

Academic Women's Association (AWA)
University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta

Diversity Gaps in Faculty Awards for Research, Teaching and Engagement

(27 June 2016, Edmonton) As part of an ongoing independent, comprehensive equity audit of the university, the Academic Women's Association at the University of Alberta has undertaken a study of the faculty recognition awards granted to over 450 award recipients between 1968 and 2016. Led by Dr. Malinda S. Smith (AWA President) and Dr. Kisha Supernant (AWA Vice-President), the research team examined three types of recognition awards: first, awards for faculty excellence; second, internal and external awards for teaching excellence; and, third, awards for community engagement.

The goal of the third part of our equity audit was to assess the recognition of [equity-seeking 'designated groups'](#)—women, Aboriginal people, visible minorities, and persons with disabilities—with respect to research, teaching, service and engagement awards. This third report and the two accompanying infographics follows upon the AWA's first report and two infographics released on June 2, 2016, in which we examined the status of women and the diversity gap in Canada Research Chairs and Canada Excellence Research Chairs. Our second report, released on June 14, 2016, presented our findings and three infographics on representation, including the status of women in the academy, the overall diversity of the professoriate, and an intersectional analysis of the four designated groups. We could find no data source for the prevalence of professors with disabilities in research chairs or recognition awards.

"Internal recognition builds a community. External recognition enhances a reputation," states the website for the [Faculty Award Information and Recipients'](#) database. In the two accompanying infographics, and the analysis below, we examine faculty recognition awards and, by implication, what they may suggest about the constitution of community as well as individual and institutional reputation.

The recipients of these awards draw attention to the immense talents within the university community. As important, the patterns and trends we highlight in the distribution of awards also draw attention to talents and contributions that might not be tapped or recognized. More challenging, they raise questions such as: the "how," "who" and "why" of recognition; "what" type of contributions are recognized; and "where" the recognized are located in terms of faculty rank and disciplines. An important, and too often inadequately explored, question relates to how the university and those appointed or elected to nomination committees interpret the widely used but rarely defined concept of "excellence."

I. Faculty Excellence Awards

The 'Awards for Faculty Excellence' include the Distinguished University Professor (1968-), the University Cup (1996-), the Henry Marshall Tory Chair (1982-), and the Vargo Teaching Chair (2003-). They recognize professors who have excelled in research, teaching, service and citizenship. The AWA infographic on 'Awards for Faculty Excellence, Teaching & Engagement' shows that, overall, 75.2% of the recipients of awards for faculty excellence have been male faculty members, including 90% of Distinguished University Professors, 75% of University Cups, 73% of Vargo Teaching Chairs, and 62.5% of H.M. Tory Chairs. On the one hand, this distribution may parallel the inequitable gender distribution in the academy, in which male faculty constitute two-thirds of the professoriate and men at the rank of full professor (38%) outnumber the entire female

professoriate (34.4%). On the other hand, it may also reflect systemic biases including those based on discipline, curriculum and pedagogy, and assessment.

Women have been most recognized as recipients of H.M. Tory Chairs, constituting 37.5% of the total, and least recognized among recipients of the DUPs, with only 6 women (10%) so recognized between 1968 and 2015. A reasonable assumption of progress over time is not reflected in the data, which shows at best stalled or a reversal of fortunes for equity groups. For example, a temporal analysis shows that the first woman to be recognized as a Distinguished University Professor, an engineer, was in 1984. In the decade 1985 to 1996 over 93% of DUPs were awarded to male professors, and between 1997 and 2006 they received 83% of the awards. The most recent decade shows no change: Between 2007 and 2016, the number of recipients of DUPs doubled but the percentage of women declined as male professors were awarded 92% (23) and women professors only 8% (2). The last academic woman recognized with a DUP was in 2011. In the case of the Vargo Teaching Chair, the first woman to be recognized was in 2005, with 100% (2) women recipients. It took 8 years before another academic woman was recognized with the award. Since the creation of the University Cup, 25% (5) of the recipients have been women, the last awardee in 2011. In sum, even as the percent of women among associate and full professors increased over time, this has not been reflected in faculty excellence awards.

