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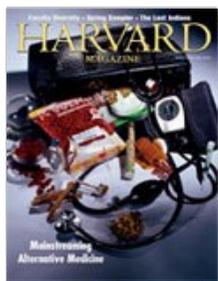


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Forum

Faculty Diversity

Too little for too long

by Cathy A. Trower and Richard P. Chait

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When alumni, after a long absence, stroll through Harvard Yard or return to any other university campus, two questions usually come to mind: "What's different?" and "What's the same?"

Even a casual observer visiting alma mater for the first time in 30 years would be quick to notice that today's students look different. This is not just a matter of fashion (though that's surely true), but also a matter of faces. Colleges in general are now far more diverse than three decades ago. In 1971, 42 percent of undergraduates were women, versus 56 percent in 2001; 8.4 percent were African Americans, now 11 percent; and 2.8 percent were Hispanic, now 8 percent. In 1976, 1.8 percent of college enrollees were Asian Americans; now the number stands at 6 percent. Women and minority students are particularly well-represented at elite institutions. ([Table 1](#))

On the other hand, a close observer would notice that faculty members around the country seem pretty much the same. Professors do not dress all that differently these days--we seem to have wardrobes that are timelessly out-of-style--or look that different. Despite 30 years of affirmative action, and contrary to public perceptions, the American faculty profile, especially at preeminent universities, remains largely white and largely male.

Women currently represent 36 percent of full-time faculty compared to 23 percent in the early 1970s.

Although this represents a very substantial gain nationwide, women constitute only 25 percent of the full-time faculty at research universities, versus 10 percent in 1970. Faculty of color remain a very small part of the professoriate. (Whites constituted 95 percent of all faculty members in 1972 and 83 percent in 1997.) Most of the growth in minority participation has been by Asian Americans, from 2.2 percent in 1975 to 4.5 percent in 1997. The percentage of African-American faculty members at all levels has been remarkably stagnant--4.4 percent in 1975 and 5 percent in 1997--and almost half of all black faculty teach at historically black colleges. The increase in Hispanic faculty has also been slow: from 1.4 percent in 1975 to 2.8 percent in 1997.

Usually, what's different on a college campus provokes a degree of anxiety among alumni, while what remains the same offers a measure of comfort. But with respect to diversity, the opposite may be true. Substantial changes in student demography are probably a point of pride, since most Americans--more than 90 percent in a recent poll--agree that it's important to have students of different races, cultures, and backgrounds in higher education. What has barely changed, the demographics

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of the faculty, should be cause for concern.

Who teaches matters. In fact, the most accurate predictor of subsequent success for female undergraduates is the percentage of women among faculty members at their college. Although most women study at coeducational institutions, those who have attended women's colleges earn two to three times as many advanced degrees as those attending coed schools. For women of color, the difference is even more pronounced: among African-American women awarded doctorates in biology between 1975 and 1992, for example, 75 percent graduated from black colleges, most notably two women's colleges--Spelman and Bennett.

Faculty Roll Call

Research universities, the focal point of this article, employ the largest number of full-time faculty members, conduct the most influential research, and produce the majority of doctorates. These institutions employed 32 percent of the full-time faculty in the United States in 1998, and accounted for 24 percent of all faculty members if part-timers are included. In addition, such institutions enrolled 21 percent (15 percent public, 6 percent private) of all students in 1998. Nonetheless, it's important to remember that a majority of faculty members work in other kinds of higher-education institutions.

FACULTY BY INSTITUTIONAL TYPE, 1998

	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total Faculty	% of Total
Total	560,393	416,024	976,417	100%
Public research	137,532	35,762	173,294	18%
Private research	38,953	14,769	53,722	6%
Public doctoral	58,054	25,539	83,593	9%
Private doctoral	20,655	18,017	38,672	4%
Public comprehensive	83,041	48,401	131,442	13%
Private comprehensive	37,508	36,709	74,217	8%
Private liberal arts	47,486	32,970	80,556	8%
Public 2-year	102,463	170,092	272,555	28%

Why is it, especially relative to student diversity, that premier universities have made so little progress over so many years with faculty diversity? What's the problem? What are the obstacles? And how might innovative measures--such as revisiting the assumptions underlying tenure, and a commitment to disclosure, publicity, and rankings of tenuring practices--swing the balance more effectively toward diversity? Finding solutions now is particularly important, when a

generational wave of faculty hiring nationwide lies just ahead.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

The popular explanation of the problem holds that there are insufficient numbers of women and minorities on the pathway from graduate student to faculty member. Academics label this the "pipeline problem." As the data that follow indicate, this is only half right: true for minorities, false for women. Indeed, if *the* problem were the pipeline, one might expect that 30 years of the "good-faith effort" required of universities by affirmative-action regulations would have borne more fruit.

