The University of Western Australia

ARC SMALL GRANTS SCHEME - 1999 ROUND

Because of the disparity in the success rate between male and female applications for funding in the ARC Small Grants 1999 Round with respect to applications assessed by the Biological Sciences Subcommittee, the Research Committee requested a statement addressing this from the Convenor of the subcommittee, Associate Professor Phil Withers. His statement follows:

The Biological Sciences subcommittee ignored gender of applicants with respect to evaluation of grant applications - the grounds for recommendation were first for the research proposal to rate a score of at least 10/15 points, then a combined score of research proposal and track-record was used to rank applicants. The only special considerations taken into account by the subcommittee were specific requests for such consideration on the basis of early career status or other specified circumstances. It is basically impossible to make any conclusions that are statistically meaningful from the small numbers, but my impressions are as follows.

The numbers of female applicants who were recommended for funding was 36% of the applications (4 of 11) compared to 56% for males (25 of 45) and 33% for mixed (3 of 9). The lower % for female and mixed applications could be an artifact of the much smaller number of applicants in this category, or it may reflect less experience of these applicants in writing grant proposals - only examination of individual applications on a much more detailed basis might reveal this.

The major difference between female and male applicants is in the % of applications actually funded - 9% (1 of 11) for females compared to 44% (20 of 45) for males and 22% (2 of 9) for mixed. Another way to look at these numbers is the % of projects recommended for funding that were actually funded - 25% (1 of 4) for females, 80% (20 of 25) for males and 67% (2 of 3) for mixed. This reflects both the actual score for the project and the track-record. More detailed examination would reveal whether this major difference is because the project scores were lower, whether the track-record scores were lower, or both were lower, for the female applicants.

So, the major difference in success rates for female and male applications would reflect more the combined project and track-record scores that rank applications for funding, rather than the initial cut-off based only on project scores achieving 10/15 points in which females did not do as well proportionately as males but the difference was not nearly so disparate.

22 March 1999