IS GENDER PARITY IMMINENT IN THE PROFESSIORATE? LESSONS FROM ONE CANADIAN UNIVERSITY

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This article examined issues and implications associated with gender parity in the professoriate. The findings, based on the results from one Canadian institution's most recent women's committee report, emphasize the importance of monitoring progress toward gender parity by examining potential indicators of gender imbalances such as gender differences in applicant pools, starting rank and salary, and promotion application and attainment. This article addresses implications for recruitment, hiring, and formalized reporting mechanisms that can contribute to ultimately attaining gender parity in academia.

Key words: post-secondary education, faculty hiring, status of women

Cet article porte sur les problèmes et les incidences liés à la parité hommes-femmes dans le corps professoral universitaire. Les conclusions des auteures, basées sur les résultats d'un rapport récent préparé par un comité de femmes dans une université canadienne, soulignent l'importance de suivre l'évolution de la question de la parité hommes-femmes en étudiant les indicateurs potentiels des déséquilibres en la matière, notamment les écarts entre le nombre de femmes et d'hommes dans les bassins de candidats, le salaire et le rang de départ ainsi que les demandes de promotion et leur obtention. Cet article traite notamment des procédures de communication d'information sur le recrutement et l'embauche pouvant favoriser la parité hommes-femmes dans les universités.

Mots clés : éducation postsecondaire, embauche des membres du corps professoral, statut des femmes

Within the academic community, women are trying to achieve equity in terms of salary, rank, and status. Although some evidence exists to show improvement in the status of women at Canadian universities, evidence also suggests that inequities persist (e.g., Benschop & Brouns, 2003; Hannah, Paul, & Vethamany-Globus, 2002; Kite et al., 2001). On average, women continue to earn less than men, are employed in substantially lower numbers and ranks than men, and receive fewer promotions and tenured contracts than men (Canadian Association of University Teachers, 2006). Drakich and Stewart (2007) noted that, prior to the current situation in Canadian universities, where large numbers of retiring professors will be replaced, the 1960s was the last time that there were extensive faculty hirings. At that time, despite the fact that the number of full-time faculty members increased by more than 10,000 positions, there was a drop of one per cent in the number of female faculty members. The purpose of this article is to explore the potential for gender parity in academia drawing on information from one Canadian university. Although we recognize gender parity is not synonymous with gender equity (Rosenfeld, 2007), we believe a balance of male and female professors will create a context to achieve equitable treatment. Within a gender-balanced professoriate, there is increased likelihood both males and females will be involved in the establishment of practices intended to promote equity.

University equity and women's committees provide vehicles through which dialogue on gender equality and equity occur. However, based on data collected by the Canadian Association of University Teacher's (CAUT) women's committee, of the 62 Canadian universities, 25 (40%) do not have women's or equity-related committees at all. Only 18 (34%) Canadian universities have Status of Women Committees through their faculty associations (L. Rumleski, personal communication, February 19, 2007).

As Drakich and Stewart (2007) noted, the potential exists for significant change in the coming years. For example, Simpson's (2006) perspective regarding the "feminization of Canadian universities" highlighted the movement toward a closing gender gap in post-secondary senior administration. He noted that women lead (as university principals or presidents) half of the largest universities in Canada. At the

same time, he proposed the current gender imbalance resulted from the "gender balance that prevailed among students several decades ago" (p. A15) but pointed out that the number of female doctoral students has increased in recent years. Similarly, Acker and Armenti (2004) argued proportional representation for women would continue to increase as the older generation of academics retires in large numbers. Of course, this achievement will depend on when and which faculty members choose to retire. Acker and Armenti caution it is important to continue to address gender inequities to obtain proportional representation.

Bird, Litt, and Wang (2004) stated similar concerns after preparing a status of women report for Iowa State University, emphasizing a list of important findings that emerged through the review process. Specifically, they observed that the administration at their university expressed explicit concern about gender equity but, in fact, there was a "lack of coordination and continuity in reporting . . .," there were ". . . no overall university plans to monitor equity . . .," information was collected ". . . without a plan to evaluate the data for gender equity," and there were "no benchmarks for tracking progress toward equity" (p. 197). In addition, they learned that at their university women were four times more likely than men to resign within three years of having been appointed to a faculty position. Through the identification of statistics such as these from individual university reports, the impetus for change can arise. Specific gender analyses of these data are essential to direct strategies for eliminating imbalances. More importantly, these data must be accessible to or shared with other institutions if this information is to impact change.

