



Keeping Pace, But Not Catching Up

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Although women have surpassed men in degree attainment in many fields, women's numbers in coveted tenure positions and leadership posts still lag behind.

During University of Miami President Donna Shalala's first teaching job in the early 1970s at Bernard M. Baruch College of the City University of New York, her department chair extolled her teaching skills and prolific publishing.

He also signaled that her stellar performance didn't really matter." We have never tenured a woman, and never will; [it's] a bad investment," she recalls him saying.

Life for women in the academy is a different story now. Such explicit gender discrimination is uncommon these days. Today, women are 57 percent of undergraduates at U.S. colleges and they earn a majority of the doctorates awarded to U.S. citizens, according to a recent report by the Association of American Colleges and Universities.

However, women's numbers in coveted tenure positions and leadership posts — while growing — still lag behind those of men. From the implementation of family-friendly policies to aggressive diversity initiatives, many universities are trying to change that. The American Association of University Professors reported in a 2006 study that women are being hired at higher numbers into nontenure-track positions where their prospects for promotion and salary hikes are limited. Women held just 31 percent of tenured faculty posts and 45 percent of tenure-track posts, according to the AAUP study.

Those numbers worsen for women the more prestigious the assignment, with women at doctoral-granting universities having significantly lower shares (26 percent) of tenured posts.

For the top jobs in academe, the prospects have been even drearier for women. Shalala, who has been president of the University of Miami since 2001, is a rarity. Just 23 percent of college and university presidents are women, according to the American Council on Education's Center for Policy Analysis. It's just 14 percent at doctoral universities.

"There's been some improvement, but it's simply not enough," says Shalala, renowned for her forceful "Madison plan" to hire minorities and women in underrepresented faculties during her 1987-to-1993 tenure as chancellor of the University of Wisconsin- Madison.

Despite slow but steady gains, her former institution still struggles. During the years of the Madison plan, women's share of faculty posts grew from 16.3 percent to 19.1 percent. By 2007, women held 29 percent of UW Madison's faculty jobs — still less than one third of the total.

Shalala says that to change those numbers in the academy, there needs to be significant action — from the offices of college presidents on down. "It needs to be a lot more aggressive," she says.

"It needs to come from every direction — particularly from department chairs and faculties themselves."

Dr. Winnifred Brown-Glaude, an assistant professor of African-American studies at the College of New Jersey and editor of the book *Doing Diversity in Higher Education*, agrees ground-level efforts are as essential as presidential dictates on diversity.

"We also have to look at bottom-up processes and strategies and what's happening in the departments," Brown-Glaude says. "

It's here where you see very subtle processes that are creating — unintentionally, we hope — these problems. One example that comes to mind here, which we talk about in the book: At the University of California, Davis, the faculty members noticed that when the search committees are predominantly men, what they're finding out is the number of women who are being hired tends to be very small."

Diversity Strategies That Work

UC Davis Professor of Law Emerita Martha S. West, who enlisted a state senator to pressure university administrators to address the problem, says the hiring of women faculty hasn't kept pace with the increases in women earning doctorates — often a prerequisite for a faculty post.

The "2007 Survey of Earned Doctorates" says women are earning most of the doctorates in life sciences such as biology (51.4 percent), social sciences (58.7 percent), and education (67.4 percent).

Women who earned doctorates in psychology held a far more lopsided share of those degrees at 72.6 percent, according to a 2008 study by the Commission on Professionals in Science and Technology. Still, when it comes to faculty posts in psychology, they hold a slight majority of positions — 53.9 percent — and a minority of tenured posts at 42 percent.

"We're just not catching up," West says. "I think a variety of things are going on: One big issue is male-dominated workplaces are not family-friendly, so it's hard to maintain these highly driven careers and raise kids. And so women just bail out because academia makes it so difficult."

West, who co-authored with John W. Curtis the AAUP gender equity study in 2006 and has researched the issue for 25 years, says that studies and informal interviews have shown that women are also made to feel uncomfortable in male-dominated departments. She says there are built-in biases in institutions when it comes to hiring faculty:

"I still think both men and women evaluate men's résumés higher than they would evaluate women's. So women have to be better qualified to get on the tenure tracks."

Many universities are trying to change the approach by providing mentors and allowing faculty to stop the tenure clock to care for a new addition to the family.

At the University of Missouri-St. Louis, the push for diversity has come from many directions. While the 2006 AAUP study showed UMSL still lagging in tenured women faculty — with just 31.1 percent of tenured posts — they had one of the highest rates of women on the tenure track for a doctoral institution: 58.5 percent.

Dr. Glen Cope, UMSL's provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs, attributes women's large share of tenure-track posts partly to Chancellor Tom George's efforts launched five years ago to boost the number of tenure- and tenure-track faculty in general, and a commitment to diversify those ranks.

