A Measure of Equity
Women’s Progress in Higher Education

by Judy Touchton
with Caryn McTighe Musil and Kathryn Peltier Campbell
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Acknowledgments

In 1970, just two years before Title IX made gender discrimination illegal in federally funded education, Bernice (Bunny) R. Sandler established the Project on the Status and Education of Women at the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). After four decades of continuous concerted efforts to improve women’s status, AAC&U is pleased to offer our first comprehensive national report, *A Measure of Equity: Women’s Progress in Higher Education*, documenting women’s advancement toward full inclusion. The material presented here shows that women have made great strides. Yet it also shows the many areas where progress has been stymied or skewed by misinterpreted evidence. With women positioned at a critical crossroads, having travelled so far and yet with so much still to be accomplished, AAC&U’s report takes stock of women’s status and seeks to move the equity agenda forward.

The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Global Initiatives, where the Program on the Status and Education of Women now resides, issues this report with deep thanks for the exceptional talent of author Judy Touchton. Judy tackled the formidable challenge of amassing the data in one place and in a digestible format. Now running WomenLeadersMove.com, a coaching and resource consulting service for women in higher education, Judy served in the Office of Women in Higher Education (OWHE) at the American Council on Education for twenty-two years. While at OWHE, she spent five years as deputy director under Donna Shavlik and one year as interim director. During her remarkable tenure at OWHE, Judy coauthored the first serious data collection on women presidents, *Women in Presidencies: A Descriptive Study of Women College and University Presidents* (1993), and the *Fact Book on Women in Higher Education* (1991). Thanks in part to Judy’s demonstrating the value of collecting such data, ACE continues to be the key source of information about women presidents to this day. Judy brought her data analysis skills and passionate commitment to advancing women to this monograph, and AAC&U is in her debt.

Judy’s exceptional work benefited from the considerable expertise of our distinguished advisory board, whose names are appended below. They are some of today’s most important researchers and practitioners on gender and higher education. AAC&U is honored that they agreed to lend their counsel in shaping and informing this monograph.

While Judy took responsibility for the heart of the monograph’s data analysis, Kathryn Peltier Campbell, editor of AAC&U’s *On Campus with Women and Diversity & Democracy*, and I took the lead on the Hot Points that follow each of the sections. Kathryn also assumed responsibility for the overall editing of the monograph. We would also like to thank Lucia Cruz for assisting with the research for the socioeconomic hot point, Darbi Bossman for her cover and interior design, Katie Young for fact-checking the manuscript, and Laura Donnelly-Smith for her editorial assistance in the final stages of production. We are also grateful to several dedicated
researchers who generously shared with us their data and analysis, particularly Jacqueline King and Bryan Cook at the American Council on Education, Ray Sizemore at CUPA–HR, and John Curtis at the American Association of University Professors. Without their dedication to collecting and reporting the data, we would know far less about women’s progress.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge all those women and men whose work over the past four decades has made the progress reported in this monograph a reality. Some are well known to the larger public; most remain invisible except in their local communities. But collectively their courage, vision, and hard work means my granddaughter Catherine will take for granted that she can—and should—shape the world in which she lives. That is a gift to be treasured and an obligation to be honored.

Caryn McTighe Musil
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As I read *A Measure of Equity*, I can’t help but think of the sixties slogan, “You’ve come a long way, baby.” When the advertisement first appeared, it celebrated the relative progress of women (typically defined by that decade’s advertisers as “feminine” and white). More than forty years later, *A Measure of Equity* arrives at a time when our country is more culturally, ethnically, economically, and religiously diverse than ever before. Thanks to the valiant efforts of women and men dedicated to social justice in higher education, women of all backgrounds have made much progress. Yet critical work remains before us. Just as in the 1960s, “You’ve come a long way, baby”—but the full journey is yet to be travelled.

While reading the report’s powerful data, I began to think of the stories behind the statistics—of the women from all backgrounds, across class, race, culture, religion, and sexual orientation, whose hopes and dreams are represented by the numbers. As we read the data, we must celebrate those who completed the educational maze in spite of society’s struggles with gender equity. Likewise, we must lament those women who walked away in frustration—for no one enters higher education intending to fail.

I see myself in these numbers just as I see the students I have served whose stories have touched me and influenced my scholarly and professional choices. Growing up in Brooklyn, I was one of seven children. My parents had left the island they loved, bringing my five eldest siblings to a land where the language and culture were unfamiliar to find a better life for their family. My brother and I were born in Brooklyn, where we were labeled “Nuyoricans”—children born in New York City to Puerto Rican parents. Among my siblings, race was a nonissue: if you lined us up, our skin tones ranged from fair to dark, our hair from straight to curly. We lived among the factories that dominated downtown Brooklyn, between the housing projects of Farragut and Fort Greene and the upper-class neighborhood of Brooklyn Heights. My parents had eighth-grade educations. My dad graduated with honors but my grandmother could not afford to send him on to high school, and my mother, an orphan raised by her aunt, lamented her lost opportunity to study further. Still, my parents were smarter than their educational level demonstrated. My father helped me with my algebra homework, and after he died when I was twelve, my mother maintained a household on her factory salary while miraculously ensuring that we never felt poor.

My parents embraced education and understood how powerfully transformative it could be. They knew that education was the key to intellectual and economic empowerment and often told us, “La unica herencia que una familia pobre les deja a sus hijos es una buena educacion.” (The only inheritance a poor family can leave their children is a good education.) To them success meant that their children would earn high school diplomas and not work in factories.
While my older brothers and sisters attended elementary school in the projects, my brother and I went to school in the more affluent Brooklyn Heights neighborhood. It was there, where one African American boy and I shared a class with white students, that I found I was different. While my classmates participated in other activities, I was escorted out of class to work on eliminating my Spanish accent. Unlike my siblings, at my school I took music lessons (and brought home a violin to practice, much to the chagrin of my family), studied French, saw Broadway plays that my parents could not afford, and worked with teachers who cared about my progress. Having access to good schooling gave me such a strong foundation that when I entered junior high school, I skipped from seventh to ninth grade. There I was, a young girl from a lower socioeconomic stratum given the opportunity to succeed. In retrospect, I was one of the lucky ones: I had caring teachers, resources outside of the classroom, and validation that I could reach my potential.

Like many women and students of color, I entered higher education through a community college, where I enrolled in the legal secretarial sciences program because I felt it would help me escape the factory. At the community college, I made another discovery. While I had had many women teachers, it was not until the community college that I encountered faculty of color—women and men who helped me take pride in my cultural background. Their encouragement propelled me to graduate and enter a baccalaureate-degree-granting institution, despite the fact that my neighbors thought that “college was for rich people.”

My transfer to a four-year institution was not as smooth as my transition to community college. I went from a caring environment to a place where I had to prove myself academically while working in secretarial jobs to support myself. My goal was to teach business and give back to my community, but when I graduated, there were no teaching jobs in New York City, so I taught at a Catholic women’s high school in the Westchester suburbs. I commuted two hours each way to teach students who drove their cars to school, and the class differences were evident. A snowstorm changed my fate. When I arrived at work (on time), the high school was closed. It took six hours to get home. I decided to find a job closer to home and applied at LaGuardia Community College, which hired me. That serendipitous event changed my professional life.

My journey, like that of so many women, has not been lockstep: I taught at the community college while obtaining my master’s degree, and I became executive assistant to the president and dean of students at Hostos Community College while working on my doctorate. I began a career at Montclair State University upon graduating, first as assistant to the provost and then as assistant vice president of academic affairs. Throughout my tenure there, I was teaching, conducting research, and publishing as well.

Encouraged by programs run by the American Council on Education, Harvard, and the American Association of Higher Education and by my powerful male mentors, I pursued higher levels of administration. With my mentors’ guidance, I became associate vice provost for academic affairs at Arizona State University, where I entered the tenured faculty line. When I became president of Berkeley College, a for-profit institution that many warned me would limit my future in “traditional higher education,” I finally reached one of my goals: serving students from neighborhoods like mine. Today my unconventional journey...
continues at California State University-Dominguez Hills, where last year I was appointed the first women president at that institution and the first Latina president in the California State University System.

So I, and we, have “come a long way, baby.” Once a first-generation college student from humble roots, told by my high school guidance counselor I would never finish college, I began my unexpected journey through higher education in the community college. Throughout my career, I heard that those who begin at community colleges can’t work in research institutions, that those who begin in student affairs can’t cross over to academic affairs, that those with doctorates in education will never become presidents of anything other than community colleges. I shattered these myths throughout my unexpected journey. It is time to shift the story line and the data sets that mark journeys like mine as unexpected ones. Instead of accepting stories like mine as unusual triumphs, higher education needs to have greater expectations of access, success, and achievement for all its students.

In the end, the academy knows what must be done to create inclusive environments where all who enter our institutions can flourish. The test is whether we have “las ganas”: the will to put into practice all we have learned from the millions of stories the data represent. The future rests in our hands, and history will measure how successful we are.

