



This issue features commentaries by Laura Wright and Hal Herzog on gender differences in faculty salaries.

Gender (In)Equity

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The WCU branch of the Tar Heel Chapter of the AAUW requested a campus gender equity study in 2011. It was completed and presented in an open forum last semester. One of the main conclusions was "...the faculty portion of the study states that no person's salary was two standard deviations or more from the mean salary for his or her employee group, and thus not large enough to suggest potential discriminatory bias based on Department of Labor guidelines."¹

While WCU appears to be in legal compliance on gender equity, the study shows us (among other things) that female faculty members earn \$2,234 less than male faculty members when controlling for all predictor variables. Consider that over the course of a 30-year career, the difference by simple multiplication amounts to \$67,020. (In reality, differences are compounded annually.) Even if the disparity revealed in the study is not sufficient to mandate action, that's not to say it shouldn't warrant it.

I'd like to take this opportunity to examine how this faculty and institution might address this inequity because, while legally things may be a-okay, to my way of thinking, ethically, if WCU's female faculty members are earning over \$2,000 less than their male counterparts, we are in rather shabby shape.

According to our study, men earn higher average salaries in all ranks. Male full professors at WCU earn – get this -- \$25,363 more than their female counterparts. Say that one is a full professor for 10 years of their career. That's more than \$250,000 that women are getting shorted (again, figures are not compounded).

Suddenly, this legally defensible inequity, I hope you agree, is rather staggering.²

What we see in the higher education gender gap at WCU isn't really abnormal – in fact, we're in better shape than lots of places. WCU's average faculty salary for all men is \$68,667 and \$59,551 for all women; women earn 87 cents for every dollar earned by men. According to Jonah Newman,³ "at doctoral universities . . . women across all faculty ranks make about 78 cents on the dollar, nearly the national average ratio for all women." He also cites work by Kelly Ward, which "cautions that women tend to drop out of the

¹ <http://thereporter.wcu.edu/2014/10/summary-of-faculty-results-from-gender-equality-survey-to-be-presented-oct-29/>

² Furthermore, the salary average for the College of Business, the highest earning college with the most male faculty members, is \$90,470.00. For the College of Arts and Sciences, the lowest earning college with the highest number of female faculty, the average salary is \$56,584.00.

³ <http://chronicle.com/blogs/data/2014/04/11/there-is-a-gender-pay-gap-in-academe-but-it-may-not-be-the-gap-that-matters/>

academic pipeline more often than men do, choosing to stay at the associate-professor rank due to discriminatory workplace practices, parenting choices, or being overlooked for promotion to full professor because of a focus on teaching and service rather than research.” This phenomenon can be seen at WCU, where 69 percent of the 74 full professors included in the study were male.

So we’re doing better than the national average cited above, and while the inequity we do see is not “statistically significant” or legally actionable, gender inequity very much exists at WCU. My sense is that the body of people within our institution who might have believed men should earn more than women is shrinking, and I’m optimistic about a generational shift that will keep women from starting at this particular disadvantage.

If you are in a position to hire, first and foremost recognize the historical tendency to offer women less, and then don’t. Don’t ever offer a woman less than you offer a male counterpart with the same credentials. Ever. She has the same credentials and the same experience; she deserves the same salary. End of story.

But offering is the easy part.

There’s more to consider, both for the potential female hire and for the person doing the hiring. Even if you do offer women and men the same thing, there’s plenty of evidence to suggest that women don’t negotiate, so men will still make more. Linda Babcock’s 2003 *Women Don’t Ask: The High Cost of Avoiding Negotiation* discusses the problem in detail. And there’s more at stake than simply telling women to negotiate – which you should do, and which I do whenever I make a job offer to a woman (or to a man, for that matter) – because research indicates that women are penalized for daring to negotiate.

What might those of us at WCU do to address these very, very real issues?

First, don’t offer women less, and recognize that women have a harder time with negotiations.⁴ More importantly, we need to acknowledge that there is a very real bias against women who dare to negotiate – and male and female employers are guilty of this bias. We need to encourage women to negotiate and let them know that we won’t hold them to a standard to which we wouldn’t hold a man. And we need to mean it. That means being aware of our own tendencies to engage in this bias and making sure we don’t hold against women things we wouldn’t hold against men.

