



Developing a System to Support the Advancement of Women in Higher Education

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Female faculty in higher education face challenges in promotion and are more likely to leave academia than male faculty. Faculty development can play an important role in changing the institutional system within which female faculty work to help support their promotion and retention, which, in turn, can lead to more diverse and equitable systems for supporting a diverse student body. This paper identifies professional development for three groups. One, senior faculty, especially white male faculty, can be trained to be advocates and allies for female faculty by learning how to identify and intervene when discriminatory behaviors occur. Two, department chairs play a key role in creating an equitable and supportive departmental climate for all faculty. Despite their important role, department chairs often receive minimal training. Workshops on family-friendly benefits can help them support their faculty when family issues affect their ability to do their faculty jobs. Finally, promotion and tenure committees are asked to review faculty achievements and make recommendations about whether faculty members have earned promotion and/or tenure. Their recommendations are critical for faculty retention and promotion. We review several ways that gender bias can be addressed through promotion and tenure committee development activities including workshops, simulations, and interactive theater.

BROADLY, THE PURPOSE OF faculty development is to help faculty members succeed in their academic careers. In higher education, one group that has shown lower and slower rates of promotion are women faculty. The National Center for Education Statistics (2019) data show that at each faculty promotional level the percentage of female faculty decreases. For example, female assistant professors are overrepresented (54%), but females make up only 47% of associate professors and only 33% of professors. Attrition of female faculty at each promotional rank has been aptly described as a leaky pipeline. Additionally, women spend more time in the associate professor rank before getting promoted to professor (Misra, et al., 2011). Similarly, female faculty are underrepresented in leadership positions, such as chairs and deans (Bartel, 2018; Bilimoria, et al., 2008).

There are many reasons why it is important to retain and promote female faculty, particularly female faculty of color. Female faculty provide important mentorship for all students, but especially female students. They serve as role models that demonstrate that females, including females of

color, belong and can succeed (Stewart & Valian, 2018), which is particularly important in fields where women and women of color are underrepresented. Female faculty enhance the diversity of ideas in research and decision-making (Stewart & Valian, 2018). And simply, loss of female faculty is costly for an institution. Some of these costs include replacement faculty search costs, damaged reputations, and diminished morale amongst those faculty who remain (Pascalle, 2018; Rockquemore, 2016).

Given the importance of retaining female faculty in academia, it is important to understand the factors that impact women's decisions to leave academia. Rosser (2004) examined data from the National Study of Postsecondary Faculty and found significant relationships between perceptions of work life, job satisfaction and intent to leave. Pascalle (2018) did a similar study using STEM faculty and highlighted the importance of creating positive departmental and campus climates. To achieve a positive climate, supportive male colleagues need to advocate for policies that are viewed as traditionally female-focused, such as family leave (Pascalle, 2018). Deans and department chairs play a

key role in shaping perceptions of the organization as equitable (Pascale, 2018). Additionally, tenure and promotion committees are integral in making transitions through the academic ranks.

In this article, we explore the roles of three groups at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville—peer advocates and allies, department chairs, and promotion and tenure committees—in increasing retention and promotion rates for women in academia and how faculty development can play a role in supporting the successful retention and promotion of female faculty members. SIUE is a medium-sized, doctoral/professional university in the metropolitan St. Louis area. Like other comprehensive universities, we could be considered a *striving institution* where research expectations increase to emulate more prestigious institutions while maintaining heavy teaching loads (Gardner, 2013). Researchers have found that *striving institutions* are often less friendly to women faculty, resulting in a lack of balance between work and family (Henderson & Kane, 1991; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006a; O'Meara & Bloomgarden, 2011). Women at striving institutions tend to show lower job satisfaction (O'Meara, 2007; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006b) and higher intentions to leave (Gardner, 2013; Hagedorn, 2000). Our faculty rank data portrays lower proportions of female faculty at higher ranks (SIUE 2020, Female faculty by rank: Instructor 67%, Assistant Professor 55%, Associate Professor 47%, and Full Professor 39%).

We focus primarily on looking for ways to change the system to make the system more equitable and inclusive rather than ways to train or change the women to work within the system (Bilimoria, et al., 2008). From our perspective, it is the system that is problematic, not the women within the academic institution. Systems are representative of the larger society and political climate in which they reside; they replicate and reproduce power relationships—often at the detriment of white women, people of color, and others whose identities fall at the margins of socially constructed hierarchies of privilege. We also recognize the importance of using an intersectional lens that considers the multiple layers of identity that create gendered experiences within the professoriate. We cannot fully understand the issues that female faculty face without considering their

other identities, including race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, and other characteristics shaping their access to power. Using these perspectives, we turn our attention to allyship programs.

