Progress and Promise: Women in Academic Medicine

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March 4, 2008

Disclaimers

This is not my research area

My personal experiences, and my responses to them, have been strikingly similar to those of many other women of my generation

Credits

"A Study on the Status of Women Faculty in Science at MIT"
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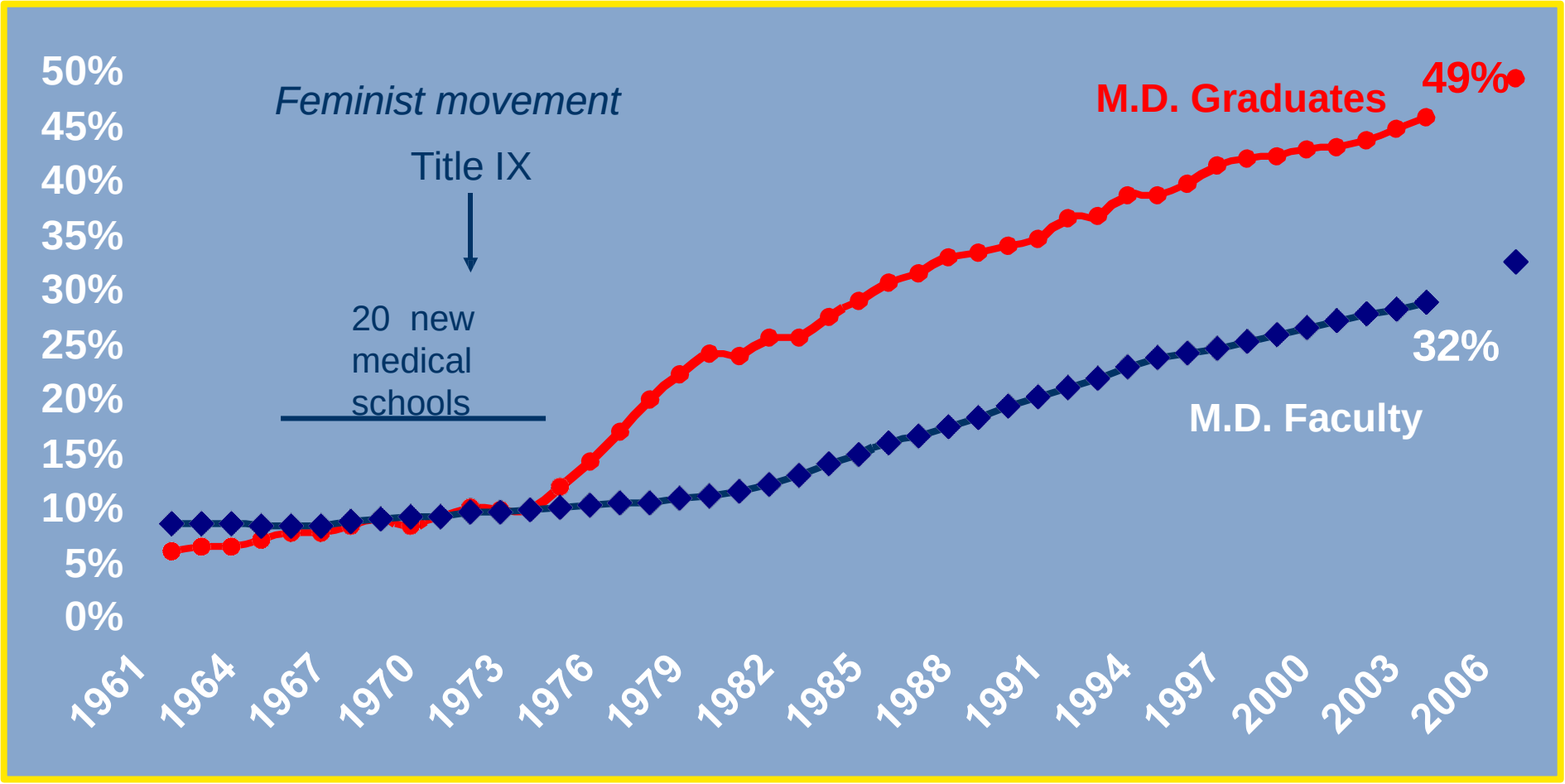
"The Challenges of Sustaining Women's Leadership"
Diane Magrane, M.D., AAMC 2007

