GENDER BALANCE IN RESEARCH AT AARHUS UNIVERSITY
CASES AND INITIATIVES FROM ACROSS THE UNIVERSITY
We are moving in the right direction, but we need to speed things up. To ensure equal opportunities for all our bright minds, and to ensure that our university will remain competitive in the future. Diversity is also a question about recruiting the best qualified scientists – and high quality will always be our most important goal.

In 2016, the Senior Management Team at Aarhus University agreed on an action plan to create better opportunities for women in research. All four faculties are implementing the plan and have adopted it at a local level. Hence, a number of exciting and inspiring initiatives have emerged throughout the university to address the gender balance problem – some of the initiatives are related directly to the action plan, others are driven by dedicated employees and students. We have included a few examples in this pamphlet to serve as inspiration.

In order to improve the gender balance, we need to address not only structural biases, but also unconscious psychological biases. These are challenging tasks, so we need to work together and, we need to share our knowledge and our solutions. On the back of this pamphlet, you can read more about how you can share your thoughts and contribute to our common goal.

At Aarhus University, 54 percent of our PhD-students are women. However, at professor-level this is only 21 percent. This imbalance must be addressed.
UNCONSCIOUS GENDER BIAS IN TEACHING SITUATIONS – LET’S START TALKING ABOUT IT!

Based on accounts by staff of their experiences with gender bias in teaching situations, particularly from junior female lecturers, the management at the School of Communication and Culture initiated a discussion about the issue in a piece in the employee newsletter in 2017. The lecturers experienced that their professional competencies and legitimacy were compromised in teaching situations by both male and female students. This obviously made creating constructive learning environments a challenge for them.

The piece by the management gave rise to quite a bit of feedback that confirmed the existence of the problem, which prompted the management to make gender bias one of the mandatory topics in this year’s SDDs for all lecturers. The SDDs confirmed the existence of the problem, which was cited as one of the explanations for certain colleagues’ decision not to pursue an academic career. Efforts to widen the discussion have continued in several contexts - and have evolved to include the students’ academic environment and the possibility of anonymising selected examinations.

The main purpose of the initiative is to discuss gender bias throughout the school – and to develop solutions which in the long run can ensure a better gender balance among the school’s employees, improve work and student academic environments – and make unconscious gender bias visible through dialogue between lecturers and students.

Participants in the initiative include department heads, the school management team, academic staff and students.

CONTACT:
Lars Kiel Bertelsen
Director of Studies
School of Communication and Culture
lars.kiel@cc.au.dk
The School of Culture and Society is working to improve gender balance in the recruitment of international staff. The school aims to recruit the best candidates for positions at all levels and base the recruitment on the fact that female and male voices are equally indispensable when cutting-edge research defines and tackles pressing societal and research challenges.

In this sense, the ultimate goal of gender balancing initiatives is not only to promote equality – it is also about the quality of the research performed at the school and of the education it offers students.

The School operates in accordance with the “AU action plan for more women in research”, which targets recruitment as a focus area. However, improving gender balance in recruitment is not regarded as an isolated ‘project’. It is a long-term strategy that involves several action points before, during, and after the actual recruitment process.

Current and forthcoming initiatives include using taskforce initiatives in departments with particularly pronounced gender balance challenges, and promoting an attractive, inclusive and flexible work environment at the school which we highlight in recruitment campaigns. Finally, the initiative focuses on search committees and proactively encouraging female candidates to apply for open positions at all levels.

One challenge the initiative has encountered is time. Improving gender balance in international recruitment is not a simple task to be ticked off – it requires a multi-level strategy to facilitate cultural transformation.

CONTACT:
Bjarke Paarup
Head of the School of Culture and Society
bjarke.paarup@cas.au.dk
The Department of Management at Aarhus BSS have institutionalised a process to safeguard against gender bias in recruitment decisions. First of all, positions are posted broadly, which results in a large pool of qualified applicants. Secondly, the gender composition of all evaluation committees is balanced. Since the committees have an uneven number of participants, a member of the minority gender chairs the committee.

