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Female administrators face discrimination in ed

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In past articles of this column we have reported data that show that women in general find more barriers than their male counterparts in getting into academic careers. Further, female college professors earn on average 10 percent less in salaries than their male colleagues.

If you are a woman in academia and aspire to an administrative job in order to substantially improve your earnings and make them more in par with the males around you, you should think twice.

According to a new report released just a few days ago by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR) there is a significant gender gap at the top levels of higher education leadership. Women administrators in higher education earn 80 cents on the dollar when compared to men. And despite claims by institutions of higher education that they are egalitarian and politically correct, this disparity has changed little over the last 15 years.

According to the CUPA-HR study, the gender gap has narrowed by only 3 cents since 2001, when women administrators earned 77 cents on the dollar versus men. Such a difference is largely in line with the gender pay gap for all full-time workers in the United States, which shows women earning 79 cents for every dollar men earn. In other words, just because you are a woman and work for an institution of higher education you cannot expect to be treated better than a woman anywhere else in the workplace.

Despite all the talk about increasing diversity in colleges and universities, women are not benefitting from that rhetoric. In other words, the liberal principle of equal pay for equal work seems to have become missing in action in academia.

Part of the problem is bias (unconscious or not) about the requirements for a particular job. According to this report women working in administrative positions mostly filled by men (presidents, provosts) did earn relatively more than many of their peers who work in positions largely filled by women. When those positions tend to be perceived as typical “women’s jobs,” women earned more than their male counterparts.

Women hold more than half of the available jobs in only a handful of executive positions in academia, such as human resources, libraries, public relations, institutional research and student affairs. On the other hand, male presidents outnumber female presidents by a ratio of more than two to one and male chief information officers and chief athletics administrators outnumber women by a ratio of more than four to one.

Another part of the problem is perception. Many in higher education believe that because of the rhetoric for equality, colleges and universities pay the same to both genders, which is obviously not the case. Even worse, the numbers in this report indicate that if there was ever a

tendency to close the gap in pay between women and men, that momentum was lost some time ago.

According to the CUPA-HR study, although there was a tendency at closing the gender gap when it came to pay in the early 2000s, that tendency slowed down significantly and the reason may have been the recession of 2007-2009. One of the consequences was the drop in higher education funding. And since recessions tend to have a greater economic impact on women and minorities, that explains why the drive for more equality was lost.

And all this is not because there are not that many women administrators in higher ed. According to the study, in 2016 women made up approximately half of all higher education administrators across the country. Yet, there were differences by regions. Women made up a little more than half of administrators in the Northeast and slightly less than half of administrators in the Midwest, West and South.

Another difference had to do with the prestige of the position. More than 50 percent of department heads are women, but less than 30 percent of top executives are women. Again, the better paid positions were still dominated by men.

Interestingly enough, although there are fewer women in top-paying positions, the pay gender gap was generally narrower. For example, women top executives earn more than 90 cents on the dollar when compared to men, while department heads earn only about 85 cents on the dollar.

Another curious fact is that for a few specific positions – in which men usually outnumber women – women administrators earn more than their male counterparts. That is the case for chief facilities officers, where men outnumber women by a ratio of more than nine to one. Women in such positions make \$1.17 for every dollar men make.

We see some great disparities for other positions. That is the case for chief financial officers, for which about 40 percent are women yet make only 77 cents for each dollar men made. Seniority also plays a role in the pay gap, with it being higher for women with more than 17 years of service. The CUPA-HR suggests that reasons for this differential include more barriers for women from older generations, ageism and a general U.S. pay gap that is wider for older women.

The size of the pay gap also has a geographic component, according to the report. The Midwest region shows the narrowest in the last 15 years, with women's pay rising by 8 cents on the dollar men earn, from 74 cents to 82 cents. In the West, which had the highest women-to-men pay ratio in 2001 with more than 80 cents on the dollar at the time, has seen the least change.

It is time for colleges and universities to look at their own data and start moving toward more equitable pay between genders. Otherwise, higher education administration will continue to be a man's world