The Problem

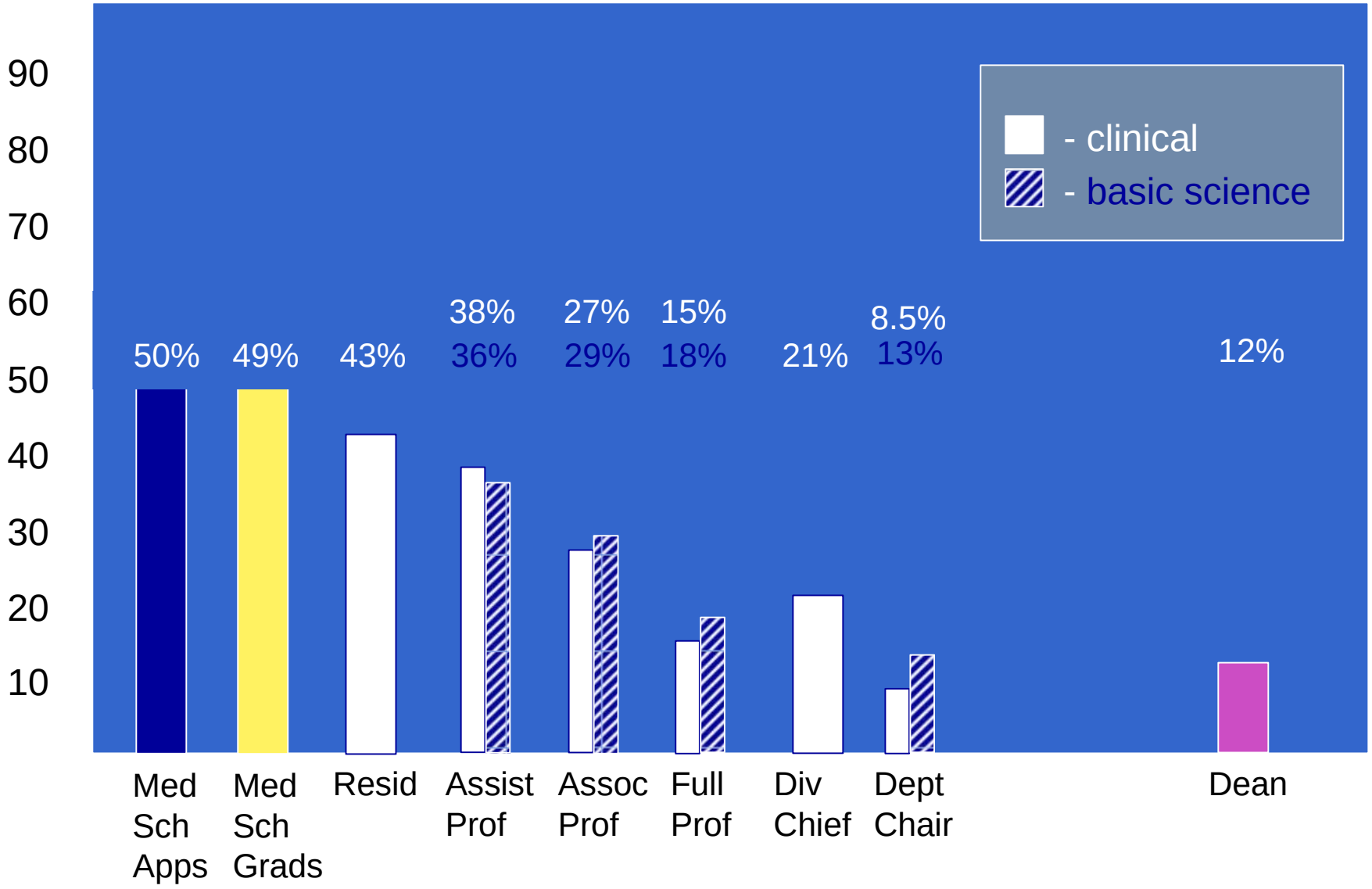
Representation of Medical Women in Academic Medicine



"No person in the United States shall, on the basis of gender, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

Magrane, AAMC

Where we are now (2005-2007)



