

## Compensation

The University of Western Ontario Faculty Association (UWOFA) has published data showing that women faculty members earn on average 10-20% less than their male counterparts of the same age (see chap. 3, p. 65). Many, if not most, women interviewed felt they received unfair compensation relative to their male colleagues. Given the confidential nature of information about salaries, it is often difficult to know if one is underpaid relative to peers. But occasionally hard evidence does surface.

One respondent reported that a colleague who was leaving the University made a chance remark to her about what he was earning at the time. She was astonished to learn that although she was slightly senior to this man, he was being paid more than she was by several thousand dollars. Others told us that they learned of their situation only when their Deans or Chairs singled them out to tell them that their salaries were lower than they should be.

Some speculate that the salary differentials begin at hiring, where professors make one-to-one deals with their administrative head, setting out their starting salary. The theory is that men customarily drive harder bargains at the outset of hiring. Yet even when women try to negotiate the best salary possible, they often come out behind. One respondent described the careful background research she did before starting salary negotiations with the Dean of her Faculty:

When I was close to being hired, I knew there was no policy, that there were no rules. You negotiate. In preparation I talked to people hired in [the Faculty] last year — there were fifteen of them. I talked to eight of them, four women and four men, seven of them permanent and one woman on a term contract. I found out all about their salary negotiations.

Armed with this information, our respondent began her salary negotiations with the administrative head. He offered her \$—. She asked for \$15,000 more. She described the process:

We played broken record back and forth for half an hour. He said he didn't have the money. Finally he came up with \$2500 more. It was to the point where I had to say I wouldn't take the job or take that amount. I ended up with \$3000 over his original offer. I signed the contract. The day after, I found out that a male had been hired with eleven years' [professional] experience and one publication. I have sixteen years' [professional] experience and two publications. He got a salary of \$18,000 more than I did.

This respondent was justifiably angry about this, although she felt there was nothing further she could do. "I keep practising going back to see [the administrative head], but I just know that it wouldn't matter what I said. I just couldn't face it."

Occasionally, administrative heads even disclose sexist reasons for treating women and men differently in this area. One respondent recounted how she had been done out of some extra earnings from a summer school course. "I was next on the rotation to get the opportunity to teach in the summer [for extra income]," she noted. "By rights it was my turn. But they told me I wouldn't be able to teach the course because I didn't need the money." The excuse given was that "I didn't have any alimony payments to meet." "This was by no means an isolated incident," she added.

### **Benefits**

Women often tell of the problems they face in combining career demands with the raising of a family. Instead of recognizing that an academic career spans decades and that colleagues (female and male) should be permitted the flexibility to adjust academic responsibilities around their peak child-rearing years, the University still makes many women feel embarrassed and unprofessional about pregnancy.

One respondent described a situation common to many faculty women, frantically trying to juggle pregnancy around academic calendars. "I tried to have my first baby in May, because I was untenured, so it wouldn't interfere with my teaching." Although she was successful in this, thus inconveniencing the University as little as possible, the birth of the child still had an impact on her research. "I know my research wasn't as strong as it might have been because of my pregnancy," she admitted. "At least six months were gone, and then you're out of date and you have to catch up or switch topics. They tenured me at the rank of Assistant Professor because my research was weak due to this time out." In a tenured position, however, this respondent finally felt secure enough to undertake pregnancy again. "I had my second baby in December," she added. "I got pregnant within two months of getting tenure. The Chair wasn't too happy about it." Men at the same age and stage of their careers are often roundly congratulated when they get tenure and are seen to be starting a family. This is seen as evidence that they are settling down and making a permanent commitment to live in London.

## **IV. Orientation to Western for the New Woman Faculty Member**

### **"Military Boot Camp"**

Many of the academic units at Western seem to have no reliable system for orienting new faculty members. Some encourage a sort of trial by fire for those who are newly hired. Several women described one Faculty as a "vicious," "brutal," and "abysmal" environment for women faculty. All of

them mentioned the sexist behaviour of male faculty as well as the harassment of female faculty members by male students. For these women, adjusting to this unit was comparable to surviving "a military boot camp."

