Reflections of Women Standard Setters in the United States

Gender research in accounting shows women remain underrepresented leaders of corporate boards, audit committees, and executive teams. Many scholars ask why this problem persists given the prevalence of women in university accounting programs. A recently published paper in *Accounting Horizons* by PSU Accounting Professor Matt Kaufman and colleagues examines recent evolution toward gender equality on accounting standard-setting boards.

Kaufman and colleagues used semi-structured interviews of current and former women standard setters to understand women's experience with board nomination and appointment. Women standard setters highlight nomination as based upon the value of their work experience, their professional service, and their relational networks within a particular stakeholder group. They describe acceptance based upon their ability to be of value to a particular stakeholder group, to represent their interests in board decisions, and to bring a fresh perspective to board deliberations.

Interview evidence suggests a diverse standard-setting board is the product of numerous nominations and acceptances at all levels of the accounting profession. The coathors note "Employers must encourage diverse participation in professional associations, facilitate skill development and networking opportunities, and provide the time and financial support necessary to engage." Professional societies offer paths for a diverse membership to serve on committees, contribute to comment letters, and offer public testimony. This results in a diverse pool of individuals who are known to FAF members as both competent contributors and effective representatives of a particular interest group.

According to Kaufman, "Women standard setters consistently downplay the idea of diversity alone as a primary decision criteria for board membership. Instead, they emphasize practices the profession can use to promote the advancement of competent professionals from all backgrounds." Factors improving gender equality on standard-setting boards may not be equally effective for other underrepresented groups or in other countries or cultural settings. However, Kaufman and colleagues hope their work provides an important starting point for continued action.

This research was co-authored along with Lisa Baudot of HEC Paris and Amanda Convery of the University of Delaware.

Citation

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