



Cooper Medical School of Rowan University

September 16, 2020

Dear Students, Faculty and Staff:

The designation by the American Medical Association of September as **Women in Medicine Month** affords us the opportunity to not only celebrate the contributions and successes of women physicians, but also to reflect on what needs to be done to enhance the progress of women at all stages in their medical careers.

A great deal has changed since I graduated from medical school almost 40 years ago. One of the most striking changes is in the gender composition of the student body. Only 20% of my class were women and only one student chose to enter a surgical specialty, traditionally the domain of men. Today, half of all U.S. medical student matriculants, approximately 46% of residents, and 40% of general surgery residents are women. Women comprise 35% of the active physician workforce in the U.S. At CMSRU, the class of 2024 has 55.3% women. Women faculty comprise 43.8% of all CMSRU faculty. Unless the "pipeline" suddenly springs a leak, gender parity in total numbers will be achieved within the next decade.

Despite the significant numerical progress that has been made, women in academic medicine continue to face barriers to advancement that cause them to "hit the glass ceiling." Women remain significantly underrepresented among tenured faculty, among the ranks of professors, among researchers, and in positions of leadership. The problem appears to be more complex than merely a "pipeline" issue. Studies have shown that men are advancing academically at a faster pace than their women colleagues. What has prevented women medical school faculty from achieving at the highest levels academically? Multiple factors, including balancing family responsibilities and scholarly productivity, lack of effective mentoring, fewer opportunities for networking, and lingering biases probably contribute and may even be cumulative. Compounding the disparities women faculty already face regarding promotion, tenure, and other academic rewards, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted almost every facet of academic medicine and has disproportionately affected women faculty with regard to childcare, eldercare, and household responsibilities.

It is important for us to be cognizant of and responsive to these issues as we recruit faculty, set policies on appointments and promotions, and craft faculty development programs. As part of the culture of CMSRU, we embrace an organizational commitment to create an inclusive environment with an emphasis on diversity, collaboration, and personal mentorship. If we are successful, our students, our patients, and our entire faculty, male and female, will benefit.

Sincerely,

Annette C. Reboli, M.D.

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Dean and Professor of Medicine