"Our Office of Equal Opportunity has canceled a search if the pool wasn't diverse enough, saying, 'No, you can't go forward,'" Cope says. "The search committees themselves have to be diverse. I do think we're probably more assertive about this than many places."

Deborah Burris, director of UMSL's Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity, is involved, even before a department forms a search committee. In departments where women or minorities are underrepresented, she meets with the chairs to see that they're networking with women's and minority groups before an opening occurs, to establish relationships before feelers go out for a faculty search.

Once a search committee is created, she's there, too. If there are no women on it, she makes them start over. In math and science departments where tenured women faculty are nonexistent, that presents a special challenge: How do you make sure women are on a search committee if there are none to start with?

Burris' response: Find a woman from another department to serve. "They may not be able to evaluate the candidate's credentials in that discipline, but they are certainly there and present to encourage the committee to seek female candidates."

She says that since the approach has been put in place, she's seen more women in the pool — and some were offered faculty positions. When a candidate doesn't accept, she'll often call the job candidate to ensure they were treated well. Burris says that in math and physical science fields, where men outnumber women, she knows the competition is stiff.

"When you look at the academy, when there are very few women or minorities out there, other institutions may be more competitive than we can [be]," Burris says. "I still expect the effort."

Establishing Clear Policies

While women have made tremendous gains overall, the "2007 Survey of Earned Doctorates" shows that women still lag severely behind men in earning doctorates in physical science and engineering. Women earned just 28.1 percent of the doctorates awarded in 2006-07 in physical science, which includes math and computer and information sciences. They earned just 20.7 percent of doctorates in engineering.

The National Science Foundation, through its ADVANCE program, is aiming to change the climate that has created obstacles for women in science and engineering posts. The program was created after the Massachusetts Institute of Technology came out with a 1999 study on the status of women faculty at MIT that shed light on the low numbers of women faculty — just 11 percent — and their unequal access to resources.

MIT's numbers of women faculty are better today, but still rank near the bottom among doctoral institutions with 15.9 percent of tenured faculty being women.

The ADVANCE program has awarded grants to 37 universities since 2001, to help universities identify problem areas and try to resolve them. One such area: "Making sure there are no unwritten rules or policies," says ADVANCE program director Jessie DeAro, who advocates making recruiting policies clear and standardized university-wide.

"We'll go with tenure, one of the big barriers. If the chair of the department sets up a tenure committee and there are no guidelines to what the tenure committee needs to look like in terms of the diversity, the chair is on his/her own. There's no consistency in the process."

Shalala also took a deep interest in women's poor numbers in science. She chaired a committee created by The National Academies that produced the 2007 report "Beyond Bias and Barriers: Fulfilling the Potential of Women in Academic Science and Engineering." The report found

women's advancement in academic science careers was the result of "unintentional biases and outmoded institutional structures." It also called for clear leadership from university presidents, deans, department chairs and tenured faculty to find and change discriminating policies — and for federal enforcement if they don't change.

Shalala says that even at her own institution, the University of Miami, she faces her own challenges to change the numbers. Among the University of Miami's full-time faculty today, women hold just 22.4 percent of tenured posts.

To help address the problem, the university recently secured an NSF ADVANCE grant to create a program in four UM science colleges — medicine, marine, engineering and arts and sciences — to foster an appealing climate to women and minority scientists. It establishes networking and mentoring so that women and minority faculty will feel less isolated. It hosts career research conferences with women and minority speakers and brings in prominent women scientists for lectures. The university pays for leadership training grants.

"A lot of it is a support system for people once you recruit them," says Shalala. "We still have a lot of work to do on women. A lot of our new hires are women. In fact, the new [hired in 2006] chair of biology is a woman."

TOP 12: DOCTORAL UNIVERSITIES WITH THE LARGEST SHARE OF FEMALE TENURED PROFESSORS

SUNY Upstate Medical University 72.7%

Texas Woman's University 68.8%

University of Washington-Tacoma 48%

University of California-San Francisco 42.6%

University of Northern Colorado 41.1% University of Washington-Bothell 41%

Indiana University Pennsylvania 40.5%

University of Massachusetts-Boston 39%

University of San Diego 38.8%

Adelphi University-New York 37.9%

University of North Carolina-Greensboro 37.7% Albany Law School-New York 37.5%

BOTTOM 12: DOCTORAL UNIVERSITIES WITH THE SMALLEST SHARE OF FEMALE TENURED PROFESSORS

University of Missouri-Rolla 7.6%

Colorado School of Mines 7.6%

Rockefeller University 9.3%

North Dakota State University 9.8%

Clarkson University, New York 10.8%

California Tech 11.3%

Polytechnic University, New York 11.3%

New Jersey Institute of Technology 12.1%

Georgia Institute of Technology 14.6%

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute 15.1%

Texas A&M University 15.2%

Massachusetts Institute of Technology 15.9%

Source: American Association of University Professors Gender Equity Indicators report, 2006

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