Gender Equity in the University: The Unmet Agenda

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Abstract

In 1991 Topside University established the University Committee on the Status of Women Faculty and Librarians (UCSWFL) to identify obstacles to the professional and personal development of women faculty and librarians and to provide advice and guidance concerning initiatives to support them throughout the University. The University has focused on the status of women faculty for almost twenty years and yet disparities exist specifically related to promotion in rank, which is highly dependent on research productivity at Topside University. Thus, there remains an unmet agenda (at Topside and in the United States) with respect to gender parity.

The purpose of this exploratory study was to understand the experiences of men and women as they seek promotion in rank from associate to full professor through the successful execution of their research agenda. Utilizing a liberal feminism framework, which does not change the core assumptions of the culture of the professorate, this study sought to understand research support in four key areas: obtaining sponsored research, writing, research assistance, and conference travel. Findings suggest some of the schools and departments at Topside University have developed policies and procedures that systematically support all faculties, including women, succeed in developing their academic career through research productivity. Unfortunately, these are the exception, not the rule. Further, given administrative responsibilities, patterns of communication, and their inability to be considered "insiders" in certain circles crucial for promotion, women are particularly vulnerable to being ignored or passed over in the process of promotion from associate to full professor. Recommendations focus on specific ways in which Topside can ensure equitable access to research support to develop overall research production in the University.

Gender Equity in the University: The Unmet Agenda[1]

In 1991 a private university (hereafter known as Topside University[2]) in the United States established the University Committee on the Status of Women Faculty and Librarians to identify obstacles to the professional and personal development of women faculty and librarians and provide advice and guidance concerning initiatives to support women faculty and librarians throughout the University. Major accomplishments of the Committee include:

- Influencing the establishment of a campus-based child care center;
- Advocating for the University's Parental Leave Policy;
- Sowing the foundational seeds for systemic faculty mentoring;

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[1] This paper was presented at the Oxford Roundtable: Women in the Academy, Oxford, England, March 15, 2010.
[2] Topside University is a fictitious name.

- Recognizing and promoting women authors; and
- Encouraging women to pursue leadership roles on various University committees.

These accomplishments focused on work/life balance and representational issues. Yet, there remains an unmet agenda (at the study university and nationally) related to the core tenets of success at a research university, namely, promotion in rank; access to research funding and graduate assistants; and support for publication, both formal and informal. This exploratory study focused on perceptions of male and female professors' access to research support, which is the primary requirement for advancement at a research-oriented institution in the United States.

Women and the Academy

For decades, researchers have raised concerns and documented women's inequitable success in the academy (Acker 1992, 2003; Baker and Copp 1997; Branch-Brioso 2009; Dinerman 1971; Eliou 1988; Graham 1970 Rush, 1987). Concerns have centered on the percentage of full-time faculty, tenure accruing or contract, who are women (Graham 1970; Banerji 2006), inequitable salaries between men and women (Banerji 2006; Ginther and Hayes 1999), differing student expectations for men and women in the professorate (Baker and Copp 1997; Johnson-Bailey and Cervero 2008; McGinley 2009; Pierce 2004), and different career trajectories for men and women in the academy (Johnson-Bailey and Cervero 2008; Rush 1987).

The picture that emerges from these studies is bleak. While women have made progress, only 25 percent of the tenured, full time faculty members at U.S. doctoral institutions are women and they make, on average, 81 percent of their male counterparts' salary (Banerji 2006). Women are more likely to be in adjunct, lecturer or instructor positions as opposed to tenured, full faculty positions (Banerji 2006; Wolfinger, Mason, and Goulden 2009). Students question the intellect and grades of female faculty, and expect women faculty to assume caretaker roles or to be deferential (Baker and Copp 1997; Johnson-Bailey and Cervero 2008; Pierce 2004). And, in general, the path of a woman academic is more difficult, in their quest for full professor, their ability to obtain needed resources for research, or even their ability to continue in the profession (Johnson-Bailey and Cervero 2008; Lawler 1999; Sanders Willemsen, and Millar 2008).

The differences in experience between men and women faculty have been documented across disciplines and country contexts. McGinley documented "differential expectations" and "colleagues' bullying behavior at work," in law schools (2009, 99). McDowell, Singell, and Zilik found that while promotion prospects have improved, they are "generally inferior [for women] to those of their comparable male colleagues," in economics (1999, 392). Ginther and Hayes found "substantial gender differences in promotion to tenure exist after controlling for productivity, demographic characteristics, and primary work activity," in the humanities (1999, 397). In contrast, Jordan, Pate and Clark (2006) found women were no longer underrepresented in academic accounting, but they were underrepresented among senior faculty. Acker found academic women in Britain were "disproportionately in lower grades and less secure posts than their male counterparts," (1992, 57). In 2003, Acker found Canadian women still lagged in the professorate while those women who were in academe "worked harder" with "heavier

expectations to 'mother' students" and "be a good citizen as members of committees," (396). Similarly, in Australia, Jones and Lovejoy (1980) found women less likely to be in employed full time and less likely to be employed at the higher rungs of the professorate ladder.

