science, but significantly fewer that work to ensure their retention in STEM fields, though challenges are pervasive and societal. Women are viewed as less competent and less hireable than identical male candidates, receive harsher proposal grades and fewer citations than comparable men, and are given fewer resources and more service work than their male colleagues.

(Some) Recommendations:

- Standardized rubrics should be used both in the classroom and in hiring and promotion processes to ensure that criteria are applied evenly and objectively.
- Departments should offer, or encourage members to attend, in-depth trainings relating to teaching, mentorship, and bystander intervention practices, as well as pre-professional development including negotiation and self-promotion.
- Departments should ensure that service and committee work is equitably distributed and that no individuals are overburdened. Departments should also offer recognition for service and teaching work.
- Instructors should incorporate active learning strategies in their classrooms and emphasize a “growth mindset,” disabusing students of the idea that scientific careers are limited to the naturally brilliant or innately talented.
- Having a strong social and professional network can bolster belonging and persistence. Promoting peer and near-peer mentorship, affinity groups, and counterspaces can help build community for underrepresented scientists.
- Codes of conduct should be clear and enforceable. Similarly department and collaboration member should understand the process for reporting violations and be aware of strategies for intervening in the moment that a violation occurs.
- All department members should understand institutional leave policies and benefits. Graduate students and independent postdoctoral fellows should be, when possible, hired as employees to take advantage of those protections and benefits.
- Meetings should be held during typical school/daycare hours when possible. For international collaborations, ensuring that people can engage asynchronously may alleviate some burden. Similarly, conference organizers should be cognizant of accessibility for international participants and should offer flexible childcare funding and robust hybrid/virtual options.

Picture an Astronomer: Best Practices for Retaining Talent in Astrophysics

<https://arxiv.org/abs/2512.24465>

<https://pictureanastronomer.github.io/whitepaper>