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Colleges across Scotland take action to address workforce gender imbalance in key Scottish industries

Representatives from ten participating colleges attend Equality Challenge Unit's Attracting Diversity events in Dundee and Edinburgh

Scotland's colleges are seeking to address the gender imbalance in the workforce pipeline for industries such as construction, which is dominated by men (84.4%), and public admin, healthcare and education (70.3%), which are dominated by women*.

As key contributors of talent to such industries, colleges are investigating how to redress the balance. Part of this drive is the college sector's active involvement with Equality Challenge Unit (ECU), which works to extend and support equality in colleges and higher education institutions.

Representatives from ten Scottish colleges, including SRUC and North East Scotland College will attend the Attracting Diversity events on the 26th and 27th May 2016 held in Edinburgh and Dundee, along with universities, to share research findings and plan next steps in developing initiatives. The events are part of the wider work programme ECU, funded by the Scottish Funding Council aimed at working with Scottish colleges and universities over 2016-2018 to support them drive equality forward.

Individual colleges are also developing a range of initiatives to encourage men and women into sectors where one gender predominates. SRUC, for example, is currently conducting a project as part of the Attracting Diversity programme into gender balance in Veterinary Nursing, which is a mostly female dominated profession, and land-based Engineering which is mostly male.

David Bass, ECU Senior Policy Advisor explains: "The Equality Challenge Unit is working with ten colleges, as well as universities, in a project aimed at increasing the diversity of the student body in key subject areas. The colleges are working to develop initiatives to address the barriers to access for underrepresented groups through robust research. We are delighted that the colleges have been proactive in taking forward the project and have contributed the time and resource required to begin to tackle gender imbalances, however these are societal issues and real change will take time."

"Rob Wallen, Principal, North East Scotland College, said: "Colleges are committed to providing opportunities for all members of the community. The ECU has an important role in helping to support this."

Shona Struthers, Chief Executive, Colleges Scotland, added: "The benefits of a truly diverse workforce is increasingly recognised. The challenge is to affect changes that will result in a real shift in the balance of the talent pipeline into the country's key sectors. It is essential to understand existing practices and learn from others what can be done on a practical level. We are committed to the programme led by ECU and it is hugely encouraging that so many colleges are involved in driving this initiative."

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Notes to editors:

*Scottish Government's Maximising Economic Opportunities for Women in Scotland Communities Analytical Services report March 2015

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