Different theories have been posited as to why women are underrepresented, disrespected, unsuccessful, and paid less across disciplines and universities around the world. Researchers suggest sex bias and the old boys' network contribute to the plight of academic women (Graham 1970; Rush 1987). As Bain and Cummings have noted, the old boy's network that "may not only reinforce the male-friendly norms but also lead to gender bias in key decisions" (2000, 499). Other researchers have pointed to the differing family pressures women face related to child rearing and household responsibilities (Graham 1970; Rothausen-Vange, Marler and Wright 2005; Wolfinger, Mason, and Goulden 2009). Still others have pointed to feminized professions and disciplines, gender-based epistemological differences, and theories that posit different ways of knowing or conceptualizing knowledge that is not consistent with a male-oriented, positivist paradigm (Bain and Cummings 2000; Belenky et al. 1986; Gilligan 1983). Further, Bain and Cummings suggested that women may be predisposed to teaching rather than research as they are more oriented to helping others.

These different theories related to academic women have led to different theoretical frames for investigating women in the academy. For example, researchers who ascribe gender difference in the academy to bias are more likely to utilize a feminist critical theory approach to analysis (Anderson 2003; Nakhaie 2007). This theory takes a political, emancipator approach to investigation. Affirmative action policies that focus on hiring more women into engineering and science faculties, or that specifically support research of academic women, fall within the feminist critical theory approach.

Alternatively, researchers who utilize a liberal feminism approach, focus investigation on "strategies for change that focus on assimilating women into established structures while leaving androcentric norms, values, and conventions in tact [*sic*]," (Anderson 2003, 324). Thus, the focus is on barriers to equal opportunity and treating everyone – man and woman – equally (Acker 1992). Researchers that have ascribed women's behavior to choices to "derail" and family pressures (Rothausen-Vange, Marler and Wright 2005; Rush 1987; Wolfinger, Mason, and Goulden 2009) employ a liberal feminism approach to conceptualizing their research. Further, researchers that assert slow gains in the percentage of academic women in the field are understandable, given their "late start" in the field are also speaking from a liberal feminism voice. These researchers do not seek to redress past injustices, but rather to let the process and time take its course (Jordan, Pate, and Clark 2006). University equal employment policies can be categorized as liberal feminism.

Bain and Cummings (2000) employed institutional analysis in their discussion of academic women, both discussing the larger forces in the environmental field as well as institutional isomorphism, that is, the tendency of institutions to copy one another (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) as a determinant of how women are treated in academe. This is consistent with an essay by

Anderson (2003) in which she asserts that the real issues are how gender is perceived and conceptualized in the environment.

Studies that focus on the propensity of women to conceptualize knowledge differently from men do so from a radical feminist perspective. That is, knowledge is "*man*made" whereas radical feminism posits that a new reality should be created that puts women at the core, where women's ways of knowing is valued and women are not penalized for using an alternative woman's syntax. Focusing on academic women in feminized professions and disciplines as a model for university policy can be interpreted through the radical feminist lens. Likewise, women's studies programs create an opportunity to break away from the patriarchal milieu of the university (Acker 1992).

Despite laws barring discrimination on the basis of gender, academic women do not enjoy parity with men. While the prevalence of academic women is close to 50 percent at community college and undergraduate institutions, women still only comprise 25 percent of the faculty of graduate institutions. Research on women in the academy tends to focus on the prevalence of women who are tenured, differential treatment of women professors, and the move from assistant to associate professor. While a number of feminist theories may be employed to study academic women, liberal feminism, which does not change the core assumptions of the culture of the professorate, is the most prevalent lens employed by researchers.

The University

Topside University is a mid-sized, private research-focused institution based in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States serving approximately 20,000 undergraduate and graduate students. The University places an emphasis on research over teaching, and offers a range of baccalaureate programs with an emphasis on doctoral study. Topside University is comprised of eight colleges and offers undergraduate, graduate, and professional degrees in three campus locations and several satellite education centers. The University is consistently ranked as one of the top 100 universities in the United States by the *U.S. News and World Report* and in the top 300 worldwide (*U.S. News and World Report* 2010). The university rankings are based on a number of factors, one of which is citations per faculty member. As a result of this ranking, combined with Topside's goal to be a premiere, world renowned university, research productivity is extremely important for faculty success in the institution.

