

**Promotion and Senior Women Faculty:**  
**A Study of the Status of Tenured Faculty Women in Six Academic Units**  
**at The University of Texas at Austin**

Co-investigators: Patricia Stout, Janet Staiger and Nancy Jennings

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## **Promotion and Senior Women Faculty: A Study of the Status of Tenured Faculty Women in Six Academic Units at The University of Texas at Austin**

Historically, women have faced sex inequities within the workplace. While one might expect a more equitable environment within academe, research indicates the contrary, particularly in regards to women's career advancement. Studies have indicated sex inequities among academics based on salaries (Kite et al., 2001), rank and tenure (Kite et al, 2001; Tinsley, 1985), and productivity levels (see McElrath, 1992). A recent study conducted at MIT indicates that inequities between men and women faculty have not changed significantly for at least 10 years and that women often face an inhospitable work environment where they have been underpaid, do not have equal access to resources at the University, feel- increasingly marginalized, and are excluded from any substantive power within the University (MIT Faculty Newsletter, 1999 – available online at <http://web.mit.edu/fnl/women/women.html>; [updated and reaffirmed in 2002, Smallwood, 2002](#)). This study examines the academic environment for women associate professors at a large research institution and explores their ability to progress to full professor.

### **Background**

Various groups of concerned University of Texas at Austin (UT) faculty women and men have been working for many years on the issues surrounding improving the equity for female faculty. Among these groups are the long-standing efforts of the Faculty Women's Organization (FWO), the Committee on the Status of Women (chaired by Vice President Patricia Ohlendorf and co-chaired by Professor Janet Staiger), and the Office of the Provost.

In 1999, the faculty at MIT University announced the results of an extended survey of numbers of, salaries of, and resources for faculty women. This national event prompted other Universities to conduct similar studies. At UT, all three of the above groups contributed various efforts toward determining similar data. In particular an initial study conducted by Professors Lucia Gilbert, Shelley Payne, and Linda Reichl for the College of Natural Sciences convinced the Office of the Provost to conduct a University-wide study. Under the direction of Gilbert, the study was completed and posted on the Provost's home web page.

In its on-going efforts, the FWO considered the data. Professor Norma Fowler of the FWO, in consultation with other members of the group, did several statistical analyses and provided new charts and another "report on the reports" (Fowler, et al., "In the Wake of the MIT Report: An Institution's Case Study). To date, Fowler has applied these analyses to six colleges and their faculty: the Colleges of Communication, Engineering, Fine Arts, Liberal Arts, Natural Sciences, and Pharmacy.

Although many findings are of significance to changing the climate for women at The University, one obvious problem is that UT women faculty are not progressing at a rate from the rank of associate professor to full professor in what might be expected for a pipeline theory (time will resolve the inequities after the push by second-wave feminism in the 1970s and accompanying federal legislation). Indeed, data suggested that for the individual colleges the number of years (at the current rate) required to achieve numerical parity would be:

Communication--49 years

Engineering--too small numbers of women faculty to predict

Fine Arts--25 years

Liberal Arts--82 years

Natural Sciences--too small numbers of women faculty to predict

Pharmacy--too small numbers of women faculty to predict

In discussions with the Deans about these matters in Spring 2001, Dean Ellen Wartella of the College of Communication and others suggested that focus groups might help the FWO and administration determine what were the causes for the slow rate of progress toward sex-equity among full professors. While large-scale social and cultural dynamics obviously affected women's choices to pursue certain disciplines, the "stall-out" problem for all fields was evident.

Thus, in Spring 2002, Staiger organized the formation of focus groups to study the perceptions of female associate professors in these six colleges. Because of the skills of Professor Pat Stout, Staiger requested her leadership, and, as well, Dr. Nancy Jennings has become another co-investigator. Ohlendorf supplied a list of current female associate professors in the six colleges to the research group. The College of Communication, the William P. Hobby Centennial Professorship in Communication, and the FWO have funded the project.

### **Research Method**

Since little research has been conducted on the career progress of associate professors, semi-structured focus groups were conducted to allow relevant discussion about issues related to respondents' academic career to emerge without biases introduced by specific questions about accomplishments, productivity, and rewards. Participants also completed a short closed-ended survey that includes basic demographic questions.