A woman in another Faculty described the very specific undermining she was subjected to:

My first day here, one of my colleagues took me into his office and said, "Well, I'm sure you'd like to know about your predecessor." My predecessor had been a woman faculty member who had apparently been forced out. It was very unsettling to hear about her on my first day. I also learned that there was quite a tradition of not granting tenure to the person who specialized in my area of research.

Another respondent recounted the sense of loneliness she felt when she arrived at Western. "I arrived in London alone, leaving behind all my family and friends in another city. My Faculty expects you to arrive with family in tow and doesn't set up any social introduction to London. It was very alienating, very lonely." These sentiments are no doubt not unique to new women faculty. But women frequently found themselves faced as well with the additional burden of curiosity. They find that their male co-workers think of them as oddities, and even seem to anticipate their failure. This is particularly apparent in faculties which have been unsuccessful in retaining their women members. This same respondent continued: "After I'd been here a few months, one of my male colleagues came by and said 'With all the disasters we've had with women here, I do hope you survive.'" She summed up her impression of the Faculty: "It's abysmal for a woman here. . . ."

Some women describe situations that can only be characterized as vicious environmental harassment. This seems to be particularly true of female academics who do feminist research and teach in the field of Women's Studies. One respondent arrived to teach at Western shortly after publishing a book which was widely acknowledged as a leading feminist publication. She recounted the reception at her Faculty:

The book had been extensively reviewed, mostly quite favourably. However there had been one predictably vitriolic review in one of the Toronto newspapers, by a journalist who "trashed" it for its feminist perspective. My first day in the Faculty, I arrived in the faculty lounge to get a cup of coffee. To my surprise and discomfort, someone had tacked the column up on the bulletin board. Whoever had done this had evidently enjoyed it, for the most vicious passages were underlined in red.

In some other context, I wouldn't have minded. I'm not afraid of criticism, and I actually thought some of the more far-fetched parts of the article were rather funny. But I didn't really know a soul in the Faculty yet. It was hardly an atmosphere where colleagues could banter back and forth about such things. To have to go in and see that column up there, day after

day, for weeks, gave me the most horrible feeling about the place. It felt like I was working in a place where people enjoyed seeing my work ridiculed.

### **Feedback: "Too Little Information, Too Late"**

Another respondent held a tenure-track position in her Department. After four years, during which she published extensively, obtained major research grants, and received satisfactory ratings within her Department, she resigned and left to take an academic position elsewhere. "I just found the general climate so isolating," she said. She noted that she had no information network, that is, no way to find out what was "a good or bad thing to do" in the Department, what committees to get on, or what resources she was entitled to. She also described feeling that she had no colleagues. There was no exchange of ideas, she felt no intellectual stimulation, and received no information about research opportunities from colleagues or suggestions about projects or granting sources.

Although she got feedback in the form of a terse appraisal letter once a year, this was all the information she got. She *never* got any personal or face-to-face feedback and always felt that she was in an information vacuum. When she returned from a leave of absence of several months during which she was doing research at another university, she told the Department Chair that she was leaving. "He had no reaction. He didn't seem to be surprised, he didn't ask me why I was going and he didn't encourage me to stay." She summarized her experience in the Department by saying that "I had to be there for four years before I had enough information to know that I was doing OK in the department. It's a long time to stay in limbo. It was too little information coming too late and I feel a whole lot better since I left." This sense of isolation was by no means unique to the Department in question and, as another respondent's account indicates, it has a cost for the University as well as for the individuals involved. One woman in another Faculty reported that, when she arrived to take a probationary appointment, she made a point of meeting with the Chair of her Department to discuss the process of tenure review. When she asked what was expected he said he could not give her any guidelines, and when she asked if they might set up some regular procedure for discussing her progress since the requirements for tenure were so indefinite, he said, "Oh, you'll know how you're doing." The only assessments she got of her performance in the four years before she came up for tenure were "telegraphic comments in interviews I requested to discuss my annual SSA (selective salary adjustment) ratings. I was never able to get any sustained feedback on how I was doing or, indeed, on what I *should* be doing where tenure was concerned." In the end her tenure case was unproblematic; nevertheless, she observed that:

It's fine to say "you'll just know . . ." if you can expect to be tied into the informal network of the Department. As a woman I felt quite vulnerable; I knew I couldn't take that for granted. I was, in the end, less isolated than many and no problems came up but this sort of attitude is just a recipe for disaster in many contexts.