The University provides a number of different faculty designations. Members of the faculty are classified as instructors, assistant professors, associate professors, and full professors and are hired in limited service (adjunct), part-time, and full time status. Faculty members are typically hired into the University at the assistant or associate level. While some members of the faculty are recruited from other universities at the rank of full professor, typically full professors are promoted in rank during their tenure at the University. During the 2008-2009 academic year there were 806 full time, active-status faculty, of which 337 were full, 259 associate, and 210 assistant professors. The full time faculty were either tenured, tenure-accruing, or on contracts. Consistent with trends in higher education (Holub 2003), the number of contract faculty has

increased with new recruits to the university. As shown in Table 1, 10 percent of the full professors are contract faculty, 11 percent of the associate professors, and 24 percent of the assistant professors are on contracts and not eligible for tenure. In terms of absolute numbers, women are at parity with men at the assistant level and almost parity at the associate level. Yet, more men, both proportionately and in absolute numbers, are in tenure-accruing positions. As noted in Table 1, at every rank, men hold more tenure-accruing positions than women. At the full professor level, only 21 percent of the full professors are women, 19 percent of which are tenured, full professors. Men hold more absolute full time faculty positions at the highest faculty levels.

Table 1 Employment Status and Rank of Regular Full Time Faculty by Gender, 2008-2009 (percent)

Professorial rank	Male		Female		Total of all full time faculty
	Tenure-accruing	Contract	Tenure-accruing	Contract	
Full (n=337)	47	16	32	5	42
Associate (n=259)	36	17	31	16	32
Assistant (n=210)	31	19	29	21	26

NOTE: Data provided by Topside University Institutional Research Office.

In addition to the disparities related to the number of women who are full professors, women tend to remain in the prior rank longer than men at Topside University. Women associate professors on the tenure track spend a mean 6.3 years as assistant professors in comparison to men who spend a mean 5.1 years as assistant professors. Women full professors spend a mean 7.3 years in prior rank compared to men who spend a mean 6.9 years in prior rank. Combined, women spend an average of 13.6 years obtaining the full professorate whereas men spend a mean 12 years in the obtaining the full professorate. Hence, there are fewer women in the pipeline to become full professors and those that are, work longer to achieve that status.

The University Committee on the Status of Women Faculty and Librarians
Topside University's Committee on the Status of Women Faculty and Librarians was established in 1991 by the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs to provide advice and guidance concerning initiatives to support women faculty and librarians throughout the University. The Committee was established to identify obstacles to the professional and personal development of women faculty and librarians and to increase their contributions to the University; to develop and recommend strategies to overcome obstacles and improve conditions of campus life for women faculty and librarians; and to collaborate with the Office of Academic Affairs to implement these

strategies across the University. As such, the Committee was formed out of a liberal feminism conceptual framework and seeks to ensure better assimilation of women into the existing campus culture and structure.

Since its inception, the Committee has focused on such issues such as development strategies for women and faculty of color, mentoring and networking, campus climate, faculty governance, strategies for promotion, tenure and renewal, childcare for faculty, and the research climate at GW.

While the accomplishments of the committee are laudable, they primarily focus on barriers to contribution, service to the University, and work/life balance. Missing are specific achievements related to promotion, tenure, and renewal of women faculty. This is reflected in the disproportionate number of men at the full professor status versus women.

The Study

The University has had a focus on the status of women faculty for almost twenty years and yet disparities exist specifically related to promotion in rank, which is highly dependent on research productivity at Topside University. Thus, there remains an unmet agenda (at Topside and in the United States) with respect to gender parity.

The purpose of this exploratory study was to understand the experiences of men and women as they seek promotion in rank from associate professor to full professor through the successful execution of their research agenda, which is the primary prerequisite for promotion in rank to full professor at the institution. The specific research questions of this study were:

1. How do men and women experience the promotion through research productivity process at Topside University?
2. How do men and women perceive their access to important supports for research productivity?
   a. Do men and women perceive the University research support system as different based on gender? If so, how?

Consistent with the University's conception of gender equity, the study was based on the liberal feminist theoretical frame discussed earlier. This was operationalized as access to research funding and graduate assistants; ability to present at national and international conferences; and support for publication, both formal and informal.

Methodology

The research questions were explored through phenomenology. Phenomenology is a systematic examination of human experience and how people make meaning of that experience (Fitzgerald 2006; Pollio, Henley, and Thompson 1997; Moustakes 1990). The researchers neither begin with a preconceived theory related to the potential outcomes of the study nor do they seek to know why a respondent perceives a particular situation in a given way. The focus rather is on the human experience and the meaning an individual ascribes to that experience (Glesne and Peshkin

1992; Husserl 1900/2001; Moustakes 1990). A phenomenology seeks to understand human experience and as such, the findings are not generalizable to a larger population.

