

# FROM INDIVIDUAL ALLYSHIP TO COLLECTIVE ACTION FOR GENDER EQUITY: TRANSFORMING GEOSCIENCE CULTURE

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The underrepresentation of women in the geosciences has persisted despite decades of efforts to make geoscience workplaces more welcoming. Barriers to the retention and career advancement of women are often cast in individual and interpersonal terms, such as work-life balance challenges, gender-based microaggressions, sexual harassment, and sexual assault. Addressing these issues in isolation, however, will not transform geoscience culture to fully support, retain, and advance women geoscientists.

The BGSU ALLIES project (funded by the National Science Foundation's ADVANCE program) has conducted allyship training focused on gender equity for STEM faculty. We have collected both quantitative and qualitative data on faculty beliefs about allyship, their sense of self-efficacy to take ally actions, and the actions they feel prepared to take. These data show that it is difficult for faculty to think beyond what they can do personally, as individuals, to support their women colleagues. This focus on individual action is a problem because we know that individual efforts are not enough to transform the culture of geoscience to be more gender-inclusive. While ally actions are important and can have a positive impact on women, a focus on individual actions can lead to feelings of burnout for those trying to effect change and does not address the larger structural barriers that women face.

To transform geoscience culture, we need to organize and work collectively. As a discipline, we must listen to women and take concrete actions to remove the barriers they describe. We need to dismantle biased power structures, challenge structural norms, redefine metrics of success, scrutinize policies, procedures, and practices for gender bias, and create meaningful consequences for bad actors. We must move away from a "pipeline" model and toward a "swimming pool" model of career advancement. To start this process, we need to leverage existing organizational structures to promote collective action for gender equity, using proven institutional change strategies.

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