

26<sup>th</sup> April 2017

## **Reapplication for IoP Juno Champion Status**

It gives me great pleasure to personally strongly support our reapplication for IoP Juno Champion Status. I took over as Head of Department in 2014, having previously had terms as Director of Education and Deputy Head of Department. Throughout this period holding senior roles, I have been extremely keen to move our department's approach to diversity and equality from a position of reacting to issues raised, to one in which we proactively produce a positive working environment for all staff and students. During this period, I have been an active member of the departmental diversity and equality committee, and very strongly believe that the changes we have made as a result of the work of this committee have already greatly benefitted all of the department, both in terms of 'departmental culture' and also with practical changes to support all staff in their teaching and research. It is now, for example, common-place within the department for staff who are not directly engaged with the committee, to highlight how policy under discussion may disadvantage minority groups, and for diversity of representation to be raised before any planned event, including the recent launch of the departmental Instagram account. As a department, we now think much more carefully about diversity of representation, and have moved beyond a simplistic requirement for gender diversity on committees to a more nuanced attempt to best support our minority staff in their development, while also allowing their voices to be heard.

The University support for this broad agenda has also been substantially improved over the last 3-5 years, and I have been actively involved in many of the strategic discussions leading to these changes, including those at the University Senate, Science Faculty strategic away days (held annually) and the Science Faculty Board. I have been particularly pleased with the improvements in the training available for staff in diversity and equality, and have organised departmental events bringing in this training to staff for several years. As an example, one departmental staff development event I assisted in recently was devoted to hearing about good practice in mentoring and resulted in the collective designing of a significant addition to the departmental mentoring portfolio. This new scheme is now in place and I am leading by example by participating as a mentor.

I have always strongly supported staff taking career breaks, both in setting these up, supporting the return to work, and ensuring that these breaks are properly considered in any of the University promotion or reward processes. I have also overseen significant changes in our departmental approaches to promotions, which improved the transparency of the process, and decreased dramatically the number of people given access to potentially sensitive candidate

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information. This has facilitated people, who had historically felt unable to engage, to make successful promotion cases.

There is still a great deal of work to do, for example, in supporting the ground swell of interest in improving the BME representation in the department, and I am very excited by the opportunities we have identified in our action plan to improve our culture and practice. An area I am personally keen to work on is to help staff to find a good work – life balance, and to demonstrate by example that staff can progress and excel without sacrificing this.

I am very happy to commit both my own time and that of the senior team in Physics (including our Operations Group and the Heads of Research Sections) to implementing the action plan laid out in this application, and look forward to the benefits that will certainly arise in staff morale and effectiveness.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Simon Morris

Head of Department.