The lack of success invites another hypothesis: that the pipeline is *not* the basic problem. In fact, even if the pipeline were awash with women and minorities, a fundamental challenge would remain: the pipeline empties in-to territory women and faculty of color too often experience as uninviting, un-accommodating, and unappealing. For that reason, many otherwise qualified candidates forgo graduate school altogether, others withdraw midstream, and still others--doctorate in hand--opt for alternative careers. In short, the pipeline leaks.

Before considering the barriers that women and minorities confront en route to academic appointments and cherished tenured posts, a few more data on the current composition and distribution of faculty at American colleges and universities can help flesh out the current, generally bleak picture:

* 94 percent of full professors in science and engineering are white; 90 percent are male.

* 91 percent of the full professors at research universities are white; 75 percent are male.

* 87 percent of the full-time faculty members in the United States are white; 64 percent are male.

* Only 5 percent of the full professors in the U.S. are black, Hispanic, or Native American.

* The gap between the percentage of tenured men and the percentage of tenured women has not changed in 30 years.

([Tables 2](#) and [3](#))

Women in the Academy

In 2000, women earned more than half of the bachelor's (56 percent) and master's degrees (57 percent) and 44 percent of the doctoral degrees awarded nationwide. The percentage of women with advanced degrees has increased steadily for 30 years. ([Table 4](#)) The trouble for women is not the lack of numbers in the pipeline; the problem is that their status, once in the academy, is low.

FACULTY, BY GENDER AND RANK, 1980 AND 2000

	Men		Women	
	1980	1998	1980	1998
Professor	90%	76%	10%	24%
Associate Professor	79%	61%	21%	39%
Assistant Professor	66%	55%	34%	45%
Instructor	57%	41%	48%	59%
Lecturer	57%	45%	43%	55%

Women are more likely than men to hold lower academic ranks and work at less prestigious institutions. Even though the proportion of men decreased across all ranks from 1980 to 2000, men still occupy the majority of positions at senior ranks (especially full professor and associate professor). The disparities between men and women become more pronounced as one ascends the academic career ladder. And although the percentage of female full professors has increased substantially, women still hold only 16 percent of full professorships at doctoral institutions, compared to 40 percent at two-year colleges. ([Table 5](#)) The more prestigious the institution, the higher the proportion of male faculty overall, and, of course, the reverse is true for women. In fact, the gap between males and females by rank is much the widest at the most esteemed institutions (i.e., nearly one-half of male faculty members at doctoral institutions are full professors--*five times* the representation of women; at two-year colleges, one-third of male faculty members are professors, while one-quarter of women faculty members have attained that rank.) ([Table 6](#))

Nor have women reached parity with men in terms of tenure. As if set in concrete, the proportion of women with tenure lags the rate for men by 20 to 27 percentage points across all types of institutions, with the greatest imbalance at universities. ([Table 7](#))

A study by the Commission on Professionals in Science and Technology revealed that among those in academe with doctorates in science and engineering, only one-quarter of women had been awarded tenure, compared to one-half of men. ([Table 8](#)) The share of faculty positions in science and engineering with tenure has been quite constant for both men (80 percent) and women (56 to 60 percent) between 1975 and 1995. In the humanities, in 1995 women made up one-third of the faculty, with 49 percent tenured versus 71 percent for men; in the social sciences, women constituted 29 percent of the faculty, of whom just one-fifth had tenure. Eighteen percent of women, versus 10 percent of men, are employed at institutions without tenure, and 37 percent of women, versus 24 percent of men, are employed in non-tenure-track positions. And as is the case with academic rank and institutional prestige, the percentage of tenured women at elite institutions generally falls below overall national averages.

**TENURED WOMEN
FACULTY MEMBERS
AT SELECT ELITE**

INSTITUTIONS, 1999

Institution	Percent of Tenured Women
Harvard	13%
Princeton	15%
Yale	15%
Dartmouth	21%
Williams	25%
Amherst	33%

Closely related to tenured status is the nature of the faculty members' employment. The science and technology commission's study showed that four times as many men as women with doctorates in those fields held full-time faculty positions. Women were less likely than men to be employed full-time: 75 percent of men, 60 percent of women. Overall, women in the academy are more likely than men to be employed part-time (45 percent versus 34 percent); in fact, women constituted a larger portion of the part-time than the full-time faculty in 1999.

