

Notes taken by students

International Symposium

Education and Gender Equality

Wellesley College, October 20 & 21, 2017

Symposium Opening – Friday, 8:30-10:00 am

Speakers:

- Andrew Shennan, Provost and Dean of Wellesley College
- Martin Walsh, Mayor of Boston (video remarks)
- Marie-Pierre Rixain, Member of the French National Assembly, President of the delegation on women's rights and equal opportunities for men and women
- Alice Peisch, Massachusetts State Representative, Chair of the Joint Committee on Education
- Cornelia Woll, Vice President for Studies and Academic Affairs, Sciences Po
- Bertrand Monthubert, President of Campus France

Main points:

- Gender inequality persists. Society acts as if everyone has an equal chance of success, but even though equality is guaranteed by law, this is not reflected in reality. The only way to fight this is to transform people's mentalities in order to change their behaviors. There is no real equality while there are still attitudes of doubt and resistance to it.
- The question of gender equality concerns men as well as women.
- Stereotypes and specialization (ex: more men in I.T., engineering and scientific industries). We impose stereotypes on these industries which discourage women to go into these fields. So, girls and women tend to choose to study and work in the humanities and social sciences.
- Successful women in powerful positions typically held by men are still perceived as disturbing, as threats, because they are perceived as "taking men's place" instead of staying where society has told them.
- Leadership in institutions of higher education are filled by women. However, the public sector lags behind the private.
- Research shows that having women professors changes how/what women students choose to study (for example, more female students took a financial economics courses when taught by women professors).
- Promoting gender equality also requires promoting racial/national diversity.
- We need to understand the root and impact of our prejudices and stereotypes which de-incentivize helping young women professionally, and to think critically about what we teach and convey to students.

Best practices evoked regarding public policies, corporate actions, civil society or academic initiatives:

- Have women professors teach introductory courses to disciplines where women are underrepresented, such as finance, to encourage more women students to go further into fields typically thought of as playgrounds for men.