

Some Campuses and Academic Departments Need to Take Additional Steps to Resolve Gender Disparities Among Professors

Audit Highlights . . .

Regarding the University of California (UC) and its hiring of assistant, associate, and full professors:

- Hiring data for the past five years indicate that a significant disparity appears to exist between the proportion of female professors hired and the proportion of female doctorate recipients nationwide.***
 - Certain types of decisions made by academic departments effectively reduced the proportion of women in the available labor pool from 46 percent to 33 percent. The UC hired 29 percent female professors during that five-year period.***
 - Analyses of the hiring practices used on each UC campus reveal weaknesses such as using search committees that are either all male or predominantly male.***
 - Although the starting salaries for female professors averaged from 90 percent to 92 percent of male professors' salaries, more in-depth analyses point out that factors other than gender may be the cause.***
-

REPORT NUMBER 2000-131, MAY 2001

The Joint Legislative Audit Committee requested that we review the University of California's (UC) practices for hiring assistant, associate, and full professors (professors) to determine whether those practices adversely affect employment opportunities for women. A decline in the proportion of newly hired female professors prompted concern about employment opportunities for women, especially in light of UC's expectation that it will need to hire about 7,000 new faculty members over the next 10 years. Specifically, we found:

Finding #1: Not all UC campuses fully consider gender parity concerns early in the hiring process.

It is during the position allocation phase, the first of three steps in the process for hiring UC professors, that departments decide the specific levels at which to hire professors and the specialized fields or subfields of study from which to hire them. The likelihood of obtaining a male or female professor is strongly influenced by a department's decision to fill a position at the more senior levels (e.g., associate or full professor) or from various disciplines or specialized fields of study that tend to be predominantly male.

Our site visits revealed that some campuses are now directing their departments to consider the existing gender mix of their professors during the position allocation phase. For example, in December 2000, the Irvine campus directed its colleges to "devote attention to enhancing the diversity of the faculty" as part of the position allocation phase. Although these overall efforts seem to be steps in the right direction, we believe that additional considerations early in the hiring process are critical if gender disparities in hiring are to be corrected. Because UC professors can have careers that last 30 years or more, failure to fully consider early in the hiring process the effect that level and field of study can have on the likelihood of hiring a female professor can unnecessarily prolong a department's efforts to address gender disparities.

To avoid inadvertently contributing to gender disparities among professors while still allowing departments to meet their overall missions, we recommended that UC direct academic departments to more fully consider during the position allocation phase of the hiring process how new positions being requested will affect employment opportunities for women overall and the resulting gender parity of its professors, especially those positions above the assistant professor level and those in disciplines or specializations in which women are underutilized. We also recommended that deans review the sufficiency of the departments' considerations of the effects that level and specialization have on gender parity before authorizing departments to proceed further with the process for filling their positions.

UC Action: Partial corrective action taken.

UC states that it incorporated these recommendations into its *Affirmative Action Guidelines for Recruitment and Retention of Faculty*. It also states that individual campuses have implemented our recommendation in a variety of ways. For example, the Davis campus developed a target for each school to recruit 80 percent of all new positions at the assistant or early associate professor level. Data for the first year reflect a 70 percent success rate. Also, the Santa Barbara campus will allocate upwards of 70 percent of new faculty positions at the assistant level and will ask deans to evaluate departments' efforts to consider gender equity in the formulation of staffing plans. Further, effective this year, departments on the Irvine campus will conduct an analytical assessment of their diversity profile and will be asked to justify how any new positions will fit their plan.

Finding #2: Not all departments ensure that they use gender-diverse search committees during the hiring process.

Within the disciplines we reviewed, the search committees for half of the 242 professors hired in fiscal years 1995–96 through 1999–2000 had, on average, either four or five men. The average size of a search committee was six members. Further, the search committees for 156 new professors—nearly two-thirds of those hired—included either no women or only one woman. Finally, while the searches for 83 new professors had no women on the committees, only nine committees did not have any men. Campus representatives told us that female professors can provide search committees with different perspectives that otherwise might be lacking when evaluating candidates.