As Bird et al. (2004) demonstrated, the examination of statistics on gender differences in any given institution can inform the process to promote change toward equity in the professoriate, generally. Yet, beyond the national statistics presented by the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), documents that individual institutions may prepare with respect to gender differences are scarce or not easily accessible to general readership. One such important and extensive report (Joldersma, 2005) was produced internally for the University of Calgary. Within the numerous outcomes the author reported were the findings that male and female faculty members did not differ on factors like

starting salary, number of courses taught, or number of students supervised. Dramatic gender differences did arise for other variables. For example, female faculty members reported that they spent a greater proportion of their time on committee work. Furthermore, women faculty members reported that almost half (46.5%) of their research assistants were female in contrast to male faculty members who reported only about 13 per cent of their research assistants were females. This difference did not emerge for gender of teaching assistants. Also, males and females did not differ in terms of time taken to achieve promotion to associate professor, but female faculty members took twice as long as males to achieve full professor status.

Joldersma (2005), like Bird et al. (2004), emphasized that relying on information from other institutions can assist specific institutions to examine their own situations. With this idea in mind, the present article highlights some key findings of the women's committee report from a Canadian university to illustrate that outcomes specific to one institution can provide the foundation for movement toward gender parity within that university and can also promote similar shifts at other institutions. We strongly believe that widespread dissemination of institutional data collection and reporting will allow an opportunity for a broader audience to reflect on these institutional outcomes for the purpose of furthering gender parity in the professoriate across the landscape of Canadian higher education. Given the increasing numbers of female students in each level of post-secondary education (i.e., females make up 60 per cent of undergraduates and 49 per cent of graduates, Drakich & Stewart, 2007), it makes sense that they should have equal opportunity to encounter female as well as male faculty members within their fields of study. Furthermore, if Joldersma's (2005) findings that female faculty members mentor more female graduate students were consistent across graduate programs, it indicates that gender parity in the professoriate can create more beneficial conditions for scholarly activity among female students, in particular. In turn, such mentoring may result in more women choosing careers in universities.

EXAMINATION OF THE TRENDS IN ONE CANADIAN UNIVERSITY

Data Collection Process

The information from the case university, a primarily undergraduate university in Canada, arose from a review that the women's committee conducted and reported in 2004. As outlined in one article of this university's 1988 collective agreement, the women's committee is required to complete regular reviews (maximum every five years) on all faculty members regarding salary, rank, and promotion to assess the status of women on campus. Furthermore, this article of the collective agreement requires the women's committee to assess and report on the progress toward achievement of equal opportunity.

Given this mandate, the committee hired a research assistant in the spring of 2004 to collect archival data. All data were drawn from the offices of Human Resources and the Vice-President Academic and included information for each faculty member regarding starting and current salary, starting and current rank, years of service, highest degree attained, type of appointment, date of tenure, promotion history, sabbatical history, and number of internal grants received. The research assistant collected these data for all full-time current members (including term appointments) of the faculty association (91 women; 141 men).

Characteristics of the University

The case university, which includes a women's committee within its faculty association, includes an affirmative action policy in all employment advertisements encouraging women and minorities to apply. The collective agreement allows that when a man and a woman are equally qualified for a position, preference shall be given to the woman. Furthermore, when the 2004 review was conducted, although all the senior administrators were male, almost half of those at the deans' level were female, and women held all of the school's Canada Research Chair appointments. It appears that the university has taken some basic steps towards creating an environment to ultimately establish gender balance. However, the question remains whether this outcome is likely, given a gender analysis based on the data collected.