Representation and recognition are interconnected. Despite 22 years of equity policy the university remains overwhelmingly white (81%), and so, too, recipients of recognition awards. White male and female professors have held 100% of H.M. Tory Chairs, 95% of University Cups, and 82% of Vargo Teaching Chairs. Visible minority men, who constitute 11.9% of the professoriate, have been awarded 5% of University Cups and 18% of Vargo Teaching Chairs. Available historical data suggests no visible minority woman, or Aboriginal person, have ever been recognized with a faculty excellence award.

II. Research Chairs

The gender gap in research chairs is especially notable given that they can be used to attract and retain talent from across Canada and worldwide. The infographic on the ‘Status of Women in Research and Teaching’ shows that at the U of Alberta women are significantly underrepresented in Canada Research Chairs (CRCs) Tier 1 and Tier 2 as well as in the Canada Excellence Research Chairs.

The gender gap in Tier 1 and Tier 2 CRCs is significantly larger at the U of Alberta than at comparable U15 research-intensive universities. Building on our [first study of research chairs](#), we looked at two types of comparative data to assess how the university’s CRC distribution compares over time and in relation to comparator universities. First, an analysis of the October 2007 CRC data show no reduction in the gender gap since then. Of the 98 CRCs at the U of Alberta in 2007 some 76.5% (75) were men and 23.5% (23) were women. Of these, women held 19% of Tier 1 and 28% of Tier 2 CRCs. By contrast, the 2016 data show that of the 87 CRCs, only 16% Tier 1 and 29% Tier 2 are held by women. Second, the below table of February 2016 data from U15 universities reveal that Alberta universities lag in closing the gender gap.

Gender Gap in Canada Research Chairs – U15 Examples				
University	CRC Tier 1		CRC Tier 2	
	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %
University of Alberta	84	16	71	29
University of British Columbia	78	22	50	50
University of Toronto	74	26	58	42
McGill University	71	29	62	38
University of Calgary	92	8	74	26

Source: “Analysis of Extant CRC Awards by Institution, Agency, Tier and Gender” (2016-02-10); M. Smith and K. Supernant, “Research Chairs” (AWA 2016); CRC database (May 2016); M. Smith, “Closing the Gender Gap” (AASUA 2013).

An equity analytical lens reveals that although white women constitute 28.8% of full professors, they hold only 16% of Tier 1 CRCs. Women constitute 44% of assistant professors but only 29% of Tier 2 CRCs. Visible minority men constitute 11.9% of the professoriate and hold 13% of CRCs, while visible minority women constitute 4.5% of the professoriate and hold 7% of all CRCs. Not a single Aboriginal scholar has held a Tier 1 or Tier 2 CRC or CERC at the U of Alberta, although this may change in the near future.

III. Teaching Awards

This study examined internal ‘Awards for Teaching Excellence’, which include three major awards for undergraduate teaching – the Provost’s Award for Early Achievement of Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching, the Rutherford Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching and the William Hardy Alexander Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching (awarded to contract academic staff). There is also an Award for Excellence in Graduate Teaching, and an award for Teaching Units. A second cluster of prestigious ‘External Teaching Awards,’ which build on faculty-level and university-wide teaching recognition, include the 3M National Teaching Fellowship (STLHE), the Alan Blizzard Award (STLHE), and the Desire2Learn Innovation Award in Teaching & Learning (STLHE).

The analysis of internal and external awards for teaching excellence reveal some concerning patterns in how members of the faculty and teaching staff are rewarded for their work. Overall, since 1982, women have received only 30% of the Rutherford Award, while men received 70%. Notably, the last ten years has seen an actual decline in the percentage of women winning Rutherford Awards. Between 1982 and 1995, 28% of Rutherford Awards went to women and 72% to men. Between 1995 and 2005, 35% of awards went to women, while 65% went to men. Between 2006 and 2016, only 32% of awards went to women, while 68% went to men. This decline parallels the trends in the representation and recognition of women within the academy, which have stalled over the past decade.

In 2008, the Provost’s Award for Early Achievement of Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching was established. Since 2008, only 25% of these early career awards have gone to women, with 75% going to men, even though [women constitute 43% of assistant professors](#). Other awards reflect more generally the percentages of women within the professoriate and other teaching groups. For example, women constitute 34% of the prestigious 3M National Teaching Fellows. While this number is still not near parity, it does seem to reflect the overall percentage of women in the professoriate.