Dr. Mildred García
President of California State University–Dominguez Hills
Introduction

My first grandchild, a girl, was born last year. I sat on the couch holding Catherine on her first day home from the hospital as my daughter, Rebecca, a lawyer, sat next to me. Arrayed as we were, three generations of women side by side, I thought about how my mother, now deceased, had been born before women could even vote. She never graduated from high school even though she was rarely without a book. What extraordinary leaps women had made in only one short century, I sighed with wonder and relief, thankful that Catherine’s world might be free of the obstacles that tamped down ambition, undermined confidence, ignored talent, and distorted possibilities for so many women before her.

But there is no real evidence that gender has yet ceased to define how societies organize themselves and stratify opportunity. While many earlier cultural norms that limited women have evaporated, old attitudes, habits, and most importantly institutional and societal structures still shape everyday life. Although much progress has been made, higher education has not escaped the musty residue of an earlier period.

To help us grasp the contours of women’s progress in higher education, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) commissioned Judy Touchton to produce this compact, easily accessible synthesis of existing research. The last research brief offering a data-driven overview of women in higher education was published by the American Council on Education in 1995. *A Measure of Equity: Women’s Progress in Higher Education* compares the gains women have made since the earlier publication and identifies areas still resistant to change. It also names the pressing issues that require serious attention in this next decade.

Celebrating Progress and Probing Resistance

As we mark thirty-six years since the passage of Title IX, it seems especially timely that AAC&U’s women’s office, established nearly four decades ago, examine how women are faring across all sectors of higher education. This is all the more urgent in a climate that for the past decade has been punctuated by a persistent, organized effort to undermine equity progress on many fronts in the courts, legislatures, state referendums, and on college campuses themselves.

As readers sift through the data, it will become clear that there is much to celebrate. We can point to measurable progress, thanks in large part to federal and state legislative incentives for equity in the sixties and seventies in particular; the serious commitment by colleges and universities to dismantle barriers to access and success and to create warmer, more welcoming climates for women; and the organized efforts by women working tirelessly in local groups and through disciplinary, state, and national organizations.

Women, for example, continue to enter colleges and universities and earn their postsecondary degrees in higher numbers than ever before. As students, they reflect the dramatic diversity of race, ethnicity, and age that...
now characterizes our nation. As faculty and administrators, women have dramatically increased their numbers at lower- to mid-level positions, and they have made strides in higher ranks as well. As graduates, women are now essentially on a par with men who attend schools of medicine, dentistry, and law.

However, despite considerable progress for some women, not all women across racial, ethnic, and income groups are achieving the same level of success. Similarly, the farther up the ladder of leadership and influence one looks, the less likely one is to find women, particularly in certain disciplines and in research universities. Within higher education, women are still advancing more slowly and earning less income on the whole than their male peers. Troubling, too, is the fact that while women receive the majority of undergraduate degrees, the percentage declines steeply in graduate school. So while women in the twenty-first century have much to celebrate, persistent inequities beg for new solutions.

**Structure of the Monograph**

For ease of comparison, we have organized data in a structure that echoes earlier research briefs and parallels most formal data collection sources. Using the familiar pipeline analogy, *A Measure of Equity* begins with a section on high school completion, moves to undergraduate enrollment, and then examines where women go to school and what kinds of degrees they earn as undergraduates and postgraduates. The last third of the monograph provides data on women faculty, senior administrators, and presidents. Wherever possible, we sought to disaggregate the data by race, ethnicity, and gender (although sometimes, as was the case with Native American and Asian American students who recently completed high school, the data were not available). In certain cases, we were also able to disaggregate by age and income.

AAC&U members have expressed their desire to have access to concrete data to drive campus improvements, which is why AAC&U’s *On Campus with Women* (www.ocww.org) includes its Data Connection column in every issue. *A Measure of Equity*, therefore, amasses in one convenient place data about women in higher education that is otherwise strewn across multiple Web sites and tucked within numerous reports. But we also want to offer a road map to where you can peruse the data in more detail. Thus we encourage you to use the rich collection of data sources named in our monograph to investigate further those areas most important to your campus. These data sources often provide even more nuanced, contextualized analysis, and many offer concrete suggestions to remedy remaining inequities.

In addition to updating where women have made progress and where they remain stymied or are even losing ground, this monograph seeks to identify what we are calling Hot Points, those still-contentious arenas of unsolved and sometimes poorly understood dilemmas. We have included seven of them in our report. They focus on (1) the missing boys and men in the education pipeline; (2) the effect of socioeconomics on educational opportunity; (3) women’s uneven success in STEM fields; (4) the impact of family formation on advancement; (5) promotion and income disparities among faculty; (6) the leadership gap; and (7) the challenge of creating inclusive multicultural institutions. These self-contained Hot Points do not fit neatly within the pipeline structure of the data but are nonetheless linked to specific points on the pipeline. We believe they mark front-burner issues if women’s talents and leadership are to be fully tapped. As such, they suggest an agenda for equity research and action as the next decade unfolds.

We offer *A Measure of Equity* to you in recognition of all that many of you have striven so hard to achieve and as a reminder that our work is not yet complete. Catherine is counting on us.

CARYN McTIGHE MUSIL
Director, Program on the Status and Education of Women
Senior Vice President, AAC&U
High School Completion and Transition to College

College enrollment rates for white, African American, and Hispanic women rose between 1985 and 2005, with women in all groups completing high school and enrolling in college at slightly higher rates than their male peers. But progress is mixed: students of color are achieving at lower rates than their white peers as they graduate and transition to college. The data indicate a need to expand support structures to improve completion and matriculation rates for students from all racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Who is completing high school, and how has this changed?

- In 2005, men aged eighteen to twenty-four years outnumbered women in the total U.S. population (with 14.1 million and 13.8 million respectively). However, a higher proportion of women (87 percent, up from 84 percent in 1985) than men (79 percent, down slightly from 80 percent in 1985) in this age group had completed high school (by earning a high school diploma or its equivalent) (Cook and Córdova 2007).¹

- In 2006, slightly more women than men aged twenty-five and older in each racial or ethnic category had completed high school, with white women attaining the highest completion rates: 91 percent of white women, compared to 90 percent of white men; 82 percent of African American women, compared to 81 percent of African American men; and 60 percent of Hispanic women, compared to 59 percent of Hispanic men (U.S. Department of Education 2007). Among Asian and Pacific Islanders, 81 percent of women had completed high school, compared to 80 percent of men (Klein 2007).

- More “older students” (twenty-five or older) are completing high school than ever before. In 2005, 85 percent of all women and men twenty-five years old or older had completed high school, up from 74 percent in 1985 (U.S. Department of Education 2007).

Among recent high school completers, who is enrolling in college, and how has this changed?

- Among recent high school completers aged sixteen to twenty-four years, women are enrolling in college at rates roughly equal to those of men. In 2006, roughly 66 percent of women and 66 percent of

¹ Cook and Córdova’s data derives from the U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey Reports. The rates of high school graduation, as opposed to high school completion, are much lower than these statistics suggest. Researchers have criticized the Census Bureau’s statistics for being overinflated by self-reported data and the inclusion of recent GED scores and immigrants who did not attend high school in the United States, among other factors. Data on actual graduation rates are difficult to attain, however, as data collection criteria vary widely by state (Corbett, Hill, and St. Rose 2008).
men in this age group enrolled in college within twelve months of completing high school, representing net increases for both genders over the previous twenty years, but declining transition rates for women over the previous ten years. (In 1996, 70 percent of women and 60 percent of men transitioned to college; in 1986, 52 percent of women and 56 percent of men made this transition) (Snyder, Dillow, and Hoffman 2008).

- Expanding the scope of inquiry to include all high school graduates aged eighteen to twenty-four years, regardless of date of graduation, college enrollment rates for women who received a degree or its equivalent have increased across racial and ethnic groups. Between 1985 and 2005, college enrollment rates increased for both African American women (from 25 percent in 1985 to 37 percent in 1995 to 44 percent in 2005) and Hispanic women (from 28 percent in 1985 to 39 percent in 1995 to 41 percent in 2005) (Cook and Córdova 2007).Comparable data for Asian Americans are not available.

**Figure 1**

College Enrollment Rates for High School Graduates Aged 18–24, By Gender, Race, and Ethnicity

Source: Cook and Córdova 2007. Comparable data on Asian American students not available.
Do girls’ educational successes equate with declining achievement for boys? Despite popular claims to the contrary, the answer is a resounding “no.” As Jacqueline King, author of *Gender Equity in Higher Education*, has said, “[E]ducation is not a zero-sum game in which women’s success results in losses for men” (2006, 21). At the same time, King stresses, while no “generalized educational crisis among males” exists, “there are pockets of real problems” for some men of color and men of lower economic status, who continue to achieve at troublingly low levels (2000, 2).

As a group, men are doing well in terms of educational attainment. A review of high school completion rates shows that the percentage of men completing high school (earning a degree or its equivalent) has remained roughly the same (declining from 80 percent to 79 percent) in the years between 1985 and 2005 (Cook and Córdova 2007), and more men than ever before are enrolling in college (almost 7.5 million in 2005, as compared with under 6 million in 1980) (Snyder, Dillow, and Hoffman 2008). Men are also obtaining postsecondary degrees, from associate through doctoral levels, in higher numbers than they have since the early 1970s (Snyder, Dillow, and Hoffman 2008). Thus an increase in the number of women graduating from high school, attending college, and earning degrees may shift the gender balance, but it doesn’t detract from the number of men achieving at every level. And of course, men still earn the majority of all doctorates (Hoffer et al. 2007).