Sample. A purposeful sampling design was used for this study. In purposeful sampling, subjects are selected because they are "information rich" and hold potential for learning about the phenomenon under study (Patton 2002).

The focus of this study is on faculty who are currently ranked at the associate level. The reason for focusing at the associate level is because associate professors have career pressure primarily related to research productivity in order to progress to the full professor stage. The population of current full time, active status associate professors at the University was the sampling frame for this study. From that sampling frame, a sample was drawn to maximize diversity across schools and disciplines. Further, faculty members who had at least two years in rank at the associate level at Topside were interviewed to ensure that they had adequate time to understand the resources available to them and their role as associate professors. The common thread among respondents was that they were associate professors. Some of the respondents were tenured, some tenure-accruing, and some on contract.

Consistent with phenomenology, sample participants were drawn based on their likelihood of providing information related to the purpose of this study and participants were recruited to the study until the researchers reached the point of data saturation. That is, participants were recruited to the study until the researchers' analysis of the data render similar themes (Creswell 2007). Researchers conducted fourteen interviews across nine University departments in six schools of the University. Of the fourteen interviews, ten interviews were "paired," meaning one man and one woman from the same department were interviewed. In one instance, a man and woman from self-described comparable departments were interviewed, as one department had no male associate professors. The two non-paired interviews were eliminated from data analysis.

Procedures. All participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview protocol to allow the respondent to describe his or her experience fully. Semi-structured interviews are highly educative and consistent with the phenomenology methodology. The protocol was only a guide and the researcher varied the protocol as needed in order to delve deeper or further clarify participant responses. The participants were not given the questions prior to the interview to discourage "packaged responses" and to allow the interviewer to seek rich, thick descriptions of the respondents' experiences. Interviews were tape recorded with the permission of the participant. One respondent did not give permission to be taped and the researcher took notes during the interview. All taped interviews were transcribed for data analysis.

Data Analysis. Transcripts and notes from the study were analyzed using the constant-comparative methods of data analysis (Creswell 2007). In this method of analysis, transcripts and notes (data) were first read for general impressions. Data were then coded for significant concepts. Concepts were clustered into themes. Subsequent transcripts and notes were first analyzed for codes and themes, these codes and themes were then compared to prior coded data for new insight and nuance. If a new code emerged in a subsequent data set (transcript), prior data was reviewed to see if the new code emerged. Further themes were enriched in meaning

from the subsequent data sets by constantly comparing data across the interviews. Each researcher conducted this analysis separately, and then discussed themes until consensus was reached.

Findings

The research findings are reported out by research question.

Question 1: How do men and women experience the promotion through research productivity process at Topside University? As was expected, both men and women reported that the single greatest determinant of promotion is research productivity. As one respondent noted, "So the things I think you're mostly evaluated on are your writings. You know if you've done enough writing, if you're going to be productive." In fact, members of the faculty who were not research active reported they could not expect to be promoted in rank. When asked if extraordinary teaching and service could be substituted for research productivity in the promotion decision, one member of the faculty succinctly noted, "No, and I don't really even think that that's a possibility. No, it just hasn't happened in the school that anybody would come up [for promotion to full professor] unless they meet, you know, unless they have a very significant research publication in top journals, and are a decent teacher. If you don't meet those two criteria, you need not even apply." Throughout the six schools represented in the study, faculty clearly understood the need to be research active in order to be promoted from associate to full professor.

Yet, women reported more ambiguity about how much productivity, and what constituted "national recognition in field." As one respondent noted:

> So there's no real clear guidelines as to how do you get to the next step. So I continue my publications. I continue my…I wrote a book. I sit on editorial boards. I do my national presentations. So you ask the dean, look at my resume. [He says,] "Wow, you have to have national recognition." I said, "What does that mean? I sit on the national… or I'm on some committees, national committees. I'm getting the editorial board for this journal and do tons of presentations." It's just national recognition. What does that mean?…Well you have to have national recognition. Okay. And then you sit around and wait.

Guidelines such as "research active," "national recognition," and "significant" levels of productivity were reported throughout the University. These terms were left to interpretation at the school or department level, often by a sole "gatekeeper" such as the department chair. As a result, some respondents were unclear of specific guidelines, yet continued to work toward the vague goals they stated.

Question 2: How do men and women perceive their access to important supports for research productivity? Overall, levels of support for research were highly variable across the schools within the University. The law school was described by faculty as the most supportive. One respondent noted

> The law school has been very supportive. It was one of the things that I really wanted coming in because I do a lot of research…at least for a law professor, I do

> empirical research. The law school provided me with a really, a nice package to give me. In addition to the usual summer writing stipend and/or, I guess, reward or bounty…I don't know what it's called, but if we write something and publish it, they give us $16,000.00 for spending our summer time doing that, which is just remarkable. Then, in addition to that, the law school gives me $10,000.00 a year to do empirical research, and that goes into a fund and just accrues there.

