

Equity Action Plan for NIST

COACH Team: Geri Richmond

Celeste Rohlfig

Jean Stockard

Jane Tucker

Barbara Butterfield

Maya Noviski

Priscilla Lewis

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Project Purpose

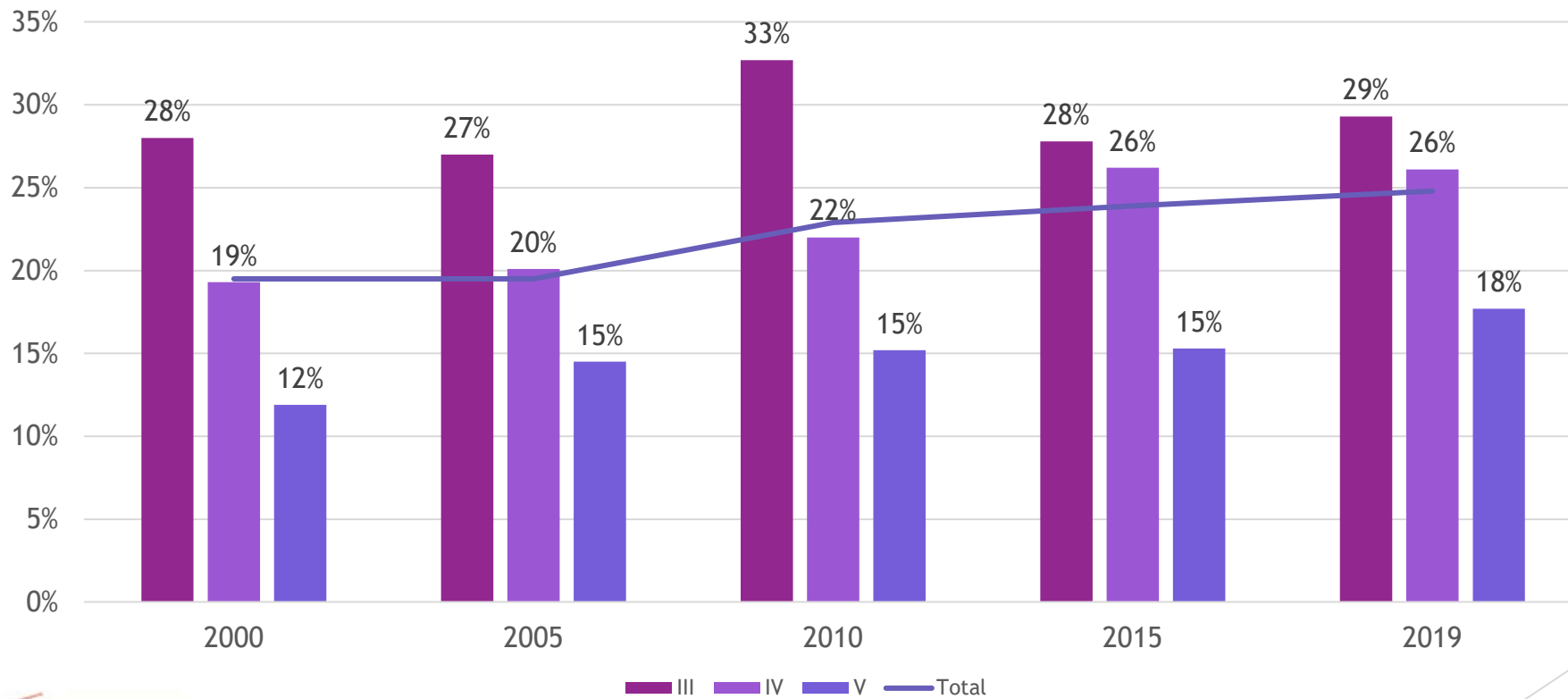
To implement a data-driven study of promotion disparities for underrepresented groups in ZP and leadership career paths, and provide recommendations and strategies to support equity in career advancement

Approach

- Methods: Listening Sessions, Analysis of Data from HR and FEVS Aggregate Data, Survey to ZP Employees III and Higher, Focus Groups and Interviews
- Quantitative analyses: univariate, bivariate, and multivariate; supplemented by qualitative data and extensive review of literature
- Summary of key findings and recommendations in Equity Action Plan
- Written reports of our analyses and recommendations have been made available



HR Data: Women as Percent of ZP Staff by Grade and Year



HR Data: Average Years at Grade by Grade, Gender, and Year

	<u>2010</u>		<u>2015</u>		<u>2019</u>	
<u>Grade</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>
III	4.4	4.9	4.5	4.1	4.3	4.5
IV	8.5	9.8	7.9	9.5	8.4	9.5



Other Findings from HR Data

- ▶ No gender differences in holding supervisory posts, in promotion patterns by site, salaries at hire, conversion of postdocs to regular positions
- ▶ Other important factors are hiring and separation
 - ▶ Little increase in hiring of women over time
 - ▶ Minorities and women more likely to separate