At all ranks--across disciplines and institutional types--female faculty members earn lower salaries than men do. Furthermore, the inequities are progressive: that is, the disparity widens from assistant to full professor. In the 2000-2001 academic year, females, on average, earned \$10,301 less than men at public institutions and \$12,895 less at private institutions--and during that period, that wage disparity widened almost 3 percent from the prior year. ([Table 9](#))

Minorities in the Academy

In the case of faculty members of color, the academy does have a stubborn supply-side problem. On the other hand, minorities in professorial careers, like women, are concentrated in lower-status positions.

Minorities earned 16 percent of the master's degrees and 18.6 percent of the doctorates in 2000. Whites accounted for 79.3 percent of all earned doctorates in 2000, followed by Asians at 7.8 percent; other minority groups combined accounted for 10.8 percent. ([Table 10](#)) Blacks were most represented in education (12.4 percent)--and were underrepresented in most arts and sciences fields--while Asians earned 17.5 percent of engineering doctorates.

Still, the relative scarcity of persons of color with doctorates does not entirely explain the lack of progress for minority faculty. The *number* of minority faculty increased considerably between 1983 and 1993--by 44 percent. But the *percentage increase* was much less dramatic--from 9.3 percent to 12.2 percent, mostly attributable to gains by Asian Americans. The proportion of black faculty at predominantly white colleges and universities today--2.3 percent--is virtually the same as in 1979. Even in fields with a relatively ample supply of minority

scholars, such as education and psychology, the proportion of black and Hispanic faculty positions at predominantly white institutions barely approximates the percentages of nonwhites who hold doctorates or professional degrees in those fields.

Minority men and women also hold lower academic ranks than whites. The representation of faculty of color, though low at each rank, has increased overall from 1989 to 1997. Still, minorities accounted for only 11 percent of the full professors in 1997. Women of color made greater progress than men of color in attaining full-professor status (23.2 percent of women faculty members, versus 9 percent of men), yet such women hold only 2.5 percent of full professorships nationwide and men of color constitute only 8 percent of that population; of the remainder, 17 percent are white women, and 72 percent are white men.

FACULTY, BY RACE AND RANK, 1989 AND 1997

	Faculty of Color		White Faculty	
	1989	1997	1989	1997
Professor	8%	11%	92%	89%
Associate Professor	10%	13%	90%	87%
Assistant Professor	14%	17%	86%	83%
Instructor	13%	15%	87%	85%
Lecturer	14%	14%	86%	86%

Members of all minority groups, men and women, are less likely to be tenured than whites. With the exception of Native Americans, however, the percentage-point difference is not as great between tenured minority men and women as between all men and women (consistently 20 or more percentage points). The proportion of tenured faculty of color increased 3 percentage points from 1989 to 1997, but the increase was entirely for minority males; the proportion of minority females actually dropped 1 percentage point. ([Table 11](#))

Minorities, meanwhile, are more likely than whites to work at less prestigious institutions. The highest percentages of black faculty members are found at public comprehensive universities (9.1 percent) and public two-year colleges (6.2 percent). Asian Americans make up 9 percent of the full-time faculty at private research universities and 7.1 percent at private doctoral universities. ([Table 12](#))

THE OBSTACLE: AN UNACCOMMODATING CULTURE

Like other professions, such as medicine, law, or architecture, academe has a strong culture--a set of beliefs and assumptions, often unspoken and unwritten, that guides individual and collective behavior and shapes the way institutions do business. Strong cultures are not easily changed--which can be very advantageous

to an organization, unless and until the culture becomes ill-suited to new external conditions and priorities.

From the start of graduate school and on through the probationary period, new generations of academics are socialized both discreetly and directly by senior scholars to adapt to the dominant norms of the academy. These values include, among others, collegiality, allegiance to disciplines, respect for faculty autonomy, and the sanctity of academic freedom. But there are subtler norms that undercut efforts at diversity: hierarchies of disciplines; gender- or race-based stereotypes; single-minded devotion to professional pursuits; and the relative value assigned to various elements of faculty work (for example, teaching versus research), to various forms of research (pure versus applied, quantitative versus qualitative), and to various outlets for research (refereed versus non-refereed, print versus electronic).