> If I bring in grant money that replaces my salary, rather than going to my salary, that will go to replenish my research fund. So I'm in my fourth year and I spent down most of the $40,000.00 that they've given me, but it's pretty remarkable to have the University, or the law school, just providing me with that…money. That's allowed me to write grant proposals and to bring in a lot more research money based on the kind of little surveys that I've done since being there. So it's been great, and if I needed computer equipment or anything like that, they provided that for me outside of [the grant fund]…I don't pay for that out of my research funding.

In addition, another law professor reported that the school distributes a formal notice of the types of research support available to faculty, including up to 540 hours of law student research assistance per year, travel to conferences, "take a friend to lunch" opportunities to discuss research ideas, and school-sponsored research colloquia.

In contrast, the education school appeared to offer the least amount of support for research. As one education professor noted,

> I believe that in order for faculty to conduct research, we need research support, R&D support. There is no infrastructure to do that here. You have to do it on your own. It would be great to have a ½ time or ¼ time research assistant, if not on a continuous basis, on a semester basis. It would be great to have grant support, someone to identify competitions, assist in writing portions of the grant, and then following through with the funder. It would [be] great to have full support to go to conferences.

Members of the faculty who reported getting support for research from the department, school, or university typically received that support when they were assistant professors. Faculty reported course releases for research as assistant professors or in the first few years they were at the University, summer support for the first two summers of their tenure of the University, special University-sponsored grant competitions for early-career professors, and offers of research assistants in the initial years of their career at Topside. Yet, this level of support did not continue throughout the years, nor was it necessarily related to grant productivity. As one associate professor noted:

> When I was…probably the first year, first or second year I was here, I was allocated I think a quarter time research assistant for one semester. It had nothing to do with anything besides the fact that the department chair at the time…said "hey you want help to get research kick started?" Beyond that, I've never had a research assistant.

This associate professor was a 13-year veteran at the University who had brought in substantial grant funding.

Funding to support research and support to develop grants proposals varies widely, even within the same department. Overall, faculty members were left to identify and generate their own grant proposals. As one respondent put it, "In the past, we have been writing blind. I would expect a research dean to keep his ear to the ground, find out what they [funders] want, to ensure we are on target and competitive for certain grant proposals." Departmental or school support tended to be in terms of budget development and routing forms. Yet experiences were quite different among faculty, even those in the same department. As one associate professor noted:

> As an assistant professor, I won two outside fellowships.…I received grants from the [outside funding source] about three or four times, and I received a Topside Policy Institute Fellowship, and I received University funding once during my six years or so as an assistant professor. Since being tenured, I have my sabbatical coming next year. I still have applications for funding that are being considered, and I've received…I've continued to receive summer money from the [outside funding source]…I did them mostly on my own. I don't seek out help, I know how to do them, I think, and that's why. So I didn't really seek out help, it was available, but I didn't seek it out.…The department chair would put appropriate fliers in my box. I think in [my field], most people know what the main available fellowships are though. So there's very little that I could imagine people would say, "Did you know you could apply for this," and I wouldn't have applied.

In contrast, another associate professor in the same department noted:

> Well you know Topside does have, at least it offers options for people who are interested in doing research to apply, like the [university-based research competition] obviously and the [university-based research competition] is that what it is? I know they had one. I applied for the one for Junior Faculty my first year here that I did not get. But they have that and then they have the UFF, University Facilitating Funding, I think is what it's called. At least, and those are grants that somebody in my field…can at least apply for.
>
> …To be honest with you, I'm not [applying for research funding]; I don't know that much about [it], I'm still trying to figure out this university. I say it takes five years to kind of begin to understand it; maybe ten years to really understand it. So I must say that it's been a hard place to understand period.

These two quotes from professors in the same department suggest drastically different experiences with respect to research support.

The University-level sponsored research office was perceived historically as wholly ineffective and in efficient. As a result, some faculty reported they stopped applying for sponsored research through the University or altered the types of grants they pursued. As one associate professor noted:

> Associate professor: Most of my experience goes back to when I was fellow and in the years immediately after …when I was junior faculty. And I had a couple of grants and in one case, the grant had one employee. And we had to give the grant money back because the research office was requiring so much of the employee's time to keep up with the demands of maintaining the grant that they didn't have time to do the work [of the grant]. So then my experience with the research office a decade or so ago was not very positive.

> Interviewer: And have you had any more recent experience with the grants office?
>
> Associate professor: Not really. That kind of convinced me that I didn't want to be a PI anymore.