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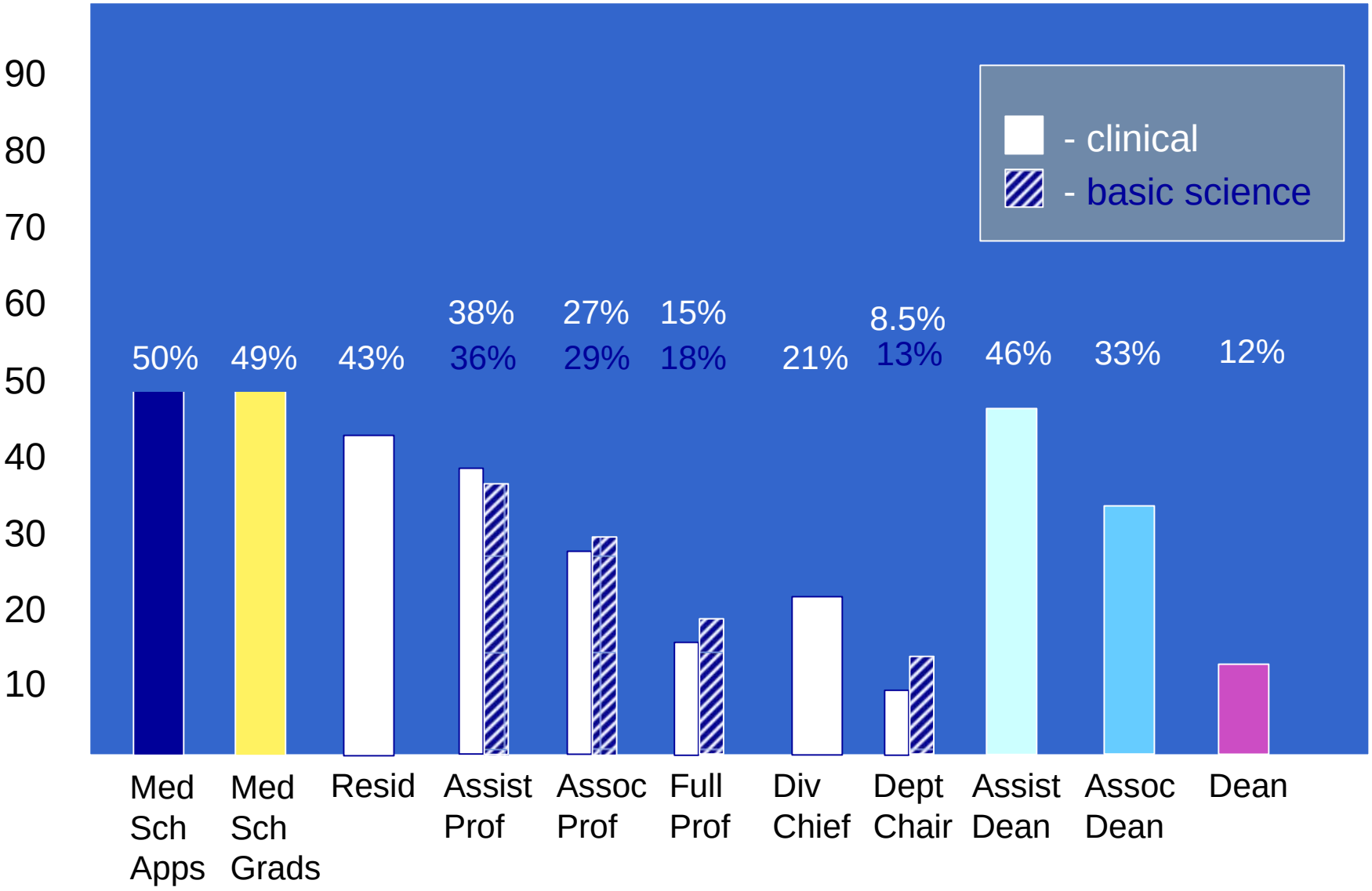
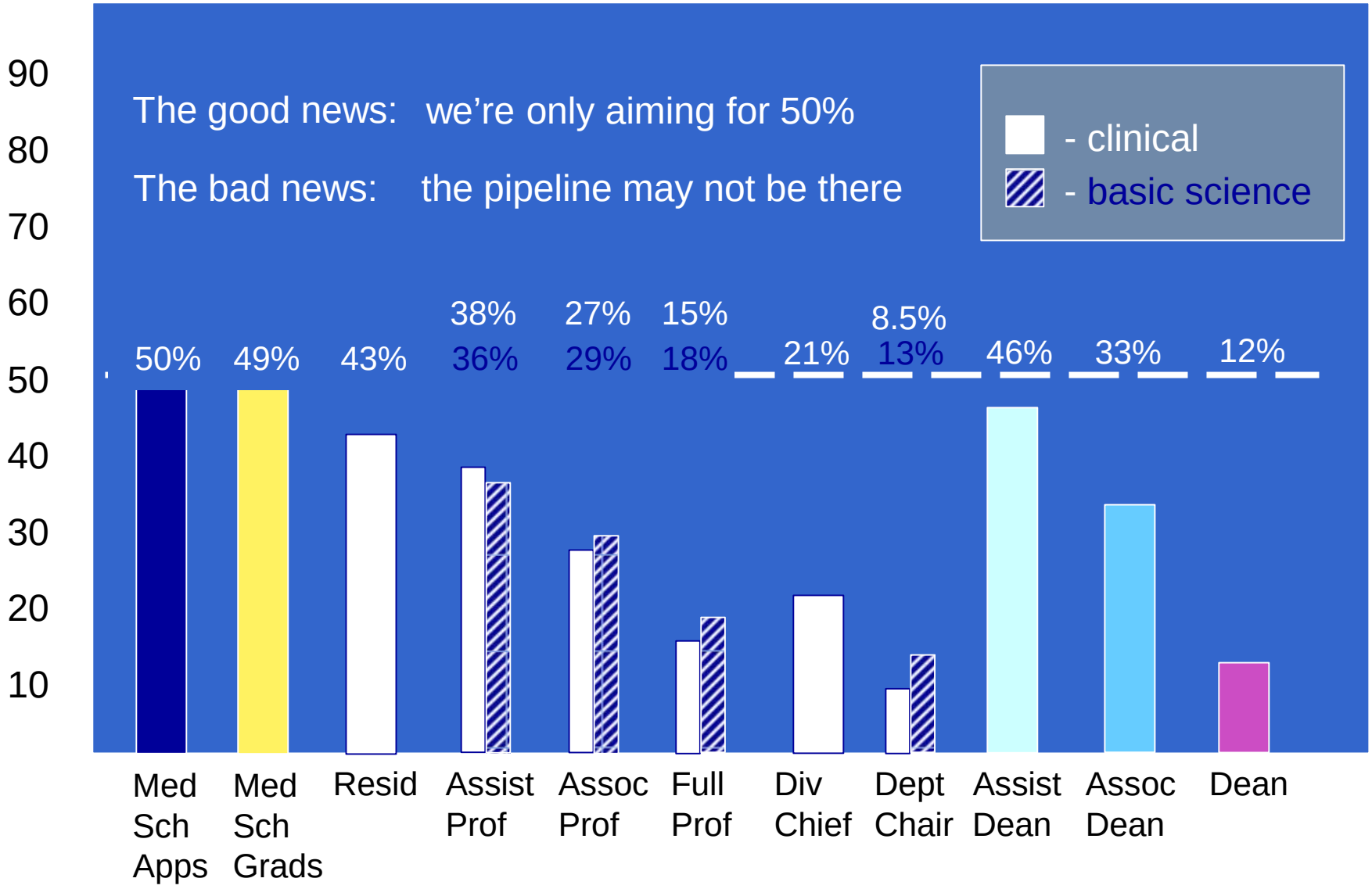


