

The Price Paid by Women Who Serve -- Gender Disparities in Academia

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A very provocative study, [The Ivory Ceiling of Service Work](#), conducted at my institution, UMass Amherst, by Joya Misra, Jennifer Hickeys Lundquist, Elissa Dahlberg Holmes and Stephanie Agiomavritis, is being released today in *Academe*. The study, based on a survey of 350 faculty, confirmed growing scholarship that, when it comes to promotions to full professorship, women may hit a glass ceiling near the top of the ivory tower.



Men still hold more than [three-quarters of full professorships](#) in the United States, and women's share of full professorships has increased only marginally over the last several decades. Women are less likely ever to be promoted to full professor than men, and their promotions take longer. A 2006 report of the Modern Language Association's Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession, [Standing Still: The Associate Professor Survey](#), showed that women professors in the association were less likely to be promoted than their male counterparts, and it took women from one to three and a half years longer than men to advance to full professorships, with women at doctoral universities lagging farthest behind.

The situation is no better in STEM fields: A [study](#) of tenured and tenure-track women faculty members in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields by Georgia Institute of Technology sociologist Mary Frank Fox and cultural studies and literature professor Carol Colatrella identified ambiguity in institutions' criteria for promotion to full professor. While most faculty members interviewed could identify the expectations for tenure, fewer could identify the expectations for promotion to full professor. This lack of clarity opens the door for promotion based on vague criteria rather than straightforward expectations.

INSIDE Higher Ed has a terrific summary of this study, called, [The Gender Gap on Service](#), and notes that for years, women have complained that they are assigned a disproportionate share of departmental service duties. Some suggested strategies for changing this climate from this study:

- Colleges work to replace lost faculty lines. By relying increasingly on adjuncts -- many of whom do not serve on committees, have formal advising duties, and so forth -- colleges have forced more service duties on associate professors. (Many departments try to protect junior faculty members on the tenure track, so they can meet research expectations for tenure.)
- "Cultural changes also matter," the report argues, regardless of how many faculty members are in a department. "Deans and department chairs or heads need to examine teaching, advising, mentoring, and service responsibilities to ensure that all faculty members pull their weight and are rewarded accordingly," the study says.
- And I would add the following: there need to be mechanisms in place to reward exceptional service at all levels. As a Chaired Full Professor, who cares for the institution, I have co-written proposals to acquire faculty lines, which were successful, and as a consequence, 3-4 new faculty were hired in the past 3 years for our group. Without this additional effort on my part for which I received no added compensation or even recognition (besides some muted applause) our "group" would have been left with the department chair supervising two Full Professors (and we run programs at the undergrad, MBA, and doctoral levels).

Women need to start taking care of themselves and their careers and administrators need to advocate for the recognition of women for their contributions in all dimensions of research, teaching, and service and to back them with promotions and financial compensation.

The exploitation of successful women under the gaze of "service" needs to be put to a stop.

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