

RSAA Equitable Hiring Strategy: Progress report

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A/Prof Luca Casagrande (RSAA Associate Director, IDEA)
Professor Stuart Wyithe (RSAA Director)

The RSAA Equitable Hiring Strategy is communicated to the School on a regular annual basis (Nov 2022, Nov 2023), with the most recent reminder occurring during the February 2024 School Town Hall meeting to discuss strategic directions for the School in the areas of inclusion and diversity, including future faculty hiring. The strategy offers a set of recommendations to enhance diversity throughout the School via retention and hiring practices. It includes metrics to monitor the adoption and impact of these initiatives and to measure their success.

To evaluate the implementation of the strategy and resulting outcomes all chairs from hiring panels during 2024 have been invited to participate in an anonymous survey undertaken by the Associate Director (IDEA). The purpose of the survey was to benchmark RSAA hiring practices against the strategy and previous report. Only completed job rounds were taken into account for this purpose.

During 2024, RSAA has advertised 9 positions: 2 academic, 7 engineering/technical and none in HR. The survey reports data on the hiring of 6 individuals, and we regard it as indicative of how hiring practices have been implemented across the board. The full data for each survey question is available in the Appendix. In the following we provide a brief summary of key findings.

Training and Composition of Hiring Panels

RSAA has prioritized unconscious bias training over the past few years, as evidenced by the 2022 demographic survey conducted by the College across the School (63% staff completion rate for unconscious bias training, with 83% of academics at levels D and E). Due to the high completion rate among staff, it is worth noting that no unconscious bias training has been organized at RSAA during 2024. While only 17% of chairs completed the training in the last 2 years, that figure rises to 100% over the past 5 years. This latter result aligns with the high completion rate reported previously and corresponds well with the goal of a 90% completion rate set by the Equitable Hiring Strategy. Over the next couple of years, it will be important to provide both old and new staff with opportunities to refresh or attend this training.

Overall, 50% of hiring panels achieved gender balance (40/40/20 women/men/any). This is lower than the previous year's figure of 90%, primarily due to the fact that two-thirds of the panels surveyed this year were for engineering/technical positions, where there is a greater lack of diversity among staff to join the hiring panels. A balanced hiring panel was achieved instead for all academic hires.

Mitigation Strategies and Rubrics for Each Position

For all advertised positions, discussions on potential biases and mitigation strategies took place before shortlisting, while specific rubrics for each position were developed in 33% of

cases. This first result corresponds with the Equitable Hiring Strategy's recommendation for 100% compliance and reinforces the positive outcome from the previous year. The lack of rubrics primarily pertains to engineering/technical positions, which typically already have very specific requirements outlined in the job advertisements. In contrast, rubrics were developed in 100% of cases for academic positions.

Advertising and Invitations to Apply

All positions have been externally advertised, surpassing the 90% target set in the strategy. For 100% of the positions, women and/or individuals from under-represented groups were invited to apply, noting that one advertised position was for women only. All advertisements underwent gender decoding and included language addressing reasonable adjustments to support disability needs. Additionally, 83% of job announcements were advertised through various channels and networks to reach under-represented groups, with the same percentage including a statement on diversity or gender balance related to under-represented groups. The strategy does not set specific percentages for these statements, aiming instead to enhance diversity in the applicant pool. While within statistical uncertainties, it is noteworthy that these numbers systematically improve upon those in the last report.

100% of academic job announcements included statements about work-life balance, flexible work arrangements, parental and caregiver support policies, and/or campus childcare facilities. This was not the case for engineering/technical positions based at Siding Spring Observatory, a rural area that lacks many campus facilities, which adds to the existing challenges in improving diversity. Not all respondents were able to provide data on the gender distribution of applicants. We note that the women-only position advertised at the faculty level attracted 41 high-quality applications, resulting in a longlist of 9 exceptionally strong candidates. In line with what was reported last year, there is a notable gender imbalance for applicants to engineering/technical roles (3 women, 17 men, 0 others).

Shortlisting and Offers

While one position was advertised for women only, separate shortlists for men and women and a 50-50 men-women ratio in shortlisting were not achieved for the other position. This partly stems from the stark gender imbalance previously mentioned among applicants in engineering/technical positions. The other academic position had an odd number of shortlisted applicants (3 men, 2 women). When looking across all adverts, offers were extended to 3 women and 3 men, with variations based on the type of position. Specifically, for academic roles, offers were made to 2 women, while in engineering/technical positions, offers went to 1 woman and 3 men (a ratio of 25% women, which, although low, helps to improve the current imbalance among engineering/technical positions).

Building on the equitable hiring strategy and future directions

Similar to the previous year, many of the recommendations in the Equitable Hiring Strategy were implemented in the hiring processes of 2024. The School continues to benefit from the unconscious bias training and reminders of the Equitable Hiring Strategy provided in the past and proactively engage individuals from under-represented groups to apply. However, it is critical to refresh trainings and the strategy in the coming years to maintain the positive progress we have made.