At the time the report was completed, 37.9 per cent of full-time faculty members at the case university were female. This number is higher than the national average of 31.7 per cent (CAUT, 2006). Further, males had been employed for an average of 14.9 years and women for only 9.5 years. Given this difference in years of service, it is not surprising that males earned an average salary (\$73,459) greater than that for females (\$59,342) and also tended to outnumber women in the higher ranks. The data revealed 13 per cent of full professors, 33 per cent of associate professors, 44 per cent of assistant professors, and 56 per cent of lecturers were females. These numbers are similar to the national averages reported by CAUT (2006) of 18 per cent, 34 per cent, and 41 per cent respectively (no national data were provided for lecturers). These numbers indicate that the case university reflects the typical situation on Canadian university campuses.

CRITERIA FOR MONITORING GENDER PARITY

Although a broad range of archival data was collected for all full-time faculty members, we selected a subset of the research outcomes for the purpose of this article. We believe a review of five key indicators may provide the foundation for movement toward achievement of balanced gender composition in any university. Each of the five indicators provides a piece of the information necessary to determine the potential to attain gender parity.

Indicator 1. Number of Men and Women Hired

One clear and obvious indicator of gender balance is evident in an examination of the gender distribution of faculty hirings. For the case university, the percentages of males and females hired across the last 20 years were examined. The data were divided into four groups including faculty members who were hired fewer than five years ago, between 6 and 10 years ago, between 11 and 20 years ago, and more than 20 years ago. As might be expected, more men were hired at the university more than 20 years ago (80.6% males; 19.4% females), and between 11 and 20 years ago (56.5% males; 43.5% females), and in the most recent 5 years (58.1% males; 41.9% females). In contrast, for faculty members who were hired between 6 and 10 years ago, more women than men were hired

(35% males; 65% females). However, this particular difference corresponds with the establishment of a degree in the health field, for which most hirings were women.² Therefore, excluding the group of individuals hired 6 to 10 years prior to the report, the ratio of male to female faculty hirings had changed little in the 20 years prior to the report.

The data on faculty position applicants were also examined. These data showed almost twice as many men (n = 41) as women (n = 23) were hired at the university in the four years prior to the report. Although only 24.2 per cent of the overall pool of applicants was female, 35.9 per cent of those hired were female. Therefore, this university has hired a proportion of women that is close to the proportion of females in the overall pool of recent graduates (i.e., 41.9%, CAUT, 2006). However, if university administrators and faculty care whether female students have the opportunity to benefit from female faculty role models, they must consider that a gender-balanced professoriate would be advantageous. That is, universities must hire as many women as men, if not more. If the proportion of newly-hired faculty continues to be 35.9 per cent, the university will not reach parity. Furthermore, the application data showed women represented only 24.2 per cent of all applicants for positions at this university in contrast to the 42.5 per cent of current female doctoral graduates at Canadian post-secondary institutions.

Indicator 2. Highest Degree Attained

The doctorate is generally required for promotion to the higher ranks (and therefore higher salary scales) at universities across the country. In the case university, a very similar percentage of men (69.1%) and women (60.0%) at all levels, Full, Associate, and Assistant Professors as well as Lecturers, had attained doctorates. In addition, for those who were hired in the most recent 10 years prior to the report, 59.1 per cent of men held doctorates, compared with 55.6 per cent of women. These numbers indicate the case university is showing a hiring trend that presents equal professional attainment for males and females. Although this factor alone will not ensure parity at least or equity at best, it is an essential contributing factor to achieve subsequent tenure and promotion in the university context.

Indicator 3. Starting Rank

The next indicator of potential achievement of gender parity is the rank at which individuals were hired. Data demonstrated that, of the faculty members hired in the 10 years prior to the report, males and females were equally represented at the lecturer and assistant professor ranks. However, of those faculty members hired in the top two salary scales (i.e., associate and full professor) within the last 10 years, eight were men and one was a woman. This result showed there was a tendency for men to be hired at higher starting ranks.

Indicator 4. Starting Salary

The average starting salary of male faculty members who began employment in the 10 years prior to the report was \$50,746, while the average starting salary for women was \$44,796. This difference may be accounted for, given differences in starting rank (i.e., his or her starting salary scale) mentioned above. In addition, the year an individual was hired could also have affected starting salaries because negotiated changes in the institution's recent collective agreement resulted in yearly changes in the floors and increments for each salary scale. However, a regression analysis predicting starting salary, taking starting rank into account first, starting year second, and gender third showed that salaries varied based on all three factors. Importantly, gender was a significant predictor even after the other two factors were taken into account first. The results showed men, compared to women, were starting at higher steps within their ranks.