*Research Questions.* While this proposed study is not concerned specifically with the issue of promotion to associate professor and tenure, it does seek to examine the notion of the "accumulation of disadvantages" (Moore, 1987), that is, small differences between sexes that accumulate over time and have a larger impact on the career advancement, quality of life, and self esteem of women faculty. Research indicates these "disadvantages" include institutional,

professional, and societal factors (Bain and Cummings, 2000) including career disruption (McElrath, 1992) and motherhood (Mason, 2002; Young, 2001) as well as personal/psychological/social factors such as self-efficacy (Vasil, 1996), lack of respect for women-centered scholarship (McElrath, 1992), and sex discrimination in areas such as student evaluations of teaching (Kite et al., 2001). Self-efficacy is one's confidence in being able to exert personal control. Self-efficacy was initially described in Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory and is a cognitive factor that may influence individuals' likelihood of performance in their academic career by influencing confidence in being able to perform and excel at certain expectations. Therefore, the research questions guiding this study include:

1. What reasons do women faculty articulate for the rate at which they may advance in their academic career to promotion to full professor and to senior levels of leadership in the academy?
2. How do these reasons compare with previous studies of the careers of women faculty?
3. Do women faculty perceive differences between male and female faculty in academic career progress within their department?
4. Do women faculty feel marginalized or supported within their department?
5. What changes and opportunities do women faculty suggest to strengthen their ability to advance in their academic careers?

*Participants.* Because the focus of the study is to explore what accounts for the rates of progress of female associate professors toward full professorship, the investigators decided to split the entire cohort of current female associate professors into four groups. The first split was by general research areas: we combined the colleges of Communication, Fine Arts and Liberal Arts (CFL group) into one set of more creative, qualitative, and social-scientific quantitative

work; the other set was the more hard-science colleges of Engineering, Natural Sciences, and Pharmacy (ENP group). We hoped to explore whether problems with lab space and equipment resources were major factors for the latter group (similar to findings of the MIT Study (1999)).

The second split was by time in rank. We considered any faculty member in the rank of associate professor for more than ten years to be delayed in her progress (these are our “senior” associate professors). In order to manage the large number of associate professors in the CFL group, we selected faculty in their fourth and fifth years in rank (our “junior” associate professors), assuming they would be able to talk about their progress toward their next promotion. We eliminated colleagues in our own departments or anyone with whom we had worked closely in the University. This produced the following four pools:

CFL junior Associate Professors: 14

ENP junior Associate Professors: 12

CFL senior Associate Professors: 23

ENP senior Associate Professors: 9

Total pool: 56

Individuals were contacted by letter and informed of a forthcoming telephone call that would invite them to a one and one-half hour lunch meeting on these matters. Due to the scheduling of focus groups during the end of the spring semester, we were unable to adhere strictly to the initial plan of sampling by rank across the six schools and colleges.

The Office of Survey Research initiated mail and telephone contact with prospective participants and noted that only a couple women out of the total of 56 women indicated lack of interest. Nearly everyone contacted wanted to participate, and many were disappointed that the date selected for their group was one on which they already had a prior commitment. Because of this, and our general interest in not letting our initial splits affect the total number of people

involved, we mixed the attendance at the third meeting (combining both senior CLF and ENP women). Three women had to cancel at the last minute because of childcare or other emergencies, but our overall attendance was:

	Original Pool	Volunteered	Actually Attended
CFL junior AP:	14	5	5
ENP junior AP:	12	9	9
CFL senior AP:	23	9	7
ENP senior AP:	9	3	2
Total:	56	26	23

(41% of 56 possible)

This 41% rate of participation and attendance seems high, suggesting that our responses are reasonably representative of the original pool. Other studies of these problems (McElrath, 1992; Vasil, 1996) achieved rates of response of 58% and 66%, but their studies involved individuals filling out questionnaires--a much easier task than attending a scheduled one and one-half hour - lunch meeting. Overall, then, we had four meetings, each running about one-hour in length in discussion of the questions, for a total of four hours of information gathering.