This is not to say that all men are succeeding, and African American and Hispanic men in particular face less promising odds. Only 74 percent of African American men aged eighteen to twenty-four years and 60 percent of Hispanic men in the same age group completed high school (including attaining a GED) in 2005 (Cook and Córdova 2007). In 2007, only 15 percent of African American men and 10 percent of Hispanic men aged eighteen and over had earned at least a bachelor’s degree (as compared with 17 percent of African American women, 12 percent of Hispanic women, and 27 percent of white men and women) (U.S. Census Bureau 2007). Meanwhile, within traditionally aged student groups, income makes a difference. The gender gap simply does not exist at upper-income levels (where in 2003–04 men were over 50 percent of dependent undergraduates of any race or ethnicity). But in the lowest quartile, fewer men than women are attending college, regardless of racial or ethnic group (King 2006).

These statistics (and others recently published by the American Association of University Women) suggest that the United States should stop worrying about a generalized “boys’ crisis” and start focusing on educational attainment rates for all students (Corbett, Hill, and St. Rose 2008). While many men and women are succeeding in education, considerable gaps remain, particularly for men in underrepresented groups who are not attaining at the same rates as their female or white male peers. Targeted recruiting efforts and sustained support programs (such as those suggested by the Dellums Commission’s 2006 report on the lives of men of color) could go a long way toward improving educational attainment for all, particularly these underrepresented men.
Since the civil rights legislation of the sixties and the passage of Title IX in 1972, the demographic profile of who attends college has changed considerably. Over the past decade, student participation in higher education has continued to expand, with women of all races and ethnicities taking the lead. In every racial or ethnic category, more women than ever before are enrolling in some type of higher education. Men’s enrollment has continued to increase as well, but not at the same rate as women’s. Enrollment rates have varied considerably, however, across racial and ethnic groups. While the gaps between white women’s college attendance rates and those of African American and Hispanic women are shrinking, differences still remain. We need to find more effective ways to open higher education’s doors more widely and hospitably to people of color, especially men of color.

Who is enrolled in college, and how has this changed?

By Gender Alone:

- Students are more likely than ever to be women. Women constituted 57 percent of the 17.5 million undergraduate students enrolled in 2005, up from 56 percent of 14.3 million students in 1995 (Snyder, Dillow, and Hoffman 2008).

- Growing numbers of men and women are enrolling in college, but the rate of increase for women exceeds that for men. In 1970, more men (5.0 million) than women (3.5 million) were enrolled. By 1980 the balance had shifted (5.9 million men and 6.2 million women), and by 1995 the gender gap had widened (6.3 million men and 7.9 million women). In 2005 the gap was wider than ever (7.5 million men, 10.0 million women) (Snyder, Dillow, and Hoffman 2008).

- Current projections suggest that between 2005 and 2016, college enrollment will rise to 20.4 million (an increase of 17 percent) and that almost 60 percent of students will be women (Hussar and Bailey 2007).

By Race, Ethnicity, and Gender:

- Student demographics are increasingly diverse. In 2005, 31 percent of undergraduate students were racial or ethnic minorities, compared with 15 percent in 1976. Much of this change is due to rising numbers of Hispanic and Asian or Pacific Islander students. The proportion of Hispanics among all students rose from 4 percent to 11 percent during that time period; for Asians or Pacific Islanders, the
increase was from 2 percent to 7 percent. The proportion of black students fluctuated, but increased overall from 9 percent in 1976 to 13 percent in 2005 (Snyder, Dillow, and Hoffman 2008).

- In 2005, a higher proportion of male students (67 percent) than female students (65 percent) were white; and higher proportions of women students than men students were people of color. Among women of color, 14 percent were black, 11 percent were Hispanic, 6 percent were Asians or Pacific Islanders, 1 percent were American Indian, and 3 percent were nonresident alien. Among men of color, 10 percent were black, 10 percent were Hispanic, 7 percent were Asians or Pacific Islanders, 1 percent were American Indian, and 4 percent were nonresident alien (Snyder, Dillow, and Hoffman 2008).

- The National Center for Education Statistics projects that by 2016, women will constitute 60 percent of all students enrolled in college, and more than one-third (36 percent) of all students will be from racial or ethnic minority groups. These shifts correspond with other expected projections: a 22 percent increase for women between 2005 and 2016 (compared to 10 percent for men), and increases of 45 percent for Hispanics, 34 percent for American Indians, 32 percent for Asians or Pacific Islanders, 29 percent for African Americans, and 15 percent for nonresident alien students, compared to an 8 percent increase for whites (Hussar and Bailey 2007).

**By Age and Gender:**

- The student population as a whole is aging, but women outnumber men significantly among older students. In 2005, 4.2 million women college students (42 percent of all female students) were twenty-five or older, an increase of 20 percent in the last decade and of 70 percent since 1980. Almost half of women aged twenty-five and older in college in 2005 were over thirty-five years old. In 2005, 36 percent of the 7.5 million men in college were twenty-five or older (Snyder, Dillow, and Hoffman 2008).

- National Center for Education Statistics projections suggest that the number of women students older than twenty-five attending college will increase an additional 21 percent by 2015. Only a small increase in the total number of male students in this age group is expected during the same time frame (Hussar and Bailey 2007).

**By Enrollment Status and Gender:**

- More college students attend part time than ever before. In 2005, the majority of students of both sexes (60 percent of women and 64 percent of men) attended college full time, but the number of both who attend on a part-time basis has been increasing fairly steadily since at least 1970. In 2005, about 4 million women were enrolled part time, compared to 2.7 million men (Snyder, Dillow, and Hoffman 2008).

![Figure 2](image-url)
• Among part-time college students who graduated from high school in 2007, 85 percent were employed, with female students more likely to hold a job than their male counterparts (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2008).

• The National Center for Education Statistics projects a 23 percent increase in undergraduate students who are enrolled full time and a 6 percent increase in undergraduate students who are enrolled part time by 2016 (Hussar and Bailey 2007).

By Income and Gender:
• Most dependent undergraduates come from higher-income families. In 2004, 50 percent of dependent students came from households with family incomes of $60,000 and above. Conversely, 13 percent of dependent undergraduates came from households with family incomes below $20,000. Of the 50 percent of students from higher-income households, two-thirds came from families who made $80,000 or more (Wellman, Desrochers, and Lenihan 2008).

• Women are a higher percentage of undergraduates at lower income levels than at higher income levels. Thus as family income rises, the gender gap in undergraduate enrollment closes. This is true regardless of racial or ethnic background. For undergraduate students dependent on family income in 2003–04, women were 58 percent of African American students in the lowest income quartile but 46 percent in the highest quartile; women were 57 percent of Hispanic students in the lowest quartile but 49 percent in the highest quartile; women were 56 percent of white students in the lowest quartile but 49 percent in the highest quartile; and women were 52 percent of Asian American students in the lowest quartile but 46 percent in the highest quartile (King 2006).

![Figure 3](source.png)

**Source:** Snyder, Dillow, and Hoffman 2008
Obtaining a college degree is one of the few relatively certain pathways to financial success in today’s economy, as both men and women with bachelor’s degrees earn over fifteen thousand dollars per year more than their peers with high school degrees (Webster and Bishaw 2007). Certainly gender, race, and ethnicity affect a student’s chances of educational attainment. But no single factor may have as great an influence on early educational gaps—and thus on persistent earnings gaps—than socioeconomic status (Sacks 2007).

There is no doubt about it: the higher the socioeconomic status of a family, the better chance a student in the United States has of educational achievement. The correlation begins in childhood but is deeply entrenched by high school. In 2006, high school completion rates for students whose family incomes were below $38,660 stood at only 68 percent, compared to 92 percent for students whose families made over $105,800 (Mortenson 2008). Compared to this 24-percentage-point gap, the 8-percentage-point difference between women’s and men’s high school completion rates seems barely significant (Cook and Córdova 2007).

In fact, at the college level, higher socioeconomic status correlates to a smaller gender gap. In 2003–04, male students accounted for 44 percent of dependent undergraduates in the lowest income quartile, but were 52 percent of undergraduates in the highest quartile (King 2006). This pattern holds across racial and ethnic lines (King 2006). And if the benefits of higher socioeconomic status are apparent for men in upper-income brackets, the effects of low status are no less evident: students of lower socioeconomic status are less likely than their peers to enroll in college within one to two years of graduating from high school (Rowan-Kenyon 2007), and less likely to complete their bachelor’s degrees when they enroll (Mortenson 2008).

Thus just at the point where women as a group are most successful in educational attainment—during the high school and undergraduate years—students of lower socioeconomic status are exiting the pipeline. Some of these students, of course, are women, a significant number of whom opt to pursue higher education later in life. Almost twice as many female than male undergraduates were over twenty-four years old in 2003–4 (King 2006), and these women have entered their earning years without the economic benefit of a bachelor’s degree. They will feel the effects of this disparity—in future income, retirement savings, and accumulated capital—for the remainder of their lives. Unfortunately, the cycle doesn’t stop with the degree: women earn less than their male peers, even with a bachelor’s degree in hand (Webster and Bishaw 2007).