To take advantage of the differing perspectives that women can offer in the search for new professors, we recommended that UC avoid using all-male or predominantly male search committees. We also recommended that UC encourage departments to consider, whenever appropriate, participation by female professors from other departments on search committees.

Further, to address the conflict that can result from low numbers of women in some departments and the attempt to avoid all-male or predominantly male search committees, we recommended that UC develop alternatives to its current search committee methods. One alternative that we suggested was that UC should consider whether departments from various campuses are interested in participating in regional or statewide search committees to conduct the preliminary selection of qualified candidates. If insufficient interest exists for this proposal, UC should identify other specific alternatives.

UC Action: Partial corrective action taken.

UC states that it incorporated these recommendations into its *Affirmative Action Guidelines for Recruitment and Retention of Faculty* and that they have been widely implemented by each campus. At the Riverside campus, for example, several procedures are in place to ensure that the composition of search committees reflects a diverse cross section of the faculty. Search committees are comprised now of junior and senior faculty members and, in some cases, students. Committees are also required to have at least one member from another department. Further, all search committees have at least one member designated to be the affirmative action/diversity monitor. The composition of the search committee is reviewed and requires approval from the dean, the campus affirmative action officer, and the executive vice chancellor.

However, UC did not provide an action plan that specifically addressed our recommendation concerning the identification of alternatives to its current search committee methods.

Finding #3: Some departments prepare less detailed search plans to help direct search efforts while some others do not prepare them at all.

Search committees on some campuses prepare a document called a search plan before beginning a search. This document details the steps the committee will take, including the job

announcement and the advertising media that the search committee plans to use. According to a representative from one campus, search plans help eliminate any subjectivity and allow search committees to solidify selection criteria. Not all search committees include the same level of detail in their search plans. For instance, search committees at departments we visited on the Santa Cruz and Riverside campuses include in their search plans the position announcements and the advertising media they plan to use; although they do not identify the selection processes. Moreover, search committees at departments we visited on the Irvine and Los Angeles campuses do not submit written plans before conducting searches. Because the hiring process can be subjective, the lack of an adequate search plan can compromise the integrity of search efforts and the selection process.

To help ensure that searches for professors are properly conducted, we recommended that UC require search committees to prepare written search plans that describe, at a minimum, the advertising channels to be used, the position announcements to be used in advertising, and the criteria and processes to be used to select winning candidates.



UC Action: Partial corrective action taken.

UC states that it incorporated this recommendation into its *Affirmative Action Guidelines for Recruitment and Retention of Faculty* and that most campuses already adhere to many of the practices in the guidelines. UC also states that the campuses have strengthened existing practices and added new ones to promote diversity and gender equity in faculty hiring. However, UC did not provide an action plan that specifically addressed this recommendation.

Finding #4: Some search committees do not use underutilization data to plan searches.

We found that some search committees use underutilization data in planning their searches, but others do not. To comply with federal affirmative action requirements, each campus prepares an annual report that compares the estimated proportion of women in the applicable labor pool and the proportion of women in the department. It also identifies a target number or percentage of women, called a “goal,” for the department to hire to achieve gender parity. Departments are required to make good-faith efforts to address this goal.

Some search committees receive this underutilization information and use it to plan the outreach efforts they will need to conduct searches. This helps search committees focus their efforts to achieve their hiring goals. However, some departments on campuses we visited, including Riverside and Santa Barbara, are not incorporating underutilization data and related strategies into their written search plans. Without formally considering the underutilization data while planning searches, search committees may not know how much effort they need to make to help address issues related to the lack of gender parity within their departments.

We recommended that UC require search committees to incorporate underutilization data into their search plans, together with strategies to help achieve any departmental recruiting goal.



