Purdue Center for Faculty Success 207 S. Martin Jischke Drive West Lafayette, IN 47907

Phone: (765) 494-9407 advance-cf@@purdue.edu

## Valian to give keynote at ADVANCE-Purdue Symposium

Virginia Valian, distinguished professor of Psychology and Linguistics at Hunter College, will give the keynote address at the $2^{\text {nd }}$ annual ADVANCE-Purdue Gender and STEM Research Symposium. Valian is a cognitive scientist who uses concepts and data from psychology, sociology, economics, and biology to explain the disparity in the professional advancement of men and women. In her landmark book Why So Slow? The Advancement of Women (MIT Press, 1998), Valian asks why so few women are at the top of their professions. Valian also serves as a member of the ADVANCE-Purdue External Advisory Board.

Valian's keynote, Why So Slow? The Advancement of Women, will kick-off the symposium on February $17^{\text {th }}$ at $5: 00 \mathrm{pm}$ in Fowler Hall. The symposium will take place on February $18^{\text {th }}$ from 8:00 am -5:00 pm in Stewart 302. Talks and posters will focus around emerging methods for substantive studies on gender and STEM.

Both events are free and open to the public. Please register at www.purdue.edu/dp/advance.


Virginia Valian, distinguished professor of Psychology and Linguistics at Hunter College and author of Why So Slow? The Advancement of Women.

## Diversifying STEM

Since 2000, the Purdue tenured/tenure-track faculty headcount (TTTFH) has increased by $11.5 \%$ with the STEM ${ }^{*}$ TTTFH increasing by $18.7 \%$. If you look at this by gender, although there has been a large increase in the number of women faculty they still only constitute $17.4 \%$ of the total STEM faculty.


## Recommendation Letters Impact Women

Research from Rice University found words used to describe females in letters of recommendation were in great contrast to those used to describe males. Although both were positive, specific words caused a woman to be evaluated lower, which appears to impact their chances for being hired for faculty positions.

The study analyzed the content of 624 letters of recommendation for junior faculty positions. They found that "female candidates were described in more communal (social or emotive) terms and male candidates in more agentic (active or assertive) terms." Readers gave negative weight to letters with the communal terms. It was also noted that "letter writers include more doubt raisers when recommending women."

As a result of this study it is recommended that both letter writers and letter readers be aware of these subtle gender discrimination issues. Attending the ADVANCE-Purdue / OIE sponsored Search Chair Workshop on Faculty Hiring provides insight on similar relevant research for search chairs and committee members.

Article: Madera, J., Hebl, M., \& Martin, R. (2009). Gender and letters of recommendation for academics: Agentic and communal differences. Journal of Applied Psychology. 94, 1591-1599.

ADVANCE-Purdue (NSF \#0811194) is an institutional transformation project funded by the National Science Foundation that targets the recruitment, retention and advancement of female STEM faculty. At the heart of ADVANCE-Purdue is the Purdue Center for Faculty Success, a campus center located in Discovery Park that develops programming and implements activities and events for all Purdue faculty members.

