

FFNT Conference 2019:

Inclusiveness at 360°: HIGH TECH, HUMAN TOUCH in practice

Aim: The aim of the conference was to address and discuss inclusiveness from its different facets. How diverse cultures, genders, personalities, as well as education backgrounds, can come together and enrich our working place?

Background: diversity and inclusion. Diversity is a worldwide topic under discussion for society, government, industry, and academia. National and international leaders have recognized the need for open forums to develop strategies to effectively improve diversity.

The motto *High Tech, Human Touch* adopted by the University of Twente recalls the importance of a diverse and interdisciplinary university, where everyone is heard, and different perspectives merge together. Why is this so important? Because diversity and inclusion improve motivation, enhance talents and open to new unexpected opportunities.

Diversity and inclusion, while commonly conflated, are not the same¹. In the ongoing discussions about the lack of diversity in science and academia, it can be easy to focus solely on demographics. And although improving the numbers is a necessary start, it is not enough to truly solve the problem. Many universities, for example, are making concerted efforts to diversify the recruitment of professors as well as students. However, this approach will only succeed if faculty members, administrators, and the scientific community at large also contribute to making those places truly inclusive arenas where diverse groups of people can thrive. We need to create a culture where each individual feel that he/she is part of the fabric of the institution. This transition is critical. Despite many of us feeling otherwise, we are all subject to a number of forms of unconscious bias that can make openness and inclusion difficult to achieve. Other than gender equity, inclusion relates to the broader issue of cultural barriers and biases, and what we can do to minimize these. An inclusive workplace values diversity and supports all employees to reach their full potential. From the side of employees, support staff and students, this means being recognized for their own qualities and ideas. From the side of the organization, the skills and perspectives that people may bring to the workplace by gender identity, race, ethnicity, disability, age, or personalities are inestimable resources we cannot miss.

To address the important topic, the Female Faculty Network Twente organized a thematic conference on 11th February 2019, the international day of Women and Girls in Science. The conference featured two high profile keynote speakers and a workshop, as well as the opening from the HR policy advisor of the University of Twente. All presentations are available on FFNT website.

¹ N. Bumpus, "Moving toward inclusion", Science Magazine, Dec. 2015, doi:10.1126/science.caredit.a1500273

- Opening –**M. De Boer**, HR policy advisor on Diversity and Inclusion
- Keynote **Jennifer Herek** (Dean UT/TNW) “Inclusive excellence: talent development at the UT”
- Keynote **Annalisa Pelizza** (UHD UT/BMS) “Intersectionality for High Tech, Human Touch”
- **Workshop** “Inclusion: To belong or not to belong?”

Opening and Introduction

The conference started with the introduction from **Drs. Michelle de Boer**. She showed the percentage of women in Assistant, Associate and Full Professor positions (32, 20 and 15.8%, respectively) at UT. She discussed the leakage of women through the career promotion path. As an action to improve those numbers, UT aims at 10 Hypatia Chairs, full professor positions reserved to women. Another topic that she discussed was the need for a broader diversity policy at UT covering diverse aspects, such as culture, gender, sexuality, and disability. In the end, UT must invest in attracting employees and students, but also, in keeping them.

Vanessa Magnanimo followed the discussion by presenting two different situations. On one side, a colleague left UT after 10 years for feeling stuck in his/her career, and on the other side, a colleague recently had the opportunity to join UT, but he/she did not feel welcome during the interview process. Again, UT is missing talent. Some actions must be taken to avoid that. UT is unique as it covers Technical and Human Sciences, and it should be the best option to attract and keep talent. Some better inclusion policies must be considered to make minority groups feel more integrated at UT.

Keynote prof. Jennifer Herek

Prof. Jennifer Herek talked about “Inclusive Excellence”. Talent development must be promoted for all members of the UT. She introduced herself, and talked about some life experiences, being new at UT, having kids and working, and in the “autumn” of her life, becoming the Dean of the TNW Faculty. She talked about the UTalent program, to support student’s development through the growth model, where all the students can develop their all talent to a full potential. The same applies to UT staff.

A lively Question and Answering discussion followed, briefly summarized here:

- Q: You said that opportunities come to you, but they do not always come. What do you need to do to make the opportunities come to you?
A: We always have choices to make in our life. Awareness of it is very important, and it is very important to be connected.
- Q: You said that you do not like to wear hats (mother/teacher/dean/mentor).
A: This is who I am, my work/private life is integrated. It also helps that my partner works within the same field.
- Q: Could you tell us about your experience in Atlas?
A: Amazing. They are different types of students. They know that they do not want to choose a topic, they choose for more personal development. They are more aware to shape their CV and make decisions.