Although the majority of the women indicated they were Anglo (78% of the individuals), just over 20% of the individuals self-described themselves by a variety of different ethnicities; 2 individuals indicated they were African American; 1, Asian American; and 2, Jewish. Regarding marital status, 17 women were married (74%); 1 was single (less than 1%); 5 were separated or divorced (22%). The majority of the women had children with 17 individuals (74%) reporting having from 1 to 3 children; among those, 4 indicated they were "single-parents" as a result of divorce, separation, or a commuting marriage.

*Fieldwork.* In each group, the same “core” questions were addressed (see Appendix A for focus group protocol). General questions about having an academic career were used to begin the sessions, allowing each participant a chance to talk and adjust to the group. The questions were designed to become more specific as the session progressed. Additional questions were asked as necessary to expand on an issue or probe into an area being discussed. Within the focus groups, questions explored career-related beliefs and practices, feelings about academic career progress, issues encountered while in the academy, and strategies used to manage these issues. Relevant issues related to University policy, perceived sex and gender differences related to an academic career among departmental colleagues, and suggestions for facilitating respondents’ academic career progress were also explored.

*Data Analysis.* Transcripts for the four focus groups were created from audio tapes and reviewed by each of the three investigators and analyzed to detect reoccurring themes in the four sessions. First the transcripts from each focus group were analyzed individually and then across focus groups to see what themes and issues converged and diverged within a group and across the groups. Analysis involved consideration of specific word choice, the context of comments, the internal consistency of a respondent’s comments as well as the specificity of responses. Through multiple readings of the text the investigators developed an understanding of the range and variability of the study topic. Additionally, the discussions were analyzed for the sorts of self-narratives these women tell about their life at The University. These “in-their-own-words” stories have significance not only for how they view their own situation but also how they relate it to others, producing and reproducing an institutional culture.

## **Thematic Results**

*Most and least liked about academic career.* Prior to beginning discussion of the “core” questions of the study participants introduced themselves and were asked to talk about things they liked best about having an academic career at the University of Texas at Austin. No discernible differences in responses occurred across the four groups. The most popular response to the question by all women associate professors was enjoyment gained from working with bright and interesting students. Participants also mentioned the resources available at an institution like the University of Texas, being affiliated with a respected department, having freedom to pursue personally interesting research and scholarly inquiry, and having the lifestyle associated with living in Austin.

In talking about what they liked least about having an academic career at the University of Texas the range of responses across all groups varied little. The most frequent responses overall related to university policy and procedure, including the lack of regular sabbatical leaves or family maternity leave, and their overall inability to secure promised support for their research and teaching. Several associate professors mentioned having unpleasant experiences with the promotion process, and several also mentioned a problem of sexism at UT either in terms of evaluation of their work or in the day-to-day departmental environment. Lack of senior mentors was also mentioned.

*Reasons for rate of advancement.* Participants were then guided into discussion of the core areas of focus in the study. For the most part, responses for both groups mirrored issues identified elsewhere in the literature on studies of advancement from assistant professor to associate professor. One predominant theme that emerged was career disruption due to personal relationships attempting to accommodate a two-career-couple marriage or due to motherhood or parent care. Interestingly, many of the junior faculty had strategically planned to start their

families following receipt of tenure and promotion to associate professor but now faced negotiating these increased and sometimes overwhelming demands. Another theme emerging was lack of support for scholarship, including insufficient time to do the work, inadequate facilities (e.g., space, equipment) and monetary support, and lack of reciprocal time for research after a heavy administrative load. Some women also felt support and respect was lacking due to the type of scholarship they did, because it was unusual or gender- or race-centered.

The theme of sex discrimination was expressed in several ways. Women believed that they'd experienced discrimination from students (via student evaluations) and from colleagues and their departments (by being asked to "wait" to go up for promotion until after a colleague had been promoted or as a result of differing standards of males and females as to what qualifies as worthwhile work for promotion to full professor). The issue of self-efficacy was evident in some of the discussions where women were concerned people would think they'd been promoted for the wrong reasons (without a quality record), so they elected to wait. Others thought that administrators had reneged on agreements made when the women had agreed to wait. Concern for racial discrimination on the campus was also mentioned.