Taken together, the gender based differences discussed in Indicator 3 and 4 could mean any number of things including that male applicants have more years of experience at the time of their application. It is also possible that men negotiate more steps within their starting rank than do women. Although the rank and salary analyses do not imply systematic gender bias, they are two more indicators that can explain gender differences and so should be monitored.

Indicator 5. Promotions

The statistics on promotions were also examined and these findings pointed to some interesting gender differences. When considering those faculty members who have received one promotion at the case university, the university granted both women and men their first promotion after an average of five years of service. However, when considering those faculty members who have received a second promotion, a gender difference emerged in favour of female faculty members. Although the percentages of males and females who applied for promotion were similar, on average, women had fewer years of service than men between their first and second promotions (5.6 years for women; 8.9 years for men).

Despite this promising finding, a gender difference emerged when we examined the statistics for faculty members who had not yet applied for promotion but were eligible to do so. Of those faculty members with five or fewer years of service, or with more than 10 years of service, similar proportions of men and women had not yet applied for a promotion. However, a different pattern emerged for those faculty members who had between 5.5 and 10 years of service. In this particular cohort, a large difference occurred in the number of men and women who had not yet applied for a promotion; fully 43.8 per cent (or 7/16) of these women had not yet applied, while only 8.3 per cent (1/12) of these men had not.

We also examined data for faculty members who had attained a first promotion but had not yet applied for a second one. Overall, a greater percentage of women (59.4%) than men (45.3%) had not yet applied for a second promotion. However, this difference could be explained by the fact that men have generally been employed at this university longer than women.

Although many faculty members at this university received their first promotion after five years, for those with approximately 10 years of experience, five times as many women compared to men had not yet applied for a first promotion. These findings suggest that one group of women in particular was taking longer than men, or deciding not to apply for their first promotion. Also, the statistics showed a gender difference emerged that reflected males took approximately three years longer to receive a second promotion.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNIVERSITY

For the case university, some positive trends were evident. Women hired into the academic ranks were just as likely as men to hold a doctorate, and were promoted in proportions equal to men. However, some important gender-related issues need to be noted. First, given the gender differences in job applicants, it may be that the case university needs to consider how it promotes itself to attract a greater number of potential female applicants. Although specific reference to affirmative action in position advertisements may draw more female applicants than otherwise might be the case, this approach is insufficient to create more gender-balanced applicant pools. Second, it would be beneficial to examine underlying factors to explain why some men were beginning their employment at higher ranks and more steps above the floor within rank compared to women, although, again, experience may have been a key determining factor. Third, it is important to explore why some women were waiting longer to apply for promotions but also why some men were taking longer to receive a second promotion.

One important concern regarding the potential use of these data is that, although the collective agreement for this institution requires the women's committee to regularly collect data and report on the findings, no process exists in the collective agreement to direct how to use the outcomes to promote change. To this point, the women's committee has used the information to establish their own initiatives to assist women. For example, they have developed and presented tenure and promotion workshops to provide all faculty members with direction regarding the amount and kind of information to include in professional dossiers. Furthermore, the committee contributed to the establishment of a university research mentors system, and has developed a research discussion group to support women in their research activities. However, this women's committee is also well positioned to use their report to motivate broader change, particularly with respect to the collective agreement under which they work. For instance, they might use their findings to emphasize that the collective agreement must be modified to go a step further to mandate change based on the outcomes of their regular reports.

The concerns that have arisen from the data collected at the case university arose because data collection and reporting are required. There is an avenue for faculty members to legitimately raise questions regarding potential gender imbalances. In contrast, as indicated earlier, 40 per cent (L. Rumleski, personal communication, February 19, 2007) of the universities within Canada have no formal vehicle to discuss gender imbalances. Surely each university should at least find ways to formalize the examination of faculty statistics, taking gender into account. If a forum to examine such issues were formalized at each institution, this action would create the conditions for legitimate examination of continuing and pervasive gender-based differences.

