In 2014, only 15 percent of the nation's medical school department chairs were held by women, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges report, *The State of Women in Academic Medicine: The Pipeline and Pathways to Leadership, 2013-2014* [1].

Since August 2014, five of the UA College of Medicine ? Tucson's 21 departments ? cellular and molecular medicine; family and community medicine; medicine; obstetrics and gynecology; and surgery ? were headed by women, for an impressive 25 percent of the total.

Of course, it wasn't always like this. But *Women in Academic Medicine* [2], a UA College of Medicine ? Tucson special interest group, has worked for the last 16 years to help more of the college's female faculty achieve their highest goals.

"We have come a long way," said Anne Wright, senior associate dean for faculty affairs and professor of pediatrics with the Arizona Respiratory Center. "It seems incredible that 45 percent of our faculty now report to department chairs who are women."

Women in Academic Medicine, or WAM, traces its origins to a groundbreaking research project begun in 1999 when the college authorized a study to look into pay disparities as well as gender differences in rank, track and leadership. The study was prompted in part by a faculty survey that asked if men and women were treated equally. Among male faculty, 80 percent answered yes; 30 percent of women said yes. Dr. James Dalen, then dean of the College of Medicine in Tucson, was concerned about the finding.

The research committee, led by Wright and Dr. Kathryn Reed, a 1977 UA College of Medicine alumna and now head of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, documented an 11 percent annual pay gap between male and female faculty members. The study also noted wide disparities in promotion and tenure, and the fact that no woman had ever been appointed department head.

The research group called its study the GRACE Project, which stands for Generating Respect for All in a Climate of Academic Excellence.

When the project's results were released to the media in May 2001, Dalen and then-UA President Peter Likins praised the study's fairness. Dr. Kenneth Ryan, interim dean of the college at that time, used the study's findings to reduce salary disparities for female faculty members. In April 2002, Ryan appointed Dr. Tammie Bassford interim head of the Department of Family and Community Medicine; she was the first woman to head a department in the college's history. He named her permanent head in January 2003.
The results of the GRACE Project were published in the peer-reviewed journal *Academic Medicine* [3] in 2003. The study also earned the American Association of University Women's 2004 Progress in Equity Award.

Appointments of women department heads continued.

In 2004, then-dean Dr. **Keith Joiner** appointed Reed interim head of obstetrics and gynecology. He made her permanent head in July 2006.

**Carol Gregorio** became interim head of the Department of Cell Biology and Anatomy ? now the Department of Cellular and Molecular Medicine ? in 2008 and permanent head in 2009.

Dr. **Leigh Neumayer**, became the first woman to head the Department of Surgery in May 2014. Dr. **Monica Kraft** became head of the Department of Medicine in August 2014. Dr. **Myra Muramoto** became interim head of family and community medicine in October 2014 and was appointed head in March 2015.

WAM has continued, offering several workshops a year, sometimes with nationally known speakers. Wright oversaw the group until 2014, when **Judith Gordon**, professor and vice chair for research in the Department of Family and Community Medicine, became chair of the group's steering committee.

"Women want to be successful," said **Lydia Kennedy**, WAM coordinator, who is with the UA College of Medicine ? Tucson Office of Diversity and Inclusion. "They want answers to questions like: How do I make it to the top? How can I handle my spouse and my kids and my job? How can I be sure I'm asking the right questions? How can I say no without sounding negative?"

WAM's recent efforts include developing the CREST ? Creating Success and Satisfaction ? program for junior faculty, both men and women. And WAM's programming calendar for 2015-2016 includes several seminars, including "Navigating Your Career with Coaching and Mentoring," "Power and Influence in Communication" and "Imposter Syndrome."

"Our overarching goals in WAM are to provide career development opportunities, and create an environment for enabling success among our women faculty," Gordon said. "But we include male faculty in this process, too. We're all in this together. Male faculty experience similar issues regarding career development and managing work and personal life, like caring for children. These are challenges we all face, and WAM's goal is to provide education and support."

Looking back, Reed recalls "the support of the male faculty and leadership in our work. And I deeply honor the energy and spirit that Peter Likins, the UA president at the time of the study, brought to embracing diversity. He modeled respect and used his power and influence to encourage others to do so. He opened the doors that allowed us and many, many others to make a difference."

Wright remembers attending a department heads' meeting in the dean's conference room, with its large conference table and chairs along the walls, around the time of the GRACE Project.

"I looked around and I realized how few women there were in the room and how few
physically sat at the table. And it was hard to overcome that and say, 'We want to be at the table.' And I realized that we (women) were contributing to the inequality by our own behaviors, by not engaging fully in the mix.

"One of the great things about WAM is it has created a network. You don't have to be sitting on the sidelines in your own little world. Now you can be engaged. It's made a huge difference."

Source URL: https://uaatwork.arizona.edu/lqp/building-gender-equity-women-academic-medicine

Links: