Regarding Gender: Eight SEC Doctoral Granting Land Grant Institutions
Women’s Leadership Institute Auburn University
2015

ABSTRACT

This study contextualizes the circumstances of women academics in the South Eastern Conference (SEC) within a broader framework of the national landscape of gender inequity. The doctoral institutions included are a subset of land grant universities in the Southeastern United States including Auburn University in Alabama, the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, the University of Florida, the University of Georgia, the University of Kentucky, Louisiana State University, Mississippi State University, and the University of Tennessee at Knoxville.

Examining pay, hiring, promotion, and academic leadership, it explores the question of a potential relationship between the gender composition of the institutions’ upper administrations and the pay trends and hiring practices as they differ between men and women at these schools. It is supported with data provided by the American Association of University Professors, the American Association of University Women, and from data compiled by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education in the United States.

Introduction

The Southeastern Conference, known as the SEC, typically conjures images of spectacular football teams which are often associated with fine universities. While the SEC universities vary in size and mission, the doctoral granting land grant institutions among them share something in common besides outstanding football teams. These universities have not yet reached parity between men and women in pay, hiring, and promotion among their faculty members. Nor have they reached a critical mass of women among their academic leadership. Academic women may not garner the authority and influence necessary to affect policy that reflects the values of both men and women until a critical mass (one third) of academic leadership is made up of women.

Marie Wilson argues in Closing the Leadership Gap: Add Women, Change Everything that “when it comes to women’s leadership, we live in a land of deep resistance, with structural and emotional impediments burned into the cultures of our organizations, into our society, and into the psyches and expectations of both sexes” (Wilson, 2007). These cultural impediments
may be more salient in the southern United States where long held traditions tend to slow cultural change. As Wilson notes, the contributions women bring will not be valued until the perception of women as leaders changes within the culture (Wilson, 2007).

The study below examines the relationship between academic leadership in the SEC and equity in pay, hiring, and promotion within the SEC doctoral granting land grant universities. The question raised is, does a lack of a critical mass of women in academic leadership slow the rate at which women at these universities advance towards equity in pay, hiring, and promotion, or does the slow rate of advancement for these women faculty members prevent them from entering academic leadership positions at a pace that matches their representation within the universities. Neither answer bodes well for women academics at the SEC doctoral granting land grant institutions who intend to assume leadership positions within their institutions.

**Trends in Pay at the SEC Doctoral Granting Land Grants**

Table 1 examines the percentage of pay that women earned compared to men at eight SEC doctoral granting land grant institutions in the South. The percentages are culled from public information provided by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). The eight schools examined are Auburn University in Alabama, the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, the University of Florida, the University of Georgia, the University of Kentucky, Louisiana State University, Mississippi State University, and the University of Tennessee at Knoxville.

At all three professorial levels examined—full professor, associate professor, and assistant professor—women made less on average than their male counterparts in every instance from 2001-2014, except for at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville where women reached salary parity (earning 100% of men’s salary on average) at the assistant professor level in the 2013-2014 academic year.

At the full professor level, Mississippi State University paid women 12% less than it paid men in academic years 2001-2002, 2010-2011, and 2013-2014. However, Mississippi State University has seen incremental improvements in reaching salary parity at the other two levels, associate and assistant professor. At the associate professor level, women made 10% less in 2001-2002, 6% less in 2010-2011, and 7% less than men in 2013-2014. At the assistant professor
level, women made 9% less in 2001-2002, 3% less in 2010-2011, and 5% less than men in 2013-2014.

The largest salary disparities at the full professor level among these SEC schools were at Auburn University, Louisiana State University, and the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. At both Auburn and the University of Tennessee Knoxville, the gap between men’s and women’s average salary at the full professor level increased 5% between 2001 and 2014. Auburn paid women full professors an average of 7% less than men in 2001-2002, 11% less than men in 2011-2012, and 12% less in 2013-2014. The University of Tennessee at Knoxville paid women full professors 10% less than men in 2001-2002, and 15% less in 2011-2012 and in 2013-2014. Women full professors at LSU saw a 6% increase in the gap between their pay and that of their male counterparts between 2010-2011 and 2013-2014.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Avg. full professor</th>
<th>Avg. associate professor</th>
<th>Avg. assistant professor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auburn University</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Arkansas at Fayetteville</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Florida</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Georgia</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Kentucky</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana State University</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi State University</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Tennessee at Knoxville</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: *data from AAUP
*women/men faculty salary percentage
In a recent study, Renzulli et al argue that the issue of academic pay inequality is “complex, nonlinear, and deeply embedded within the academic structure” (Renzulli et al, 2013). Typically the inequities are thought to come from three sources: segregation by discipline with women being concentrated in lower paying divisions such as humanities and men in greater numbers in the sciences; organizational segregation with women more often accepting appointments at lower paying institutions, and finally, rank, with women being promoted to full professor much more slowly than men (Renzulli et al, 2013). Just as women are promoted to full professor more slowly, they are also less likely to enter academic leadership positions at which decisions such as those about salary and promotion are made.

It is worth noting that nationally across the doctoral granting land grant universities in the United States, women academics do not earn as much, on average, as their male counterparts. With one exception, the gap between what men and women academics earn at the SEC schools is slightly larger than it is nationally.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Avg. full professor</th>
<th>Avg. associate professor</th>
<th>Avg. assistant professor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SEC doctoral granting land grant average</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National doctoral granting land grant average</td>
<td>91.2%</td>
<td>90.8%</td>
<td>93.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: *data from AAUP
*women/men faculty salary percentage

Table 2

Updated version: Sept 22, 2014

In four of the states in which the SEC doctoral granting land grant universities are located, fully employed women statewide make less than the national average of 78%. Women in Arkansas and Mississippi make 77% of what fully employed men make. Women in Alabama make 76% of men’s earnings, and in Louisiana, women make a startling 66% of men’s earnings. Women in Florida, Georgia, and Tennessee fare better but still make less on average than their male counterparts according to the American Association of University Women.
The Gender Pay Gap

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data from U.S. Census Bureau
*Updated version: Sept 22, 2014

The pay gap is frequently attributed to the fact that women often work in lower-level and less demanding occupations than men do. While “segregated labor dynamics have played a role in the gender pay gap by funneling women into lower-tier jobs and occupations in both private sector and academic labor markets,” more striking, according to Renzulli et al, is that compared to “the labor market generally, jobs in academia performed by women and men are more similar” than they are in other employment sectors. Since men and women in academia typically perform the same jobs with the same evaluation criteria, the reasons for the pay gap are more arbitrary and difficult to explain (Renzulli et al, 2013).

One explanation is “reward dualism,” in which cultural expectations are framed in such a way that men’s work is valued more than women’s even when they occupy the same locations. Even more interesting is that, according to Renzulli et al, “both men and women in female-dominated niches are paid less than faculty in male dominated niches” (Renzulli et al, 2013). Men are paid less when they work in traditionally female areas.
Trends in Hiring at the SEC Doctoral Granting Land Grants

The information in the following six graphs regarding the eight SEC doctoral granting land grants examined here was prepared by Auburn University’s Women’s Leadership Institute using raw data provided by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) at www.ipeds.org. NCES is the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education in the United States.

At the eight SEC doctoral granting land grants, the number of full time faculty members increased 33.6% between 1980 and 2011. The number of women full time faculty members at these institutions combined increased 17.6%. In 1980, women accounted for 19.4% of the overall faculty (1181). By 2011, women made up 37% (3015) of full time faculty members. However, between 2008 and 2011, the number of women in full time faculty positions at the eight institutions increased only slightly. Although women had not reached parity in full time faculty positions by 2011, they had reached a critical mass, having made up a little more than one third of the faculties at the SEC doctoral granting land grants.

The number of faculty members who reached the rank of full professor at the SEC doctoral granting land grants increased slightly between 1980 and 2011 growing from 31% of the total average of the combined schools to 32.04% of the total average at these institutions. The number of women who reached full professor rank increased from 5.44% (with 103 women full
professors) in 1980 to 20.5% (with 536 women reaching rank of full professor) in 2011. Although there was a 15.06% increase in the number of women reaching full professor in the SEC, the total percentage (20.5%) remained below one third. Women had neither reached parity nor critical mass at the full professor level at which decisions in promotion and equity in leadership are typically made. (See Figure 2 below.)

![Faculty at the Full Professor Rank SEC Doctoral Granting Land Grants 1980-2011](image)

Figure 2

The number of faculty members who reached the rank of associate professor at the SEC doctoral granting land grants combined decreased from 31.67% (1933) in 1980 to 27.6% (2251) in 2011 of the total average of the combined schools. The number of women who reached associate professor rank increased from 15.57% (with 301 women associate professors) in 1980 to 37.18% (with 837 women reaching rank of associate professor) in 2011. Over three decades, the percentage of women reaching associate professor has increased but not in proportion to the percentage of men who reached the rank of associate professor at these institutions. (See Figure 3 below.)
In 1980, women accounted for 27.06% (464) of assistant professors at the combined SEC doctoral granting land grant institutions. By 2011, women made up 42.65% (783) of assistant professors suggesting that the number of women hired into tenure-track positions increased steadily, but fell short of parity with men who were hired at these institutions. (See Figure 4 below.)
The figure below illustrates the number of women and men in faculty positions at the full, associate, and assistant professor ranks at the SEC doctoral granting land grant institutions between 1980 and 2011. While the number of women in ranked professorships has increased, the graph clarifies that the gap between men and women becomes greater as faculty members climb the ranks to the full professor level. The graph also indicates that the total number of women in ranked faculty positions remained consistently lower than the total number of men in ranked faculty positions. (See Figure 5 below.)

Unranked, non-tenure track faculty grew from 9.24% (564) of the overall faculty in 1980 to 17.82% (1453) of the overall faculty in 2011 at the combined SEC doctoral granting land grant institutions. Women in unranked, non-tenure track positions at these institutions increased from 55% (313) in 1980 to 59% (859) in 2011. The unranked, non-tenure lines are the only faculty positions in which women outnumber men. The unranked, non-tenure track positions are the positions holding the least power, authority, and opportunity for advancement. They are also paid the least. (See Figure 6 below.)
Nationally, faculties are becoming more segmented between primary tenure track jobs and secondary non-tenure track jobs. This segmentation has led to a marked gender-segregation with women disproportionately represented in lower-paying, non-tenure track jobs (Renzulli et al, 2013). So at the same time that women are disproportionately represented in fewer full professor positions than men with the decision making authority and leverage associated with that rank, women are also disproportionately entering the academic job market at a higher rate in unranked positions from which they cannot expect to be promoted through the ranking system.

The graph below illustrates the linear forecast for faculty positions at the SEC doctoral granting land grant institutions. The raw numbers were culled from information available from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) at [www.ipeds.org](http://www.ipeds.org), and the linear forecast was calculated by the Women’s Leadership Institute at Auburn University. The projections indicate that if trends continue at the same rate as in the past, women faculty at the assistant professor rank will reach parity (1046 women and 1046 men) in approximately 15.7 years. Women faculty at the associate professor rank will reach parity (1135 women and 1135 men) in 14.6 years. Women at the full professor rank will not reach parity with men at the full professor rank in the next twenty years. It is likely to take more than 92 years for women and men to reach parity at the full professor rank at the SEC doctoral granting land grant institutions. (See Figure 7 below.)
When women are not equally represented among faculties, particularly at the full professor level, the consequences reach far beyond the faculty itself. Research is affected since women’s concerns are less often discussed and explored. According to Marie Wilson, the lack of women at the top affects the very questions that are asked. In addition, women in academic leadership positions “serve as powerful role models and mentors to younger women starting out on the path to leadership themselves. Thus, these leaders can serve to bring out the best in women of not only this generation but several generations to come” (Wilson, 2009). Since women cannot expect to see parity in the full professor ranks for several decades, many younger women may be denied the opportunity to interact with women mentors among the highest ranks.