### V. Daily Life at Western: Components of Faculty Responsibility

Several of the women we interviewed reported that during their time at the University they lost confidence in their ability to do scholarly work. Rather than receiving encouragement from administrators and colleagues to develop their skills as teachers and researchers, many found themselves not only unsupported but seriously undermined. The experiences described by these women ranged from isolation and exclusion by colleagues, sexism and harassment on the part of students and colleagues, to threats and intimidation by colleagues and administrators.

Several of the women interviewed stated that the lack of peer support was a major stumbling block. It undermined their confidence in their academic ability, despite external signs that their careers were flourishing. Often this was cited as the reason they left their jobs for other academic institutions. One said that as a result of her experiences, she felt herself losing her sense of professional competence. She reported that it was more than a year after she left that she began to feel better about herself.

#### Research: Crises in Confidence

One respondent had been teaching on a limited-term position but has also since left for a permanent position elsewhere. She described her initial enthusiasm about coming to the University. There were two senior male colleagues who worked directly in her field and were central to a network of researchers in this area. Her optimism was soon crushed. She said:

In my five years at Western I found my male colleagues — especially those working in my own area — consistently unwilling to provide any support or even to find out very much about my work and interests. In one instance I was pointedly not invited when an evening reception was held for a researcher in my area who was visiting London. I spent a lot of unproductive time wondering why my colleagues should have so systematically excluded and undermined me, and why the worst offenders should have been those with whom I shared the most by way of academic interest.

In the early years she assumed their lack of interest reflected a negative assessment of her research capability but as time wore on, she realized this was unlikely. Her credibility outside the University grew stronger and she

built a strong national reputation with a substantial publication record. She began to wonder if she posed some kind of threat to them. "But this was implausible," she said, "since I was so junior and they were so well established." She finally concluded that an important part of the problem was that they just didn't know how to deal with her as a woman. "They couldn't relate to me as mentors, or see me as a valuable junior colleague the way they do junior men. You see it all the time: they're treated as 'young turks' (junior male colleagues showing signs of success), and everyone takes great pride in their progress."

### **Feminist Research: No Academic Integrity?**

Even more disturbing are the reactions to women who undertake feminist research. For instance, one respondent teaches and publishes in this area; she has a lengthy publication record and has also received prestigious academic awards. She reported that graduate students were actively discouraged from working with her. One senior male faculty member told his class that she was "incompetent" and another cast aspersions on her "academic integrity." Comments such as these were not isolated instances, she noted. Further, her Department Chair had denied her the academic freedom to identify her area of research in the departmental graduate brochure, and she was refused permission to teach graduate courses. This situation continued until it was formally disallowed by more senior administrators in the University.

Another respondent noted that she published some of her scholarly work in a major women's studies journal entitled *Resources for Feminist Research*. "I took all kinds of flak for publishing there," she noted.

One female professor who specializes in feminist scholarship described how she was asked by one of her male colleagues to give a lecture to his class on some of her feminist work. Somewhat surprised, she agreed to do so. When she got to class, she found that he had "no real intention of seeking to understand feminist analysis. He didn't want to hear about the research, the new ways of thinking. He wanted me there as a 'side-show.' He interrupted me, over and over, joking and making snide remarks throughout my presentation." She was beside herself by the end of the class: "I felt entirely marginalized as a woman, completely belittled."

### **Teaching: Male Students**

Male students commonly harass female faculty members. One woman professor reported having pornographic pictures shoved under her office door at night. "It was very frightening," she said, "I felt like someone was really trying to give me a vicious message."

Another respondent referred to the condescending manner in which some male students spoke to her. "I remember having to correct at least two of my young male students because they addressed me as 'dear,'" she said.