Advocates and Allies

Advocate and Ally programs have been effective tools for institutions seeking to create a culture that retains, attracts, and promotes diverse faculty. Over a dozen institutions have initiated Advocate and Ally programs. These programs primarily focus on best practices for including and advancing opportunities for women currently working in STEM fields at the institutions implementing the programs. Though recruitment is not the primary goal of Advocate and Ally programs, it is a byproduct of such work. Healthy campuses attract diverse faculty pools. Past workshops, by ADVANCE institutions, focus on advocate education, ally training for university leaders, and skill building for men serving as gender equity allies. At SIUE, we have designed workshops which help participants recognize their own biases, engage in difficult conversations, and promote allyship among chairs.

Advocates serve as leaders. They acknowledge the pervasiveness of gender bias (which includes gendered racism, elitism, and heteronormativity). They then address the effects of such bias. They do this by encouraging the recruitment, retention, and promotion of minority faculty. They do this by examining their own self-interests and educating others to do the same. Lastly, advocates do this work by making sure to (re)educate their colleagues—holding regular, informal or formal, education and empowerment trainings for those who wish to serve as allies.

Allies address hegemony within the inner workings of their disciplines, departments, and service obligations. They interact and learn from advocates, attending the training workshops advocates host. Allies then do the work of empowering women, across race and class lines, through co-authorship, mentoring, and creating pathways to career success¹ for these colleagues. In essence, they do the work of being good colleagues.

According to Green (2014), there are several ways that advocates can encourage allies and allies can be of service in addressing institutional gender-based discrimination. One way is to call

¹ An example of this is making sure white women and women of color are not overburdened by unfair service requests.

attention to gender representation within departments, with a special focus on differences in retention across race, gender, and rank. Another tactic is to volunteer to take on service requirements that would, traditionally, be delegated to overburdened white women and people of color (consider the collection *Presumed Incompetent*, Gutiérrez, et al., 2012, for examples).

Advocates and allies are people, throughout the institution, who dedicate themselves to learning about their privileges, educating others on bias, and acting in such a way that the groups they are a part of are challenged and changed—acknowledging and examining the pervasive and hegemonic nature of inequalities. The primary task of advocates and allies is to engage in critical self-reflection, examining individual privileges. In addition to self-examination, advocates and allies also challenge policies and procedures that disempower women and people of color within departments and academic institutions. In doing this much needed work, advocates and allies assist in recruiting, retaining, and otherwise bringing women and people of color to the table—making sure there are equitable pathways to promotions and leadership positions. Their jobs are important, as it is only through intentional equity practices that institutions can create healthy campus climates that are able to recruit and retain qualified, diverse faculty.

The work of university-sponsored advocate and ally programs is essential, as it creates a culture of bias accountability (Anicha, et al., 2018). Institutional goals for equity are best achieved by changing the campus climate and culture. Behavior modification, via self-reflection and education, have been widely demonstrated to be effective (Furst-Holloway & Miner, 2019). By examining, and then interrupting, bias (implicit and explicit), advocates and allies socialize others (via micro and institutional calls for self-reflection) to interrupt bias as well.

Like all social change, this process requires long-term support. Resources are needed to train advocates. Advocates are then in need of university support to sponsor workshops for allies. Regular educational workshops concerning the importance of equity and the damaging effects of bias are needed to help change the culture of the larger campus community. Lastly, both advocates and allies need

institutional support in order to challenge colleagues and leaders in order to recruit diverse faculty, stop leaky pipelines, and to create pathways to career development for women and people of color.

Adapted from the groundbreaking program started at North Dakota State University (see https://www.ndsu.edu/forward/advocates_and_allies/), the advocate training program being developed at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) seeks to recruit senior women and men, specifically white men (although all men, regardless of race-ethnicity, are welcome). Under the guidance of an advisory board composed of women, people of color, and white men, advocates will receive comprehensive training related to power, privilege and allyship work. In line with other ADVANCE grant institutions (for example, see Rochester Institute of Technology, <https://www.rit.edu/nsfadvance/advocates-allies>), our goal is to not only create a campus climate of inclusion but to create a supportive working group of faculty members doing the work of breaking discriminatory norms.

Advocates will be innovators, regularly meeting to examine university functions and address areas in which they observe underrepresentation or mistreatment of minority faculty. Advocates will also serve as ally workshop trainers. They will lead workshops which are inclusive of diverse members from the university community. At these workshops, they will provide opportunities for others to learn action steps for supporting women daily. Allies will be those who regularly attend these workshops and engage in behavior modification in order to support women and people of color working at SIUE.