In order to create educational equity, it is necessary to attend to socioeconomic difference across lines of gender, race, and ethnicity. Publications like Postsecondary Education Opportunity and centers like the Education Trust have done much to generate conversation about how socioeconomic gaps manifest themselves, in education and beyond. There is an increasingly wide range of proven recruitment strategies that increase educational access for students from lower economic income levels as well as concomitant effective pedagogies and practices to ensure their academic success. What is needed now is the institutional will to adopt them. With such actions, college can continue to be a route to economic well-being regardless of the family and zip code in which a student is born.
Degrees 1: Associate, Baccalaureate, Master’s, Professional

As women have entered undergraduate and graduate education in increasing numbers in recent decades, they have become the majority of degree earners at almost every level, and women of color have contributed considerably to this progress. It is still true, however, that women are concentrated in what have become known as “women’s fields.” At both the baccalaureate and master’s degree levels, women earn a majority of degrees in the health professions, psychology, education, other social sciences, and humanities.

Who is earning Associate, Baccalaureate, Master’s, and Professional Degrees?

- Women are earning more degrees than men at every level except professional, where their representation is almost equal to men’s. Across degree fields, in 2005–06 women earned 62 percent of all associate, 58 percent of all baccalaureate, 60 percent of all master’s, and 50 percent of first professional degrees (including dental, legal, and medical degrees). These represented increases over 1995–96, when women earned 60 percent of associate, 55 percent of baccalaureate, 56 percent of master’s, and 42 percent of first professional degrees (Snyder, Dillow, and Hoffman 2008).

- Comparing white women to women of color as a group, in 2004–05 white women earned 39 percent and minority women earned 18 percent of associate degrees; white women earned 39 percent and minority women earned 14 percent of baccalaureate degrees; white women earned 37 percent and minority women earned 12 percent of master’s degrees; and white women earned 33 percent and minority women earned 13 percent of professional degrees (Cook and Córdova 2007). In 2005, white women constituted 34 percent of the total U.S. population, while minority women accounted for 17 percent. (Note: Foreign students and persons of unknown race were not included in this analysis) (U.S. Census Bureau 2008).

- Women of color are earning more degrees than men of color at every level. In 2004–05, minority women earned 18 percent (and minority men 10 percent) of all associate, 14 percent (and minority men 9 percent) of all baccalaureate, 12 percent (and minority men 7 percent) of all master’s, and 13 percent (and minority men 10 percent) of all professional degrees (Cook and Córdova 2007).

How does degree attainment break down by race and ethnicity?

- Associate degrees. Minority women earned 18 percent of associate degrees in 2004–05, up from 12 percent a decade earlier. The highest proportion (8 percent) of the recent degrees went to African American
women; 7 percent went to Hispanic, 3 percent to Asian American, and less than 1 percent to American Indian women. White women earned 39 percent of associate degrees (Cook and Córdova 2007).

**Baccalaureate degrees.** In 2004–05 minority women earned 14 percent of all baccalaureate degrees, up from 10 percent ten years before. A total of 5.8 percent went to African American women, 4.0 percent to Hispanic women, 3.5 percent to Asian American women, and 0.4 percent to American Indian women. White women earned 39 percent of baccalaureate degrees (Cook and Córdova 2007).

**Master’s degrees.** Minority women received 12 percent of master’s degrees, up from 8 percent ten years earlier. In 2004–05, 6 percent of master’s degrees went to African American women, 3 percent to Hispanic women, 3 percent to Asian American women, and less than 1 percent to American Indian women. White women earned 37 percent of master’s degrees (Cook and Córdova 2007).

**Professional degrees.** Women earned almost 50 percent of professional degrees in 2004–05, an increase of nearly 10 percentage points over ten years. Minority women in 2004–05 earned 13 percent of all professional degrees, up from 9 percent ten years earlier. Four percent of professional degrees went to African American women, 2 percent to Hispanic women, 6 percent to Asian American women, and less than 1 percent to American Indian women. White women earned 33 percent of professional degrees (Cook and Córdova 2007).

**How have degree recipients changed between 1995 and 2005?**

- The total number of degrees awarded to both men and women in every category except professional has increased over the last decade, but the number of degrees awarded to women is increasing at a much faster rate. The number of professional degrees earned by women increased by 39 percent between 1995 and 2005, while the proportion of all professional degrees earned by men declined 4 percent in the same period (Cook and Córdova 2007).

- Comparing data from 1994–95 to 2004–05, minority women are earning a higher proportion of degrees at a faster rate than minority men. Minority men are earning more degrees at every level than ten years ago, but at rates far below those of minority women. The greatest increase in proportion of degrees earned over ten years for minority women and men occurred at the master’s degree level with a 143 percent increase for women and an 83 percent increase for men (Cook and Córdova 2007).

- The actual number of degrees attained by white men and women continues to increase, but the percentage of all degrees earned by whites of both sexes decreases as the share earned by other race/ethnicity groups increases (Cook and Córdova 2007).

**In what kinds of institutions are women earning their degrees?**

- For the most part, women are obtaining their degrees in the same places that men do: in public, private not-for-profit (independent), and private for-profit institutions, where they are a majority of degree earners in both four-year and two-year programs. In 2005–06, women earned 57 percent of degrees awarded at public four-year institutions, 59 percent of degrees awarded at not-for-profit four-year institutions, and 56 percent of degrees awarded at for-profit four-year institutions. At two-year institutions, women earned 61 percent of degrees awarded at public institutions, 62 percent at not-for-profit institutions, and 63 percent at for-profit institutions (Snyder, Dillow, and Hoffman 2008).
• Although the number of women’s colleges has continued to decline, in 2006, the 53 institutions identified by the Women’s College Coalition as women’s colleges enrolled 90,400 students, 94 percent of whom were women and over two-thirds of whom attended full time. In 2006, women’s colleges awarded more than 13,339 baccalaureate, 4,315 master’s, 792 associate, and 165 doctorate degrees (Snyder, Dillow, and Hoffman 2008).

In what fields are women as a group earning their degrees?
• In 2004–05, women were the majority of degree earners at the baccalaureate and master’s levels in multiple disciplines, including the health professions and related fields (87 percent of baccalaureates and 79 percent of master’s degrees), psychology (78 percent of baccalaureates and 79 percent of master’s degrees), social sciences and history (51 percent of baccalaureates and 51 percent of master’s degrees), and education (79 percent of baccalaureates and 77 percent of master’s degrees). They earn about 50 percent of baccalaureate business degrees and 42 percent at the master’s level. However, women continue to be underrepresented in the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), with under 50 percent of degrees earned in most fields (U.S. Department of Education 2007).

• Women are especially underrepresented in computer/information sciences at the undergraduate level, where the percentages of women degree earners actually dropped by 8 percentage points between 1979–80 and 2004–05. By contrast, in 2004–05 women at the master’s level earned a higher percentage of degrees in computer/information sciences (29 percent) than did women at the baccalaureate level (22 percent) (U.S. Department of Education 2007).

• Over the last several decades, the proportion of first professional degrees—dentistry, medicine, and law—awarded to women has risen dramatically. Between 1979–80 and 2005–06, the percentage of students who are women graduating with degrees in dentistry rose from 13 percent to 44 percent; in medicine, from 23 percent to 49 percent; and in law, from 30 percent to 48 percent. During this period the number of men graduating with degrees in these fields also fluctuated and ultimately decreased, although in law there were more men in 2005 than five years earlier (Snyder, Dillow, and Hoffman 2008).
Over the past ten years, women's levels of participation in many science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines have continued to rise, sometimes dramatically. Women have increased their share of undergraduate degrees in the life sciences in particular: in 2005, women (who are just over 50 percent of the U.S. resident population) (National Science Foundation 2007a) earned 51 percent of bachelor's degrees in agricultural sciences, 62 percent in biological sciences, 42 percent in environmental sciences, and a strikingly unbalanced 78 percent in psychology (increases of 11, 9, 8, and 5 percentage points since 1996, respectively) (National Science Foundation 2008).

These shifts reflect significant efforts on the part of the National Science Foundation and many other organizations to encourage women to enter, remain, and advance in scientific fields—and to encourage academic programs and workplaces to welcome them.

But this incoming tide of women earning undergraduate life sciences degrees tells only a partial story. In engineering, small change is small comfort. Even with an increase of 2 percentage points over ten years, women earned only 20 percent of baccalaureate degrees in engineering in 2005 (National Science Foundation 2008). Women's shares in certain disciplines—such as computer sciences, where they earned 22 percent of baccalaureate degrees in 2005, and mathematics and statistics, where they earned 45 percent in the same year—are now on the decline (National Science Foundation 2008). And perhaps most troublesome is a second waning tide: that of women retreating from the sciences at the graduate level. In the physical sciences, for example, women earned 43 percent of bachelor's degrees but only 27 percent of doctorates in 2005—a pattern of reduced participation from undergraduate to doctoral level that holds across almost every major subcategory of the STEM fields (National Science Foundation 2007b).