Where we are now



Women deans of North American medical schools (March 2008)

Name	Institution	Year
Patricia L. Monteleone	St. Louis University School of Medicine	1994
Barbara F. Atkinson	University of Kansas School of Medicine	2002
Deborah E. Powell	University of Minnesota Medical School	2002
Lois M. Nora	Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine	2002
Betty M. Drees	University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Medicine	2003
Claire Pomeroy	University of California, Davis, School of Medicine	2005
Karen Antman	Boston University School of Medicine	2005
Debra H. Fiser	University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences COM	2006
Eve J. Higginbotham	Morehouse School of Medicine	2006
Marsha Dawn Rappley	Michigan State University College of Human Medicine	2006
Phyllis Horns	Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University	2006
Valerie Montogomery Rice	Meharry Medical College	2006
Pamela B. Davis	Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine	2007
Nancy C. Andrews	Duke University School of Medicine	2007
Sharon Hostler	University of Virginia School of Medicine	2007

Why are women underrepresented at the highest levels?

One view

"….I'm going to confine myself to addressing one portion of the problem…, which is the issue of women's representation in tenured positions in science and engineering at top universities and research institutions, not because that's necessarily the most important problem or the most interesting problem, but because it's the only one of these problems that I've made an effort to think in a very serious way about….

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"…. There are three broad hypotheses about the sources of the very substantial disparities that … have been documented before with respect to the presence of women in high-end scientific professions. One is what I would call … the high-powered job hypothesis. The second is what I would call different availability of aptitude at the high end, and the third is what I would call different socialization and patterns of discrimination …. In my own view, their importance probably ranks in exactly the order that I just described.…."

Former Harvard President Lawrence Summers, January 2005

Remarks at NBER Conference on Diversifying the Science & Engineering Workforce
Cambridge, MA

A different (earlier) view

I learned two particularly important lessons from this report and from discussions while it was being crafted. First, I have always believed that contemporary gender discrimination within universities is part reality and part perception. True, but I now understand that reality is by far the greater part of the balance. Second, I, like most of my male colleagues, believe that we are highly supportive of our junior women faculty members. This also is true. They generally are content and well supported in many, though not all dimensions. However, I sat bolt upright in my chair when a senior woman, who has felt unfairly treated for some time, said "I also felt very positive when I was young."

Former MIT President Charles M. Vest, March, 1999

From "A Study on the Status of Women Faculty in Science at MIT"
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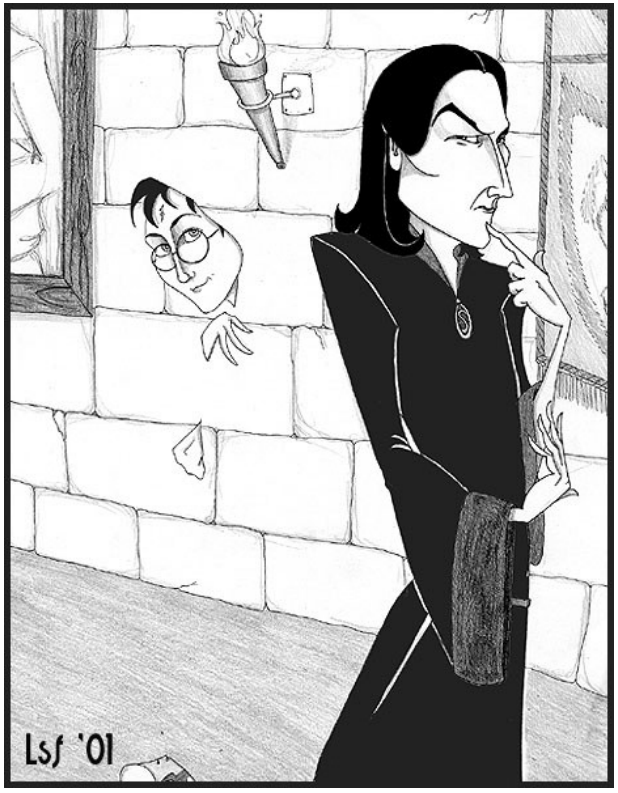
Challenges facing women in academic medicine

How it feels



(from Google Images)

Feeling invisible, underestimated

Feeling isolated, like you're not part of the club/team

Adapting to a culture that developed for decades without influential women

Not feeling comfortable as a squeaky wheel

Questioning your own ability to distinguish paranoia from reality

The challenges change over time

"…The Committee discovered that junior women faculty feel well supported within their departments and most do not believe that gender bias will impact their careers. Junior women faculty believe, however, that family-work conflicts may impact their careers differently from those of their male colleagues….

From "A Study on the Status of Women Faculty in Science at MIT"
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The challenges change and compound over time

"…In contrast to junior women, many tenured women faculty feel marginalized and excluded from a significant role in their departments. Marginalization increases as women progress through their careers at MIT. Examination of data revealed that marginalization was often accompanied by differences in salary, space, awards, resources, and response to outside offers between men and women faculty with women receiving less despite professional accomplishments equal to those of their male colleagues…..