Certainly, this work is not done without consequence and backlash. Often, those who do not recognize their own biases react to change agents, such as advocates and allies, with apathy, fear or violence (Green, 2014; Weissinger, et al., 2017; Yancy, 2018). Therefore, work for equity and inclusion must also occur at every rank within the institutional hierarchy. Advocates provide faculty development training programs which support the mission of supporting women, addressing implicit bias, while challenging backlash to equity initiatives on the part of the university. Senior faculty and chairs can address backlash by serving as an advocate or ally.

Chair Training to Increase Retention and Productivity

The faculty experience largely is shaped by interactions that occur within the academic department, so much of our work focuses on department chairs. Despite their critical role, most department chairs lack enough support, training and resources to adequately lead their departments and promote a supportive departmental climate. A spring 2020 climate survey of all SIUE faculty ($n = 321$, 48.4% response rate) revealed significant gender disparities in perceptions of climate. For example:

- in the School of Engineering 64% of male faculty and 50% of women faculty agreed that their department creates a healthy climate for *all faculty*
- in the College of Arts and Sciences 81% of male faculty and 55% of women faculty agreed that their department creates a healthy climate for *women of color*
- in the School of Education, Health and Human Behavior 100% of male faculty and 50% of female faculty agreed that their department creates a healthy climate for *international women*.

To address this need, new and ongoing professional development is being provided for chairs. Numerous leadership development workshops for chairs/heads can be found online: for example, see <https://www.ccas.net/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3668> with list of workshops offered by the Council of Colleges of Arts & Sciences ('Academic Leadership', 'Managing People and Conflict', 'Faculty Evaluation', 'Recruitment', 'Retention & Development of Faculty', 'Resource Management', and 'Working with the Dean'). Activities to assist Chair development on our campus include individual and small group meetings with external speakers, workshops with faculty experts, workshops targeting specific skills for chairs (e.g., for conflict management, leadership development, and working with diverse people), informal chair gatherings to discuss journal articles on the topic of gender equity, and equity scorecards for chairs. Two of the more novel activities are described in this section: a new workshop for Chairs on Family-Friendly Benefits with an emphasis on 'Making it Happen in Your Department' and Chair Chats discussing research

articles about equity, inclusion, and results of the recent climate survey.

Many studies have supported development of family-friendly benefits as retention and productivity issues (Christensen, 2017; Christensen, 2019; Drago, et al., 2006; Fine, 2019; Flaherty, 2019; Kachchaf, et al., 2015; Ong, 2019). Some women leave academia following personal and family care situations, such as birth, adoption, spousal and parental care. Leave rates are highest for women, especially underrepresented minority women who described their work environment as chilly (Flaherty, 2019; Turner, 2002) and/or discouraging the use of family leave (Kachchaf, et al., 2015). For women in traditionally male fields (e.g., STEM area) coworkers value the commitment to the job as measured by long hours and constant visibility and availability (Ong, 2019), and thus these women can feel an implicit discouragement of use of family leave policies. To comply with the ideal worker norm, women use bias avoidance behaviors and minimize or conceal family commitments (Acker, 1990; Drago, et al., 2006). These behaviors can result in reduced productivity: happily, those with supportive supervisors have significantly less bias avoidance behaviors (Drago, et al., 2006). In short, work-life programs help women (Christensen, 2019).

A faculty member considering a personal or family-related leave will need to work with their department chair, and thus chairs need information, ideas, and contacts. A workshop for chairs has been developed covering SIUE's family-friendly benefits. In the past 8 years, SIUE has approved several new leave categories that are available in addition to leave provided by the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) that include: modified duties, differentiated workload, parental leave, family leave, and extended leave. Although many universities provide excellent information to their employees about their leave benefits, our workshop focuses on practical information and ideas chairs will need to cover the faculty member's courses and other assignments. We identified four key steps for chairs: 1. *Support your faculty member*, 2. *Ask your faculty member to contact Human Resources (HR)*, 3. *Consider options*, and 4. *Work with your dean's office*.

Support your faculty member. Chairs can either support the faculty member, or they can fur-

ther reinforce a chilly climate by grumbling about their own workload or sputtering about leave for women, etc. Depending on how much information the faculty member is willing to share, a chair can inquire about when the leave might start, when they expect to return (if known), etc. The conversation will likely be ongoing. We have developed a brochure that summarizes our University benefits, and this can be given to any faculty member at any time (<https://www.siu.edu/time/programs/keep.shtml>). In fact, a chair who notices a faculty member in distress should reach out to that faculty member and can remind them about the family-friendly benefits that are available.