Women overall expressed concern about unclear and variable standards for merit recognition and promotion. Some found it difficult to determine when it would be appropriate for them to pursue promotion to full professor. If there were rules, they were hard to locate; if there were no rules, it was difficult to figure out what the standards were for promotion. While a minority of the women thought they'd had good female mentors either in their department or outside of it, the majority of women had not had the benefit of a mentor to help them traverse the path to promotion.

A clear theme of feeling demoralized emerged across every one of the groups. Several of the women had found the process of tenure and promotion to associate professor as well as the

inequities of department life to be so humiliating and devaluing that they had consciously withdrawn from the fray. Women questioned whether it was worth the effort to fight the fight to promotion to full professor. They felt burned out and deflated, no longer wishing to be actively engaged in the academy.

*Suggestions for improvement of ability to advance.* Participants had many ideas about changes or opportunities that could strengthen their ability to advance to full professor. The clearest theme to emerge was the need for a set of standards that are shared knowledge and applied equally. Participants sought clear procedures and open processes regarding promotion and obtaining leaves (e.g., Faculty Research Award), sharing and discussing to understand one another's work, and consideration of the contribution of individuals' entire career of teaching, research, and service as it applies to promotion to full professor. Another clear theme was the need for resources and infrastructure (including administrative and clerical assistance) to support both scholarly and routine work as well as preparation of promotion packets. Other themes emerging involved opportunities to find colleagues and mentors with similar interests.

### **Narratives Results: Self-Representing the Careers of Women Associate Professors**

Studies of the functions of narratives in individual memories and the construction of self-identity indicate the personal and cultural significance of such storytelling, not only for the narrator but for those empathizing with the raconteur. Researchers of this "life narrative" storytelling emphasize that while the stories may not be literally factual (Neisser, 1994) that is not relevant: that the narrator and the audience take the stories to have emotional credibility and practical validity for the purpose of their telling is what counts. Barclay (1994: 66-67) lists four adaptive functions within everyday life of "autobiographical remembering": (1) to "maintain a sense of coherence"; (2) to provide "a means of regulating their own feelings"; (3) "to explore

possible selves . . . or the nature of other selves . . . and to relate one's personal memories to cultural events"; and (4) "to establish and maintain intimate interpersonal relationships." Thus, this type of memory act may serve individual, social, and cultural functions.

Self-narratives appear to have many of the characteristics of fictional narratives--and may be distortions of the real event to fit cultural norms of narrating. Certainly self-narratives change from telling to telling and are influenced by the specific audience (including different stories being told to boys versus girls), and unpleasant memories are better remembered than pleasant ones. Because context drives the self-narrative, Neisser argues that most such memories are developed on "implicit theories of stability and transformation" with "turning points," the individual's sense of agency (or lack of it), and the resolution as major parts of a self-narrative (Neisser, 1994: 9-13). Bruner (1994) and Gergen (1994) specify in greater details the "cultural rules" for telling a story about the "self":

- A story is constructed to prove the "valued endpoint" (Gergen, 1994: 91)
- A story is ordered temporarily, with the related events sequenced to show causality leading to the end (Gergen, 1994: 91-2)
- The "self" is characterized as either having agency or "victimicity" (Bruner, 1994: 41) and may be a "leitmotif of a life" (Bruner, 1994:50)
- The "self" is assumed to be typical (Bruner, 1994:42)
- The context determines where emphases in the story may be placed (Bruner, 1994: 42)
- Turning points are "thickly agentive" (Bruner, 1994: 50) and serve to "debug the narrative in an effort to achieve clearer meaning" (Bruner, 1994: 53)
- Stories are "drenched in affect" (Bruner, 1994:50)

Given the significance of narratives in creating “selves” and making arguments about experiences in the workplace, we examined the women’s remarks during the focus group for storytelling--either about their own lives or about others at the university. We defined a story as an extended narration of a specific event that included individual characters and a conclusion or “morale to the fable.” We did not include “generic events” such as statements that described repeated routine events (such as “every time my case has come up”).

In our four hours of conversations, a total of 57 stories were told (or about one every four minutes). Everyone but one of the women told at least one story, with the range of number of stories told per person going from 1 to 7. Of the 57 stories, 49 were about themselves and 8 were about other people.