Yet another respondent described how women are viewed inside the classroom:

It's brutal for female faculty. They have to be enormously credible before students will listen to them. Male faculty might be viewed as eccentric, they might be ridiculed or imitated, but they would never be attacked as incompetent. For women, the connotation of incompetence is always tacked on.

Nearly all the women interviewed in one Faculty remarked on the sexist, aggressive behaviour of male students. For instance, two of them reported specifically that male students were unhappy about having women teaching certain subjects, ostensibly because these subjects were supposed to be "male" in orientation. A woman from this Faculty observed that women also "suffer in teaching evaluations. What we say isn't taken as being important."

One woman on a limited-term appointment, who has since left for a permanent position elsewhere in Canada, described her experience as an undergraduate instructor as one of continuous harassment. Each year she taught, several male undergraduates repeatedly demanded extensions of deadlines and reassessments of virtually every component of the course grade she assigned to them. When she was being rehired (a renewal of her original limited-term contract), she was asked by the Department to inform her classes (all undergraduate) that she was being assessed for reappointment so that her students could submit additional documentation to her file if they wished. Two of the male students wrote such extremely vindictive letters they were thrown out by the committee reviewing the file. But none of those privy to her difficulties with these students offered her any support. In fact, it was made clear to her that her teaching ability was in question. She described a double standard that women face as new faculty:

I had a first year like anyone else's first year. But it was clear to me that, as a woman, I had to be seen to maintain control *on my own*. They'll jump on anything; first year difficulties teaching large classes are played down for men, but for a woman it's immediately seen as evidence of incompetence. You quickly learn not to go looking for help because that would just confirm their suspicion that you can't handle it on your own. It really isolates you.

In response to the pressure to "prove herself," she made teaching a top priority the year her contract was renewed, at the expense of further developing her research strengths.

It is worth noting that the difficulties this respondent faced as a new Instructor were exacerbated by gender bias in the way she was perceived and treated by students. Although the harassment she described did not have any overtly sexual overtones, she was very clear that junior male colleagues would not have been and indeed, were not, a target for such systematically aggressive challenges. She seemed, in fact, resigned to the fact that junior women faculty inevitably suffer such "hazing" and can only hope that as they gain seniority it will be reduced: "I don't have any grey hair and I'm not male," she said pointedly.

Less overt hostility that nonetheless carries the clear message that women faculty are attributed much less authority than their male counterparts was very widely reported during our interviews. One woman, teaching on a probationary appointment in a department she finds quite supportive of women, described a direct comparison she was able to make between the response of first-year students to her and to a junior male colleague:

Despite having the same name plates on our doors (both were "Professor X" or "Professor Y"), and despite my male colleague looking extremely young for his age and being brand new at the University, I was routinely asked when I would finish my doctorate — whether I was doing an MA or a PhD. The students were just amazed when I said I'd had my doctorate for 8 years already. I asked my male colleague whether he ever got any such inquiries. He'd been out only 1 year when he started teaching and had spoken to me about difficulties he'd had with some of his students. But he said he had never had any such comments. In fact, it was rather gratifying; he was shocked. He couldn't believe a student would challenge a faculty member that way. Clearly, however difficult he found his first years of teaching this was, indeed, no part of his experience!

This same woman reported a much more hostile encounter with a male graduate student when she gave her first graduate seminar in the Department, the second semester after she'd arrived:

I had prepared my seminar description something like six months in advance. It had been widely circulated and when I met the seminar for the first time in January, there was quite a crowd; lots of senior students as well as ones still doing course work, interested to see the new act in town. When I was part way through laying out the plan for the course, this one (male) student got up and objected to its proposed content as not fully representative in one of the areas to be covered. I pointed out five or six really major figures in the area who were on the syllabus and he then challenged me for lack of material in another, related subfield. I was pretty angry by this point and said I couldn't imagine what he was thinking, pointed out another half-dozen readings on the list in exactly this area, and basically told him that if he had any other complaints he could raise them outside the



class since he didn't seem to be making very much in the way of constructive contributions in the class.