UC Action: Partial corrective action taken.

UC states that it incorporated this recommendation into its *Affirmative Action Guidelines for Recruitment and Retention of Faculty* and that most campuses already adhere to many of the practices in the guidelines. UC also states that the campuses have strengthened existing practices and added new ones to promote diversity and gender equity in faculty hiring. However, UC did not provide an action plan that specifically addressed this recommendation.

Finding #5: Some search committees do not effectively use underutilization data to assess their success in recruiting women.

We found that not all search committees compared the estimated proportion of women in the labor pool to the proportion of female applicants to help determine whether outreach efforts were successful. Certain other search committees did not perform such comparisons until well into the search process, increasing the risk that the hiring process could not be stopped or delayed while outreach efforts were supplemented. Performing such comparisons allows search committees to examine and, if necessary, revise their search efforts to secure a more gender-diverse applicant pool.

To help assess the success of the outreach efforts by search committees in recruiting female applicants and in monitoring the inclusiveness of the hiring process, we recommended that UC compare the proportion of women in the total applicant pool to the proportion in the labor pool as soon as possible after

departments have received applications. If the proportions are not comparable, UC should consider performing additional outreach to identify a broader applicant pool.

UC Action: Partial corrective action taken.

UC states that it incorporated this recommendation into its *Affirmative Action Guidelines for Recruitment and Retention of Faculty* and that most campuses already adhere to many of the practices in the guidelines. UC also states that the campuses have strengthened existing practices and added new ones to promote diversity and gender equity in faculty hiring. For instance, the Irvine campus implemented a new web-based system for gathering and analyzing applicant data on race and gender, which will allow it to provide departments with timely and accurate information for evaluating searches in progress. If the system is successful, it will be a model for the other campuses to follow to improve their current systems of applicant pool tracking and evaluation.

Finding #6: Outreach efforts of some search committees should be expanded.

Some search committees have not been successful in their outreach efforts for professor positions. For instance, while women represent 20 percent of the labor pool in the mathematics discipline, women made up only 9 percent of applicants for positions in the mathematics discipline at two of the UC's campuses. Search committees typically rely on outreach tools such as professional journals to advertise positions. Some search committees advertise on Web pages and in media that target potential female applicants. However, when search efforts fail to produce proportionate numbers of female applicants, search committees may need to go beyond the typically used tools. For example, departments might encourage search committee members to personally contact potential applicants at professional meetings, national conferences, and seminars. Additionally, UC's campuses could find ways to collaborate in the outreach efforts. An unsuccessful applicant at one campus may be a natural fit at another because of specialization, research, or teaching interests.

To help increase the number of female applicants, we recommended that UC explore alternative methods of attracting female applicants when outreach methods prove ineffective. Such methods can include expanding efforts to make personal contacts at various functions both off and on campus and identifying ways to collaborate with other campuses in their outreach efforts.



UC Action: Partial corrective action taken.

UC states that it incorporated this recommendation into its *Affirmative Action Guidelines for Recruitment and Retention of Faculty* and that most campuses already adhere to many of the practices in the guidelines. UC also states that the campuses have strengthened existing practices and added new ones to promote diversity and gender equity in faculty hiring. However, UC did not provide an action plan that specifically addressed this recommendation.

Finding #7: Some departments allow a single person to decide if candidates should be considered further in the hiring process.

Some departments rely on only one member of a search committee when reviewing applications to determine which candidates should be considered further. Such a practice increases the risk that the reviewer's own background, experiences, and biases may unfairly exclude an otherwise qualified individual, regardless of gender. Having at least two members review applications would better ensure that all candidates are fairly considered.

Therefore, we recommended that UC require at least two members of each search committee to review application material submitted by candidates.



UC Action: Partial corrective action taken.

