



Gender equity and inclusion policy

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Responsible position: GeneMappers Committee

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Background

GeneMappers is a meeting held by a loose affiliation of researchers interested in statistical genetics and gene mapping, with a strong focus on human disease. These meetings have been held in Australia every 1.5 years for more than 15 years with the first held in 1999. The meetings move around Australia. The 12th GeneMappers meeting will be held in Geelong in April 2017.

GeneMappers focuses on approaches for the genetic dissection of common human diseases, including investigating mechanisms of gene action and translation of genetic research into medical practice.

As the themes of future GeneMappers conferences must adapt to new and emerging research fields, so too must our approach to gender equity and inclusion.

The 2017 GeneMappers organizing committee will formally undertake to ensure that there is an equal representation of men and women as committee members, speakers and session chairs at GeneMappers 2017, with a view to this stance being formally accepted as a priority at future GeneMappers conferences. Gender equity at GeneMappers will have the legacy effect of ensuring that both females and males have equal opportunity at being acknowledged for their achievements, which will promote emerging research leaders and an increased diversity of role models in the Australian scientific research community. Further, to support inclusiveness and diversity, this

committee will seek to ensure that students, early career researchers and (senior) academics from all backgrounds are encouraged to participate in all aspects of the conference regardless of gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, disability, religion or age.

GeneMappers 2017 is committed to supporting diversity in all of its activities, and it is anticipated that, with the current committee setting the example, this strong stance will be adopted at future GeneMappers conferences and more broadly as a mechanism to address gender imbalance and differential visibility in the science research sector.

Gender inequity in particular can be addressed through some direct measures as gender is disclosed and affects 50% of the population. Some of the reasons for gender inequity in science and in conferences in particular are:

- (1) Men continue to occupy the most senior roles and therefore enjoy greater visibility.
- (2) Women tend to self-nominate less frequently than equally qualified men,
- (3) Women tend to be nominated by senior men less frequently than equally qualified male colleagues.
- (4) Women are more frequently unable to take up invitations than men, so to achieve an equal representation at the final symposium more women need to be invited to speak or chair.

Whilst harder to address, due to factors such as unknown information, attention should also be paid to ensuring diversification in terms of gender expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, disability, religion or age, ensuring there is no exclusion.

The approaches described below address each of these key factors, and will ensure that current and future GeneMappers' committees are proactive in ensuring gender equity and inclusion at conferences.

Objectives

This policy seeks:

1. To achieve equal representation of males and females at both the committee level and as chair/s of current and future committees, with representation from students, early career researchers, as well as senior academics.
2. To achieve equal representation of males and females as speakers and session chairs at all GeneMappers' conferences.

3. To achieve inclusion through promotion of participation by members regardless of gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, disability, religion or age.

Procedure

1. Initial information for organizing committee

When planning begins for a new conference, the new chair(s) of the committee shall be made aware of this policy, prior to setting up a committee, which is to be published (or a summary statement) on the conference webpage.

When recruiting members to the organizing committee, the chair/s are strongly encouraged to seek not only equal representation from both male and female representatives, but also from diverse backgrounds including students, early career researchers as well as senior academics.

2. Included information when requesting self nomination

When calling for self-nominations, the organizing committee should keep in mind that women tend to self-nominate less frequently than men so every effort should be made to counter this tendency to ensure gender equity. This should be noted in the minutes as having been discussed at conference organizing committee meetings.

3. Included information when requesting nominations

When calling for nominations for prizes or honorary roles such as chairing of sessions, the organizing committee will adhere to the following principle: 'We strongly encourage you to consider gender equity in your nominations as, in keeping with the GeneMappers policy, we are committed to selecting an equal number of male and female nominees as speakers and chairs and giving equal access to awards.' This statement should be included in any nomination forms. This should be discussed and noted in the minutes at organizing committee meetings.

4. Selection of speakers from nominees and invitation of speakers

The organizing committee is encouraged to invite equal numbers of male and female invited speakers both national and international. This is easiest to achieve by recruiting speakers within these divisions.

In addition, all efforts will be made to promote students and early career researchers in both speaker representation as well as networking opportunities with more senior delegates, through such events as 'guaranteed' talks across conference sessions (by selecting either or both a student and an early career researcher to speak in each session) and social events targeted towards ensuring parity of access to networking opportunities.

5. Checks when arranging final speakers and session chairs

Final lists of speakers and chairs should be circulated to all members of the committee to be endorsed at a committee meeting, with final approval made by the committee chair/s. Where gender equity balance has not been achieved, the organizing committee should briefly document the steps that have been taken and note barriers encountered.

Committees of GeneMappers that have completed their conference are encouraged to write a brief report about the meeting including specific reference to performance in terms of gender equity and inclusion. This could either be accompanied by summaries of any questionnaire results collected or with data from questionnaires. Such surveys are now routinely conducted by conference organizers such as ASN Events (conference organizers for GeneMappers 2013 and GeneMappers 2017). This report is to be forwarded, along with the gender equity policy to the succeeding GeneMappers organizing committee.

6. Event evaluation

Where formal evaluation of event participants is undertaken there should be a question included regarding this policy, such as: 'GeneMappers 20yy is committed to ensuring diversity, such as gender equity, among speakers and chairs. Was this commitment adequately demonstrated at this event? Did it have an impact on you as a participant?'

7. Monitoring

This Gender Equity and Inclusion document is to be included as a downloadable file in all GeneMappers conference webpages. The GeneMappers Committee will monitor the outcomes achieved and report to the succeeding GeneMappers Committee, with successive committees striving to achieve gender targets if not met.