Second, we need to recognize that gender inequity isn’t just a women’s issue; it’s as important for men to take responsibility for changes as it is for women to call the system to account for its inequity. If you are a male department head or dean (and nearly all department heads and deans at WCU are men), then gender pay inequity is very much your issue *because it is something you can actively do something about*; it’s something you can recognize and change.

Finally, if you are a male faculty member with a female faculty member partner who has a child, you should seriously consider taking paternity leave.

Bill Clinton signed the Family and Medical Leave Act in 1993, and that act requires companies to allow 12 weeks of leave to new parents. While men can take such leave, they seldom do, and their female partners lose time at work (which translates as time to build one’s CV in order, in particular, to attain full professor status, a metric that could very well shift the inequity dynamic in significant ways). I know exactly one man who has taken paternity leave in the time that I’ve been at WCU, which isn’t to say that there aren’t others out there. But I know of only one. And to my mind, he’s done something powerful in terms of changing the culture at WCU. He’s shown both his colleagues and WCU he thinks childcare is as much his responsibility as his partner’s.

⁴ <https://hbr.org/2014/06/why-women-dont-negotiate-their-job-offers/>

According to Clare Cain Miller, “peer influence can change workplace culture, too, according to a study published in the *American Economic Review* in July. The study found that when a man’s co-workers took paternity leave, it increased the chance he would take it by 11 percentage points.”⁵ Such a move not only allows women to better maintain their career agenda, which, in turn allows them access to more money and more professional opportunities, but it also indicates that men – and in turn the places they work – place a real value on childcare, which has been a historical nightmare for WCU. My very real belief is that when childcare becomes a men’s issue as well, we might see some change in that area.

I would love for WCU to be the campus model of an institution where women earn the same salaries as their male counterparts. And, when I go to my dean and say “I want x,” he often tells me “people in Hell want iced tea.” But I know and respect the wisdom, insight, and ability of my colleague to bring real change to fruition. As faculty, we are the highly educated, the elite; we are the people in the world who have the most information about injustice and inequity. We should find it our duty to address such circumstances wherever we see them, to call them out and to refuse to participate in them.

These are my thoughts, but I’d love to hear yours. If you have ideas about how we move forward from here, please send a response to be published in next month’s Faculty Forum. It’s time for serious conversation about solutions to the gender inequity problem on this campus.

“In Compliance” Is an Unreasonably Low Bar

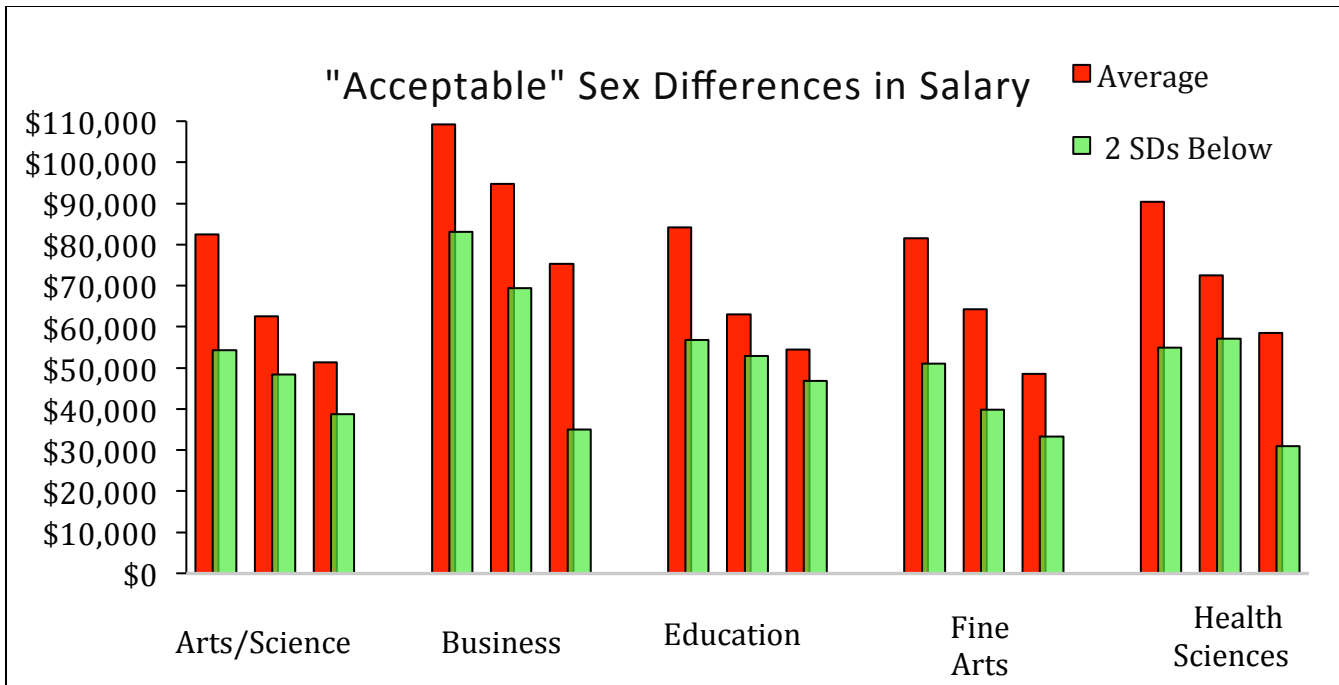
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The WCU salary study found that, on average, female faculty members make about \$10,000 less than males. However, Henry Wong and University legal counsel Mary Ann Lochner repeatedly emphasized in their presentation to the faculty in November that the study’s most important finding was that WCU is “in compliance” with federal regulations on sex differences in pay. This claim is, in fact, true. But, as Laura Wright indicated above, there is a difference between what is legal and what is right. And the devil is in the statistical details.

