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Commission for Women

Spring 2003

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Commission for Women

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The Commission for Women NETWORKER

SPRING 2003

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cfw feature

Dr. Anne Mayhew's speech at the CFW 30th Anniversary Luncheon, October 2002.

Comparable and Incomparable Worth Revisited

There is much to be happy about in this 30th birth year of the Commission for Women.

The Commission has served well as the voice of women in their various relationships to the University: as faculty, as staff employees, as students. It is in no small part due to the efforts of the Commission that women are in leadership roles in many parts of the university: both the VP for Budget and Finance and the General Counsel are women, as are four of the deans of the nine academic colleges. Barbara Dewey is Dean of Libraries and in Arts and Sciences women head seven of the 25 departments. For those of you who remember the University as it was 30 years ago, this is progress indeed.

And yet, as an economic historian doomed by disciplinary training to look back dismally on the past, I am compelled to ask a gloomy question: why do women still lag so far behind men in earnings and income and in many ways in social and political power. And lag they do. The first theme of what I am going to talk about today is a theme of why and how policies designed to close that gap have been only partially successful. Statistics show that in the United States as a whole, women overall have about 1/2 as much income as men. Here I am including wages, overtime, bonuses, pension and social security income, and income from assets. Even if we look at a more optimistic set of numbers and compare earnings from full-time work, women earn somewhere between 3/4 and 4/5ths as much as men. In the state of Tennessee, using the last numbers that I have (and these are for 1996-98), women earned about 71% as much as men, which placed Tennessee 32nd in this ranking. The District of Columbia came in first at 86%, with Maryland, Hawaii, and NY 2nd, 3rd, and 4th, all at about 80%. So women do lag behind even in those places where they are doing well.

The continued lag in the income and earnings of women is puzzling for over the years a number of policies have been adopted to close the gap. The same can be said here at the University of Tennessee where even after decades of official support for pay equity we know that tenure-track and tenured women faculty continue to earn less than their male counterparts even after allowance is made for discipline, rank, and seniority. A brief review of the policies put in place nationally and locally may help understand why this is so.

Although there were pioneers who advocated pay equity before the 1940s, it was during World War II that the issue began to assume major importance among legislators, union leaders, and human resource managers. By the time the U.S. entered World War II, it was common place for wages to be determined bureaucratically rather than by personal edict or a simple market determination. What I mean by that is that people were hired into a job that was associated with a particular pay range. Within that job classification, seniority and other factors might affect pay, but the basic rate of pay was associated with the classification and not with the particular individual. Managers of personnel systems attempted to differentiate between jobs according to skill and education level required, physical demands of the job, danger, and other factors.

Through the 1930s, many of these systems of remuneration openly allowed for differences between men's and women's work. That is, gender was as much a criteria for pay grade as was skill or education. This system began to break down during World War II when Rosie the Riveter and her many sisters began to do "men's work" and asked for the pay that men would have gotten. This is not the place to recall all of the interesting debates that took place as a consequence. What is important is to say that the later debate over comparable worth was set in the context of wage management during WWII.

It was not until the 1960s, however, that pay equity for women once again became a major issue. In 1963, the Equal Pay Act was passed which said "No employer . . . shall discriminate . . . between employees on the basis of sex by paying wages to employees in such establishment at a rate less than the rate which he pays wages to employees of the opposite sex. . . for equal work on jobs the

women of achievement

Women of Achievement Awards honor a student and a faculty member who have improved the status of women on this campus.

Dr. Lannett Edwards, assistant professor of animal science, has gained international recognition for her groundbreaking work in the nation's first successful attempt to clone a Jersey cow, Millie.

Dr. Edwards' achievements have significantly improved the status of women in the university community. She serves as a powerful role model exemplifying the impact of women in science.

The student winner is **Melody Conkin**, who has served as a member of the Women's Coordinating Council for three years. She is recognized for her strong leadership and the ability to build bridges between many different groups. She has been an organizer and avid supporter of Take Back the Night, and has coordinated donations to the Sexual Assault Crisis Center.

This year, she has held the key position of Women's Center Coordinator. Her energy and enthusiasm have helped to develop an active community of those interested in women's issues.

women in the tech-know

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Type the message:
*subscribe wmnspk followed by your
first name then your last name*

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performance of which requires equal skill, effort, and responsibility, and which are performed under similar working conditions, except where such payment is made pursuant to . . . seniority or merit.