Ask your faculty member to contact HR. The faculty member's consideration of leave options may or may not depend on how much sick time (and vacation time for FMLA) that they have available. For example, a newer employee with small amounts of paid leave available may prefer part-time work for 8 weeks instead of paid-leave for 4 weeks. For privacy reasons, it is important that the faculty member, and not the chair, contact HR to determine their exact situation. The chair is, of course, welcome to ask HR general questions about benefits, which might be helpful in their continuing discussions with the faculty member. The faculty member should also be encouraged to inquire about the types of benefits available and learn about which benefits can be combined. Additionally, choices in part-time and extended leave might affect the employee's insurance coverage and retirement benefits; the faculty member needs to be well-aware about how changes in their employment status affect their other benefits when deciding.

Consider options. The chair's options likely will depend on the timing of the notification, i.e., whether the leave is needed immediately or in the future. Some options will depend on the timing of the leave within the semester. For example, options for a faculty member on leave during the first five weeks of a semester are likely different than for leave during the middle or entirety of the semester. The department chair likely will have the greatest clarity regarding: the possible rearrangement of teaching assignments, the importance of a course in each semester, and availability of part-time faculty. Options for a chair to consider include:

- canceling a class with least impact

- rearranging teaching assignments so an important class is moved to another faculty member
- with some advance notice, changing the format of a course (e.g., from 16 to 8 weeks)
- with lots of advance notice, developing a differentiated teaching load (e.g., 4 courses in fall and 2 courses in spring)
- offering x weeks off or 2x weeks part-time (or another ratio)
- combining options—every situation will be different
- thinking outside the box!

Work with your Dean's Office. Perhaps not every department chair is dependent on their dean's office to access lapsed salary and/or financial assistance, but this is true at some universities. Additional options for a chair include requesting funds for a replacement lecturer or overload for another faculty from, for example, lapsed salary if unpaid leave is requested. Chairs can seek input from the dean as they will likely have encountered similar situations previously and they may have even more ideas and options available that they are willing to share.

Throughout the workshop, we remind chairs why it is important to support their faculty. Faculty are entitled to all approved family-friendly benefits and any inconvenience to the chair's time is indubitably small compared to the reasons the faculty member is requesting the leave.

The initial offering of the workshop was effective. Results of a brief post-test showed that chairs who participated in the workshop had significantly higher understanding of family-friendly benefits and options for their faculty than those who did not participate.

A second type of chair development is modeled after the University of Wisconsin's *Chairs Chat*. We have initiated small, informal gatherings for 2–3 chairs/deans, as they may not be familiar with current gender equity studies. Many chairs/deans are data-driven and open to studies that measure and reduce unconscious bias, document the added service load for professors of color, and highlight gender differences in perceptions of their own department climate. The gatherings encourage interactions between departments and increase the content knowledge of chair/deans regarding inequities. This

helps to create a work environment where equity and diversity contribute to stronger programs, successful students, and productive faculty.

Promotion and Tenure Committee Training to Support the Advancement of Women

Promotion and tenure (P & T) committees serve as gatekeepers to academic rank. In order to achieve a promotion to the next academic rank, faculty are evaluated by a committee of their peers. They typically are then evaluated at additional levels within the organizational hierarchy, but a recommendation from the departmental P&T committee is the first evaluation and often sets the tone for further evaluations. As described throughout this paper, various forms of bias have been shown to be inherent in the judgments of P & T committees (Roper, 2019; Sarsons, 2017; Steinpreis, et al., 1999).

Faculty development can help minimize P & T committee bias through workshops. For example, the University of Oklahoma (<http://facultydevelopment.ou.edu/>) offers a workshop called Ensuring a Fair Promotion and Tenure Process which focuses attention on lack of transparency and fairness in the review process. Georgia Tech uses a creative approach to the educate P & T decision-makers using an interactive, online simulation (<https://adept.gatech.edu/activities>) to present the types of discussions that occur during faculty review meetings in their Awareness of Decisions Evaluating Tenure and Promotion (ADEPT) program. Some universities have brought in interactive theater groups (e.g., <https://crlt.umich.edu/crltplayers>, <https://www.unh.edu/powerplay/bias-awareness-intervention>, <http://facultydevelopment.cornell.edu/faculty-workshops-on-teaching-and-working-in-a-diverse-campus/>) to portray the biased actions or statements that might occur during faculty review meetings or other campus situations. Discussions with the audience can explore different techniques for bystanders to use to interrupt bias. These activities can help educate P & T committees and reduce gender bias in decision-making. Discussed below are areas in which bias against women candidates is more prevalent and documented in P & T committees.