More importantly, of the 49 “self” stories, the narrator characterized the “self” as a hero in 14 of the stories but as the victim in 35 (61% of all the stories). For the “other” stories, the “other” was a heroine in 7 of the 8 stories. In overall terms:

Self as Heroine	14	(25%)
Self as Victim	35	(61%)
Other as Heroine	7	(12%)
Other as Victim	1	( 2%)

Additionally, some difference occurred between the senior and junior associate professors. Senior associate professors significantly told victimicy stories in comparison with junior associate professors.

Senior Narrators of Self-as-Victim	17 (or 81% of their stories)
Senior Narrators of Self-as-Heroine	4
Junior Narrators of Self-as-Victim	18 (or 64% of their stories)
Junior Narrators of Self-as-Heroine	10

The purpose of the focus groups may have encouraged the overwhelming predominance of “victimicy” narratives, but as we shall discuss below, what those stories are about tells us much about the self-image women associate professors--both junior and senior--have of their situation at The University of Texas.

When telling a story about someone else, these women told “success” or “support” stories; they told of--in all cases--women who had done some specific act to make it at the University (4 stories) or to make it bearable for the story-teller (3 stories). These stories are significant because, as they were told, they served for the narrators either as a model for how to act in order to have agency in what these women see as difficult circumstances (other-as-positive model) or as nostalgia for a past good deed when the narrator deeply needed help (self-as-victim). Moreover, the representations of agency typically involved women speaking up or acting strongly or, as told, *out of character* for female behavior. For instance, one story was of a pregnant colleague securing a course reduction because “she was very in your face and didn’t give up.” In another tale, “a senior woman friend of mine who left a few years ago once marched into the Chairman’s office and said, ‘why do you keep tapping women to do administrative duties?’” However, one of the “other-as-heroine” stories was a rather ambivalent success story and told with irony: a colleague explained to the narrator that why the colleague was admitted into a prestigious national professional organization was “because she knew to stand by the door and to wait for it to be opened for her because she knew it was not going to play well if she was an outspoken woman.”

Self stories of success were similar to the stories of others-as-heroines. The 14 “self-as-heroine” tales had a typical plot. The woman was faced with a career obstacle, and usually she acted. The obstacles and actions differed.

<u>Obstacle</u>	<u>Action</u>
Degraded by colleagues	took a leave
Degraded by colleague	ignored colleague and stayed here to punish him
Degraded by colleague	stayed here and parades in front of him
Degraded by colleague	he hurt himself in attempt to attack her
Need for pregnancy leave	threatened lawsuit
Need for pregnancy leave	juggled grant funds to do-it-herself
Need for pregnancy leave	told chair would take one year off without pay
Need for personal time	has stopped doing some professional service
Need for promotion	has talked with chair and dean
Need for promotion	has pushed chair to permit consideration
Unequal treatment by BC	she and another woman complained
Need for mentors	asked for help
Need for resources	complained
Help another woman	kept quiet

From our perspective, despite these stories about the self-as-heroine, these stories are not very encouraging tales about life as a female associate professor. In the three cases of stories about dealing with pregnancies, either the women had to threaten legal action or they were on their own devices. In the four “degradation” stories, agency comes from leaving the university, ignoring the individual, finding satisfaction in realizing that he (and it is always a he) must be irritated by her presence, and enjoying a “just ends” twist to university life. In none of the “female-revenge” cases has the collegial relationship been improved; in all cases, the women have just found ways to “live with it.” That’s the extent of their heroism. Some positive modeling does come from the women who took action to resolve an obstacle such as wanting to

go up for promotion or needed resources, but the narrational language is often one of having to complain or pushing a chair into action. Such acts are “heroic” in the University, but they do not necessarily improve the overall departmental environment or relations between the women and their administration.

This depressive environment is even more marked in the “self-as-victim” story. As with the success stories, the need is about obstacles to the career trajectory. However, the “formula” to the stories takes several permutations:

negative self-efficacy 8

fear of degradation 1

required to sacrifice for others 2

unequal treatment 3

degradation by colleagues 17

overworked 3

discouraged by watching others 1

These are tales of an inability to resolve a problem, usually followed by resignation at ever being able to do anything or, if something positive does occur, any final resolution will always be tainted by these events. Women used the metaphor of events leaving a “bad taste in my mouth” on at least two occasions; they also talk about being permanently bitter toward the University. These stories also often end with the women discussing how they are resigned to their status as associate professors or how they have turned to other parts of their lives to compensate for their disappointments. They are “drenched in affect”: several women cried telling their self-narrative; several more spoke with intense anger.