This seems clear enough but unfortunately, it is not. Consider again the wording that says “on jobs the performance of which requires equal skill, effort, and responsibility.” That is the very heart of what human resource managers had struggled with from the beginning of bureaucratic job classification systems. The point of the bureaucratic system was to be fair. A person shouldn’t get paid more because the boss thought them good looking or because they were the bosses’ nephew. All should be paid the same for the same job. But what constitutes the same job?

By the 1970s and 80s, when women’s groups in various parts of the country had begun to mobilize under the banner of “Comparable Worth”, it was clear that different jobs needed to be compared for their worth, with the likely consequence that some quite different jobs would be found to be of equal worth. It was with a sense of excitement that studies were undertaken in many states to determine comparable worth. But the excitement was soon dampened by the difficulty of comparing worth. Part of that difficulty stems from the fact that there are men’s jobs and there are women’s jobs and perception of skill, effort, and responsibility is colored by the gender relationship of the job.

It is not difficult to realize that if women’s pay and their income lags behind that of men, and if job classifications are gendered, then one way to solve the problem is to allow women access to men’s jobs. Here we come to another tool that promised much but in the end has been disappointing to many: affirmative action. The scheme, first put in place with an executive order in 1965, is simple: employers must take affirmative action to identify excluded groups from employment opportunities. The excluded groups have been understood to include both women and minorities. In many ways, some of which I will come back to in a moment, affirmative action has been effective. We do know that African-American males in particular have been given employment opportunities that would not likely have come their way otherwise. And, for women, the evidence is that some good has been accomplished, but still wages and incomes lag.

This has led many to a further step in reasoning and in policy. Affirmative action does not require that less qualified individuals be hired simply because they are female or of a minority population. It does require that those of equal ability be identified and hired without gender or racial discrimination. Perhaps, therefore, the reason that women tend to be excluded from higher paying jobs is that women are not of equal ability, and particularly not of equal ability in technical and mathematical areas. Perhaps, some have argued, we would truly turn the corner toward pay equity if only women would study more math and study more science or learn technical skills that enable men in skilled technical positions to earn good pay. A wide variety of programs have been developed within organizations and in larger arenas to encourage women to do just that. Those who have studied these efforts conclude that while it is a very good idea for women to study more math, and to learn a variety of technical skills, such efforts don’t provide a quick solution to pay inequality. Careful studies by a number of analysts conclude that with additional math and additional technical skills, women could close the wage and income gap some, but not all that significantly.

Turn now to the story of earnings and employment for faculty women at UT. By focusing on us some of the difficulties that are writ large in the nation become clearer, as do some of the difficulties of non-faculty women at UT.

Note first that the issue of comparable or incomparable worth would seem to become irrelevant, thus simplifying the search for the cause of the continued pay and earning gap. An assistant professor is an assistant professor. The job classification is the same. Over the 20th century, this entry-level job and the ranks above it became, in effect, gender neutral. Note also, that this trend toward gender neutrality did not mean that that women in all disciplines actually had equal access to faculty positions 30 or 40 years ago. Vigorous and often controversial enforcement of affirmative action was required. Once upon a time, and not so long ago, it was sufficient for a department head or faculty committee to say simply, “we think that *he* is the best choice.” No explanation was required for the appointment to proceed.

Enforcement of affirmative action required that departments explain in writing why women and minority candidates were not so well qualified as the white male chosen and that often proved difficult. I have absolutely no doubt that many more women have been hired into faculty ranks because of this requirement.

So, in our population of women faculty, women are hired and salaries of assistant professors do not vary by gender, but they do vary by discipline and the earnings gap reappears. There is a pretty tight correlation between academic disciplines populated by many women (humanities, some social sciences) and entry level pay. However, here at UT (and in other institutions of higher education) the gap between male and female salaries exists even within the same disciplines, and even though male and female have roughly the same salaries when first hired. In other words, even if professors of

Provost Honors

The Commission for Women wish to congratulate all who received awards at the Provost Honors Banquet on April 9, 2003.

A list of the women recipients are listed below.

2003 TORCHBEARERS:

The highest honor the University can bestow upon a student.

