

EVERYBODY INTO THE POOL: SUPPORTING CAREER SUCCESS FOR WOMEN IN PALEONTOLOGY

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Women have contributed to the science of paleontology for centuries yet continue to face barriers to their full participation in paleontology careers. These obstacles can involve interpersonal interactions, like harassment, microaggressions, and implicit bias, as well as structural and institutional barriers, including discrimination in hiring and pay, lack of affordable childcare, inhospitable department cultures, isolation within programs, and inequitable workloads. By allowing these barriers to marginalize women and those with other underrepresented gender identities and push them out of the field, we are losing their contributions to paleontology.

Historical efforts to increase the number of women in paleontology careers have focused on providing early-career women with tools to overcome the obstacles they face as they travel the career pipeline, rather than discipline-wide efforts to tear those obstacles down and change the “pipeline” into a “swimming pool,” with many points of entry and exit and a variety of activities to pursue while in the water.

Recent studies of inclusion in science have provided powerful new approaches for supporting women scientists’ career success. More senior paleontologists can learn strategies to effectively mentor and sponsor early-career women and leverage their leadership positions to make real change within the discipline. Men can work to develop their allyship skills in order to shape inclusive work and learning spaces. And we can all work together to address the gendered way that career success has historically been defined in our discipline, identifying ways to recognize and reward non-traditional career paths. In this presentation, I will provide a toolkit of strategies that people at various career stages can use to promote inclusion and support women paleontologists’ career success, and facilitate discussion of what the paleontology “swimming pool” might look like.

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