These areas of continued inequity beg the question: why are women still struggling in particular branches of science? At the level of undergraduate recruitment, reward structures and pedagogies seem to make all the difference: women as a group are more motivated by personal praise than by peer competition, and are more inclined to pursue science connected to social outcomes than to abstract questions (Thom 2001). Certain fields have been more successful in making the connections between science and society, and as more women succeed in those fields, the chances for same-gender mentoring increase, too. Moreover, persistent sexism in male-dominant fields creates a chilly climate that drives even PhDs away (Thom 2001). As one woman remarked, men begin their scientific careers with the presumption of competence, while women “must prove themselves at each stage” (Thom 2001, 67).

The issue of women’s participation in science is more than one of equity: it is a matter of investing intellectual resources in the complex and consequential scientific challenges that humanity faces. Women bring new perspectives and considerable talents to the historically masculine STEM fields. As Shirley Ann Jackson has said, “[I]f you have a myriad of social and environmental problems…you do not have anybody to waste!” (Thom 2001, 100). Thus organizations like the National Council for Research on Women have called for more practices that have proven effective in recruiting and retaining young women and people of color in the sciences, such as mentoring, cross-disciplinary applications, and early research opportunities (Thom 2001). Likewise, the National Academies have identified steps that university leaders, higher education associations, and federal agencies should take to ensure that women are able to succeed (2007). With greater institutional commitment to these efforts, the STEM tide can turn so that women swim with it rather than against it.
I 2005–06, women earned 45 percent of all doctoral degrees. In an even more stunning benchmark of progress, among U.S. citizens, women have earned a majority of doctorates since 2002. As in undergraduate and master’s degree attainment, women have been more successful in some fields than in others. In 2005–06, for example, women earned more than half of all doctorates in education, the social sciences, life sciences, and humanities while remaining greatly underrepresented in the physical sciences and engineering despite recent gains in these fields. Moreover, women anticipated using their degrees differently than men. Women who had employment plans after doctorate completion were more likely than men to anticipate being employed by an educational institution, while men were more likely to find employment in the industrial or business sectors. These differences in planned career tracks have far-reaching implications for women’s promotional and earning potential over the course of their careers.

Who is earning doctoral degrees?

- **Total doctorates.** Women earned 45 percent of all doctorates (20,539) awarded in 2006, a proportion that reflects steady increases in women’s share of degree attainment over the past 30 years (women earned 23 percent of all doctorates in 1976, 35 percent in 1986, 40 percent in 1996, and 44 percent in 2001). However, if only U.S. citizens are taken into account, women have earned a majority of doctorates since 2002 (Hoffer et al. 2007).

- **By race and ethnicity.** Among the 45 percent of all doctorates awarded to women in 2006, the distribution by race and ethnicity is: 27 percent to whites, 10 percent to Asian Americans, 3 percent to African Americans, 2 percent to Hispanics, less than 2 percent to American Indians, and 4 percent to women whose race/ethnicity is unknown (Hoffer et al. 2007).

- **By U.S. citizenship status.** Among doctoral recipients in 2006, more women (66 percent) than men (53 percent) were U.S. citizens, while more men (37 percent) than women (23 percent) held temporary visas. Among U.S. citizens, the balance of male and female doctorate recipients in 2006 varied among racial and ethnic groups, with just under half (48 percent) of doctorates earned by whites awarded to women. But for the first time among U.S. citizens, women in 2006 earned more doctorates than men in all racial groups except whites. Among whites, women earned 10,504 and men earned 10,776 doctorates; among African Americans, women earned 1,079 and men earned 615 doctorates; among Hispanics, women earned 755 and men earned 615 doctorates; among Asian Americans,
women earned 790 and men earned 770 doctorates; and among American Indians, women earned 64 and men earned 54 doctorates (Hoffer et al. 2007).

- **By non-U.S. citizenship status.** The percentage of U.S. doctorates awarded to non-U.S. citizens is substantial for both women and men. Among women doctoral recipients in 2006, 34 percent were non-U.S. citizens (including women of unknown citizenship); almost half (47 percent) of all men doctoral recipients were non-U.S. citizens (including men of unknown citizenship). Among this group, Asians were the most represented racial group for both women and men, constituting 55 percent of non-U.S. citizens who earned a doctorate (Hoffer et al. 2007).

### In what fields are women earning their doctorates?

- **Women in 2006 earned more than half of all doctorates awarded in education (65 percent), the social sciences (57 percent), life sciences (52 percent), and the humanities (51 percent) (Hoffer et al. 2007).**

- **In contrast, women remain underrepresented in the physical sciences (28 percent) and engineering (20 percent). However, even these lower percentages represent significant increases over the last three decades (Hoffer et al. 2007).**

### How do women plan to use their doctorates?

- **Postdoctoral study.** If postdoctoral study was planned, women were more likely (61 percent) than men (50 percent) to have a fellowship; and men (41 percent) were more likely than women (30 percent) to have a research associateship (Hoffer et al. 2007).

- **Postgraduate employment.** For those who had definite employment plans after receiving the doctorate, women were more likely to be employed by an educational institution (68 percent women, 53 percent men) and men were more likely than women to enter the industrial or business sectors (31 percent men, 15 percent women). Slightly more men (7 percent) than women (6 percent) planned to work for the government, and women (5 percent) were more likely than men (3 percent) to work for a nonprofit organization (Hoffer et al. 2007).

- **Primary activity anticipated.** With regard to primary activity anticipated, men were much more likely than women to go into research and development (45 percent of men, 27 percent of women), while women were more likely than men to enter the teaching profession (44 percent of women, 34 percent of men). Women were also more likely to enter administration (16 percent of women, 11 percent of men) or provide “professional services to individuals” (11 percent of women, 8 percent of men) (Hoffer et al. 2007).

### What else do we know about women doctoral recipients?

- **Entered higher education through the community college system.** Slightly more than 14 percent of all doctoral recipients in 2006 attended community colleges, and women were somewhat more likely (16 percent) than men (13 percent) to have done so. More than one in five American Indian
(35 percent), Hispanic (27 percent), white (21 percent), and African American (20 percent) doctoral recipients attended community colleges, and 17 percent of Asian American doctoral recipients did so. Doctorates in all major fields are included in this group, with education (24 percent) being most represented and engineering (7 percent) and the physical sciences (10 percent) being least represented (Hoffer et al. 2007).

- **Marital status.** When they received their doctorates, about the same proportion of women (26 percent) as men (27 percent) were single (never married); somewhat fewer women were currently married (49 percent of women, as compared to 54 percent of men), and women were twice as likely to be divorced (6 percent of women, compared to 3 percent of men). More women (7 percent) than men (5 percent) reported being in a marriage-like relationship. As Figures 5 and 6 illustrate, disparities in family status widen as women continue through the pipeline (Hoffer et al. 2007).
By 2005–06, women earned 45 percent of doctoral degrees (Hoffer et al. 2007), but represented only 26 percent of full professors (an increase of only two percentage points since 2003) (Snyder, Dillow, and Hoffman 2008). No single cause can account for this significant gap in persistence and success. But most women PhDs received their degrees at age thirty-three—meaning that key opportunities for professional development coincide with women’s reproductive years (Hoffer et al. 2007). This fact prompted Mary Ann Mason and Marc Goulden to ask, “Do babies matter?” (2004). Their research indicates that family formation has very different consequences for men and women in academe. As Mason and Goulden conclude, particularly for women, “babies do matter—they matter a great deal” (2002).

Mason and Goulden’s research surfaced a number of striking findings related to family formation and academic careers. Among doctoral recipients who work in academia, women who have “early babies” (those born up to five years after the parent finishes the doctorate) have much lower chances of working as tenured professors than men in similar circumstances (56 percent of women still working after twelve years in academia are tenured professors, as compared to 77 percent of men). In fact, men with early babies are actually more likely to become tenured professors than any of their peers. Thus women who have early babies often find themselves working as “second-tier” faculty—lecturers, adjuncts, and part-timers—if they are working at all. Citing data from a University of California-Berkeley survey of postdoctorates, Mason and Goulden reported that 59 percent of married women with children postdocs are considering leaving academia (2002). These women may be reacting to what Joan C. Williams has called the “maternal wall”: the “specific forms of bias” that mothers face in the workplace (2004).

If family formation affects faculty careers, the inverse may also be true. Only one-third of women who are childless when they enter the tenure track will ever have children, and women who are married when they enter the tenure track are about 50 percent more likely to divorce in any given year than their male counterparts (Mason and Goulden 2004). Their familial decisions may represent an extreme form of what Robert Drago and others have termed “bias avoidance,” or the attempt to elude punitive bias by minimizing personal commitments (2005). The contrasts are stark: twelve years after earning the PhD, 55 percent of women (compared with 74 percent of men) have children, and 63 percent of women (compared with 85 percent of men) are married (Mason and Goulden 2004). These figures apply to women in administration as well: among college presidents, 68 percent of women and 91 percent of men have children, while 63 percent of women and 89 percent of men are married (American Council on Education 2007).

