

## **Promotion for Women in Academic Surgery: a surrogate for retention**

V. Liana Tsikitis MD MBA MCR, Head of Division of General and Gastrointestinal Surgery  
Vice Chair of the Diversity Equity Inclusion, Department of Surgery, Oregon Health Science University (OHSU)  
Mentor: David Jacoby MD PhD , Dean of School of Medicine, OHSU  
Sponsor: Kenneth Azarow MD , Chair of the Department of Surgery, OHSU

**Background :** In 2017, the American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC) reported that more than one-third of the active physician work force in the US and more than half of incoming medical students are female, yet women comprise less than one quarter of faculty in most surgical specialties. In addition, parity in attaining Full Professor rank for women surgeons is predicted to be in 2136. A concerning trend is the consistent attrition of promising, young surgical academic female faculty, perpetuating the stereotype that women “are not fit” for surgical fields and contributing to the glass ceiling phenomenon. When we conducted exit interviews to assess our Department of Surgery (DoS), two themes emerged: 1) lack of transparency regarding the promotion process; and 2) lack of mentorship.

### **Purpose of the project:**

This study and action plan is a multi-step, multi-year process. The purpose is: 1) to evaluate the current state of the Department and assess gender-based differences in promotion and retention; 2) to define a clear, transparent pathway for recently hired faculty to prepare them for advancement and promotion; 3) to provide consistent education to faculty and departmental leaders about the Promotion and Tenure (P&T) process; and 4) to establish a collaborative peer support culture among junior faculty.

**Methods:** 1. Retrospective review of the promotion and retention rates within the DoS and 2. establishment of education webinars regarding the SOM P&T process 3. Scheduled peer support meetings of junior faculty with a senior leader to assure mentorship regarding the P & T process.

**Results of the project to date:** Over the most recent decade, 2013-2023, 30 women and 42 men were recruited and 10 women and 13 men left the institution. . The rates of promotion, from Assistant to Associate and Associate to Professor, were 37% and 19% for women and 45% and 39% for men, respectively. To prompt proactive interventions when faculty have a lack of academic progress, the following steps have been implemented:

1. Implementation of a yearly educational series, titled *P&T NUTS and BOLTS* which consists of two webinars and addresses all necessary aspects of the P&T portfolio.
2. Revision of the institution’s Annual Review form, which is used to assess Assistant and Associate professors as a way to provide equitable and transparent evaluation on the three pillars of academic medicine: scholarship, teaching and service.
3. Request that all Assistant and Associate Professors complete a CV in the OHSU format and the Educator’s Portfolio, as required for the P&T application, no later than the mid-rank timeline.
4. Creation of peer support dyads which meet periodically with a DoS mentor. Two assistant professors from different divisions and years of rank are matched with a senior faculty who is well versed in the SOM P&T process.

### **Conclusion and Future Directions**

To ensure transparency and consistency, the DoS has implemented measures for junior faculty. Metrics of success will need to be established by evaluating long term retention of faculty.