Keynote Dr. Annalisa Pelizza

Dr. Annalisa Pelizza presented the topic “Intersectionality for High Tech, Human Touch”. She started by introducing two non-real situations on people not being included, analyzing the fact of having different gender, cultures, and age. Elena, from Romania, Vidi laureate, not being including as co-author in one publication of her PhD student: and Victor, Associate Professor, with an ERC Grant awarded, being included as co-author by his PhD student.

These stories introduced the audience the concept of Intersectionality and the 5 aspects that affect it: 1) Interplay, 2) Saliency of categorical distinctions are contingent, 3) Who defines when some categorical distinctions are more relevant? 4) Different types of diversity have different types of logic, and require different types of policies. How to design policies that account for those differences? 5) Identity as a temporary outcome of responses to the ways in which we are addressed.

A Question and Answering discussion followed, briefly summarized here:

- Q: High Tech/Human Touch. Is it discriminatory?
A: I feel it more like a distinction
- Q: A person from the audience said that she was in Caltech and did not feel discrimination for being a young woman. However, now she feels that constantly.
A: A general method is needed to address all these situations.

Workshop “Inclusion: To Belong or Not To Belong?”

Mrs. Helena Borgman from “Talent naar de Top” prepared a workshop in which she first divided the audience into four groups. Through the activity programmed, she made people more aware of how biased we can be. Inclusion means that you belong because you are different.

Final discussion

In the final discussion with the audience, a suggestion was made to include more men in these conferences and workshops and participate in the bystander workshops.

Prof. Jennifer Herek mentioned that there must be targets to include diversity, not only counting women. A better diversity policy to improve commitment and empowerment.

Dr. Vanessa Magnanimo closed the conference with a reminder of the important distinction between diversity and inclusion. The former can be addressed with actions aimed to attract talents (e.g. Hypatia Chairs at University of Twente), the latter needs a set of coordinated actions to make everyone feel really part of an organization where his/her voice is important.

Summary of comments from the participants.

At the end of the conference participants were asked to fill a questionnaire and give feedback about the conference and the final output. The topic was considered of great relevance from many participants. The conference's objectives were considered clear, in line with expectations, relevant for the type of work/position of the participants.

1. The topic was considered very relevant and broader than only gender, reflecting the current discussion at UT, brought awareness about the importance of retaining talent and international staff/students that tend to leave the UT and the region and the need of concrete actions to contrast this.
2. Examples and actions were considered close to everyday experiences of the participants; helped to place many phenomena in a new perspective; the link with their own work and (academic) position was evident for many participants; some people highlighted the concrete possibility to use the insights gained as teaching material for students.
1. The importance of moving from diversity to inclusion from the side of the UT and the relevant networks, including FFNT, was highly appreciated.
2. The keynotes and the discussion were considered inspiring and highly appreciated. The combination of the two keynotes, the first more "personal" and the second "theoretical" was considered ideal. The two speakers are role models for the whole UT community.
3. The workshop was effective and raised awareness. Suggestions were made about the opportunity of smaller groups to facilitate discussion and a larger discussion to connect the outcomes at the end of the workshop.
4. Some important lessons were learned including:

The importance of identifying behaviors that actually lead to exclusion;

Often barriers are made by women themselves; inclusiveness is about authenticity;

Inclusion is about belonging but also able to stay yourself;

Diversity and inclusion are two different things, and inclusiveness has multiple aspects;

An overview of the UT activities about inclusion;

It is of utmost importance to make the step toward inclusion and make concrete steps to make this happen, with a special eye for the invisible diversity;

How it feels to be excluded; how to include other people that are different from yourself; diversity and inclusion groups are easily formed so is exclusion; what inner group & outer group are;

The concepts of intersectionality and a working definition of inclusiveness;

It is important to become aware of (implicit) bias;

Everyone can play a role! Hopefully, together we can make a change!

5. Many interesting suggestions were given:

The discussion must continue further. A next step can involve practical actions toward inclusion: active bystander can correct unwanted behavior, but there must be more constructive things everyone can do to make uniqueness appreciated.

Inclusiveness must become a cultural need and become part of the strategic plans of the university, also learning from the best practices of other universities.

It is important to follow closely the development of policies and statistics at UT. Interesting projects can be developed via an actual cooperation between HR and the science community at UT; the central decisions about policies can get a great benefit from input from the UT staff.

It is important to create more activities involving role models for women (like the two speakers);

A recurrent suggestion refers to strategies to involve a wider UT community, not limited to women, that were the great majority in the audience, not limited to academics only.