Here are some examples of their shame and rage:

- So that [prior judgment] means I'll never get to be a full professor. So I felt extremely burned, and now I've had--in the last two years--I have published another book with an excellent national reception and I have this editorship that is very visible and the department is all cheerful. So I'm going to go up, but I don't want to be sucked into feeling optimistic again. Because the worm can turn at any time."
- Having just gone through this [promotion to full professor]--I'm going to cry--reading those outside reviews was one of the most up experiences I've had in many years. And you just think, "Damn, this place really deserves any kind of crap they get for keeping me at associate professor because look who I am," and I didn't know that before, and it was incredible. And this was after last spring [when] my chair had said to me, "The EC is of two minds about whether we should do this or not and it will depend entirely on the outside letters." And those letters came in, and I went to the chair, and I said, "Now what?" and he said, "I'm with you entirely." You bastard.
- I've decided sexism is part of the cost of doing business here. It's how it is. How men put you down implicitly. I've decided that my salary . . . has not been solved, because my direct colleague who came in at the same time and went away and got job offers, because that's the way you play the game. I don't want to play that game that way because I think it takes advantage of other Universities. He got this big salary jump and got promoted early to full professor when I have more publications on my resume and a lot more things on there but he's promoted to full professor, and I'll get put up this year, but it's a year after him, and it really, really bothers me, because I think it's blatant sexism. . . . I went to my dean and I told [her/him] that I really didn't like this, and they were playing games. I asked [him/her] to do something about it. So [she/he] said [he/she] would, but it hasn't happened yet.
- That is my neighbor. I'm next door to the guy who said, "You'll never get tenure because I'm not voting for you." And I walked up and down the hall happily knowing it just pisses off him. I'm here forever. I think there might be some personality thing that helps, but support helps. If you know, OK, my neighbor doesn't like me, but I can certainly gloat with this other woman who does. You know, if you have some support somewhere; if everybody was like that I would be miserable, but they're not.
- I went to graduation and, in front of the 2000 graduates in [the college] and all of their parents, the speaker says who he really admires, and his example is Winston Churchill who at 86 years of age told the story about a woman who had been sexually assaulted in the park in London . . . and that the defendant was 76 years old, and Winston Churchill said, "man, I respect a guy who can catch a woman at that age" [groans from group]. At graduation! That's the moment I go, "why am I here?" I can hardly stand this. That kind of stuff the institution should take steps to stop instead of saying the burden is on you women to make a nice place so you can feel happy. It's time to stop that crap.
- The process of going up for full professor was so embittering that I will never get over it.

- I was put up for promotion and not promoted, but a male colleague was promoted with what I can demonstrate even to a legal outfit was less credentials. And the kind of criticisms that were allowed to occur for me were [sic], I considered, just completely unprofessional. . . . There was a senior colleague complaining that I was not respectful enough of him. He was discrediting all of my work. I publish more papers than he has. . . He was allowed to just go on and on and on. Nobody shot him down. Nobody said this is out of line. Again, it has left a bad taste in my mouth because what it has left me with is that this place doesn't deserve my good hard effort. I am doing really great work and I don't have to give it to this place. There are a lot of good places that want me to come there too. Why should I put up with this crap?

From an institutional point of view, perhaps of most concern is the sort of fatalism that sets in as well as the reinforcing nature of these stories. These focus groups are not the first (or last) place for the telling of these stories. When such feelings of helplessness and devaluation permeate an institution, a climate of disengagement with the University is promoted.

The self-as-victim story should also be analyzed for what stories were not told. While women did discuss the difficulties of child rearing or parental-care responsibilities, the focus of the narratives did not go to these features as the obstacle. Rather the obstacle was the lack of help provided by departments in balancing demands through an extended commitment to the faculty woman. It wasn't "having the child" but how insensitive the chair was to the situation in which the woman was working.