One of the tools that is frequently used to assess teaching are course evaluations or student evaluations of teaching (SET). While some research has shown that there are very small gender differences

favoring males in SETs (Wright & Jenkins-Guarneri, 2012), other research shows more complex relationships between gender and course evaluations. For example, some studies show that faculty and student gender interact such that male students rate female faculty lower and female students rate female faculty higher while student gender did not impact male faculty ratings (e.g., Basow, 1995). More recent research (Wallace, et al., 2019) analyzed the written comments provided by students and found that women and faculty of color were more likely to receive negative comments from students. Linse (2017) argued that often these negative comments are given too much weight and reviewers should focus on comments that are representative of faculty performance. Because of the potential for bias, student evaluations should not be the sole indicator of faculty teaching performance and other measurement methods (such as peer reviews, chair observation, and learning assessments) should be included to assess teaching effectiveness.

Other sources of bias come into play when evaluating a female faculty member's research. For example, attributions of credit when work is done collaboratively may be problematic. In a lab study, Heilman and Haynes (2005) examined attributions of credit and concluded that when men and women work together on a male-typed task, women are often judged as "less competent and as having been less influential and less likely to have played a leadership role than were men" (p. 911). At SIUE, female faculty who publish with their male mentors often find that their male co-authors receive more credit for the work. Credit can be impacted by author order practices. Sarsons (2017) found that in fields that list authors alphabetically regardless of contribution women who work with men are penalized when applying for tenure by receiving less credit for their work. In contrast, in fields that list authors based on their contributions to the work, women's contributions are more fairly assessed. P & T committees need to discuss the value of collaborative work and strive to consistently evaluate the collaborative contributions of men and women.

In evaluating faculty research contributions, another potential pitfall involves the use of journal impact factors. The San Francisco Declaration of Research Assessment from the American Society for Cell Biology (2012) (<https://sfdora.org/>) identifies

the issues involved with using journal impact factors as a proxy for research quality. Instead, articles should be carefully reviewed based on the merit of the research and ideas rather than being judged on the quality of the journal in which the article was published (Stewart & Valian, 2018).

Evaluation of female faculty service can also be challenging. Female faculty and faculty of color often have heavier service loads, particularly when they are underrepresented in the field. For example, they may mentor more students (Misra, et al., 2011). The gender disparity in time allocation is largest at the associate professor rank. Misra, et al. (2011) found that female associate professors spend one hour more per week teaching, two hours per week mentoring students, and about five hours per week doing service compared with male associate professors. These gender differences in time allocation have been linked to lower job satisfaction and higher turnover intentions (Misra, et al., 2011). Moreover, Heilman and Chen's (2011) research demonstrated that men are rewarded for altruistic citizenship work while women are penalized for failure to participate in this type of service, which creates a system of unequal expectations and rewards for men's and women's service. Clearly articulating service expectations, particularly for associate professors, would help ameliorate this inequity (Stewart & Valian, 2018). This type of bias highlights the important role of deans and chairs in reviewing teaching, mentoring, and service loads for their faculty to ensure gender equity (Misra, et al., 2011).

The timing of tenure often coincides with the childbearing years. The demands of childbirth, adoption, and parenting can limit faculty productivity. For this reason, many institutions have instituted *stop the clock* policies, which give faculty members tenure clock extensions. It is important for P & T committees to have clear expectations regarding the implications of a tenure extension. Faculty with a tenure clock extension should be evaluated based on the normal expectations of a faculty member without an extension. Even though they are given extra time, that time should not raise performance expectations.

Bias reduction workshops can be offered to help P & T committee members identify gender biases when evaluating faculty performance. At the risk of increasing the service burden for women and

faculty of color, attention should be paid to having diverse P & T committee membership. Importantly, it should be recognized that everyone has biases, and the committee members should commit to calling each other out and being called out for biased decision-making.

Conclusion

Diversity initiatives in higher education must address recruitment, retention, and promotion of women faculty, particularly women of color. These initiatives are synergistic and must be coordinated across the institution at all levels to create a healthy campus climate. For example, recruiting without addressing retention issues creates revolving doors and does not yield long-term change (Rockquemore, 2016). Faculty development can play an important role in changing the institutional system within which female faculty work to help support their promotion and retention, which, in turn, can lead to more diverse and equitable systems for supporting a diverse student body. General faculty bias training along with targeted faculty development supporting advocates, allies, chairs, and P & T committees are crucial to achieve the goals of gender equity in academia.

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