

Observations on female career paths in geophysics and adjacent fields

Karin Sigloch

University of Oxford, Earth Sciences, Oxford, United Kingdom (karin.sigloch@earth.ox.ac.uk)

I am contributing from the perspective of a female professor of geophysics at a research-intensive university. Women are underrepresented in my profession, also compared to some other sub-disciplines of the geosciences. On the other hand roughly one third of our graduate students are female, so there is a talent pool to nurture.

Following social sciences studies about equality in the STEM fields as an interested bystander, I am struck by the overall good correlation with my own experiences along most of the dimensions investigated. I have benefited from mentoring programmes since my first year of university, and yet I long resisted the notion that I might be witnessing any biases or structural disadvantages against women and minorities. I have moved jobs and countries to mitigate these obstacles. My Ph.D. advisor has trained numerous top female scientists, whereas other distinguished colleagues have trained only men. My partner is fully supportive of my career, sometimes at the expense of his. I have experienced funding agencies as relatively progressive and supportive agents in my career, but have become increasingly frustrated with professional societies and how their award-giving practices skew the playing field in the job market. I will attempt some thoughts on how to move forward on enabling current and future female geoscience professors and professionals. We certainly need better enforcement of existing resolutions and good intentions, most importantly on issues that have funding and salary implications.