As we detail elsewhere in this report, female associate professors do find positive aspects within their careers at the University. But when they narrate the self, it is overwhelmingly of themselves as a victim with few resources that they wish to take up. As the literature suggests, some women hold themselves to different standards about competing (the example above of the woman who did not want to play the game of securing an outside job offer to raise her salary or fast-track her promotion). Speaking forthrightly is viewed as difficult to do for fear of negative labeling (the woman is "aggressive") or results (the administrator will not like her or her request). Several of the women stated explicitly that they did not want to be promoted to full

professor because they could never again go through what they experienced during the tenure process.

## **Conclusions**

While a significant body of literature exists on issues facing the promotion of women academics from assistant professor to associate professor, research is lacking on issues women associate professors face that may impact the rate at which they may advance to promotion to full professor. For this reason, we find that women associate professors are an overlooked or “forgotten” group.

Perhaps the most serious charge and frightening insight emerging from these discussions is that women associate professors are “shell shocked” and so demoralized from the experience of their promotion to assistant professor with tenure as well as the “accumulation of disadvantages” (Moore, 1987) throughout their academic career, that they question whether it’s worth their effort to continue as proactive members of the faculty. The rewards for their work are minimal and not satisfying. This is a most serious charge in light of the working hypothesis (and a key recommendation in most previous studies) that if more women are hired at the junior levels, there will be eventual growth in numbers of senior women faculty over time (MIT Study, 1999). Apparently women associate professors in this study are unwilling to continue to trade their time and energy for minimal rewards.

Women associate professors also harbor distrust for the system. On the one hand, many of the participants complied with requests to take on additional administrative duties or to wait on their own promotion while another promising colleague was promoted based on the promise that their time would come. Many of these women “thought we’d had a deal” only to find that their sacrifice of time was overlooked later. And, on the other hand, they observe other

situations where male colleagues seemingly benefit from opportunities that are not open to all members of the department.

And, while women associate professors want to shout, “hey, you’ve changed the rules,” they’re also unlikely to call a “foul.” The lack of clarity of standards applied even handedly is voiced clearly by the participants. And, while women associate professors desire clear procedures and open processes, issues of self-efficacy limit their ability to stand up for what’s right or to promote their own accomplishments.

And yet, another clear message to emerge from these discussions was a continued resistance to the situation. “I’m here and I’m not going away.” This may be interpreted positively or negatively, however. While these women are not going to leave the academy, they also are demoralized and believe that their work is not valued. They think that the institution does not appreciate the diversity it supposedly embraces.

And so, this study raises a number of unanswered questions. Why do these women associate professors continue to stay in a demoralizing and unsatisfying situation? Why don’t they leave the university? Are these issues gender-related? How much is universal? How much is in styles of management and work? How much relates to differences in styles of teaching or scholarship? But most importantly, how can these issues be addressed--for these women associate professors and for other women in the academy who are assistant professors and graduate students? We need to resolve the problem of a demoralized class that may have negative effects throughout the institution. This study serves to identify some of the issues facing women associate professors and their advancement to full professor and senior levels of leadership in the academy.

## **Recommendations**

To break through the accumulation of disadvantages and to alter the stories of lack of self-efficacy, we propose the following recommendations:

### ***1. Reproduce the study to check the findings and compare with responses by male associate professors.***

We believe our study has validity for women associate professors at The University. However, whether these findings are related to sex differences would be valuable to analyze. The literature suggests that social constructions of men and women into gendered beings disadvantage women; gender schemas also produce the initial disadvantages that accumulate. If this is the case, a study of men might help us determine how they negotiate the institutional difficulties of post-tenure and provide insights valuable for remedying the situation for women.