I hated to close down discussion this way, but he was so obnoxious and hostile I didn't think I had much choice. He didn't bother coming back to class; it turned out he was an audit anyway, although he had never asked if I would accept audits in this course! But it took a good month before the tone of the class loosened up enough that the rest of the students felt comfortable in discussion. It was a real waste of everyone's time. I asked around and learned that although this student was known to be problematic, he had never pulled anything like this in any of my male colleagues' classes. In fact, they described him as pretty docile in class.

Even women with years of teaching experience face regular challenges to their authority. One long-time faculty member observed that these incidents were more frequent early in her teaching career but that she still does routinely have encounters with students that amount to harassment. "I wouldn't describe these as specifically sexual, but they are clearly gender-linked attempts to intimidate." She says she is quite consciously aware that, at the beginning of classes, she must establish her authority as Instructor in a way not required of her male colleagues. "Unless they make obvious factual mistakes or are really poor lecturers, men don't confront as much in the way of direct challenges as do women faculty of the same age and experience," she noted.

She recounted some of the experiences that have made her aware of this discrepancy. She was once asked when the Instructor would arrive as she called the class to order. "Maybe the student assumed I was a secretary in to check chalk..." she joked. Another respondent is still routinely asked if she has taught the course before. "They look utterly shocked when I say I've taught most of my courses 15-18 years — sometimes longer than they've been alive!!"

### **Women Faculty as Administrators**

There are very few women serving in senior administrative posts at the University. Women have never been appointed to the top positions of University President and Vice-Chancellor, or Provost and Vice-President (Academic), and only a few have been named to the positions of Faculty Dean or Department Chair. Where they do obtain administrative postings, women typically find themselves assigned to more subordinate positions, as "Associate Vice-President" or "Assistant Dean." In fact, several of our respondents referred to this pattern as the "A-job phenomenon." Said one respondent:

A-jobs rarely lead to jobs within the central administrative structure in the case of women. Women in these jobs are not apprised of or consulted about what is going on. They tend to learn about decisions in strange ways. And

they find that the jobs tend to become redefined around them into extensions of traditional female roles. They do the major share of the "house-keeping" work: support, counselling, hostessing, mediating. They are not perceived by anybody as being people who are moving in a logical progression toward non-A-jobs.

Some women take pride in their knowledge of how the University works administratively and in their success in having negotiated attractive salaries and terms of appointment. Nevertheless, one who had held several important administrative appointments concluded that it was especially in these positions that she had encountered blatant, offensive, and debilitating sexism. This she found something of an irony, inasmuch as many faculty women feel themselves disadvantaged because they are systematically excluded from administrative positions that have decision-making power. "The persistent use of sexist and sexual language, and the blatant insensitivity to issues having to do with racism and sexism are," she observed, "quite remarkable." She concluded that the culture of the senior administration is, in many respects, even more unapologetically masculinist/sexist than its critics imagine.

Another described the "boys' club" culture she encountered in Faculty and Senate-level committees: "The conversation always runs to sports and cars," she noted, emphasizing that the dissociation she felt in such an environment had gone a long way toward undermining her sense of commitment to the administrative life of the University.

Another respondent spoke of the difficulties for a woman attempting to work within such a male-dominated administrative structure:

Decisions are taken by an informal network of male buddies that excludes women. A woman in the administration finds that the decision-making structure finds it more logical to work around her. There is a sense that when a woman gets angry or passionate about something, it is obtrusive or lacking in propriety. If a male were to behave the same way, this would be far more acceptable.

Describing the double-bind that this places on women, she continued: "Women administrators must take it easy — or easier than males — in order to be taken seriously. But women also have to push to get any attention. There's a very small range of acceptable behaviour for a woman between speaking out enough to get attention and being seen as an extremist."