STATUS OF WOMEN REPORTING: DIRECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The recommendations listed above are specific to the case university, yet they offer one example upon which other universities could draw. Kite et al. (2001) stated: "periods of progress for women . . . may be followed by periods of backsliding or backlash, a pattern that is widespread in the larger society" (p. 1134). Thus, a periodic review of the status of women, indeed all under-represented groups, on university campuses is a crucial step to inform action for change. At least, a university should formalize a gendered analysis of indicators of imbalance to piece together a more complete picture of the factors leading to gender inequality.

Given the findings in the women's committee report for the case university, some additional issues should be addressed. For example, for the case university, it was reported only 24 per cent of all faculty position applicants were women in contrast to the 41.9 per cent of women who completed doctoral degrees in Canada (CAUT, 2006). This particular difference could reflect that, in reality, only 24 per cent of women who complete doctorates plan to pursue academic careers. In fact, one study of psychology graduate students reported a smaller proportion of women compared to men planned to pursue a career in academia, although women were more likely than men to agree there should be increased efforts to recruit women into academic positions (Singer, Cassin, & Dobson, 2005).

Alternatively, Valian (2004) argued it might be that substantially lower numbers of applications from women result when an institution fails in its efforts to attract female candidates. She noted universities generally and departments specifically must make special effort to attract equal proportions of men and women. For example, such efforts may include creating sufficiently broad job descriptions to attract women who may prefer collaborating to working on their own (Valian, 2004).

In addition, the data from the case university showed that women were often hired at lower ranks and at lower increments than their male colleagues, and that some women waited longer than men to apply for promotions. There may be simple answers to explain these trends, such as women are more likely to have their careers interrupted by parental leaves (e.g., Acker & Armenti, 2004) or are hired with less experience than men. Alternatively, it may be that women show a less pronounced "sense of entitlement" (Valian, 2004, p. 211) compared to men, an attitude that might lead to the emergence of gender differences, such as a tendency to delay application for promotion. However, if specific questions may be asked regarding these differences, answers may be forthcoming.

Furthermore, Bird et al. (2004) stated the importance of examining attrition rates. As a result, exit surveys might be completed to determine individuals' reasons for leaving an institution. Because some research (Singer, et al., 2005; University of Waterloo, 2002) has shown gender differences for males and females as to how they choose academic positions, it is reasonable to assume that gender differences would also emerge regarding why they leave academic positions. Access to this type of information would be vital for university committees that focus on hiring and retention of faculty members.

In addition, graduate schools should aggressively promote academia as a desirable alternative for women and men alike. Female graduate students, in particular, should be encouraged to familiarize themselves with the many articles and books (e.g., Armenti, 2004a, 2004b; Hannah, et al., 2002; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004) on the unique experiences of women in academia. Having reviewed this information, they may choose to pursue an academic career clearly understanding the expectations and demands they will face.

The task of removing barriers for women's career advancement must involve formal strategies to provide information for new faculty members and mentoring opportunities for current faculty members. Although all new faculty members receive specific information regarding tenure and promotion standards at their particular universities, current female faculty members must realize that they represent role models for female university students at all levels (Buzuvis, 2006). As such, they should be encouraged to use mentoring situations to initiate discussion regarding careers in university teaching and research. Where possible, they should involve themselves in activities that promote the advancement of qualified women in the university communities.

Although these recommendations put the onus on women to create change, in fact, as Bird et al. (2004) have noted, much of the work to achieve equity usually falls to female faculty members because they are most concerned with achieving desirable outcomes for women. However, despite the "open secret in the academy that research and publication garner the most authority, reward and prestige . . ." (Puplampu, 2004, p. 178), it is the responsibility of senior administrators to acknowledge the "gendered nature of institutional housekeeping" (p. 203). Administrators and faculty associations must work together to explore other ways to recognize the expertise and time commitment involved in service activities that benefit all members of university communities. These two groups must also strive to make routine as many procedures as possible that may influence gender balance to create "less room for unwitting biases" (Valian, 2004, p. 216). Furthermore, in a post-secondary environment that focuses on students as consumers, administrators must realize that their "customers" can best be served with a more diverse, gender-balanced professoriate. Faculty associations can assist in this endeavor by referring documents developed by CAUT to provide model wording for collective agreements related to a variety of issues including pay equity and pregnancy and parental leave (available online at http://www.caut.ca/pages.asp?page=370&lang=1).