Furthermore, a permanent council consisting of academic employees has been put in place. The council is involved in all stages of the recruitment process. This council consists of three men and three women, with a female chair.

The process was developed to ensure that gender bias is minimised in the recruitment of academic staff. The main objective is to ensure that men and women are treated equally - and that they have the same opportunities for advancement. Participants include the management team at the Department of Management and the Departmental Council.

In general, Aarhus BSS has a majority of external members on all evaluation committees in connection with academic career-track positions. The biggest challenge for the department is to attract enough external female applicants with the necessary academic credentials.

CONTACT:
Jacob Kjær Eskildsen
Head of Department
eskildsen@mgmt.au.dk
THE CREATION OF 
THE DANISH SOCIETY FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCE

The Danish Society for Women in Science (DANWISE) will kick off on 8 March 2019. DANWISE is a non-profit organisation that will liaise closely with Danish universities, foundations, industry and government. It represents women from academia, industry and business working within the STEMM fields (science, technology, engineering, math and medicine) and the humanities.

The aim of DANWISE is to reduce the gender gap in the STEMM fields by improving the hiring diversity and success of women promoted into higher leadership positions. It will do so by raising awareness of the gender inequality issue and by reducing the unconscious bias in Denmark.

Chapters of DANWISE are currently forming at all universities in Denmark, including at Aarhus University.

The organisation will initially work to become established on various social media platforms in order to raise its visibility and recruit members of all genders. On the organisation’s website, relevant information about events and networking and mentoring opportunities will be made available. A newsletter is on the drawing board as well. Finally yet importantly, DANWISE will produce information for organisations on how they can work to reduce the gender gap.

MORE INFO: danwise.org

CONTACT: Ida Vogel
Member of the Aarhus Chapter of DANWISE
iv@biomed.au.dk
The Department of Physics and Astronomy has established a gender equality committee comprised of staff, students and management representatives. The committee was established in recognition of the department’s low number of female students and very low number of female permanent staff. The aim of the committee is to make this visible – and to develop concrete solutions to correct the skewed gender balance.

The committee is working to put focus on gender bias in teaching and in the culture of the student and work environment. The committee sees the lack of diversity among staff and the lack of role models for the female students as serious problems and it is encouraging initiatives to improve gender balance in the department’s strategy and recruitment plan for 2020-2024.

The chairperson of the gender committee is Professor Klaus Mølmer. On the committee, he works alongside professors and assistant professors, representatives from the department management team, PhD, MSc and BSc students. In all, seven women and three men sit on the committee.

MORE INFO: phys.au.dk/en/gender-equality

CONTACT:
Klaus Mølmer
Professor and chairperson of the Gender Equality Committee
moelmer@phys.au.dk
‘The IT Camp for girls’ (IT-Camp for piger) is a student-driven event at the Department of Computer Science. The aim of the event is to dismantle prejudice about the IT sector, and to show young women who are starting to think about university that IT and digitalisation degree programmes are not just for men. As such, the event targets young female upper secondary students and female upper secondary graduates who are taking a gap year.

The camp represents the programmes in computer science and IT product development, and is primarily organised and run by students from these two programmes. It takes place over three days during which the participants are introduced to technology, design and inspiration. The programme is based on lectures, theoretical exercises and workshops. Besides that, the participants also visit a relevant company and get a chance to engage with female role models.

One of the challenges the organisers face is that most of the girls the event targets go to school and cannot get time off to participate in the camp. For this reason, the event is held during the first three days of the autumn holiday in October, but there are many other activities available to the girls at this time.

MORE INFO (DANISH ONLY):
itcamp.dk

CONTACT:
Søren Poulsen
Special Consultant
poulsen@cs.au.dk
For further information, please visit au.dk/genderbalance

Please use and follow #genderbalanceAU on Twitter

If you have other examples of how we can address the gender balance challenge at Aarhus University and would like to share them, please email KOM.US@au.dk