UC states that it incorporated this recommendation into its *Affirmative Action Guidelines for Recruitment and Retention of Faculty* and that most campuses already adhere to many of the practices in the guidelines. UC also states that the campuses have strengthened existing practices and added new ones to promote diversity and gender equity in faculty hiring. However, UC did not provide an action plan that specifically addressed this recommendation.

Finding #8: Some departments do not document the reasons candidates were not selected.

We found that some departments do not prepare documents summarizing the reasons why candidates did not advance in selection processes. Typically, these deselection documents list the gender and ethnicity of an applicant and the reason why the applicant did not advance further in the hiring process; they are an added control to maintain the integrity of the hiring process.

Without deselection documents, campuses are less sure that otherwise qualified candidates were not unfairly excluded from the selection process.

To help ensure that otherwise qualified candidates are not unfairly excluded from further consideration during the hiring process, we recommended that UC require search committees to prepare deselection documents that describe the reasons for rejecting candidates. When necessary, deans or department chairs could then review these documents.



UC Action: Partial corrective action taken.

UC states that it incorporated this recommendation into its *Affirmative Action Guidelines for Recruitment and Retention of Faculty* and that most campuses already adhere to many of the practices in the guidelines. UC also states that the campuses have strengthened existing practices and added new ones to promote diversity and gender equity in faculty hiring. However, UC did not provide an action plan that specifically addressed this recommendation.

Finding #9: UC's campuses lack a common methodology for calculating the availability of women in the labor pool.

Each of the UC's nine campuses prepares an annual affirmative action report describing its own benchmarking method, which measures the availability of women in the labor pool. However, lacking a common methodology for calculating the benchmarks, UC cannot compare each campus's relative success at addressing gender parity issues. Consequently, UC cannot use data developed by the campuses to effectively target additional in-depth reviews or improvement efforts at campuses or disciplines furthest from uniform benchmarks.

To better enable it to identify potential gender parity issues across campus and discipline lines, we recommended that UC devise and implement a uniform method for calculating benchmark data. We also recommended that UC centrally collect applicable hiring data, compare the data with its benchmark data, and determine whether departments need to take actions to address gender parity concerns. Finally, we recommended that, when determining the action to be taken, UC should consider developing approaches to be applied across campuses.

UC Action: Partial corrective action.

UC states that a working group convened by its Office of the President prepared a draft uniform method for all campuses to calculate benchmark data that can be incorporated into existing campus affirmative action plans developed pursuant to federal requirements. The group also developed draft guidelines that are being distributed for review to each campus before formal adoption. Each campus will be responsible for incorporating this benchmark data into its affirmative action plan. UC's Office of the President will centrally collect the campuses' analyses of hiring and benchmark data and monitor campus plans for taking action to address any problem areas.

Finding #10: Campuses do not uniformly evaluate deans and department chairs on their contributions to affirmative action and diversity.

Some campuses do not evaluate their deans or department chairs while another does not always include gender parity as a part of the evaluation. Several campuses evaluate their deans or department chairs only once every five years—the interval discussed in UC's academic personnel manual. However, such long intervals between evaluations mean that deans and department chairs do not receive timely information about their efforts to address gender parity issues. When campuses do not evaluate deans or department chairs, when campuses evaluate deans or department chairs infrequently, or when evaluations do not include efforts to address issues related to the lack of gender parity, those evaluations are rendered ineffective as a tool for helping to address gender parity issues.

To ensure that addressing gender parity concerns remains a priority on campus, we recommended that UC include an assessment of the contributions of deans and department chairs to address issues related to the lack of gender parity as part of their evaluations. We also recommended that UC evaluate all deans and department chairs on their efforts to address gender parity issues more frequently than every five years.

UC Action: Partial corrective action taken.