Specific data on gender differences in individual universities are difficult to find; however, if institutions are willing to share their findings on gender-related issues, a clearer picture of the professoriate is possible. Although many authors have expressed optimism for a more

diverse and gender-balanced professoriate in the coming years, the information from the case university shows that a seemingly positive context and regular reporting are insufficient to assure change. Specific goals must be defined. For example, in a report from the University of Waterloo (2002), evidence indicates that a university that focused on gender parity achieved greater gender balance in a variety of disciplines. The difficulties in reaching gender balance are apparent from statistics that show minimal increases in gender distributions across Canada. For example, between the 2001 and 2003 academic years, only small changes occurred in the percentages of females who were tenured (2001 = 24.8%; 2003 = 27%) and who were on the tenure track (2001 = 39.1%; 2003 = 39.2%) (CAUT, 2005, 2006). With approximately 31 per cent of Canadian faculty members aged 55 years or older (CAUT, 2006), two-thirds of whom are men, potential exists for more women to enter academic positions. It is important to bear in mind that the percentage of females receiving doctorates has remained constant (42% in 2001 and 2003). Given the makeup of the current student population in universities, efforts to make university positions attractive to women are essential.

Limitations

In arguing for the use of and increased sharing of outcomes from single universities, we recognize that it is important to state limitations of the discussion we have presented. First, we have presented outcomes of one university report and offered it as an example for other universities to explore gender imbalances within their faculties. We believe the essential similarities in the expectations for research, teaching, and service for faculty members make the findings of this report, or indeed any individual campus report on the status of women, relevant across the country. However, we recognize that each university will have its own unique culture and issues. As such, we have tried to emphasize that such reporting may function as a model for the kinds of issues that should be considered in the context of an examination of specific issues for any given institution.

Second, to provide content that may be relevant to a broader range of institutions, we have deliberately focused on indicators that were summarized across faculties (e.g., Arts, Science). In taking this approach, we have intentionally sacrificed specific examination of gender imbalances consistently seen in faculties like Science. In fact, the gender makeup of single faculties might be the focus of specific reporting and offer another perspective from which universities might share exper-iences and outcomes.

Finally, given the purpose of the original report of the women's committee upon which we based this article, we have discussed only gender-based issues, and gender balance particularly. We have not explored additional and equally important issues related to ethnic diversity in the professoriate. We recognize that faculties that effectively represent males and females, as well as a diverse range of cultural backgrounds, can create greater benefits for both students and faculty members at all levels of post-secondary education.

CONCLUSION

We have argued here that reporting, or at least data collection, must be formalized to achieve action leading to systemic change. However, although information is an essential condition for change, it is insufficient, and even useless, without subsequent action (Lewis, 2005). Univer-sities must develop goals and conduct gender-based analyses of their faculty members across all disciplines. Subsequently, this information should be reported and shared with other universities. Just as there is dialogue between university faculty committees regarding salary scales and issues of academic freedom, there must be information sharing with respect to gender issues. Conferences such as CAUT's "Doing Academia Differently" (February, 2007) are essential forums in which all institutions should participate so that individuals from many universities can learn from each other. These steps are essential, especially if Drakich and Stewart (2007) are correct when they noted that "employment equity is off the radar screens of most universities" and that we may "once again miss out on the opportunity to transform the professoriate" (p. 9). In fact, if this is the case, continued emphasis on gender issues in the literature is as vital as the discussions about gender differences that occur at individual universities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Lisa Robson and Dean Beaubier for their comments on an earlier draft of this article.

NOTES

¹ We tried various different approaches to access information regarding gender-based analyses at Canadian universities. For example, we tried searches via Google using word phrases like "gender equity report site.ca" and requesting Canadian pages only. From this type of search we uncovered a wide range of reports, some of which were documents that varied in degree of relevance to the topic discussed in this article. For example, many sites focused on gender equity in public schools or athletic gender equity in universities. One particular report (Joldersma, 2005), discussed above, was found through the particular search outlined here.

² This field has traditionally been dominated by females. CAUT (2006) reported that 93.7 per cent of individuals in this field were female.

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