People in powerful positions--professors, department chairs, faculty senate officers, deans, provosts, and presidents--are well-situated to articulate and perpetuate a university's prevalent culture. After all, these individuals, almost by definition, have been well-served by the prevalent norms. Women and minorities, on the other hand, are both under-represented in leadership roles and lack a critical mass--circumstances that afford them little leverage to reduce or eliminate cultural barriers to change. To compound the problem, some members of the majority, for reasons of self-interest or self-defined notions of "quality," are reluctant to grant newcomers a toehold. As a result, the status quo proves to be a formidable and intractable force.

So despite earning doctorates in ever-increasing numbers, many women and persons of color are eschewing academic careers altogether or exiting the academy prior to the tenure decision because both groups experience social isolation, a chilly environment, bias, and hostility. Their common concerns include their limited opportunities to participate in departmental and institutional decision-making; excessive and "token" committee assignments; infrequent occasions to assume leadership positions or achieve an institutional presence; research that's trivialized and discounted; lack of mentors; and little guidance about the academic workplace or the tenure process. As a result, women doctoral students are less likely than men to want to be faculty members, and persons of color are less likely than whites to desire an academic career. Not surprisingly, both groups are less satisfied in the academic workplace than white males. More women and minorities than white men leave the academy in the course of the typically seven-year probationary period.

Young scholars of all races, men and women alike, are not opposed to tenure *per se*. Most appreciate and seek the value of economic security and academic freedom, as well as the status, represented by a tenured appointment. On the other hand, junior faculty are more apt than senior faculty to regard ten-ure as "an outmoded concept." Among untenured faculty, just under half viewed tenure as outdated in 1998, compared to about one-quarter of faculty with tenure. Most of the objections concern tenure in practice, not in principle. In fact, one recent study by Ann Aus-tin (of Michigan State Univer-sity) and R. Eugene Rice (of the American Association for Higher Education) reported that early-career and aspiring faculty were "close to unanimous in their belief that the current tenure process must change" because it does not contribute to an "environment that optimally facilitates [good] work."

Once an almost routine rite of passage, tenure has become increasingly difficult to achieve at the foremost colleges and universities. The hurdles are higher and so are the stakes because, unlike the boom years of the late 1960s and early '70s when positions were plentiful even for faculty members who had been denied tenure, today a negative decision may signal the early death of an academic career. The sources of frustration and dissatisfaction with the tenure process (described by one candidate as "archery in the dark"), are well-documented: ambiguous standards; contradictory priorities and expectations; professional isolation; erratic feedback and inconsistent and incomplete performance reviews; ideological and methodological biases; and the multiple demands of teaching, research, and service. To make matters worse, the tenure timeline, almost cruelly, coincides with the pressures associated with starting a family and establishing financial stability. Small wonder, then, that so many probationary faculty members, most notably women and minorities, dislike the tenure process, or that a substantial subset leave the professoriate.

BEYOND THE FAILURE OF SELF-REFORM

After decades of scholarly research, hundreds of campus committee reports, and scores of disciplinary and professional commissions on faculty diversity, the needle has scarcely moved and the numbers have hardly changed. The history of the academy on the matter of faculty diversity strongly suggests that self-reform has not worked--and probably will not work.

So what are the alternatives? We propose two, both intended to provide greater voice to newcomers to the profession, both intended to exert constructive pressure. The first concerns policy changes, the second concerns tangible results.

The basic document that undergirds academic employment, the "Statement on Tenure and Academic Freedom" published by the American Association of University Professors, dates to 1940--a time when women and minorities were even less prevalent in the academy and when the respective roles of men and women in society were more narrowly defined. Times change, and so do beliefs, values, and priorities. As discussed earlier, newer faculty generally, and women and minorities more particularly, have different preferences based on different assumptions.

We do not contend that the abolition of tenure will somehow solve the problem of faculty diversity. The issue is less one of tenure as an *institution* and more one of tenure in its *implementation*. That is, do the policies and practices of yesteryear best serve contemporary faculty? The proposition might be posed as follows: If a representative random sample of faculty, *selected to mirror the diversity the academy presumably desires*, were to assemble as a "constitutional convention" to rethink tenure policy, would the document that emerged essentially paraphrase or materially depart from the 1940 AAUP statement? We do not know. We think, however, that the idea merits philanthropic support and deserves to be tested.