Noting these considerable disparities, Mason and Goulden have suggested the need to change policies and rethink equity so it includes personal as well as professional success (2004). The American Association of University Professors (2001) and the American Council on Education (2005) have called for policy changes that better enable employees (particularly mothers) to balance work and life, including providing flexible schedules, allowing pauses in the tenure clock, and providing child care. If accompanied by more inclusive cultures, these changes would allow both men and women greater opportunity for success, both in work and in life.
Women have entered the faculty in substantial numbers for several decades, and they have made great progress at lower ranks, but progress at higher ranks is more moderate. Women’s status differs substantially by institutional type, with women faculty doing well in associate-degree-granting institutions and some master’s degree institutions while facing greater challenges at doctoral institutions. Women’s progress in reaching higher ranks is slow overall, especially in research universities and highly selective liberal arts colleges, suggesting that institutional barriers to women’s advancement still exist.

Where are women in the faculty located, and who are these women?

• In 2005, women accounted for 41 percent of the 675,600 full-time faculty members of all ranks in degree-granting institutions, up slightly from 39 percent in 2003 (Snyder, Dillow, and Hoffman 2008).

• By academic rank, in 2005 women constituted more than half of all lecturers (52 percent) and instructors (53 percent) and were coming close to being half (46 percent) of all assistant professors. At higher ranks, however, the gender gap is more evident: women comprise 39 percent of all associate professors and only 25 percent of all full professors (Snyder, Dillow, and Hoffman 2008).

• Women’s distribution within institutional types varies considerably, with associate-degree-granting institutions having the most and research universities having fewest. In 2005–06 women held slightly more than half (51 percent) of full-time positions in associate institutions, 42 percent in baccalaureate,
42 percent in master’s, and 34 percent in doctoral institutions. Women have made the most progress in public institutions, both four-year and two-year; indeed, the highest degree of parity is found in two-year institutions. The lowest degree of parity appears in independent institutions, especially research universities and selective liberal arts colleges (West and Curtis 2006).

• With regard to race and ethnicity, in 2005–06, 78 percent of all women faculty were white and 17 percent were members of other racial and ethnic minority groups. (Nonresident aliens accounted for 3 percent of all women faculty, but data reflecting race and ethnicity were not reported for this group. Totals are less than 100 percent due to rounding) (Snyder, Dillow, and Hoffman 2008).

Given the complexity of women’s faculty positions, how can we track progress?

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) has created “a new set of numbers” (called gender equity indicators) “for individual colleges and universities to illustrate women’s progress (or lack thereof) in pursuing academic careers” (West and Curtis 2006, 6). The four indicators, which represent different aspects of the overall status of women faculty, are directly related to areas that historically have differentiated women’s experiences from those of men: employment status (full time versus part time), tenure track options, academic rank, and salary.

#1. Employment status. The proportion of full-time faculty appointments being awarded by institutions has been declining, and conversely part-time appointments rising, for several decades. Women receive a disproportionate number of these part-time appointments. At the national level, across all types of institutions, women constituted only 39 percent (and men 61 percent) of full-time faculty in 2003 (West and Curtis 2006).

#2. Tenure status. The percentage of faculty who have tenure or are on the tenure track has declined over the past few decades. In 2006, AAUP, citing Schuster and Finkelstein, noted that the majority of new hires since 1990 have been off the tenure track, and that “the impact of this trend has not been equal for men and women” (West and Curtis 2006, 8). To understand the implications of these changing hiring patterns, it is important to consider three tracks:

• Non-tenure-track. Higher proportions of women are being hired in non-tenure-track jobs, where opportunities for advancement in terms of position or salary are limited. Women hold more than half of non-tenure-track positions in doctoral (52 percent), master’s (54 percent), and associate (53 percent) degree-granting institutions, and almost half (49 percent) in baccalaureate institutions (West and Curtis 2006).

• Tenure track. At the national level among all institutions in 2005–06, women held 45 percent of all tenure-track positions—more than half (53 percent) in associate institutions, slightly less than half in baccalaureate (47 percent) and master’s (47 percent) institutions, and somewhat lower shares (41 percent) in doctoral institutions (West and Curtis 2006).

• Tenured faculty. Women constituted less than one-third (31 percent) of all tenured positions in 2005–06, and the differences among institutional types were dramatic. Women held one in four (26 percent) of tenured positions in doctoral institutions, and slightly more than one in three tenured positions in master’s (35 percent) and baccalaureate (36 percent) institutions. However, women constituted almost half (47 percent) of all tenured faculty in associate institutions (West and Curtis 2006).
#3. **Full professor rank.** Nationally, women were 24 percent of all full professors in 2005–06—notably more than the 10 percent of such positions they occupied in 1974–75, but still a small minority. By institutional type, women constituted 19 percent of all full professors in doctoral-granting institutions, 28 percent in master’s institutions, 29 percent in baccalaureate institutions, and 47 percent in associate institutions (West and Curtis 2006).

#4. **Average salary.** AAUP reports that in 2005–06 across all ranks (including instructors, lecturers, and unranked faculty where reported) and types of institutions, “the average salary for women faculty was 81 percent of the amount earned by men,” a comparison that “has remained virtually unchanged. . . since the late 1970s” (West and Curtis 2006, 11). Comparing men and women faculty at the same rank, women’s salaries are higher, but they are still not equal overall to those of their male peers. Among full professors, women earn an average of 88 percent of what men earn; among associate professors, women earn 93 percent of what men earn; among full-time assistant professors, women earn 93 percent of what men earn. West and Curtis attribute these discrepancies to “two primary factors”: women are more likely to work at institutions with lower salaries, and they are more likely to hold lower-ranking positions. Even when factors such as discipline are accounted for, women earn 2 to 9 percent less than their male counterparts (West and Curtis 2006).
Pipelines and Reservoirs: Women Faculty in Transitions

Women have made stunning progress in entering the faculty pipeline since 1970, two years before Title IX’s passage. The percent of full-time faculty who are women has grown from 19 percent to 41 percent (Snyder, Dillow, and Hoffman 2008) (although women are hired unevenly across different sectors and racial groups) (Gavin 1981). Yet equitable access to the pipeline does not guarantee an equitable flow to promotion or to related salary increases. To make matters worse, just at the moment when women are reaching the last stages of equity, the professoriate is undergoing a sea change. Unless higher education shifts its routes of advancement to follow the changing tides, women faculty may find themselves futilely rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic.

Despite the open flow of women into junior faculty positions, the pipeline for women faculty’s advancement is leaking or clogged. Mason and Goulden have pointed to leaks that occur when women marry, have babies, or come up for promotion (2004). Nan Keohane argues that the pipeline is obstructed with “stubbornly durable blockages” including whether women are hired at all and their rates of tenure when they are (White 2005, 22). The result is that, across the board, women advance more slowly than men. As psychologist Virginia Valian has noted, “gender schemas” produce an accumulation of advantages and disadvantages. Men accrue advantage “like interest on capital,” while women accumulate disadvantage like “interest on debt” (Valian 1998, 3). Valian’s research has found that even minute evaluative differences have a cumulative effect, accounting for differential flow through the pipeline.

Meanwhile, the pipeline model itself is becoming obsolete. Dramatic reconstitution of the professoriate in the twenty-first century has created what might more accurately be described as reservoirs that hold new college faculty, particularly women, in place. In 2001, only one out of four faculty appointments were tenure track (Finkelstein 2003), and women are nowhere near equal representation in full professorships (White 2005). Moreover, there are more women than men in part-time and non-tenure contract positions, where three-quarters of new appointments were made (West and Curtis 2006). Thus higher education is creating huge reservoirs of credentialed talent, gathered in pools like the run-off from a storm drain. Unless contract faculty are integrated into institutional life in this newly configured professoriate, the gains garnered for women faculty in particular will be at grave risk.

Thus if women are to achieve full equity, we must address two major issues: timely advancement through the traditional pipeline, and the new contractual reality of the professoriate. To repair the pipeline, institutions must monitor the time to promotion for women overall and disaggregate by race. Promotion committees must also look closely at how candidates have been evaluated and at departmental patterns. To tap the reservoir of talent, the academy must allocate the benefits of promotion, professional advancement, governance, and leadership to non-tenure-track faculty just as to their tenure-track peers (Gappa, Austin, and Trice 2007). Women faculty are a precious resource as the academy faces the complex and daunting educational challenges of the new global century. Their talents, like water, are something we ought not waste.
Senior Administrative Positions

The number of women serving in senior administrative positions below the level of CEO is now substantial. In aggregate, across all institutional types, in 2007 close to half (45 percent) of all senior campus administrators were women. At first glance this suggests that the “pipeline” for filling future leadership roles in the academy, including that of chief executive officer, is full of talented women who are ready to advance. However, a closer look at the relative numbers of women by institutional type and position offers reasons for concern. Women constitute a majority of senior leaders only in associate-degree-granting institutions (two-year colleges). In public and private four-year institutions, there are fewer senior women; they are more likely to be found in student affairs, external affairs, or administrative affairs than in academic affairs; and they are most numerous in such positions as chief of staff and chief diversity officer. The number of women, particularly women of color, now serving in senior academic affairs roles—widely recognized as primary springboards to the presidency—is higher than ever before, but their underrepresentation in these positions constitutes a structural obstacle to advancement (King and Gomez 2008).

