

"Institutional Cultures and Higher Education Leadership: Where are the Women?"
Conference held in Cape Town in March 2008 under the auspices of HERS-SA, the Department of Education, HESA and CHE.

CONFERENCE DECLARATION
28 March 2008, Cape Town
INSTITUTIONAL CULTURES AND HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP
WHERE ARE THE WOMEN?
Under the auspices of HERS-SA

All four organisations were signatories to the Declaration
(Reproduced below without signatures).

Preamble

This Declaration is addressed to government, higher education institutions, educational and research establishments and organisations and individuals who are responsible for ensuring equity in higher education. The Declaration complements existing charters and regulations regarding gender equity. The Declaration calls for action to improve gender equity in academic, administrative and executive leadership in higher education at all levels.

We acknowledge that significant progress has been made to promote gender and race equity in higher education in relation to student access. However, we are concerned that the low representation of women at all levels of higher education leadership and the cultures in our higher education institutions continue to contribute towards perpetuating old patterns of racial and gender discrimination.

We believe that a focus on improving gender equity in higher education is one strategy, amongst others, to change prevailing institutional cultures into ones that are more inclusive and embracing of diversity.

Acknowledging that:

- Issues of gender and race cannot be viewed in isolation.
- The experience of women in higher education is not homogenous.
- Higher education is both an agent and object of change.
- There are many women qualified to take on leadership roles.
- Improving gender equity across higher education leadership will both provide positive role models and bring additional perspectives and approaches to leadership, and thus impact on institutional cultures.

We commit ourselves to improve significantly the representation of women in senior academic, administrative and executive leadership positions in all of our institutions.

We call on:

- **The Department of Education and the Council on Higher Education** to promote the importance of equity at senior leadership levels. The Department of Education should consider the setting of targets (with timeframes) for the representation of women in senior positions in higher education.

- **The CHE** to monitor progress towards gender equity in leadership positions.

- **HESA** to draw up a National Plan of Action on women in leadership in higher education which would support institutional and sector-wide initiatives towards the attainment of the targets set for the representation of women in senior positions.

- **All higher education institutions to:**

- a. Commit to identifying institutional barriers to equity of participation and success in leadership and undertake innovative ways of addressing these impediments.
- b. Initiate annual monitoring and reporting to university Councils on gender equity across senior positions
- c. Undertake an examination of university employment policies and their implementation, particularly as they impact on senior leadership positions.
- d. Promote and monitor fair and effective representation of women on senior committees and external bodies to which the university nominates members or representatives
- e. Facilitate women's participation in leadership development initiatives.
- f. Promote a holistic, integrated and sustained approach to gender equity.