Other female faculty, who have sought but not yet obtained administrative appointments, described peculiar responses to their interest in these jobs. One respondent recounted her experience in applying for an administrative post. "A colleague suggested that I apply. I spoke to other members of Faculty and many were quite supportive. Then my colleague told me that

I had a lot of support, but he also revealed that some of the faculty members had said, 'We wouldn't want a man-hater in that position.' "

Nevertheless, this same respondent did apply for the job. Several weeks later, she went to the office of the head of her unit. He said: "I have your application. Are you serious?" She replied as follows:

I told him obviously I was serious or I wouldn't have applied. He then gave me some "job counselling," using the diminutive of my name which made it doubly offensive, telling me that at this stage of my career it would be a big mistake. I listened, told him I'd thought about it, and wanted to apply. Subsequently I spoke to some of the men who had held administrative positions. They were at a similar or more junior level to me, and I asked them if they had been counselled against taking the position. None had. It was so paternalistic.

She didn't get the appointment. And she summed up her own interpretation of the situation: "Any doubts I had about sexist treatment prior to that point were erased!"

## VI. Daily Life at Western: The Features of the Chilly Climate

### "We Don't Really Want a Woman Here . . ."

In some departments simply being female and a faculty member is enough to invite unwelcome comment. "I don't think that there's a day goes by that some kind of comment isn't made about my being a woman," noted one respondent. Another faculty member described her Department as one in which some of her colleagues "aren't very comfortable having women around. They make 'humorous' arguments about how 'we really don't want a woman here' or they keep their distance."

Still another woman recounted an occasion when several of her colleagues were discussing the hiring of women. One of the men asked, "Why do we need another woman, we've already got one," she recalled. She also described another meeting in which members of the Faculty had been conversing about the credentials of a woman applicant. A faculty member had the temerity to say "She's married and she'll just get pregnant anyway." A similar remark was made by a male professor in another Faculty who said "I hope they don't put a woman on the decanal selection committee." One of the respondents in our survey was so astonished to hear this remark made in her presence that she demanded of her colleague: "How do you think that makes me feel?" His reply was even more off-putting. "He actually told me that in his eyes I was not a woman." Another respondent tried to explain the gender barriers:

One of the hardest things about working in my Faculty is that they don't know they have a problem. The majority of my Faculty would say they don't discriminate. Yet they make such obvious sexist comments. I recall a meeting of the women faculty in the 1970s with one of the administrative committees to discuss hiring practices. The meeting had been called in response to the original Western study on the status of women. We came prepared. We asked tough questions about the hiring of women. I remember one male member of the Faculty being so upset at our comments that he said: "all women faculty should be castrated or at home having babies." We wanted that comment minuted but they refused.

### **Exclusionary and Derogatory Language**

The use of sexist language, and of diminutive and derogatory forms of reference is ubiquitous. Virtually all of the women we interviewed reported examples of language which they found exclusionary, offensive, and often indicative of a deep-seated ambivalence about their competence and presence on the faculty. Whether intended or not, the constant and unthinking use of such language is profoundly undermining for women who must live in an environment where it is the norm. What follows is a small selection from among the examples of such language that were reported to us.

Women from many departments reported the constant use of diminutive or derogatory terms by male faculty members. Uninvited nicknames commonly used are terms such as "dolly" and "broad" which are applied to female students and faculty alike. One respondent described it this way: "Ever since I arrived, the head of my Department has called me a diminutive of my name that I would never use myself. Despite my objections, the practice continues. He could not understand why I found this offensive." Several other respondents reported that they have had "cute" suffixes added to their names by male administrators: (name)-"doll," (name)-"love," and so forth, or they are simply referred to as "honey" or "doll." One respondent was called "babe" for her first three years at the University.

Others described treatment that was patronizing, even if not overtly hostile. "There's a certain amount of fatherliness that goes on," advised one respondent. "Young people and women tend to be treated similarly," she added. This respondent found her treatment particularly incongruous and off-putting because she was not young. In fact, she was the age of most of her established male colleagues.

Another respondent attempted to persuade the Chair of her Department to stop referring to the secretaries as "girls" in the Departmental correspondence. When she pointed out to him that even the publication style guidelines within their discipline encouraged the use of non-sexist language, he blew up. In a busy office corridor, he flung her office door open