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## In Franklin's footsteps

n Britain, Susan Gibson is in a minority. She is a chemistry professor — a rarity in that only 5% of the country's maths, science and engineering professors are women. But Gibson, a synthetic chemist at King's College London, is on a mission to redress the balance by encouraging more women to consider a career in science.

At the end of last month, Gibson won the first Rosalind Franklin Award, a prize set up by the UK Department of Trade and Industry specifically to promote women in science. The award, worth  $\pounds 30,000$  (US\$47,000), will allow her to start a programme to introduce students to successful women scientists from around the world.

As well as using her prize money to fund a female postdoc in her lab, Gibson plans to bring women scientists from overseas to visit labs and universities throughout Britain. Perhaps most importantly, Gibson will also arrange for her guests to talk to undergraduates and high-school students who have an interest in science. Bringing women scientists into the classroom will help young students to realize that "there are really, really exciting careers out there", Gibson says.

Gibson estimates that she has sufficient funds to bring over three women scientists each year for the next two or three years. She plans to increase the scope of the programme by attracting industrial support. That shouldn't be too difficult, as companies are beginning to realize that women are under-represented in the commercial sector too.

The success of the programme may well depend on how much support it can win from industry and whether other universities adopt it — but Gibson is optimistic that she will soon be in less of a minority.

### Paul Smaglik Naturejobs editor



### Contents

### REGIONS

Paris breathes life into science

p644

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Career centre Information on the scientific job market