• Danielle Kierstin Craig, *business management*

• Elizabeth Lauren Kirk, *finance*

• Kara Marie Lawson, *finance*

• Reen Lafay Locker, *political science*

• Julie Elizabeth Pedigo, *agricultural economics*

• Sarah Marie Surak, *political science major*

Campus Leadership and Service

• Mary Elizabeth Clement, *communications*

• Charity Martha Conkin, *College Scholars*

• Angela Danovi, *environmental science*

• Dametria Mustin, *marketing*

• Sherrill Elizabeth Richardson, *spanish and world business*

• Roshaunda Denise Ross, *psychology*

• Nicole Bishop Salvaggio, *english*

Excellence in Teaching

Maria V. Handelsman, *spanish professor*

Excellence in Advising

Penelope A. Tschantz, *english professor*

Alexander Prize

Dr. Palmira J. Brummett, *history professor*

Research and Creative Achievement Awards

Dr. Sally Horn, *geography professor*

Dr. Carol Tenopir, *information sciences professor*

Cox Professorships

• Dr. Marvelene C. Moore, *music professor*

• Dr. Susan E. Riechert, *ecology and evolutionary biology professor*

Commission for Black Awards

• Sherica A. Matthews, *electrical engineering*

• Dr. Faye V. Harrison, *anthropology professor and associate department head*

Outstanding Teachers

Dr. April L. Morgan, *political science assistant professor*

Graduate Teaching Awards

• Denise H. Bauer, *industrial engineering*

• Annette M. Mendola, *philosophy*

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finance earned the same pay as professors of English or Spanish, men would earn more than women. Further this would be true even if all had been in rank for the same number of years.

I think that many of us thought that if more women entered the male-dominated fields of science and engineering, the wage gap would disappear. We are hiring more women in these fields but it now appears that the wage gap will diminish, but as in the nation as a whole, will not disappear.

So, how do we account for the continued gap here at UT and in the nation? Let me deal with several partial explanations and come eventually to my conclusion that the problem is a deep one of incomparable worth.

Explanation #1: If we look at the gap in income rather than pay, a number of factors such part-time employment come into play. Even though this does not directly relate to the pay gap reported by IR for UT faculty, it is important in understanding the very large income gap that I mentioned at the very beginning of my talk and it is a big issue and UT and elsewhere. Over the past 15 or so years, for a variety of financial and disciplinary reasons, it has become increasingly common to have introductory courses in English composition, foreign language, and math taught by individuals who often do not have full-time appointments. Insofar as the people holding these appointments are disproportionately female, this trend would worsen the income gap. Nationally we know that changes in the employment relationship over the last couple of decades, with more temporary employment whether part or full-time has had differential impacts on male and female earnings. At UT the picture is somewhat mixed. Nearly 48% of all women faculty at UTK in the 1998 data were non-tenure track, in comparison to 27% of men. However, the number of male and female non-tenure track faculty are almost exactly the same, so that the percentage difference reflects the difference in total number of males and females.

What is most important, however, is what is being done to address the growth of non-tenure track appointments and here I think the news is good. Salaries have been raised and almost all such appointees are now eligible for benefits. Further, and for the first time in more than a decade, we have begun the process this year of adding new tenure-track faculty lines.

The use of non-tenure-track appointees is not going to disappear but we, along with other universities, are addressing the problems that this type of appointment creates and in the process the contribution that such appointments make to maintenance of an income gap will be diminished.

Explanation #2: There are a variety of life-cycle issues that affect women and their pay in ways that men are not affected. Chief among these are pregnancy and child-care, but elder care as well is becoming an increasing issue. There is no doubt that breaks in careers affect the earnings of women and no doubt that Universities such as UT need to work to minimize the negative impact that family responsibilities place on women employees.

Explanation #3: Even a hurried review of the literature on pay equity reveals an abundance of evidence that the kind of "caring" work that women often do is simply not as highly valued as the kind of work that men more typically perform. All of who have studied the differences in earnings among faculty women at UT and elsewhere have suspected, and have often found evidence that the kind of caring for students involved in time spent on advising and related academic activities contributes to a slower increase in earnings and slower promotion to higher ranks for women. I suspect that we are all more aware of this and that this pattern is likely to be less important in the future.

Explanation #4: Perhaps you have detected a note of optimism in what I have said so far and that is deliberate. I am optimistic about the vigorous use of affirmative action to control bias against women and minorities in initial employment. I am optimistic about efforts to reverse the effects of years of increased reliance on poorly paid non-tenure track faculty. I am optimistic about administrative awareness of the tendency to relegate women to less valued departmental work. However, let me say loudly and clearly: I remain concerned by a deep cultural tendency to see women's work, even if it is essentially identical to that of men, as somehow less important and less valuable.

All of us who read resumes know that evaluation of the records of an individual's career is not an exact science. Neither is the annual review. Neither can the evaluation of PDQs. Judgement is required and that is not a bad thing. But judgement is done by people who are raised from the early stages of life to have perceptions that females play a supporting role. They support men who do the really important work. Even in households where both mother and father work, or where mother is the sole support of the family there are constant messages to support the view of women as supporters rather than primary doers. One of the most obvious examples comes from traditional sports where men play and win or lose but women cheer. No one believes that the cheerleaders who are primarily female at least until the Collegiate level in sports such as football determine the outcome. They don't do the real work.