Where are women most represented in senior administration?

Close to half (45 percent) of all senior campus administrators are women. Combining all institutional types, women comprise 31 percent of executive vice presidents; 38 percent of chief academic officers at the campus level and 50 percent at the system or central level; 36 percent of all deans of academic colleges (excluding colleges of nursing and education); between 43 percent and 49 percent of chief officer positions in administrative, external, and student affairs; and 55 percent of chief diversity officers (King and Gomez 2008).

In what types of institutions are women administrators most likely to be found?

The concentration of women administrators varies considerably by institutional type. Only in community colleges (e.g., associate-degree granting) do women hold more than half (52 percent) of senior leadership positions. Next in terms of types of institutions having a “critical mass” of women leaders are baccalaureate institutions, where women hold 42 percent of senior administrative jobs, followed by comprehensive (master’s-granting) institutions, where women are 38 percent of the senior officers. Women are least represented in research (doctorate-granting) institutions, where they hold 34 percent of the senior positions (King and Gomez 2008).
What do we know about the age of these women leaders compared to men?

Women senior administrators are slightly younger than their male counterparts: their average age is 52, compared to 54 for men. For women and men combined, about half are 50 or younger, approximately a quarter are between 51 and 60, and the remaining quarter are 61 or older. Executive vice presidents and chief academic officers (CAOs/provosts) are older on average than all other senior administrators across institutional types, with the oldest administrators located in doctorate and master’s granting institutions (King and Gomez 2008).

What do we know about the race and ethnicity of senior leaders?

With the exception of chief diversity officers, 82 percent of whom are people of color but who represent only two percent of positions reported in the Pathway study, “20 percent or less of individuals in each type of position are racial or ethnic minorities” (King and Gomez 2008, 5). In some positions, that percentage is significantly lower. Thirty-eight percent of CAOs are women (35 percent are white women and 3 percent are women of color). Among all senior administrators, white women are 38 percent and women of color are 7 percent (King and Gomez 2008).

In what types of institutions do women more often occupy “springboard” positions to the presidency?

Women executive vice presidents are more likely to be found in associate-degree-granting institutions (38 percent) or master’s-granting colleges (32 percent), and least likely in baccalaureate colleges (22 percent) and doctorate institutions (16 percent). For women serving as chief academic officers, the pattern is similar: 43 percent in associate institutions, 38 percent in comprehensive institutions, 34 percent in baccalaureate institutions, and 23 percent in doctorate-granting universities. For women serving in academic deanships in general, the pattern is slightly different: 45 percent in associate, 34 percent in baccalaureate, 28 percent in comprehensive, and 19 percent in doctorate institutions (King and Gomez 2008).

What progress has been made in the appointment of women to academic deanships?

Higher education leaders have made considerable progress in their appointment of women to deanships, both in academic disciplines and in professional schools. This is significant not only because of the stature and influence of these roles, but also because of the value of a deanship enroute to a presidency. New data from the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA–HR) supplements the published information on deans and gender that illuminates women’s progress in these roles (CUPA–HR 2008).

- Among respondents to the CUPA–HR Administration Compensation survey, women now hold a growing number of deanships in professional schools traditionally dominated by men: agriculture (19
percent), business (21 percent), engineering (9 percent), law (18 percent), medicine (13 percent), dentistry (25 percent), and veterinary medicine (11 percent). In fields traditionally defined as “feminine,” women have increased their numbers even more. They now comprise 49 percent of deans in education, 97 percent in nursing, 42 percent in social work, and 61 percent in health-related professions (CUPA–HR 2008).

* Among those respondents within academic disciplines, women serve as deans of arts and letters (40 percent), arts and sciences (31 percent), biological and life sciences (19 percent), social sciences (49 percent), humanities (38 percent), and fine arts (18 percent) (CUPA–HR 2008).
Leadership in higher education has changed dramatically over the past two decades. While women comprised only 10 percent of college presidents in 1986, they were 23 percent in 2006, a striking improvement that nonetheless demonstrates persistent gaps (American Council on Education 2007). These gaps appear not only between leaders and the populations they directly serve (where women are 57 percent of undergraduate students and 41 percent of full-time faculty members) (Snyder, Dillow, and Hoffman 2008), but also on the path to positions of greater leadership (where women are 45 percent of all senior administrators but hold only 38 percent of chief academic officer positions, which are key pools for future presidential candidates) (King and Gomez 2008). If colleges and universities are to cultivate leadership across all ranks that fully capitalizes on available talents and reflects the diversity of their institutions, they must commit to bridging these gaps for women of all cultural backgrounds.

In some places, the bridges are already under construction: women are now 43 percent of senior administrative officers and 56 percent of chief diversity officers. These numbers signify both success in senior leadership and an ample pool of candidates to diversify the upper echelons as presidents retire. Yet the fact that women are only 38 percent of chief academic officers at the campus level (and women of color only 3 percent) represents a potentially significant fissure, as the plurality of presidents (40 percent) come immediately from the CAO or provost position. This cleft is troublesome, but it is navigable. It signals the need for presidential hiring committees to look beyond the traditional pathways and consider alternative routes where women leaders more often travel, such as faculty positions (currently, only 5 percent of presidents come directly from the faculty) (King and Gomez 2008).

Change will take more than new hiring policies, however, as both the highways and byways of women’s leadership remain sprinkled with cultural roadblocks. As Catalyst recently reported, women leaders remain trapped in a “double bind,” where they are judged harshly whether they conform to feminine (“too soft”) or masculine (“too tough”) norms (2007). These judgments have palpable consequences for women, who often find that they have to work harder than their male peers for lesser rewards (Catalyst 2007). Bias alone is adequate to forestall even the most tenacious women’s progress. But when women foresee trouble ahead (such as the fact that only 68 percent of women presidents have children, compared to 91 percent of men) (American Council on Education 2007), they are less likely to step onto the difficult path toward traditional leadership roles. To change these circumstances, women must commit not only to leading from within their positions, but to working with their allies to shift the boundaries that circumscribe what those positions can be.

Bridging the leadership gap will demand a multifaceted strategy that includes new hiring practices, institutional and individual commitments, and ultimately, cultural shifts. But the rewards of a diversified leadership that includes women of all races, ethnicities, nationalities, and sexual identities will be well worth the effort. If colleges and universities are to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, they must focus not just on emergent leaders, but on helping leaders emerge. Several programs are doing just that, including HERS (Higher Education Resource Services), the American Council on Education’s Office of Women in Higher Education and Women of Color Summit, the League for Innovation in the Community College, and AAC&U affiliate Campus Women Lead. Colleges and universities can take advantage of these programs to renew their commitment to multicultural women’s leadership—not just on the national level, but in each state and institution, one college or university at a time.

A Measure of Equity: Women’s Progress in Higher Education
Chief Executive Officers (CEOs)

Women have made dramatic gains in attaining presidencies over the past few decades. In 1975, the first year that ACE’s recently established Office of Women in Higher Education began to track the appointments of women presidents, there were 148 women presidents (Touchton, Shavlik, and Davis 1993). The picture today is strikingly different. More than six hundred women CEOs now head institutions of all sizes and types, comprising 23 percent of all presidents. Yet in the last decade, appointments of women to presidencies have slowed, a trend that gives reason for concern. More women, and particularly more women of color, are in the pipeline than are being appointed to top posts. As nearly 50 percent of current presidents are age sixty-one or older, suggesting a wave of pending retirements in the coming years, there is ample opportunity to diversify leadership—given the proper commitment and action (King and Gomez 2008). A recently established multiassociation project led by the American Council on Education, the Spectrum Initiative: Advancing Diversity in the College Presidency, is likely to play a major role in advancing this goal. The Spectrum Initiative involves current leaders, women and minorities aspiring to the presidency, and boards of trustees and presidential search committees in “an aggressive multiyear national agenda designed to diversify and broaden executive leadership talent in higher education” (Renick 2008, 2). For more information about the Spectrum Initiative, visit www.acenet.edu/Spectrum.

What do we know about women presidents of colleges and universities?

- **Number and growth.** In 2006 women constituted 23 percent of all college and university presidents and 25 percent of those newly hired. This represents a dramatic increase in the number of women appointed to presidencies over the last two decades, up from 9.5 percent in 1986 and 19.3 percent in 1998. Since 2001 the largest increases in women’s appointments as CEOs have occurred at public baccalaureate and special focus colleges and private associates colleges. Progress has slowed at other types of institutions (American Council on Education 2007).

- **Age, compared to men.** Although the median age of both women and men presidents has been rising for over two decades, women presidents today are slightly younger (59.3 years old) than their male counterparts (60.1 years old). Fifty-eight percent of women presidents are sixty or younger in contrast to 49 percent of men (American Council on Education 2007).