Women have also received 36% of the Awards for Excellence in Graduate Teaching, as well as 44% of Teaching Unit Awards that rewards collaborative teaching teams. The Alan Blizzard Award also rewards collaborative teaching. Two teams of teachers from the University of Alberta have won this award and women have been well represented among them. Overall, the more collaborative the award, the better women tend to perform. Women constitute 60% of Contract Academic Staff: Teaching and have won 61% of the W. H. Alexander Award for Excellence in Teaching for CAS:T members.

The underrepresentation of visible minorities and Aboriginal peoples, particularly women, in internal and external teaching awards at the U of Alberta is also concerning. Visible minority men fare best, being awarded 10% of the Provost’s Award, 11.6% of the Rutherford Award, 18.2% of the Excellence in Graduate Teaching Award, 2.8% of the Unit Award, and 5.6% of the W.H. Alexander Award. Visible minority men also constitute 12.2% of 3M National Teaching Fellows.

Visible minority women are significantly less well represented as recipients of teaching awards. No visible minority women have been awarded the Provost’s Awards, Excellence in Graduate Teaching Awards, or 3M National Fellowships. Only 1.9% of Rutherford Awards, 4.2% of Teaching Unit Awards, and 2.8% of W. H. Alexander Awards have gone to visible minority women. Over the history of the awards, only one Aboriginal person has won a teaching award (2016).

IV. Faculty Engagement Awards

Created by the Office of the Vice-President (University Relations), the Community Connections Awards is intended to “honour those whose commitment to community engagement embodies the spirit of the U of A’s promise of ‘uplifting the whole people,’ and recognize those who have had a positive impact on communities near and far, as well as at the university.” The cluster of awards include the Community Scholar Award, the Community Leader Award, and the UAlberta Advocate Award.

This study’s findings reinforce research on women in higher education that shows that women tend to receive recognition for teaching and engagement rather than their research. Overall the numbers are relatively small. It is, however, notable that women constitute 100% of Community Scholars and, collaboratively and individually, are the majority of Community Leaders. It is also notable that men (75%) are most recognized for being UAlberta Advocates. Only one Aboriginal person has been recognized and, to-date, no visible minority person. Engagement with the LGBTQ community is recognized both in the category Community Leader and UAlberta Advocate.

V. Recommendations

The above diversity gap analysis helps to illuminate who is included in the university’s idea of community and the reputations that are most likely to be enhanced. It also highlights diversity gaps that have not changed despite 22 years of on-the-books equity policy. Our recommendations are as follows:

First, the AWA calls on the U of Alberta to undertake a comprehensive review of recognition award criteria, and the nomination and adjudication processes, with the aim of identifying possible structural biases in the ways in which faculty excellence, and research and teaching excellence, are recognized.

Second, the patterns and trends within the faculty excellence, research and teaching awards data point to an ongoing need to evaluate equity policy on campus to ensure women, visible minorities, and Aboriginal peoples are not underrepresented in the professoriate or inequitably recognized in awards.

Third, the AWA urges the university to develop and appropriately resource a mentoring program to support professors at all ranks, as well as colleagues in all academic constituencies in the academy.

Fourth, the AWA is concerned with the gender gap among full professors. We recommend that the university develops a program with dedicated resources to support the research, teaching, and mentoring of the “[sandwich generation](#)” of midcareer/associate professors in the designated groups, many of whom are inadequately supported compared to new scholars and those at the full professor rank.

Fifth, the AWA calls upon the university to create a faculty service award to recognize professors who engage in exemplary but often invisible work that is indispensable to a well-rounded professoriate and profession. The absence of a faculty service recognition award speaks to the systemic bias in the academy, one that most often disadvantages women and minorities.

Finally, the AWA strongly urges the U of Alberta to revisit the now dated equity policy, “[Opening Doors](#)” (1994), with the aim of establishing a university-wide task-force to develop a bold, 21st century equity plan consistent with the aim of “uplifting the whole people” and achieving the public good.

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