

The Climate for Women on the Faculty at UCSF

**Report of findings from a survey of faculty
members**

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I. Introduction

The survey reported here is a central part of a study to describe the professional climate for women faculty at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF). It helps identify attitudes and experiences of women on the faculty, and compares these findings to the male experience. The report also compares experiences and attitudes in the various departments and schools.

UCSF strives to recruit, retain, promote and support the highest quality faculty members. It, like other similar institutions, faces particular challenges in assuring the appropriate inclusion of all types of individuals among its faculty. UCSF Chancellor Michael Bishop had become concerned about the status of women faculty in university settings prior to his appointment as Chancellor. After hearing a report of the results of a Massachusetts Institute of Technology study of the status of women faculty by Nancy Hopkins, Chancellor Bishop assigned Vice Chancellor Dorothy Bainton the responsibility for initiating a study similar to the MIT study. The Chancellor requested that the investigation be particularly tailored for UCSF, with the goal of describing the climate for women faculty.

The specific charge is to assess and evaluate the climate and to look for changes that should be made to improve the environment. Dr. Bainton assembled a small committee to initiate the study, which conducted a series of in depth, one-on-one interviews to lay the ground work for the survey. Subsequently Belden Russonello & Stewart (BRS), a Washington, D.C.-based opinion research firm, was asked to undertake a survey by mail of the UCSF faculty. The study was fielded in the spring and summer of 2001, among all faculty members – women and men -- at UCSF. Out of 1,787 individuals who were sent questionnaires, 1,057 were returned for a return rate of 60%.

Executive Summary

Summary

The survey of the University of California, San Francisco faculty demonstrates that women and men at UCSF experience the University very differently. While they both derive great satisfaction from the kind of work they do, women have more critical views and negative experiences in numerous ways, from satisfaction with income to opportunities for leadership, to support for their lives outside of work. They call for the development of more mentoring and modeling, family-friendly policies, and financial recognition, to enable UCSF to attract and retain top female professionals.

Key Findings

Satisfaction with work, criticisms of the demands of the job

- *An overriding point to emerge from the study is that most faculty of both genders delight in their work at UCSF.* Male and female faculty members express satisfaction with the nature of their work as professionals. They share an enthusiasm for the intellectual stimulation of their jobs, and express satisfaction with the type of work in which they are engaged. Overall women and men are also mildly satisfied with their workspace and income and grants they have been able to obtain to support their lab or other work, although their satisfaction with these areas is lower than for the work itself.
- *Women are less optimistic than are men about the future prospects at UCSF.* As they look forward, faculty members are somewhat satisfied with their future prospects, both in terms of their potential for obtaining leadership positions and for advancement. However, men are much more likely than women to see leadership and advancement in their own futures.
- *The faculty reports that working at UCSF takes a heavy toll on faculty members' lives outside work.* Women in particular are quite unhappy with the amount of time they have available to spend outside work. Only a quarter of women and one third of men say they are satisfied with the time they have for themselves or their families

and outside interests. Only a third of all faculty believes the institution does a good job of allowing for flexible schedules for faculty with young children, elderly parents, or other family needs.

- *The faculty members – women in particular – say the demands of work at UCSF seem overwhelming.* Three quarters of women and six in ten men say they have to work an unhealthy, unreasonable amount of time to succeed. In addition, women are far more likely than men to believe the system penalizes those who take maternity leave.
- *The faculty suggests institutionalized solutions.* Two thirds of women agree the academic senate faculty should be able to work part time. Men concur on this issue but with considerably less fervor.

The need to improve the welcome given women

- *Women at UCSF are especially displeased with the level of information and the clarity of the processes related to their careers.* In fact, both sexes are critical of UCSF's performance in informing new faculty of options that are open to them, the advantages and disadvantages of series, and the promotion process, but women's experience is more negative than men's.
- *The University has room to grow in modeling and mentoring, to meet the strong demand for mentors.* Faculty members believe their mentors have been very important in making their experience in the institution positive. Yet only a third of men and women are satisfied with the mentoring available to them, and few believe the University does a good job of providing formal or informal mentoring. While nearly six in ten have had a mentor at UCSF, most found their mentors through their own efforts. Furthermore, while nearly all men had a mentor of the same sex, less than half of women say their mentor was also a woman.
- *Female faculty members are particularly critical of UCSF for doing an inadequate job of welcoming new women.* Men are more likely than women to say the University does a good job of welcoming new faculty of their own gender – although even men are not highly laudatory in this regard. Indeed only a third of all faculty members call the job the University does of welcoming new faculty of their own gender “excellent” or “good.”

Women's and men's opposing views on the work environment

- *All things considered, UCSF is an attractive place to work.* Most women, like most men, on the faculty say they would like to spend their careers at UCSF.
- *However, women and men have starkly different views of their work environment at UCSF.* Men see a good climate for all at UCSF while women see a good climate for men only. Many women see unfair limits on their participation in the University: sizable pluralities of women believe they are asked to serve on less important committees, left out of decision making, and are given assignments as tokens. Men, by contrast, heartily disagree with all these views.
- *For both men and women, perceptions about the climate in departments are warmest, slightly cooler in schools, and coolest for the University in general.* Few believe there is a glass ceiling for women in their own departments.
- *The University receives weak marks on providing a climate free of sex discrimination.* Women are more likely than their male colleagues to be critical in this area as well.
- *Nearly one half the women, but less than one in ten men, believe they have definitely or probably experienced discrimination at UCSF.*
- *Few women believe UCSF performs well in responding to charges of sexual harassment or discrimination.* The faculty overall gives lukewarm approval to UCSF on addressing discrimination issues. About four in ten men but only about a quarter of women agree that the University does a good job:
 - Responding to charges of sexual harassment;
 - Addressing perceived discrimination; and
 - Providing appropriate resources for persons with disabilities.

Attracting and keeping high quality female faculty

- *The efforts needed to attract and keep top-notch female faculty are: a climate that promotes mentoring and advancement, family friendly policies, and financial benefits, according to current faculty.*
 - More mentoring, better role models, and more women in leadership positions are among the most called for measures.

- Faculty members frequently specify more flexibility and part-time work, assistance with childcare and spousal employment, and more encouragement to work regular hours, as important to luring top women to UCSF.
- And of course higher salaries and help with the cost of housing in the San Francisco area would be strong inducements to attracting the desirable female candidates.

Thus, climate and support, as well as financial incentives, are important to attracting and keeping top women. While money is important, money alone does not entice women to come or stay at UCSF in the absence of good mentoring and modeling that signify a female-friendly atmosphere, or without helping faculty and candidates attend to family and personal needs.

Summing up

The climate and the reality in which women and men believe they work at UCSF are often worlds apart. Still the University is a place where the work is highly satisfying and its faculty wants to be and remain. Women and men faculty members tell us the University's attractiveness to women can be enhanced with steps to assure their full participation and address their professional and personal needs.