Another associate professor added:

> I have no clue if the same people are there, but it just really gave me a bad taste for doing any grant projects because it just seemed like the paperwork was just ridiculous, management incompetent. You know, to be asked to do something and you do it, and you run around getting signatures, and then you're turned around the next day and have to get it again, it's just very frustrating. So my approach, I guess, at trying to get grants had been more so little grants [based on that experience].

Yet, there is a sense of greater University interest in supporting research in the past two years since the arrival of the new University President and Vice President for Research. Respondents described the university processes as "getting better". As one associate professor remarked, "Provisions need to be made to enable people to succeed. I am optimistic, we are headed in the right direction."

Those members of the faculty who were research active tended to have greater access to research support in terms of course releases, research funding, and funding to travel to conferences. In this way, the rich get richer at Topside University. Interestingly, faculty were largely unaware of research activity and support of their colleagues, so they had no way of knowing if support was being informally allocated on a differential basis across the program, department, or school. One associate professor, who was also a department chair, noted that the system of providing a small portion of indirect cost benefit money back to the faculty member in a context in which money is very scarce or nonexistent provides an added advantage to those who are receiving sponsored research support, while starving out the rest.

Of the four types of support queried, research assistance, conference travel, writing support, and research funding, writing support was the least likely to be provided by the school or university. Very few associate professors received summer writing support, with the exception of the law school. All law professors were eligible for a $16,000 summer writing stipend, payable when the manuscript was delivered and reviewed by the school's dean, regardless of rank. Writing support for associate professors, such as course releases to write manuscripts, was typically generated through grant proposals written by individual faculty members. No respondent received editing assistance for their writing and no respondents were receiving assistance in placing manuscripts they had produced.

In contrast to the lack of support for developing specific written manuscripts, several departments held informal symposia in which faculty and doctoral students could present their work for feedback. These forums tended to favor the presentation of fully developed works, rather than works in progress, though more departments are experimenting with informal venues to discuss research ideas. As an associate professor in the Business School noted:

> And we also have, well, we tried to start up over the summer, these brown-bag lunches where… and this is something that one of the rookies kind of thought of…where when they have an idea, a fresh idea that isn't fully developed that they would present it informally among the in-house faculty over lunch and just get some feedback about whether it's interesting and what kind of roadblocks you might face and that kind of thing. So that's been helpful to quite a few people.

Notably, the law school formally supports two structures to allow faculty to present more formally finished works and also share informal works in progress with colleagues, through their "take a colleague to lunch" program. Faculty from other schools noted formal presentation series that may also include paper presentations from faculty in other universities, and informal "brown bag" sessions that were organized by faculty or individual departments.

Many departments and schools offered some level of conference travel, though conference funding levels varied by department and school and the manner in which it was dispersed varied across the institution. Departments distributed travel funds in two primary ways. In some departments, each member of the faculty was allotted a given amount of money to spend on conference travel. In other departments, faculty members were required to request conference travel. In those departments that provided a given allocation each year to faculty, most faculties reported the ability to request additional resources for conference travel, such as the following associate professor:

> It's pretty much known. Faculty know when they come and [are] hired on that they essentially get a conference. It's really like $1,500.00. And so that will cover travel and will cover hotel. It will cover the conference itself. That's why sometimes if it's local, then you're not using that whole [amount]…then there's money left over and maybe you can go to two. But it becomes "assume one and then you come talk to me. If we have money left over and you're presenting [one faculty member] and you're not [a second faculty member], you'll get it [conference presenter].

Respondents generally reported the process for reimbursement of pre-approved travel expenses was quite easy and no one reported the reimbursement process as a barrier to obtaining funds. Yet, faculty did report paying out of pocket to attend conferences when there was no additional money to support their travel.

The final form of research support investigated, University-based research assistants, was not universally available. When available, they were typically provided on a semester or sometimes sporadic basis, and were often seen as minimally helpful. While some faculty would have liked research assistants, "It would be great to have a ½ time or ¼ time research assistant, if not on a continuous basis, on a semester basis," others respondents were less positive. In some departments all incoming doctoral students were offered a research assistantship. These research assistants primarily received mentoring and training from the professor and generally did not contribute to the faculty member's research productivity. "Right now, my concern, again, would be that – it would be more of a mentor role right now than the other way round because of the mix of the students that we have." Grant-funded research assistants, those who transcended semester and sometimes year, were seen as the most helpful and productive research assistants.

As with other aspects of research support, though, faculty were largely on their own to develop the funding for such research assistants.