- **Family and marital status, compared to men.** Women presidents are less likely than men to be currently married (women 63 percent, men 89 percent), to have children (women 68 percent, men 91 percent), and to have children under the age of eighteen (women 12 percent, men 19 percent) during
More women (15 percent) than men (5 percent) reported having altered their job for a dependent or spouse, and more women (37 percent) than men (15 percent) reported having altered their job for family reasons for five years or more. Additionally, women CEOs are more likely than their male counterparts to be divorced (women 14 percent, men 4 percent), and to have never married (women 10 percent, men 3 percent) (American Council on Education 2007).

**Race and ethnicity.** As a group, women presidents are more diverse in terms of race and ethnicity than their male counterparts. In 2006, 19 percent of all female presidents were women of color, compared to 12 percent men who were of color. Women presidents of color were predominantly African American (8 percent) and Hispanic (7 percent), with Asian Americans (1 percent) and American Indian (2 percent) minimally represented. Under two percent of women presidents identified as multiple race (American Council on Education 2007).

**Institutional type.** Women today head colleges and universities of all types and sizes, in sharp contrast to just thirty years ago. In 1975, almost 90 percent of women presidents were in small private colleges, both four year and two year (many of which were women’s colleges and religious institutions), and only sixteen women headed public coeducational institutions (Touchton, Shavlik, and Davis 1993). Today, women presidents lead colleges and universities both large and small, urban and rural, including highly ranked research universities, the most selective liberal arts colleges, and half of the prestigious Ivy League schools. In general, however, they are now more likely to be in public (27 percent) than in private institutions (19 percent) and in associate-degree-granting institutions (29 percent) rather than in bachelor-degree-granting institutions (23 percent). Women are almost equally represented in baccalaureate (23 percent) and masters institutions (22 percent), and are least represented in doctoral-granting universities (14 percent) (American Council on Education 2007).

**Last position held before current presidency.** In 2006, 18 percent of women and 22 percent of men moved into their current presidency from another presidency. Of those in their first presidency, women (40 percent) were more likely than men (29 percent) to have moved from a chief academic officer (CAO) position; and about equal proportions of women (13 percent) and men (12 percent) moved directly from another senior position in academic affairs. About the same proportion of women (16 percent) and men (18 percent) had another senior campus executive position as their “springboard” position. About the same proportion of women (29 percent) and men (28 percent) were internal hires. More men (14 percent) than women (9 percent) were hired from positions outside higher education (American Council on Education 2007).
With women currently representing nearly half of all senior administrators and nearly one in four college presidents, there is a new opportunity to reframe leadership goals, moving from a narrower agenda for women to a broader women-led agenda. Such an agenda does not conceive of women’s leadership as something that addresses women’s issues alone. Rather, it challenges women and their male allies to marshal the scholarship, analysis, engagement, and resources of their colleges and universities to address a broader range of equity and justice issues. Research published by the Association of American Colleges and Universities in *College Learning for a New Global Century* (2007) underscores the need for inclusive multicultural institutions that better prepare students to navigate and influence the complex worlds where they work and live. In a global century characterized by rapid change and volatile fissions across many lines, college leaders increasingly understand the importance of developing inclusive institutions like these.

As a decade of diversity scholarship has made clear, cognitive and identity development is augmented on campuses that are diverse by such characteristics as race, gender, class, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality, and physical ability. The authors of *Making Diversity Work on Campus: A Research-Based Perspective* assert that “Campus communities that are more racially and ethnically diverse tend to create more richly varied educational experiences that enhance students’ learning and better prepare them for participation in a democratic society” (Milem, Chang, and Antonio 2005, 6). Hurtado, Gurin, and others have elucidated how such diverse intellectual environments create a disequilibrium that disrupts norms and perspectives, accelerating critical thinking, cognitive complexity, and perspective taking in the process (Hurtado et al. 2003; Gurin 1999; Gurin et al. 2004).

By offering leadership that cultivates such richly diverse institutions, women and their male allies can help higher education achieve its educational and societal mission. But ensuring that colleges are diverse is not sufficient. Leaders must also take steps to guarantee that the educational environment requires myriad forms of engagement that maximize deep learning, including exchanges across and among diverse groups. What Hurtado refers to as “the democracy outcomes”—perspective-taking, engagement across differences, and a commitment to equal opportunity for all—develop not just through contact with diversity, but through coursework and cocurricular engagement opportunities that expose students to wide-sweeping perspectives on human cultures (Hurtado et al. 2003).

Reimagining and designing inclusive learning environments where excellence is possible because engagement with multiple perspectives is the norm should be everyone’s business, at every level. Working in partnership with men is essential to bringing such a vision to fruition; so is reaching across structural and cultural institutional divides. Laura Rendón’s recent book *Sentipensante (Sensing/Thinking) Pedagogy* offers one example of how to create inclusive learning environments redesigned to embrace diverse ways of knowing and to liberate creativity, wholeness, and intellectual engagement (2008). Campus Women Lead, a project affiliated with AAC&U, has created workshops to help jump-start discussions about how to mobilize women’s multicultural leadership across multiple institutional levels and domains. ACE has convened chief diversity officers and chief international studies administrators, and AAC&U has explored efforts to link civic, U. S. diversity, and global learning (www.diversityweb.org/diversitydemocracy), all of which contribute to the blueprint for the future. But more cross-fertilizations and merged agendas are needed. Tackling that challenge might be the most important contribution women’s multicultural leadership can offer to the academy and the world beyond its walls.
As *A Measure of Equity* demonstrates, women have made significant progress in higher education over the last several decades. More women across races and ethnicities, classes, and generations can now lay claim to America’s promise of a horizon-expanding education and the intellectual, social, and economic riches that flow from it. Those who worked for such changes should take pride. Celebration should be paired, however, with further analysis of what accounts for and accelerates success. Sustaining and expanding progress depends on pinpointing levers for change.

While highlighting women’s overall gains, *A Measure of Equity* also points to places where inequity persists. Progress has not been consistent across all groups of women; economic status at birth determines more than national mythology likes to admit; and national and institutional policies that address family obligations are spotty at best. These circumstances and others take a disproportionate toll on women’s personal and professional lives, while denying society the full yield of women’s expertise and talents.

Measuring equity can illuminate both progress and what might be blocking it. The importance of gathering data about women across race, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status and other key markers has been one of the great lessons since the passage of Title IX in 1972. A number of strategies for gathering essential data—both quantitative and qualitative—can accelerate the next generation of transformational work.

**At the campus level:** Institutions should assign senior administrators responsibility for ensuring equity for women. These administrators will require updated data to fulfill their mission, and the institution can designate key cross-campus committees like a commission on women or a faculty senate to collect data regularly. Institutions should also recognize the important research of individual scholars. But beyond institutional leadership, it is everyone’s responsibility to make equity an everyday practice. Therefore, as a matter of practice, units, divisions, departments, and administrative groups should collect disaggregated data regularly to create a clearer picture of trends. In addition, periodic institution-wide investigations that compare data can mark genuine progress and reveal patterns that might otherwise be invisible.

**At the regional level:** Institutional collaborations where research and practices are exchanged can have an ameliorative effect for both individual campuses and the collective. The Big Ten public land grant institutions, for example, rely on their Committees for Institutional Cooperation (CIC), including women’s center directors and women’s studies program directors, to foster research and improve programs. After MIT’s revealing study of discrimination against women in STEM disciplines, a selective group of research institutions committed to gathering and sharing research annually to remediate inequities on their respective campuses. Institutions should identify their own natural partners and initiate plans to cooperate.
At the national level: Disciplinary associations like the American Psychological Association assign a staff person to oversee research on gender equity issues, and almost all disciplinary societies have women's caucuses. More associations should incorporate these structures, providing financial and administrative support so data can be gathered and dispersed to the field at large. National higher education associations like AAC&U, the American Council on Education (ACE), and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) have designated offices or individuals that focus on women's equity and share new research through media like AAC&U's On Campus with Women (www.ocww.org) and NASPA's Journal About Women in Higher Education (www.naspa.org/programs/centerforwomen/jawhe.cfm). Government agencies like the National Science Foundation and the National Center for Education Statistics have produced invaluable data. More national associations should seek to gather and share data to paint a more complete picture of the status of women's equity.

While data collection at the campus, regional, and national levels is extremely important, it is only part of the solution. Data will remain inert unless people use it. We hope that A Measure of Equity spurs individuals on campuses to use the power of data to create more inclusive institutions. One need not be a statistician to take action, whether in individual, everyday ways or in far-reaching systemic ways. Each reader of this monograph can make a difference. The trajectory toward greater equality reminds us that progress is possible. The academy serves its educational and societal mission best when it cultivates women's talents and acknowledges their intelligence. The fruits of such commitments for individuals, institutions, and society at large are immeasurable.
References


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AAC&U is the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education. Its members are committed to extending the advantages of a liberal education to all students, regardless of academic specialization or intended career. Founded in 1915, AAC&U now comprises more than 1,150 accredited public and private colleges and universities of every type and size.

AAC&U functions as a catalyst and facilitator, forging links among presidents, administrators, and faculty members who are engaged in institutional and curricular planning. Its mission is to reinforce the collective commitment to liberal education at both the national and local levels and to help individual institutions keep the quality of student learning at the core of their work as they evolve to meet new economic and social challenges.

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