

# 2018 Annual Meeting Confronts Gender Inequality

By Dr. Sylvie Garneau-Tsodikova

There are many extremely talented and successful women working in the field of natural products; there is no question about that.<sup>1</sup> However, not confined to the natural product research arena, an important global issue in most fields of research is that of gender inequality and a lack of inclusion of women at scientific meetings. As clearly pointed out by Dr. Brian Murphy in a recently published *ASP Newsletter*,<sup>2</sup> there is still an overwhelming imbalance in gender representation as invited speakers at conferences, with men being heavily favored.<sup>3</sup>

Many wonderful suggestions were provided by Dr. Murphy to help remediate that problem. At the ASP 2018 meeting, which will be held in Lexington, Kentucky from July 21-25, we have decided to create a platform to address this issue in two ways: (1) by offering a workshop, *Towards Overcoming Gender Inequality: Challenges and Opportunities for Women in Science* and (2) by having our Young Members Event led, in major part, by early career women natural product scientists.

**WORKSHOP:** Through panel and subgroup discussions/activities led by female role models working on different aspects of natural product research in diverse work places, a goal of the workshop is to provide a safe environment to learn about and discuss gender inequality in science and share/come up with ideas about opportunities and action items that the participants will be able to work on (alone or in a team) after the meeting. It is our expectation that men who wish to provide ideas on this gender gap will also participate, as the battle can only be won if both women and men unite

and work as a team to overcome the gender imbalance in science. The workshop is designed to foster camaraderie among natural product scientists and networking with like-minded individuals. The workshop is also aimed at inspiring participants to take action and arm them with the necessary tools to do so. It is our hope that this workshop will launch a new trend of bringing the issue of gender inequality in science to the forefront of discussions at national and international meetings.

**YOUNG MEMBERS EVENT:** This year, the ASP Young Members Event will take place at the historical and picturesque Buffalo Trace Distillery in Frankfort, Kentucky, the oldest continuously-operating distillery in the USA. Early career women alumni from various natural product research groups at the University of Kentucky will lead most of the discussions. These women are now leaders in diverse work environments, such as academia, governmental agencies like the US Food and Drug Administration, and industry. It is our hope that future ASP and other national meetings will follow in our footsteps and have young member events led by alumni from universities from the state where the meeting is being held.

Finally, as a woman representative on the 2018 ASP meeting organizing committee, I am very proud to say that attendees will also have the privilege to hear from and learn about the latest discoveries of 11 distinguished female scientist plenary speakers from Brazil, Nigeria, the United Kingdom, and the USA. I cannot wait to see you all in the stunningly beautiful Bluegrass State this summer! ■

**“...there is still an overwhelming imbalance in gender representation as invited speakers at conferences, with men being heavily favored.”**

## LITERATURE CITED

- <sup>1</sup> See Women in Natural Products Research Google Document at: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/11umSEQKplknwR2dEWgl0hDhAKw7PiIFjFLusinfU8/edit#gid=0>
- <sup>2</sup> Murphy, B. The (in)convenience of gender blindness. *The ASP Newsletter*, **2017**, 53(4), 1-4.
- <sup>3</sup> Rohr, J. and Chappell, J. 2018 ASP Annual Meeting: Bourbon and Arches. *The ASP Newsletter*, **2017**, 53(4), 8.