Question 2a: Do men and women perceive the University research support system as different based on gender? If so, how? When directly asked, overwhelmingly both men and women reported no difference in access to research support at Topside University. One respondent offered a qualifier to his comment on gender bias. He opined, "I think a significant part of that [support for research] depends on the . . . school's interest in me as someone that they feel like they need to actively retain. And my guess is that if there was someone who they didn't feel like they needed to actively retain, they might be less generous, and that maybe correlated with gender, I don't know." In this comment potential gender differences in research support at Topside University are characterized as *constructive* discrimination versus *overt* bias. Constructive discrimination is behavior that is not in and of itself discriminatory, but it could be practiced in a discriminatory fashion (Reutter 1985). While there were no instances of overt bias reported, several issues surfaced related to the gendered experiences of women.

Women were less aware of institution-based resources. This may be due to the culture of privacy that surrounds research in a number of departments. As noted above, faculty were largely unaware of the research activities of their colleagues. As a result, one woman responded to the question of differential research support based on gender by noting, "I don't know. It's not transparent to me how it's handled. Those things are done privately between the department chair and the particular faculty person." Another woman responded, "I have no idea. . . although I would imagine whoever is able to negotiate better will get more of what he or she wants. And that's not something that I've really done." The private nature of support often negotiated between an individual member of the faculty and a sole gatekeeper (department chair) may result in bias that is related to constructive discrimination based on gender. Neither men nor women would necessarily know for sure if there was systematic bias in how resources were allocated.

There is some evidence that departmental policies might inadvertently be creating a gender bias. As was noted earlier, in many departments the rich get richer through policies aimed at rewarding sponsored research. One associate professor responded to the question of differential access to research support with the following statement

> [I]f I take my department as an example, our male scholars. I think if we were to tally the productivity [men] would probably be seen as being more productive than our female faculty and I think often any kind of money we get or any kind of assistance we get is tied to productivity. That's why I would say yes but again that's just a sense and I have no concrete facts to back up a statement like that. That's how I [think there may be gender differences in support], because usually you have to kinda show something to get something…does that make sense?

Women reported different communication patterns related to research support which may also have a negative impact on the level of research support they received. For example, one associate professor commented on promotion from associate to full professor

> I think men, in general, tend to push it a little bit more and a little bit sooner and will ask the questions, where women tend to [think] okay, so what's next…And then you sit around and wait, [trying to] figure out…I don't think we're as pushy. That's part of it.

Similarly, women reported different communication patterns related to research support. For example, a woman noted

> I mean when [the prior department chair] was in the position of department chair, it wasn't even something I considered to approach, so I guess he established the kind of idea of no money for anything. And I never even thought to approach [the next] department chair.…So I can't say that I went in and said, "I want to work on X. Can you support this?" Although I probably should have. I probably should do it now because the idea of teaching five courses next year, I just don't…another fall of minimal writing or research, it's…and I love teaching, but it's drowning in teaching.

In contrast, a male respondent noted, "Well, if I had a paper to present, I would ask for funding for transportation, hotel, and I was never turned down." Hence, women reported being less specific than men in their requests for support, less likely to ask for support, and not as "pushy" in pressing for research support. These gender-based communication patterns held regarding conference travel as well. Women reported the ability to ask for conference travel, but did not ask as frequently as men. Women tended to get a sense of the climate for support and not ask. And, it is unclear the extent to which women asked for resources in a specific manner. As a result, women more often than men reported paying out of their own pocket to attend professional conferences.

A final factor impacting research productivity for women was competing demands for their time. Women interviewed more often reported administrative functions as part of their job. As a result of their administrative responsibilities, women were more likely to report having no time to conduct research and the tension of trying to find time to conduct research. In contrast, men who were not research active reported the irrelevancy of conducting research to their current function in the university. Research productivity was portrayed by men as more of a conscious decision, rather than an unmet responsibility. One man noted:

> But that wouldn't work for me. It would mean a significant cut in pay to do that, because I teach overloads[3]. I teach in special programs and receive compensation for doing that. Switching to a research agenda would cost me. I might…I may do it in the future, but right now it doesn't…it doesn't work out.

Another phenomenon reported that bears mentioning is the impact on "woman's ways of knowing" and the type of research valued in the academy. One male professor recalled an instance in which, as a member of the Faculty Senate Research Committee, he watched a woman's comments ignored while the men discussed "real" (quantitative, positivist) research. The extent to which women engage in qualitative research methodologies (Belenky, et al. 1986),

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[3] *Overloads* are courses taught above and beyond the normal faculty course load for which the faculty member receives additional pay.

they may be perceived as inadequate researchers and not worthy of investment. In this case, they may be less likely to receive internal research support – yet another example of constructive gender bias.

