

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH: WHAT THEY ARE AND WHY THEY ARE NEEDED

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF DIVERSITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF DIVERSITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH?

1. Presence of role models
2. Wider range of concerns
3. More diverse student body
4. Greater development of students' skills
5. Improved ability to solve problems and make predictions
6. Improved ability to interact
7. Reduced risk of group think
8. Improved performance
9. Increased innovation

SHARI GRAYDON REPORTS A REVEALING EXAMPLE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF ROLE MODELS

Vigdís Finnbogadóttir was the President of Iceland from 1980 to 1996. One day during the last year of her presidency, she and her grandson were watching a television news piece about the candidates to replace her in the upcoming election, and her grandson exclaimed:

But Grandma, they can't be president! They're men!

Her grandson assumed that the president had to be a woman, because that was the only kind of president he had ever known. In this way, the presence of role models lets some groups of students see what is possible and imagine themselves in different roles.

DEVELOPING EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH IS ESSENTIAL TODAY, SO THAT CITIZENS CAN HELP TO BUILD AN ECOSYSTEM IN OUR INSTITUTIONS, AND THEN A SOCIETY THAT IS MORE CREATIVE, PRODUCTIVE AND REPRESENTATIVE.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL CHALLENGES OF DIVERSITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH?

1. Personal problems
2. Communication problems
3. Problems associated with fundamental and instrumental preferences
4. Need for a critical mass

BUT DESPITE ALL THESE POTENTIAL BENEFITS, DIVERSITY CAN ALSO ENTAIL SOME CHALLENGES THAT CANNOT BE IGNORED.

WHAT SHOULD YOU REMEMBER?

TO ENJOY THE BENEFITS OF DIVERSITY, WE MUST ALSO FOCUS ON INCLUSION AND EQUITY.

We cannot measure equity, diversity and inclusion by statistics alone (for example, the percentage of female professors in engineering faculties). We must also look at issues such as the work climate, well-being, cultural safety, contribution and progress. To benefit from diversity, it is essential to use some "levers" associated with it, such as education, development and implementation of policies and creation of more inclusive environments.

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ABOUT THE NSERC CHAIR FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING (QUEBEC)

The overall goal of the NSERC Chair for Women in Science and Engineering (Quebec) is to increase women's participation in science and engineering in Quebec. To achieve this goal, the Chair has divided its program into two components: an **activities** component and a **research** component.

The general objective of the **activities** component is to break down the often unconscious and unintentional barriers that girls and women face at various times in their lives and that limit their access to enjoyable careers in science and engineering.

The general objective of the **research** component is to analyze the current status of women in science and engineering in Quebec, and then evaluate potential solutions to help them to advance in these fields.

In the activities and research that it plans to carry out during its first term, the NSERC Chair for Women in Science and Engineering (Quebec) will pursue the following specific objectives:

1. **Demystify** science and engineering;
2. **Raise awareness** of the impact that careers in science and engineering have on society;
3. **Present women** currently working in science and engineering as role models, to counter stereotypes;
4. **Provide tools to support** women who have chosen careers in science and engineering, and sensitize the settings in which they work;
5. **Support** science and technology teachers in primary and secondary schools;
6. **Understand and report on the status** of women in science and engineering in Quebec;
7. **Develop strategies** for recruiting and retaining female science and engineering students and professors in Quebec.

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