Wong and Lochner emphasized that to be “out of compliance” with federal guidelines means a woman is paid more than *two standard deviations* (2 SDs) below a male with similar qualifications. For a perspective on the meaning of two standard deviations, consider IQ scores. A person with an IQ two SDs below the average would have a score of 70, which falls into the American Psychiatric Association’s category of “mentally disabled.” The problem is that SDs tend to be especially large when group sizes are small. This was true of the groupings used in the WCU salary study. Indeed, a footnote at the bottom of Table 4 in the report acknowledges that “most of the WCU faculty groupings did not meet the federal minimum size of 30.

The upshot is that, according to the “two SD rule,” very large sex differences in salaries at WCU would still -technically- be “in compliance.” This is shown in the graph below which is based on data from the report. The red bars on the graph indicate the *actual* average salaries (in declining order) for professors, associate professors, and assistant professors in each of the five colleges at WCU. The green bars indicate legally acceptable salaries 2 SDs below the average.

⁵ http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/09/upshot/paternity-leave-the-rewards-and-the-remaining-stigma.html?_r=0



The graph shows, for example, that if a male assistant professor in the College of Business were to make \$77,353 a year (the college average), WCU would still be in compliance even if his female counterpart was paid \$36,000. Clearly, the two-SD rule is an unacceptably low bar which does little to assuage concerns about gender bias in faculty salaries.

Ironically, the University did not need to go the two-SD route in justifying the present salary schedule. The gender study was well-done, and the authors were correct in arguing that most of the gender pay gap at WCU is attributable to structural factors and not overt discrimination. These include differences in career longevity, promotions, prestigious positions such as distinguished chairs, and, most importantly, what college you are in. For example, female associate professors in the College of Arts and Sciences earn, on average, \$30,000 less than women at the same rank in the College of Business. Large sex discrepancies in pay will remain a problem at WCU until these structural issues are addressed. This can be done by increasing salaries in low-paid departments which are often disproportionately female, by recruiting women at the associate and full professor levels, and by hiring more women in high-paying departments.

Editor's Note

The Faculty Forum will be published the third Monday of each month during the fall and spring semesters (except holidays). Please consider contributing to these campus conversations.

1. Lead Commentary. This is an essay written by a faculty member addressing an issue, hot topic, or project of interest to the general faculty.

2. Responses. These are faculty comments about and reactions to the previous months' FF. They are often substantive, even critical responses to the essay of the previous month. The **Responses** section is a great way to engage in discussion around campus. See the attached response to the November issue.

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