

UC GENDER EQUITY SUMMIT  
Senator Jackie Speier - Keynote Address  
November 6, 2002

Good evening. I am deeply honored to be invited to speak at the first ever President's Summit on Faculty Gender Equity. Give me a moment, please to quietly and briefly rejoice: the President's Summit on Faculty Gender Equity. The very fact that this is happening is recognition that the problem exists. The President's Summit means that it has been identified as a problem from the top.

I am reminded of a catch phrase that appeared in a news report eight years ago about the increasing number of women in the California Legislature. "The click of high heels" is the new sound in the halls of government in Sacramento.

Well, size eight lab shoes may not click, but they are being heard! Any applause at this moment should be directed at President Richard Atkinson. He listened. He understood. He acted. We applaud you President Atkinson.

This summit is the product of a shift in attitude, and, as such, it is an institutionalization of a new way of thinking among UC administrators and faculty.

It is easy to recognize personal progress, or lack thereof, through such things as a paycheck, or a mirror, but the subtlety of a change in an institution of higher learning is difficult to discern. Academia moves at glacial speeds. But, perhaps, we have started to press down on the accelerator that drives the movement towards true gender equity among UC faculty staff.

Two years ago I chaired a legislative hearing on gender disparity among UC faculty. Seventeen brave and slightly nervous tenured UC professors stated publicly that UC is not Camelot. The bottom line then was that the hiring process puts women at a disadvantage while faculty payrolls were living proof that gender disparity exists at all UC campuses. These statements were confirmed by the State Auditor in May 2001. And the UC administration concurred that change was needed.

In March of this year I chaired a second hearing on UC faculty gender issues. This time the goal was to assess progress by UC to institute meaningful reforms it promised at the first hearing when Chancellor Greenwood presented on behalf of the President. We looked at restructuring the committee search process to examining child care conditions. The State Auditor, Elaine Howle, stated candidly that while UC administrators had done well by putting words on paper, they had not implemented the action plans needed to knock down the barriers to institutional reform that will reduce gender disparity.

UC's report at the time indicated that progress was being made on a campus by campus basis. And even system wide there were signs of real progress in recognizing the factors that influence the attitudes of faculty. For example, the Office of the President conducted the first salary

comparison study of newly hired female professors versus newly hired male professors. The results were that for fiscal years 1997-98 through 2000-01:

- women at the assistant level were paid 90.2% of what men earned;
- women at the associate level earned 97.3% of what men earned;
- and at the full professor level, women earned 87.3% of what men earned...

UC is exploring the pay disparity further on a campus by campus basis. Then there is the survey of "The Climate for Women Faculty at UCSF." Many of you know the results. According to the faculty at UCSF:

- Women are less optimistic than men about their future at UCSF – they don't see leadership positions as a reality while men do.
- Women more than men are unhappy over the heavy toll on faculty members' lives outside of work...only a quarter of the female professors and a third of the male professors are satisfied with the amount of time they have for themselves and their families. And only a third of the faculty believe UCSF does a good job in allowing for flexible schedules that are needed to meet family needs.
- And women are particularly displeased with the level of information and the clarity of the processes related to their careers. They say the institution is uncommunicative with them.

Buried in the back of this survey is a very telling set of responses from 775 faculty members regarding reasons why they would leave UCSF. While the proportion of men and women who said they would leave for more money or to get away from the high cost of living in the Bay Area was about the same...more than twice as many women as men would leave due to burn out or to spend more time with their family. Finally, 14 percent of men would leave due to retirement, illness or death while only 4 percent of women would leave for those reasons. I deduce from this that women who can stand the pain are in for the duration.

The survey deals with the hypothetical in terms of reasons why faculty might leave UC. I would like to see the real data of why tenured faculty leave UC. In brief, a detailed exit interview might open doors of understanding. Was it burnout, the high cost of living in the Bay Area, or an inhospitable work climate that triggered the final decision to depart? This exit interview is not my idea, but one frequently suggested to me by UC faculty, particularly those who work in the field of medicine.

I am pleased that half of the topic agenda for the summit focuses on work climate and academic leadership opportunities, two factors critical to the longevity of a UC professor.

I am reminded that some four years ago a report from MIT's School of Science found systematic marginalization of women faculty – lower pay, fewer resources, including smaller office space

and exclusion from decision making at its campus. A mini-war on marginalization was declared by leaders of our nations prestigious universities, including UC Berkeley Chancellor Robert Berdahl. A follow-up report revealed that marginalization exists throughout the other MIT campuses and that the administration at MIT is fully committed to rooting out the problems.

Nancy Hopkins, the MIT professor who sparked the first study of how women faculty were treated, had this to say about the 2002 report:

“When we began this six years ago, I didn’t think a single other person – male – would understand what I was talking about. Now MIT has put it on the table, examined it and made institutional changes to fix it.”