The number of hires in 2024 (9 positions, with 6 captured by this survey) is considerably lower than in 2023 (23, of which 20 surveyed), and when analysing the data across roles, statistical fluctuations are significant. Nevertheless, the conclusions remain consistent with the previous report: the gender balance among applicants and offers reflects the current status quo across the School, underscoring the need for more affirmative actions to hire women in leadership roles.

With this goal in mind, the School has successfully concluded the hiring of a woman faculty member, bringing the percentage of women across faculty to 27%. While this aligns broadly with the current fraction seen at the postdoc level, it still falls short of the goal of achieving parity (defined as 40-60%) set forth in the diverse and equitable workforce development action plan devised by the College of Science. This was one of the topics discussed during the IDEA Town Hall meeting the School held in February 2024, where gender diversity at faculty level was projected in the future based on different hiring choices and reasonable retirement scenarios. Importantly, gender balance at the faculty level appears more favourable when considering individuals who earned their PhDs in the same year. The School now has a ratio of 40% women to 60% men among faculty members who completed their PhDs post-2000.

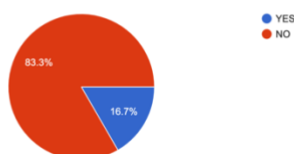
In 2023, the School embarked in an ambitious goal to improve diversity across its Advanced Instrumentation and Technology Centre. While that data is captured in the previous report, that experience also highlighted some challenges in significantly increasing diversity in more technical roles. The same conclusion applies to this report, particularly for technical positions in rural settings like Siding Spring Observatory. Nevertheless, the latest census conducted by the College of Science reports that the fraction of women in engineering and technical positions at RSAA is now 19%, nearly doubling from the 2022 demographic survey.

Overall, the School will continue to promote the application of the Equitable hiring Strategy and engage in more proactive measures in line with the available opportunities and resources to support hirings in different roles.

Appendix

The survey questions are the same as those in the previous report to facilitate comparison. Below, we present the complete findings of the data.

Has the chair of hiring panel completed Unconscious bias training in the last 2 years?
6 responses



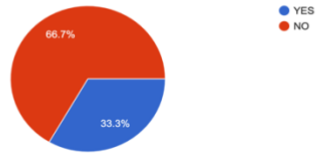
Has the chair of hiring panel completed Unconscious bias training in the last 5 years?
5 responses



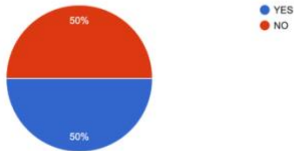
Did the chair discuss biases and potential mitigation strategies with the hiring panel before shortlisting?
6 responses



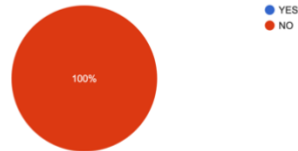
Did you have rubrics for each position before seeing the list of applicants?
6 responses



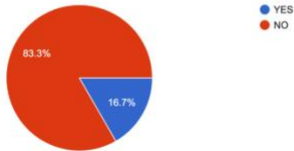
Was the recruitment panel gender balanced (40/40/20 women/man/any)?
6 responses



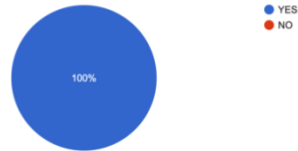
Was the position (or positions) advertised only internally?
6 responses



Was the position (or positions) for an identified women only hire?
6 responses



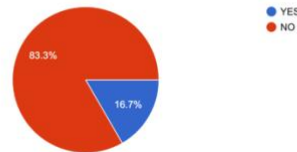
Did you personally invite some women or people from underrepresented groups to apply?
6 responses



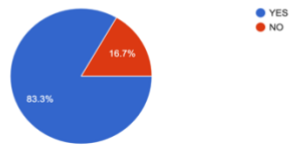
Was the job announcement run through a gender decoder?
6 responses



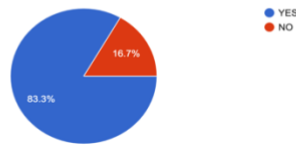
Were applicants encouraged to include a relative to opportunity statement in their application?
6 responses



Was the job announcement advertised through different channels and networks with the intent to reach women and under-represented groups (e.g., AAS ...ng lists, targeted emails to individual, etc ...)?
6 responses



Did the job announcement include a statement on diversity and/or gender balance and/or under-represented groups?
6 responses



Did the job announcement use wording around reasonable adjustments to support disability needs?
6 responses



Did the job announcement include a statement about work-life balance and/or flexible work arrangements and/or parental and carers support policies and/or campus childcare facilities?
6 responses

