Women are slowly emerging as leaders in many nations, despite the challenges inherent in the cultural definition of leadership as requiring masculine qualities. Even though robust gender stereotypes disadvantage women as leaders, they are especially gaining ground in institutions that serve the public good, including universities. Looking beyond the social justice gains that follow from including women in leadership, researchers are inquiring how and why the presence of women leaders may affect group and organizational outcomes. The most consequential differences in female and male leaders pertain to women’s typically more participative and relational leader behaviors and their more compassionate, other-oriented, and egalitarian attitudes and values. When women leaders display these attributes, groups and organizations may be more effective under some conditions and gravitate toward new goals. The relevance of this conclusion for university leadership will be explored.

This CHESS lecture is a cooperation with the Guest Colloquium in Social, Organizational and Business Psychology at the Department of Psychology at the University of Zurich. With the combined topic of the lecture, CHESS focuses on a specific gender issue and its challenges of today’s leadership in Academia and elsewhere.

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