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Challenges for Women Department Chairs

Laurie J. Patterson

University of North Carolina - Wilmington, pattersonl@uncw.edu

Amy Kirschke

University of North Carolina - Wilmington, kirschkea@uncw.edu

Pamela Seaton

University of North Carolina - Wilmington, seatonp@uncw.edu

Leslie Hossfeld

Mississippi State University, lhossfeld@soc.msstate.edu

See next page for additional authors

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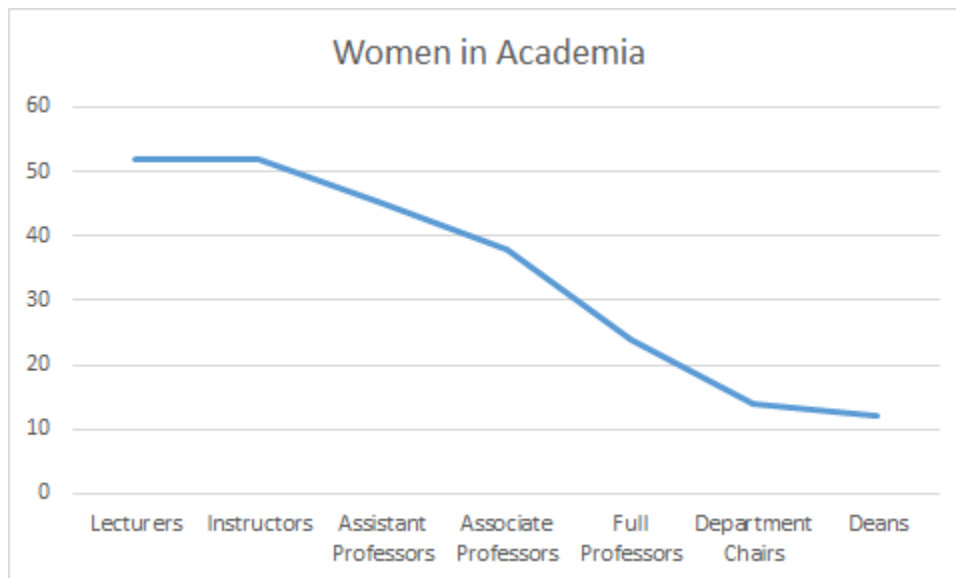
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Presenter Information

Laurie J. Patterson, Amy Kirschke, Pamela Seaton, and Leslie Hossfeld

Challenges for Women Department Chairs

In her paper from July 2009, Dr. Carol A. Mullen explored the challenges and breakthroughs of being a female department chair in academia. While her research is now over six years old, little has changed. The AAUP states that not only is equity an issue for women chairs, but equity also affects both their departments and their institutions. As women move up the academic ladder, their numbers decrease for a variety of reasons. For example, in a study conducted by Rutgers Institute for Women's Leadership (2008), 52% of lecturers and instructors were female; 45% were assistant professors; 38% were associate professors; and 24% were full professors. Similarly, reviewing the number of women who move into becoming department chairs and deans, the numbers show an even more dramatic drop. Women department chairs account for 14% of department chairs and 12% of deans (2009).



The issues faced by women chairs are no different than those faced by women in other academic positions: potential inequities in salary, promotion rates, harassment, and discrimination. Some of these issues are enforced through the academic setting. For example, a woman who becomes department chair may be told that in their public university setting that there is no negotiation for an increase in salary -- it is strictly formula based. Yet, women, who have historically been labelled "aggressive" when they negotiate assertively, may not embrace that negotiations do not have to focus solely on salary; negotiation may include research time, funding, and space.

The presenters on this topic are four women chairs at various ranks (associate and full professors) from a variety of fields (art history, chemistry, computer science, and sociology). They will present their findings, their "work-arounds", the walls they've run into, and how they've managed to stay relatively sane.

The workshop will focus on issues specific to being a woman in an administrative position. For women considering a move into administration, it is important to know these issues, to hear some

solutions found by the four presenters, and to brainstorm for solutions specific to their individual problems. If this does not occur, the number of women moving into higher levels of administration will continue to decrease. Following a brief presentation describing some of the issues, the presenters will discuss solutions they have found and why the solutions have (or have not) worked. Participants will then identify their problems and working with others at their tables, find possible solutions. The problems and solutions will be shared in the latter part of the time for discussion by all participants.