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## **Discrimination and a struggle for legitimacy: Faculty of color and female faculty experience an uneven playing field**

In a study conducted by UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute, faculty of color and female faculty disproportionately experience stress due to discrimination and feel they have to work harder than their colleagues to be perceived as a legitimate scholar.

The peer review culture and pressure to achieve excellence in the areas of teaching, research, and service can foster feelings of uncertainty and doubt among some faculty regarding the adequacy of their productivity. Findings from UCLA's triennial [HERI Faculty Survey](#) (PDF) reveal that faculty from historically marginalized or vulnerable groups, including faculty of color, women, and those without the protections of tenure, felt they needed to work harder than their colleagues to be perceived as a legitimate scholar.

More than three out of five women (61.0%) believed they needed to work harder than their colleagues to be perceived as a legitimate scholar compared to just 43.6% of men.

Disaggregating the data by race/ethnicity leads to even larger gaps between faculty of color and their White counterparts. For example, substantially more Black (72.2%), Asian (70.7%), Latino/a (70.6%), and Native American (66.7%) faculty perceived a need to work harder than their peers to gain legitimacy compared to just 46.8% of White faculty who felt similarly.

The struggle for legitimacy may come as a byproduct of experiences with discrimination, as faculty of color and female faculty also reported greater stress levels due to discrimination at work. The proportion of female faculty experiencing "somewhat" or "extensive" stress due to "subtle discrimination" nearly doubled the proportion of men reporting the same (36.2% versus 18.0%), and nearly 60% of female faculty of color reported stress due to discrimination (60.1% of Black, 60.1% of Latina, 56.0% of Native American, and 59.0% of multiracial). A much smaller percentage of Asian female faculty (44.8%) felt similarly.

“Although colleges and universities have made progress toward greater gender and racial diversity among their faculty, these findings make clear that the academy has significant work to do regarding equity and inclusion,” said Kevin Eagan, who serves as the director of HERI and as an assistant professor in UCLA’s Graduate School of Education and Information Studies. “Any progress institutions have made with respect to enhancing the diversity of their faculty through hiring will be short-lived if women and faculty of color endure discriminatory departmental and institutional climates that serve as a major source of stress and potentially erode their ability to achieve work-life balance.”

Elevated stress levels due to discrimination and working longer hours to gain legitimacy among colleagues may contribute to feeling uncertain about security of employment. Although just one in 10 faculty (10.4%) experience “extensive” stress related to their job security, faculty who stress out about their job security tend to have a greater likelihood of also feeling they need to work harder than their colleagues to be perceived as a legitimate scholar.

Overall, three out of four faculty (76.2%) with “extensive” stress related to job security also sensed they needed to work harder than their colleagues. Three in five faculty (60.0%) feeling “somewhat” stressed with respect to security of employment believed they needed to outwork their peers compared to just 42.8% of faculty who did not report feeling stressed about their job security.

### **Male and White faculty more likely to agree that women and faculty of color are treated fairly**

Differences by sex also emerged with respect to faculty’s perceptions regarding the treatment of female faculty at their institution. Overall, just over three-quarters (77.4%) of faculty agreed that women faculty were treated fairly at their institution. A significantly greater proportion of men (83.5%) than women (69.3%) agreed with this statement. While four out of five faculty (79.3%) perceived fair treatment of faculty of color at their institutions, significantly more Asian/Pacific Islander (83.8%) and White (81.0%) faculty tended to endorse this view than their Latino/a (58.8%) or Black (61.4%) colleagues.

### **Satisfaction with equity of salary and job benefits varies by race, gender, rank, and primary responsibility**

Overall, less than half of undergraduate teaching faculty (48.4%) feel satisfied or very satisfied with the relative equity of salary and job benefits.

- Full professors are most likely to be satisfied or very satisfied (54.8%), followed by assistant and associate professors (48.9% and 44.4%, respectively), instructors (40.0%), and finally lecturers (38.7%). In fact, more than one-third of those in lecturer titles (35.3%) are not satisfied.
- Faculty whose principal activity is teaching (72.2%) are less likely to be satisfied with the equity of salary and benefits than those whose principal activity is service to clients/ patients (79.3%), administration (82.6%), or research (82.6%).

- Female faculty (43.5% “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied”) are less satisfied with the relative equity of salary and job benefits than their male colleagues (52.1%).

### Other findings

- A majority of faculty identify as politically liberal, but not increasingly so. While almost half of faculty (48.3%) report identifying as liberal, these proportions mirror the proportions in previous administrations of this survey. In 2013–2014, nearly the same proportion of faculty (48.8%) reported identifying as liberal. In the inaugural administration of the HERI Faculty Survey, roughly one-third (36.8%) of faculty identified as liberal. That proportion steadily increased over the next two decades before leveling off in 2010–2011 with roughly half of faculty (50.3%) reporting a “liberal” or “far left” political orientation. Since then, the proportion of faculty identifying as liberal has actually decreased by two percentage points.
- Perhaps in response to the introduction of terms like “fake news” and “alternative facts” into the daily vernacular, faculty report placing a greater emphasis on teaching students how to be critical consumers of what they read:
  - Overall, 69.1% of faculty reported frequently encouraging students to evaluate the quality or reliability of information that they receive, which is an increase of more than ten percentage points from the previous administration (58.8% of faculty in the 2013-2014 Faculty Survey “frequently” taught students to critically evaluate the information they receive).
  - Additionally, almost three-quarters of faculty (73.4%) report frequently encouraging students to seek solutions to problems and explain them to others, an increase of more than five percentage points from the previous administration of the survey.

Results for the 2016-2017 academic year were based on responses from 20,771 full-time undergraduate teaching faculty members at 143 four-year colleges and universities.

The triennial HERI Faculty Survey, part of the Cooperative Institutional Research Program, is administered nationally by the [Higher Education Research Institute](#) at the [UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies](#).

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