

**The White House Project Report:
Benchmarking Women's Leadership
November 2009**

Specific Recommendations for:

**Academia
Business
Military
Non-Profit
Political**

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Specific Recommendations for Academia

- ***The governing board and the senior staff should annually review the institution's commitment to diversity to see whether, and how well it is working***
- ***Identify, support and advance women, and women of color, to become Chief Academic Officers (CAOs), provosts and senior executives.*** These positions are stepping stones to the presidency
- ***Allow for some flexibility in the timing for achieving tenure.*** The demands of the tenure track occur at exactly the time that many women are also raising families. The average age that a woman gets a PhD is 34, which means the five to seven years of racing the tenure clock fall right in the middle of her peak reproductive and child-rearing years. Boards and administrators in faculty review processes need to recognize that, unless they modify some of the existing time-deadlines for tenure, they will lose many qualified women.
- ***Review promotion and tenure policies to ensure that they are fair and equitable.***
- ***Diversify search committees for presidential, senior leadership and faculty positions.*** History has shown that such simple diversification helps maximize the likelihood that the search will be expanded to the broadest range of qualified candidates. Make certain that these committees have the benefit of materials on white women, and women and men of color, as leaders in all areas of college and university life. Also, if search firms are hired to assist with campus searches, make sure that they have a reputation for providing diverse pools of candidates.
- ***Insist that pools of candidates for faculty and senior leadership positions be diverse.*** Women cannot get hired if they are not in the pool of candidates.
- ***Look beyond sitting presidents and CAOs in order to increase the pool of potential presidential selections.*** Because women are more likely to have followed a nontraditional career path, the best candidates may come from farther afield.

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Specific Recommendations for Business

- ***CEOs should develop a plan for advancing women onto their boards and into top levels of management; the plan should include specific goals and progress should be tracked annually.*** In developing this plan, CEOs should include a more diversified group within the company and among consultants than customarily participate in the planning process. Together, they should come up with new ideas and added insight to help find the kind of diverse candidates that will best meet their needs.
- ***Develop flexible approaches to work scheduling.*** Most women who have reached the upper levels of management report that flexibility in their ability to schedule their work has allowed and encouraged them to continue moving up in their career.
- ***Provide training in negotiation.***
- ***Educate managers and executives about the influence of unconscious stereotyping.*** Encourage training sessions on practical ways to recognize and eliminate automatic tendencies to stereotype.
- ***Provide scholarships and set up formalized mentorship programs.*** This is especially important in top programs of business schools, where women have accounted for fewer than one in three students since the mid 1990s. When young women are guided by mentors, they are better able to exceed performance expectations, communicate effectively, and use their cultural backgrounds to enhance job performance.

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Specific Recommendations for the Military

- ***Open all units and military occupations to women as well as men but require that certain physical and intellectual requirements are met based on the needs of the position.*** Rather than a blanket exclusion of women from certain positions in the military, define the capabilities needed for each position and require men and women to meet the standards in order to qualify for the position. Specifically, the longstanding ground combat exclusion rule, meant to protect women, seems to be having an adverse effect. It does not physically protect women from actual combat situations on the ground, but it does slow or block their advancement into top leadership positions, which require combat experience.
- ***Direct public appeals to join military service toward young women as well as men.*** While the active duty military is predominantly male, women should be encouraged to choose military service as a career and should be actively recruited.
- ***Increase the number of both scholarships (Navy, Air Force, ROTC) and places at service academies that are offered to women.*** Develop new and improve existing outreach efforts to encourage more women to apply to the service academies and seek ROTC scholarships.
- ***Improve the retention rates of women in the services: Make keeping them as important as recruiting them.*** Until barriers are lifted and services are better geared to women, retention will be difficult. Work-family conflicts, sexual harassment and the difficulty of advancing in the hierarchy are among the reasons why women leave the service. The Armed Services needs to continue studying ways to better accommodate parenting and family issues—such as taking a pause in service—without career penalties.
- ***Foster a military culture that demands respect for all service members and punishes those who violate sexual harassment and assault rules.*** Military leaders must hold all violators of laws and policies against sexual assault and harassment strictly accountable and foster a culture in which peer pressure also censors those who violate these rules. New reporting procedures for sexual assault in 2005 have encouraged more women to report violence against them to the proper authorities. But as a number of these reports of assault have been ruled “unsubstantiated/unfounded/lack sufficient evidence” women may once again refrain from bringing a charge forward.
- ***Ensure that military women receive a full range of health care services, including attention to and treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder, full access to reproductive health care services, including abortion, and appropriate attention to their health care needs as veterans.***

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Specific Recommendations for the Non-Profit Sector

- ***Develop the pipeline.*** With a majority female labor force, the nonprofit sector has a pipeline in place. The challenge is to develop appropriate mentoring and staff development opportunities to position mid-level managers for the top positions in the organization.
- ***Teach women improved negotiation skills*** to help them improve their prospects for promotion to top leadership positions and to reduce the salary gap.
- ***Recruit, train and retain people of color across all levels of the nonprofit organization.*** Several studies suggest that the overall lack of racial and ethnic diversity in organizations can make the organizational culture alienating for persons of color.
- ***Widen the search criteria for top leadership positions*** and look within the organization as well as outside.
- ***Increase the diversity of boards.***

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Specific Recommendations for the Political Sector

- ***Support training programs.*** Programs designed to train women to run for office can be highly effective, and research shows that funding and women's support organizations are the most critical factors in persuading women to run for office. Research shows that although young women today are half as likely to express an intention to run for political office as their male counterparts, women who run are just as likely to win as men. Training programs encourage women to take that leap due to the inspiration, information, and tools that they provide, as well as networks of support which are garnered through their involvement.
- ***Stimulate public conversations about the impact of gender on policy making.*** Of 2,250 Americans surveyed, 69% now believe that men and women make equally competent leaders, and 21% say that men make better leaders. About half of survey respondents argue that Americans simply aren't ready to elect a woman to higher office. To give women a chance, we must stimulate public discourse about gender in political leadership, through op/eds, letters to the editor, blogs, and participation in public forums, hearings and town halls.
- ***Broaden the pipeline: Look for political leaders beyond the political arena and reevaluate the criteria used in the appointment process.*** We should encourage search committees and political leaders to tap into the political potential of women leaders in other professional sectors and celebrate women who have taken unconventional routes to office.
- ***Encourage balanced media coverage of women leaders.*** Holding media outlets and professionals accountable for their coverage of women leaders is essential to building a level playing field and regarding women with respect to their agenda, rather than their gender,