**Beyond Faculty Hires and Pay Equity**

Looking beyond the faculty to the upper echelons of administrative responsibility at the SEC doctoral granting land grant institutions, the figure below (culled from the institutions’ public web sites in 2014) indicates that gender disparity is pervasive among the institutions’ boards of trustees and among presidents. However, as of 2014, parity has been reached at the level of provost with four of the eight schools having appointed women to this role. None of the SEC schools have appointed a woman as president, and all of the schools fall short of a critical mass (one third) of women serving on boards of trustees.
In 2014, four of the doctoral granting land grant institutions had men serving as both president and provost of the university at the same time their boards of trustees fell short of a critical mass of women representing the universities’ interests. These universities are Auburn University with two women among fourteen board of trustee members (14.3%), the University of Florida with three women among thirteen board members (23%), Louisiana State University with one woman among sixteen board members (6.3%), and Mississippi State University with thirteen women among a board of trustees made up of forty-one members (31.7%). (See Figure 8 below.)
Figure 8
Academic positional leadership is usually defined as encompassing the positions of board of trustee member, university president, provost, dean, chair, and full professor. According to a recent policy brief, women comprise less than a critical mass of one-third of all positional leadership positions across the country at doctoral granting institutions (Madsen et al 2014). According to Madsen, women fare better in academic leadership positions at the nation’s community colleges than at the doctoral granting institutions.

In 2012, the Association of Governing Boards reported that 26.4% of college and university presidents across the U.S. were women, however, that number falls to 22.3% at doctoral granting institutions. Similarly, among boards of trustees at the nation’s colleges and universities, women made up 30% (Madsen et al, 2014). In some cases the presidents also report to a system president or chancellor. At the SEC doctoral granting land grants at which this the case, system presidents and chancellors are men.

A 2013 survey cited by Madsen found that women serve as provost and chief academic officer at roughly 39% of academic institutions in the U.S. (Madsen et al 2014). The position of provost is typically a fluid one in that those holding the position change frequently; so the numbers are not static. Still, at the provost level women have achieved a critical mass nationally, and they have achieved parity among the SEC doctoral granting land grant institutions. An interesting study could explore whether power, pay, and prestige typically associated with that level remains constant with the levels set before critical mass and parity were reached.

The College and University Professional Association for Human Resources in 2013 found that women made up roughly 39% of academic deans within the nation’s institutions (Madsen et al, 2014). Again, these numbers are quite fluid making it challenging to secure accurate counts at any given time. At one SEC doctoral granting land grant institution, Auburn University, women made up roughly 25% of academic leadership positions including deans and chairs during academic year 2013-2014. Within the more technical fields at Auburn, such as in the Colleges of Agriculture, Business, Engineering, Science and Mathematics, Veterinary Medicine, Forestry, and Pharmacy, only four of sixty-nine leadership positions (5.8%) are held by women. Women serve as deans in the Colleges of Education, Human Sciences, and Architecture. (See figure 9 below)
Figure 9
In an effort to discover the root causes of the underrepresentation of women in academic leadership positions, Johns Hopkins University established a committee on the status of women in 2002. The women senior leaders who participated in the study learned that there were four themes: paths to leadership are slower and often blocked for women; leadership positions, as currently defined, are less attractive to women than to men, and possibly are becoming unattractive to an increasing number of men; women already in leadership roles are not as well recognized as men or appropriately rewarded within their institutions, and women are more often excluded from the informal network of intellectual leadership than men (Dominici, 2013). The Johns Hopkins University focus group concluded that further discussion and exploration of these themes is necessary to solve the problem of disparity and inequity in academic leadership. They particularly recommend considering questions of the slow development of women’s careers, and the inadequate recognition of women’s contributions, which undermines women’s career trajectories, stature, and job satisfaction (Dominici, 2013).

Conclusion

This exploration of pay, hiring trends, and upper administrations at eight SEC doctoral granting land grant institutions reveals that among these universities there exists a problem commonly regarded as “the pyramid problem.” In sum, as Mason indicates in The Chronicle of Higher Education, “there are far fewer women than men at the top of the academic hierarchy; those women are paid somewhat less than men” (Mason, 2011). Mason goes on to contend that the systemic problem of gender inequity extends beyond questions of promotion and pay; it is also an issue that causes and affects family formation since women at the top of the academic pyramid are much less likely than men to have children. “At the bottom of the academic hierarchy—in the adjunct and part-time positions—there are far more women than men, and they are disproportionately women with children” (Mason, 2011).

Dominici also notes that for academic women “the timing of tenure decisions often coincides with the optimal childbearing years, requiring women to resolve individually the conflicts between biological and career clocks” (Dominici, 2013). Ultimately, in order for the SEC doctoral granting land grant institutions to shore up pay, hiring, promotion, and leadership inequities, they must consider broad cultural changes that value women’s contributions. They must illustrate that they value women by providing the flexibility and support necessary for equality of opportunity.
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