When Dr. Hopkins addressed my committee in 2001, she provided us with a very simple and important account of how the ball of change got rolling. And I quote from her testimony:

“I thought that success in science was entirely merit based. You make a big discovery and you would win the Nobel Prize. But I found out that this is not quite the way it is. And what is remarkable is that it took me 20 years to figure this out. I can’t quite understand why I was so slow. I had to, as a scientist, be really sure of my data. And I had to compare men and women of absolutely equal merit. That was what was critical to me. And I have found out gradually that the women of equal merit, in terms of ability, and then even accomplishment, were not equally valued to their male colleagues and that was a really demoralizing thing.”

Back to Professor Hopkins. Part of Dr. Hopkins study focused on lab space which at first blush may seem minor. Only 15 of 212 tenured faculty in Dr. Hopkins’ school were women. She talked to each of them and discovered other women professors held her beliefs. The rest is history, albeit, a brief one, of how terms such as gender marginalization became a part of academic rhetoric.

Hopkins’ pioneering was emulated three years ago by a group of UC women faculty who met with me to put gender issues on the table. Now two oversight hearings and one audit later, the seeds of reform have sprouted surveys on wages and attitudes. We have three women serving as UC chancellors. Search team strategies are being rethought. A dialogue has been struck. Lip service is over. Now all we have to do is walk the talk whether in high heels or crepe soles.

Now, President Atkinson has not only invited me here to speak, but he has accepted my invitation to testify before my third committee hearing on UC Faculty Gender Equity issues. The hearing, which I will conduct as chair of the Senate Oversight Committee, will be on Tuesday, February 19, 2003 at 9:30 a.m. in the State Capitol.

While this summit is news for celebration of sorts. It’s also a time for hard work. We’ve got to roll up our sleeves because, I am reminded that UC’s hiring surge is about one-third over and that the gender balance among UC faculty has still not reached levels achieved before enactment of Proposition 209.

The Senate committee hearings I chaired have been a time to make findings public. This year professors from UC Berkeley prepared charts that, in brief, show that we have a long way to go in the gender equity battle. For example, in the school of Chemistry, no women were hired in six out of the last eight years. This is a notable statistic when you consider that one-third of those earning a Ph.D. in Chemistry at UC Berkeley are women. The bottom line is that at UC Berkeley the percentage of women on faculty has not reached 25 percent.

One professor at UCLA noted that attempts to identify salary gender differences at UCLA's School of Medicine have met numerous roadblocks and, in fact, the chair of the Health Sciences Committee, a noted woman researcher, resigned in protest over the delays. No, all is not well with Camelot. I am pleased, however, that many of the impressive professors who have testified at the Senate hearing are participating in the summit.

In fact, as a close, I would like to quote some of the statements made by these faculty members at the hearing this past March. Their words should serve as discussion directives at the summit.

“There are departments that don't ever have what I call an open search. They do put an ad out. They go through all of the motions. They will do the de-selection report. But the way they really decide who to recruit is by going to their colleagues at Harvard, MIT, and a couple of big schools, and those people who have already decided who are the best.”

“Gender discrimination occurs through the very structuring of academic careers in such a way as to favor traditional male family roles. I'll give you another example from law. Increasingly, it is necessary for serious law faculty candidates to have both a Ph.D. and a law degree. Now to devote so many years of study and untenured faculty status during one's childbearing years, is a very great risk for women. And a recent research study at UC Berkeley, reported in the Chronicle of Higher Ed, demonstrates that women who have children during their untenured years are 20 to 24 percent less likely to receive tenure. Men who have children during this same period of their career, are more likely to achieve tenure.”

“We do need to be mindful of the fact that when women are fewer than a quarter of the faculty, to mandate that they be present on every single search is to burden them in ways that male faculty are not, and that unless there is some compensating release time either from other service obligations, or from teaching, that this is unfairly burdening their opportunities to seek promotions and to achieve leadership roles.”

“The dean and the chair can do so much, but it's the vote of the faculty that gets people hired. So having some way to work with people to have them understand that they have incorporated unconscious biases in the decision making process is one of the goals that we have. And we have a faculty member at UCI who has been very successful in the business world, going out to talk to top executive companies...showing them...how the different opinions about women affect the decisions they make and their assumptions about women. In the business world, they care about having gender equity because they realize that that's important to the bottom line. The University doesn't have a bottom line in the same sense.”

“Frankly, in the research universities...a lot of women don't apply because they don't think they have a chance at the job. And so, we have a lot of work to do to increase the numbers of women in the actual applicant pools, even before you start the search committee.”

Yes, there is a lot of work to do, but thankfully, you... Sue Bryant, Marty West, M.R.C. Greenwood, Carole Goldberg, Virginia Hinshaw, Angelica Stacy and so many others I don't know are here to do the work that must be done so that the University of California will continue to be a center of excellence for generations to come. And President Atkinson I thank you for keeping your word, for recognizing the seriousness of this issue and for hosting this historic summit.