UC states that it incorporated these recommendations into its *Affirmative Action Guidelines for Recruitment and Retention of Faculty* and that most campuses already adhere to many of the practices in the guidelines. UC also states that the campuses have strengthened existing practices and added new ones to promote diversity and gender equity in faculty hiring. Further, UC states that most campuses evaluate diversity and gender parity efforts annually. For example, the Santa Cruz campus evaluates all deans and senior academic administrators annually. Its review includes an evaluation of their diversity and affirmative action progress and plans. Further, the Riverside campus is developing a survey to assess the efforts of deans and department chairs to increase diversity and gender equity among faculty. The results of the survey will be compiled in an annual report to all departments so that strategies for success may be shared.

Finding #11: UC's concept of excellence does not always incorporate the values of gender parity.

Some departments did not include the concept of gender parity within their definition of excellence. When speaking of the importance of excellence, some departments spoke of it not only in terms of their faculty members' research and teaching, but also in terms of their departments' placement in national ranking systems. Two national ranking systems we reviewed attempt to provide a measure of the quality of the programs. However, because these systems do not consider gender parity of professors in their rankings, departments are not likely to give the gender parity issue as much weight as if it were considered.

To increase the level of excellence, we recommended that UC redefine its concept of excellence to encompass a broader vision—one that recognizes that the full use of a talent pool that includes female professors can promote new ideas, research areas, and productivity. We also recommended that UC consider working with university rating organizations to incorporate gender parity among professors into their definition of excellence.



UC Action: Partial corrective action taken.

UC states that campuses have been active in responding to this recommendation. For example, the San Diego campus has initiated a research, teaching, and service program to foster new areas of research, create opportunities for cluster hiring, and other initiatives that will contribute to the diversity of the faculty.

However, UC did not provide an action plan that specifically addressed our recommendation concerning working with university rating organizations to include gender parity in their definitions of excellence.

Finding #12: Summary-level salary reviews can help avoid improper salary disparities.

UC's campuses generally perform some type of detail-level reviews that help ensure that the starting levels and salary steps for new professors are appropriate given their education and experience. While these detailed reviews serve their purpose, they can fail to identify patterns or inconsistencies in starting salaries that would warrant further exploration. We found two campuses at which summary-level reviews were performed. Because campuses and departments have a great deal of flexibility in determining starting salaries for professors, by using summary-level salary reviews in conjunction with the detail-level reviews that already occur, campuses can help ensure that salary disparities between newly hired female and male professors do not go unnoticed or unexplained. Campuses could then investigate further to identify the factors that contributed to the salary differences and determine whether appropriate and consistent decisions were made.

In addition to being useful on each campus, it is beneficial at a system-wide level to make similar comparisons within disciplines across campuses. A salary-review method used by the Irvine campus relies on four variables (degree, age, degree year, and date of hire) as predictors of salary. We have no reason to believe that these predictors would not be valid indicators for such system-wide comparisons.

To help ensure that salary disparities between female and male professors do not go unnoticed or unjustified, UC should periodically perform summary-level salary reviews at a system-wide and campus level to identify patterns indicating whether female professors are typically receiving lower or higher salaries than male professors receive when other salary predictors are the same. When it identifies salary disparities, UC should determine the reasons why the disparities exist and, if necessary, take appropriate action to correct any inequities.

UC Action: Partial corrective action taken.

UC states that its Office of the President will perform summary level salary reviews annually and work with campuses to resolve any apparent disparities based on race, ethnicity, or gender. Reports of the systemwide salary review will be available to the campuses in Spring 2002. Additionally, UC states that most campuses already have implemented procedures for campus-level salary equity reviews.

Finding #13: UC should periodically report on its progress in correcting gender disparity issues.

Given the breadth of the above issues, we recommended that UC report to the Legislature biennially on its progress in addressing gender parity issues in its hiring of professors. The report should include the results of UC's analysis of hiring data relative to a system-wide benchmarking method as well as the efforts it has made relative to the issues described earlier. UC should also include in this report the results of its progress in addressing salary disparities between genders.



UC Action: Unknown.

UC did not provide an action plan that specifically addressed this recommendation.