Implications

The findings of this study raise several important implications related to the ability of women to be successful researchers at Topside University. First, informal processes for requesting travel funding, research assistance, and grant support that rely on individual faculty assertiveness may disadvantage women who are socialized to be more collaborative and less assertive (Gilligan 1982). Second, research at Topside is characterized as an individual, entrepreneurial activity. This may be counter to the ways in which many women conceptualize knowledge development and are socialized to operate in the world (Belenky et al. 1986), again potentially putting them at a disadvantage in vying for research support. Third, faculty reported the need for time to conduct research and publish. Those with administrative responsibilities in addition to teaching have less time, by definition. Women were more likely in administrative roles as associate professors. Hence, overall, women were less likely to have the time to conduct and publish research. Once women are in an administrative position, they can become trapped in an academic underclass of faculty who do not receive support as a "rich get richer" system is closed and does not encourage the broad base of research productivity needed for national and international rankings or promotion in rank of individual members of the faculty, including women. Finally, if faculty conceptualize gender bias as only overt bias, and not constructed discrimination -- action not in and of itself discriminatory, but potentially practiced in a discriminatory fashion (Reutter 1985) -- having a disparate impact on women, both men and women may be unwittingly tolerating a great deal of gender bias which ultimately weakens the strength of the university.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and implications of those findings, several recommendations are offered to Topside University and other higher education institutions that wish to pursue the dual goals of maximal research productivity and gender parity. First, universities should create clear, explicit policies related to research support and research expectations that do not force faculty to "guess," be a member of the "network" to have access to funding, or fall victim to a sole gatekeeper who controls access to research support. Added transparency in the system will help both men and women become successful researchers and become eligible for promotion in rank.

In addition, Topside and other universities can promote a strong culture of research by establishing structures for faculty to develop their ideas and receive feedback on manuscripts, both in the early phases of development as well as when documents are completed, prior to submission for publication. In this vein, universities can utilize faculty colloquia to help create a pervasive culture of research, rather than the notion that research is for the select few. Departments can take the lead in organizing "brown bag" sessions, thus enabling faculty to share research. University administrators can encourage cross-department and cross-school forums.

And, when implementing this approach, department chairs should clearly delineate between formal research colloquia and informal sharing of research ideas so that faculty feel comfortable sharing early-stage work.

Universities such as Topside should specifically focus research support on the associate professor in much the same way new faculty members are targeted for research resources. For example, the University should explore specific funding opportunities available only to mid-career professors, in much the same way the University encourages early-career professors such as summer support and opportunities to "stack" courses in a semester to provide more research and writing time in the opposite semester.

Obtaining funding for research is a major focus of a research university, but at Topside, this is an individual, entrepreneurial experience. Topside should explore creating stronger structures of support at the departmental level, rather than relying on individuals. This will allow those who are not in the research cycle to participate as well as help foster a culture of research throughout the school. One way this can be promoted is by hiring faculty as permanent department chairs whose role includes developing funding proposals to support the research of the department. This provides a way to "jump start" the research efforts of all members of the faculty as well as an opportunity to target funds to specific faculty ramping up to promotion and tenure decisions. Another way departments can become the center of research development is by ensuring that a proportion of the indirect costs associated with grant funding are returned to the department to be utilized for further investment in research support, including sponsored research proposals, research assistants, release time for faculty, writing support, and conference travel. Further, department chairs can establish colloquia, both formal and informal for faculty to share research ideas. Participation in these colloquia should be noted on faculty annual reports and rewarded as professional service. Further, by creating the locus of research support at the departmental level, department chairs can be evaluated in part on the degree to which the departmental faculty are research active.

In too many departments and schools in Topside, access to research support and promotion in rank are regulated by a sole gatekeeper. The process is entrepreneurial and private. One unintended consequence of this structure may be constructive bias based on gender or other factors. Creating clear policies that define terms such as "research active," "national recognition," and "significant" will help provide guidance to all faculty and make the promotion in rank process more transparent. Further, developing portfolio review committees at either the department or school level whose purpose it is to review an ongoing promotion and tenure file of all associate professors each year with an eye toward providing feedback and advising the dean on candidates who should be invited to seek promotion in rank, can make the process more transparent and less susceptible to unintended bias of a sole gatekeeper. (See, for example, the University of Western Ontario Faculty Collective Agreement 2006)

The findings of this study suggest that some of the schools and departments at Topside University have developed policies and procedures that systematically support all faculties, including women, succeed in developing their academic career through research productivity. Yet, these exemplars are the exception, not the rule. More faculties reported a weak infrastructure for research, and inequitable access to support within and across departments and schools within the University. Further, given administrative responsibilities, patterns of communication, and their inability to be considered "insiders" in certain circles crucial for promotion, women are particularly vulnerable to being ignored or passed over in the process of promotion from associate to full professor. These practices suggest the University is underutilizing its intellectual capacity, particularly women faculty. The extent to which Topside focuses on these weaknesses it will strengthen its research position overall and enhance its standing among research institutions in the United States and the world.

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