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The problem won’t go away and there is no quick fix

“…An important finding was that this pattern repeats itself in successive generations of women faculty….

…. even with continued effort of this magnitude, the inclusion of substantial numbers of women on the Science and Engineering faculties of MIT will probably not occur during the professional lives of our current undergraduate students.”

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Strategies to help

Challenging and changing the culture

We must understand, believe and communicate the message that diversity is not only the right way to do business, it is also the most successful way to do business

Why aren’t young women interested in biomedical science?

Concerns about work/life balance

Lack of encouragement to enter research careers

Lack of women role models in these careers

The feeling that they will need to be better than their male colleagues to be considered equal.

Challenges facing junior women

Work/family balance

Young women are uncertain about when they can/should have children

Academic medicine still operates on the assumption that mothers will be primary caregivers, and some efforts to address work/family balance may perpetuate that pattern

Mixed messages from institutions in trying to solve the daycare, “2-body” problems

Helping young women establish a new culture

Make sure young women don’t become isolated

Don’t do business in places where women are excluded (deliberately or not)

Value collaboration, teamwork

Provide a safe way for women to speak out, tell their stories and be heard by enlightened people with clout

Solve the childcare problem for junior faculty (of both sexes)

Acknowledge that work/family balance is difficult but important; promote “family-friendly” policies (for all)

Helping young women learn the culture

Provide supports

Mentoring and networking for women students, postdocs, faculty

Teach survival and management skills – setting up and running a lab, managing trainees and employees, working with budgets, IRB/IACUC/OHS procedures, promotion criteria, etc.

Hold dialogues to learn about gaps and needs and to have opportunities to identify the next generation of women leaders.

Challenging and changing the culture

Good practices

Frequent equity checks - not just salaries but also space, admin support, clinic hours, committee load, teaching, etc.

Be transparent about the decision processes used to determine salary, space, award nominations, committee service, advancement

Accountability - failure to recruit and retain women gets noticed

Speak out when women are ignored/forgotten; challenge insensitive comments

Use lists when trying to think of women for key roles

Oil all wheels when the squeaky one makes (appropriate) noise

Empowering and including senior women

Deliberately recruit women for influential leadership positions at every level (program heads, dept chairs, administration, chairs of key committees)

Collect the data, show the data, hold leaders accountable for the data

Replace administrators who don’t have a good track record for inclusiveness, fairness and equity

Anticipate gradual marginalization of women faculty as they rise in the system and be proactive to prevent it

Find and deal with pockets of inequity

Challenging and changing the culture

Aim for 50% and celebrate successes along the way

- Diversity should reflect the general population
- Women should be fully represented at the highest levels
- Celebrate women who shine (prizes, talks, portraits)
- Reward those who mentor and promote women

Finding women to increase numbers

Educate search committees, populate them with women, make it comfortable for the women to speak out

Enlarge recruitment pools by actively searching in unusual places

Develop mechanisms to allow non-traditional candidates to enter the career path (unusual entry, re-entry)

Select people who share the values the institution is striving for

Be creative in choosing leaders - consider candidates who have not stepped on every rung of the academic ladder

Assume that measures to promote fairness, inclusiveness and equity will need to be continued indefinitely

Challenging and changing the culture

Avoid pitfalls that may handicap elite institutions

"We've always done it like this"

"We recognize the best when we see it"

personal styles affect how CVs look (e.g., publishing higher impact less frequently, publishing in areas that are peripheral to what's currently "hot", being less aggressive about obtaining grants, not wanting to travel, etc.)

"This environment selects for the best"

mentoring and connections matter <u>a lot</u>

"She'll make sacrifices to be here because we're the best"

don't assume that it's a very attractive place for women

"Be a team player"

only feels good if you feel like you're part of the team

Don’t quit working on the problem

“Each generation of young women, including those who are currently senior faculty, began by believing that gender discrimination was "solved" in the previous generation and would not touch them. Gradually however, their eyes were opened to the realization that the playing field is not level after all, and that they had paid a high price both personally and professionally as a result.”

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