It is simply not possible for any of us to totally rid ourselves of the perception gained in so many ways that women are the secondary players. We faculty and we administrators are as afflicted with

notable woman award



*The Honorable
Shirley B. Underwood*

This year's recipient of the Notable UT Woman award is Judge Shirley B. Underwood, who received both undergraduate and law degrees (A.B. 1943, LL.B 1948) from the University of Tennessee. Appointed Juvenile Court Judge of Johnson City in 1961, Judge Underwood was elected to an eight-year term in 1962 and was subsequently reelected four times—a span of forty years. When she retired in 2002, she had the longest tenure of any current Juvenile Court Judge in the state of Tennessee.

Judge Underwood's long and distinguished record of professional and public service is impressive: she was named the Tennessee Outstanding Juvenile Court Judge in 1986, and in 1995, America's Outstanding Juvenile and Family Court Judge. In October 2002, the UT College of Law dedicated a classroom in her honor in recognition for her outstanding service to the College and the University.

Judge Underwood was presented the Notable UT Woman award at the Provost's Honors Banquet, April 9, 2003. A plaque honoring all the notable women selected by the Commission for Women since the initiation of the award in 1995 hangs in the University Center.

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those views as anyone else. What I am saying is that there are deeply embedded reasons why the idea of incomparable worth continues to plague our evaluations even when we try to evaluate comparable worth in a gender neutral manner. Support staff are by their very largely female nature likely to be evaluated less highly than male employees who maintain things. Occupations that are more largely male than female are simply more likely to be seen as contributing more value than those that are largely female.

Is this always going to be true? I don't think so. New occupations involving computers and other new technologies are not likely to be so thoroughly organized along the gender line. Awareness of cultural bias in evaluation of male and female work has grown enormously over the last 30 years both among academic administrators and those who staff human resource departments. We have a long way to go but work is being rethought.

And yet, for all of my optimism, there come those events that do discourage me. I recently learned of an effort on this campus to reinstitute the tradition of the homecoming queen. As I thought about why I thought this such a bad idea I played through several scenarios. Was it a bad idea because many would lose and only one would win? No, because I support all sorts of contests and competitions where this is true. Only one candidate can be chosen for a vacant job and I always hope for keen competition among well qualified candidates with one person winning. Did I object because of the issues of class and race that would inevitably creep into the selection of a homecoming queen. No, as much as I might regret the continued importance of those classificatory devices, that was not it. What I really objected to was that the idea of a homecoming queen at least as I understand it is the idea of honoring a woman for a largely decorative and supporting role. Why not create instead a woman leader of the year award for which all female students would compete? Why not recognize the honors that already go to women? Why contribute to the idea of incomparable worth? That we might do so discourages me.

However, having exhausted my time, and probably my audience let me quit with reaffirmation that I am optimistic that well before the 60th anniversary of the CFW, the corner will have been turned and gender will no longer be an important explanatory variable for either income or earnings distributions.

Provost Honors , cont'd

Extraordinary Service to the University

- Dr. Linda K. Sennett, *speech communications lecturer*
- Evelyn L. Cherry, *accounting and business law administrative secretary*

Special Recognition

Jane Pope, *student publications manager*

Extraordinary Customer Service

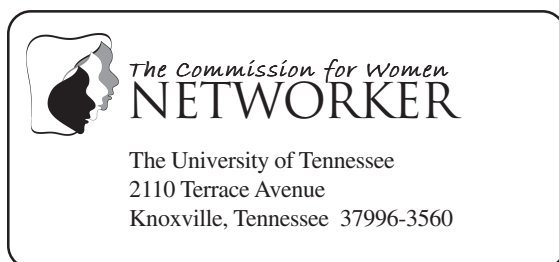
- Lori L. Epperson, *research and information technology, sr. IT technologist II*
- Connie L. Harmon, *admissions assistant director*

Extraordinary Community Service

- Dr. Rosalind W. Gwynne, *religious studies associate professor*
- Michelle H. Brannen, *Hodges Library information technology specialist*
- Kelly Benda, *public relations major*
- Connie Bucholz, *education major*

The *Networker* is published two times each year by the UT Commission for Women. Comments and suggestions may be forwarded to the Communications Committee in care of Ms. Lori Epperson, Sr. IT Technologist II: lorie@utk.edu or 865.974.2319. **If you are a club advisor, you may receive duplicate copies. Please share extras.**

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