### ***2. Insure consistency, transparency, and access to rules and processes for advancement.***

A very strong theme in the responses was the experience of watching male colleagues secure advantages of salary and position through special, individual deals rather than following stated activities such as turning in annual reports or making equipment or space requests in routine ways. Additionally, women were unaware of when and how they could go up for full professor. Some of these matters can be resolved through workshops (see below) but others may require actual policy-making (see below regarding new policies)

### ***3. Provide skills sessions and workshops for associate professors.***

We do not encourage women learning how to act in ways they dislike--using special privileges or violating the explicitly stated procedures for improving salaries or securing space. Rather, we suggest that successful colleagues share and mentor those advancing to take advantage of the strategies that will work for them. Examples of such sessions are: (a) learning

norms and traditions of the institution; (b) understanding student biases in evaluations of women teachers and how to counter-act these; (c) coping with increased demands after tenure to accommodate both the delayed family and the on-going career; (d) learning signs of sex and race discrimination and methods to contest this safely in the workplace; (e) finding mentors at this point in one's career for the next stages of advancement; (f) learning effective strategies for professional development; and (g) using colleagues and students to sustain intellectual excitement.

***4. Improve daily support systems for faculty.***

Part of the burnout for some of these women was just being burdened with routine clerical and administrative jobs. The University needs to find methods to support the scholarly and teaching activities of faculty.

***5. Improve family-leave policies.***

Women expressed significant frustration about the lack of family-leave policies and the consequence sense of lack of support for family obligations.

***6. Query department heads about how to help anyone in rank six years or longer.***

This is not a recommendation about post-tenure review but a proposal that department heads work with associate professors in rank six years or longer to create a plan to help them move to the next level of advancement.

***7. Re-examine hiring practices with a goal to setting policy that will achieve sex parity in faculty in each discipline.***

Hiring senior women professors should be a top priority of the institution to overcome the lack of mentors and role models and to permit women to lead an overall change in the institutional culture.

*8. Build awareness among administrators, faculty, and staff that a demoralized class has negative effects throughout the institution and is a waste of resources. Moreover, equity creates a stronger and more viable institution in terms of a national reputation for fairness as well as building loyalty among the faculty.*

## Appendix A: Focus Group Protocol

Welcome and thank you for your willingness to be here today to participate in this focus group session. We know you're busy and appreciate you taking the time to meet and discuss issues of import to faculty women.

We are here to learn how women associate professors perceive their status as faculty women and their progress towards academic advancement towards full professorship.

1. First, so we can get to know one another a little better, could each of you please introduce yourself? Please say which department you work in, how long you've been at UT, where you were before you came to UT, and a bit about your personal situation (for example, do you have a partner; are you in a two-career relationship; do you have children, and if so, how many and how old are they, etc.)
2. What would you say are some of the things you like best about having an academic career at the University of Texas?
3. What would you say are some of the things you like least about having an academic career at the University of Texas?
4. What are your academic career goals? For example, the goal of some women is to be a scholar and to teach; or, do you have an interest in moving into administration, like being graduate advisor?

As we continue our discussion, we'd like to focus on your move towards full professorship in your academic career.

5. In your move towards full professorship, how do you feel about your progress in your academic career?

PROBE: Are you satisfied with where you are on your career track?

6. What do you think are the reasons for your situation in terms of your career progress?

PROBES: Do you feel you've had to negotiate your career in response to career disruptions (for example, marital, parental or child care responsibilities)? How confident do you feel about your ability to negotiate within your department for courses, work space, the opportunity to work with graduate students or solicit grants, assistance, and so forth? Do you feel you have a mentor? How do you feel your level of scholarly productivity or teaching evaluations may affect your career progress? How confident do you feel about your ability to "self promote," that is, to get your self and your work recognized? Or to negotiate and apply for promotion?

7. How have you found you've been able to manage these situations?

8. What University policies and opportunities have been especially helpful to you? (For example, an opportunity to stop the tenure clock for family leave as you progressed towards promotion to associate professor or the grant proposal workshops on campus or the Faculty Women's Organization and programs it sponsors, etc.).
9. Do you feel you've been treated equitably within your department?  
Why or why not?  
  
Compared to your male colleagues in your department, would you say you've been treated equitably? Why or why not?
10. Do you feel you've encountered any type of discrimination in your department?  
  
If so, what kind and by whom? (For example, do you feel you haven't received equitable salary or work space or been asked to serve on important committees in the department or the University compared to other faculty in your department?)
11. And when you think about yourself as a member of the University as a whole, do you feel you've been treated equitably compared to other faculty across the University?  
Why or why not?
12. What changes would you initiate if you could that would strengthen your ability to progress towards full professorship?
13. Are there any other issues or feelings that you would like to raise with the group before we close?

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