Survey of ZP-III and Higher Staff (N=633)

- ▶ Women, younger employees, and those in some OUs more likely to respond. Frequencies weighted to reflect differential response. Multivariate analyses controlled for these factors.
- ▶ Data on employees' time at grade and time since last promotion paralleled analyses of HR data

Percent Agreeing with Characteristics of the Promotion Process to Next Level (Weighted %'s)

<u>Question</u>	<u>III to IV</u>	<u>IV to V</u>	<u>V to ST</u>
The promotion criteria are appropriate for people in my operating unit.	47	42	32
I understand what is needed to gain promotion to the next level.	45	43	22
The promotion criteria to the next level reflect the stated mission of NIST.	41	39	32
The promotion criteria for promotion to the next level are fairly applied.	36	30	23
Most NIST ZP employees understand what is needed to gain promotion to the next level.	30	26	10

Respondents' Views Regarding Their Own Promotion-Related Experiences (Weighted %'s)

<u>Question</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Disagree</u>
I have productive conversations with my supervisor about my career progress on an annual basis.	44	22	35
I am confident that my accomplishments will be recognized and rewarded in the promotion process in the future.	37	24	39
I have had positive experiences with the NIST promotion process.	36	24	40
Other employees at NIST who I know have had positive experiences with the NIST promotion process.	34	26	41

- **Qualitative Data: Survey, Interviews, Focus Groups**

- Open-ended comments in survey (n=263)

- Listening sessions and interviews with ZT staff (n=23)

- Focus groups (n=52)

- Separate groups for ZP staff and Group Leaders

- Most groups comprised of randomly selected participants

- Similar concerns voiced by all, including the need for:

- Greater transparency in criteria and promotion process

- More accountability for Group Leaders and Division Chiefs

- Changes in organizational practices and culture

- Strong engagement and helpful suggestions for change also voiced by all

Principal Findings of Data Analyses

- Gender disparities in promotion may not be as great an issue as initially believed
- However, serious dissatisfaction with promotion process is widespread
 - No differences in dissatisfaction by disciplinary specialty, OU, degree level
 - More dissatisfaction for women and minorities, but differences are small
 - Those with less seniority have more negative views
 - This will impact productivity and retention of new talent
 - Appreciation and respect for contributions is an issue especially for ZT staff
- Staff want clear criteria and a transparent process, as well as career planning tools, developmental opportunities, training, and mentoring
- Group leaders want consistent application of criteria, data on staff, and training
- Hiring and retention are important factors, but not within contract scope

Recommendations

I. Leadership for Effective Change

- Reinforce commitment to transparent, fair, and accountable promotion processes through communications to all NIST employees
- Appoint a steering committee to review recommendations and guide the process of change with representatives from all OUs, both managers and staff, and employees at all grades
- Review promotion practices and procedures used in other federal agencies to help develop processes perceived as fair and appropriate
- Establish a dashboard system to provide regular reports of personnel actions to leadership and staff

Recommendations

II. Developing Transparent Promotion Criteria and Processes

- Review promotion criteria to assure they reflect the mission and values of NIST and the nature of staff work and specialization
- Ensure transparency of the promotion process to all levels, including Senior Research Scientists and Fellows; make criteria easily accessible
- Explicitly discuss promotion criteria in performance reviews, providing staff with clear guidance on the extent to which requirements are being met
- Ensure that resources for career growth are distributed broadly and equitably

Recommendations

III. Accountability throughout the Supervisory Chain

- Design a promotion process that is data driven with as many objective criteria as possible, that addresses perceptions of favoritism, and that provides a mechanism for resolving disputes
- Ensure that supervisors undertake periodic leadership training and are fluent in the promotion process, procedural steps, and delivering effective feedback to staff
- Hold Group Leaders and Division Chiefs accountable for staff growth and progress, including timely promotion

Recommendations

IV. Developing Staff to Prepare for Promotion

- Ensure staff and their supervisors have regular discussions regarding their career, annual performance plans, and promotion
- Evolve to a structured mentoring program including mentorship training following best practices for matching mentors and mentees
- Expand and widely publicize available training and development opportunities
- Use succession planning as a means of developing leadership talent
- Make a concerted effort to bring external recognition to employees in order to bolster the reputation of NIST and the excellence of its staff

Additional recommendations

- Involve staff in the planning and development of change efforts. This will build on their energy and commitment to the organization, and demonstrate a commitment by Senior Leadership to greater transparency
- Consider hiring an external contractor experienced in change management to shepherd the change process
- While our contract was limited to issues related to promotion of permanent Federal staff, it became clear that issues of hiring, retention, salaries, and conversion from temporary to permanent status were of equal concern. We recommend that NIST consider an in-depth analysis of these issues with respect to equity