Based on research we and several colleagues have contributed to *The Questions of Tenure* (just published by Harvard University Press), we would anticipate popular support at such a convention for these propositions related to tenure policy in practice:

- * The candidate's dossier, as well as the portfolio of peers, should be open to inspection by the candidate.
- * Promotion and tenure committees should reflect a commitment to diversity.
- * The scholarship of discovery (e.g., conventional research) should not outweigh the scholarship of teaching and service.
- * Collaborative research should be valued as much as independent research.
- * Interdisciplinary research should be prized as much as disciplinary research.
- * Probationary periods should either be eliminated or tailored to the candidate's circumstances and discipline, and adaptable to family responsibilities.
- * Tenure-track faculty should be provided clear expectations, unambiguous standards, and consistent counsel.

These operational changes are motivated by deeper suppositions--sometimes explicit, sometimes tacit--which challenge, or at the very least complicate, the "assumptive world" of orthodox tenure. The differences are not about right or wrong, or necessarily even about males and females, or minority and majority. But while there are many exceptions, academics at the dawn of their careers, as a rule, do think differently than colleagues in the twilight of their careers. The key differences in assumptions--again based on research we and colleagues have recently conducted--are these:

NEW VIEW	OLD VIEW
Transparency of the review process assures equity.	Secrecy assures quality.
Merit is a socially constructed, objective concept.	Merit is an empirically determined, objective concept.
Cooperation is better than competition.	Competition improves performance.
Research should be organized around problems.	Research should be organized around disciplines.
Excellent teaching and advising should pay off.	Research is the coin of the realm.
Personal life matters, balance is important.	Separate work and family.
Faculty have a collective responsibility.	Faculty thrive on autonomy.

"Who should make the rules? and "Who should make the decisions?"--two pointed questions nominally about policy and practice--lie just below the surface. In order to make the academic environment more attractive to larger numbers of women and minorities (as well as to many white males), faculties will have to confront these questions and discuss the underlying assumptions.

The second proposal focuses not on conversation, but on visible actions and measurable results. In the next year, with anticipated support from two foundations, we plan to create and conduct a junior-faculty survey that gauges their satisfaction level across a spectrum of top-ranked research universities and liberal-arts colleges. The survey, to be conducted every three or four years, will assess professional factors that enable productive, successful, and satisfying careers.

The academy rests on the idea of empirical research and disclosure of results. We will apply these principles to a project with two aims: to make the academy a more equitable and appealing place for all junior faculty to work in; and to increase the recruitment, retention, and satisfaction of women and minority faculty more specifically.

Surveys on "best places to work" are routine in the corporate sector. In fact, Harvard recently engaged Great Places to Work Institute Inc. to do a study of employee satisfaction. The results of such surveys are published in periodicals like *Fortune*, *Working Mother*, and *American Lawyer*. In the academy, by contrast, a typical candidate for an entry-level position as an instructor or assistant professor lacks important information about how junior faculty at a given institution assess the quality of work, the quality of life, the likelihood of success, and overall satisfaction they have found there. These data can affect decisions about whether to even apply for a vacancy; shape the questions candidates ask (for example, "Why have minority women fared so poorly here?" or "Why does the university lack a formal mentor program?"); and influence candidates to seek certain information (salaries or tenure-success rates by race and gender, policies that govern the promotion and tenure process, or the availability of stop-the-clock provisions to suspend the probationary period during pregnancies or paternal care).

Furthermore, dissemination of the survey results should foster a constructive competition among leading colleges and universities to earn reputations as "the best place for junior faculty (or women, or minorities) to work." Institutions with a validated record as "great places to work" will enjoy a comparative advantage in faculty recruitment, and enlightened self-interest will impel the others to change. The most distinguished universities already compete intensely with each other for faculty members; the survey data have the potential to alter the basis of that competition so as to emphasize more the professional and personal considerations vitally important to new faculty hires.

Although we might all wish that substantial progress toward diversity could be accomplished entirely through discourse and goodwill, the history and demography of the academy suggest otherwise. The time has arrived to chart a different course toward faculty diversity, an essential goal that has eluded too many universities for too long.

The next decade offers an especially propitious opportunity to diversify the academy, because record numbers of new faculty members will be required to accommodate enrollment growth and wholesale retirements (more than one-third of full-time faculty are 55 or older). The University of California system alone needs to hire more ladder-rank faculty in the next 12 years than the 10 campuses currently employ. If the profession does not act now, faculty diversity may be stalled for another 30 years--which would not serve the interests of the academy *or*

society at large.

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