

The Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession

Using data from the CSWEP roster, this report relates some of the current realities about the population of women economists and about their status. It finds that women are more professional, more research-oriented, and more diverse in their areas of specialization than legend would have it. It is not legend, however, that the status of women economists is and remains poor in academe, particularly in the prestige universities.

The pool of women economists in the CSWEP roster stood at 1,705 women in April 1980. This represents about 10 percent of total AEA membership. The report reveals that the vast majority are not merely occasional members of the work force—some 90 percent of nonstudents in the CSWEP roster work full time. Nearly 90 percent have advanced degrees, with half the roster members having Ph.D.s. More than a third are known to have published one or more books and articles, thus putting to rest the allegation that women do not write. Nearly three-quarters of the roster members have a primary field of specialization in economics different from the manpower, labor, and welfare fields normally associated with women's issues. Thus, it is a myth that most women economists concentrate on women's studies. What is true is that the set of universities referred to as "The Chairperson's Group" has hired a disproportionately large number of women from those fields, some 44 percent.

Half the women in the CSWEP roster have chosen academic careers. Roughly one-fifth have chosen government service or service in nonprofit sector, and another one-fifth work in the industrial, banking, or consulting sectors. For the academic sector, the roster provides evidence that the number of women economists may be nearly twice as large as had previously been supposed. Nevertheless, the proportion of women in high faculty positions has actually worsened relative to that of men, both at all institutions

combined and at the major universities. For example, whereas the proportion of full professorships among male economists in tenure track positions at the Chairperson's Group increased from 51 to 57 percent from 1972 to 1978, that of women economists was only 26 percent in 1972 and fell even further to 18 percent in 1978.

There continues to be virtually no representation of women at the tenured level in the top seven economics departments. Thus, whereas the male economists who have achieved national reputations have done so with the powerful economics departments as their springboard, women economists have not been given this opportunity. Had it not been for government, which has in recent years done remarkably well, there would have been no improvement in the status of women economists since CSWEP was founded nearly a decade ago.

I. CSWEP Committee Activities

Before turning to the details of the analysis, I will summarize some of the activities of CSWEP since the December 1979 meeting at Atlanta. At that meeting, the principle of nondiscrimination on the basis of sex was affirmed by the decision of the Executive Committee to hold meetings and job markets through 1985 in states that have ratified the Equal Rights Amendment, and by a resolution of the general membership which applauded and affirmed the wisdom of that decision. A number of women aided in the formulation of the resolution, including representatives from URPE as well as past and present members of CSWEP. CSWEP had some \$261 in member's donations left over from the ERA ad campaign: \$100 of this was given to ERA Georgia in December, and the other \$161 was used to support "A National ERA Evening," cochaired by Rosalynn Carter and Betty Ford, held in Washington in June. The proceeds from the evening are to be used by ERA America for

citizen education and lobbying and by the National Women's Political Caucus ERA fund to support the election campaigns of key state legislators. Since the American Economic Association cannot supply funding directly or indirectly for such purposes, CSWEP was pleased when Heather Ross and Belle Sawhill supplied the additional funds to achieve the \$500 required to have CSWEP named as a sponsor of the event.

A second major activity of CSWEP is the pending reorganization of the Committee, to adapt it to its growing role as an umbrella organization for women involved in the regional economics associations. CSWEP is designating four committee members to represent the four regions: East, West, Midwest, and South. Each regional member will in turn appoint a three- or four-person executive committee to support and lead CSWEP activities in the specified regions. Each regional CSWEP group will coordinate with the president and officers of the regional economics associations to plan CSWEP activities at their meetings. These activities will include a session on research related to women's issues, a CSWEP business meeting, and a social get together. A representative of the recently formed Washington Women Economists (WWE) will also sit in on CSWEP committee meetings. WWE was formed early in 1979 as a network for women economists living and working in the nation's capitol. WWE arranges many programs, including conferences, dinner meetings, etc., publishes a bimonthly newsletter and a membership directory, services job inquiries, and encourages research and student activities. Since CSWEP has not in the past paid a great deal of attention to the needs of the women economists working in government, it is wonderful indeed that the WWE group has begun to fill this important role.

The initial leaders of the regional activities will be Irma Adelman (agricultural economics, Berkeley), Chair, CSWEP-West assisted by Claire Vickrey (economics, Berkeley), Myra Strober (education, Stanford), and Sara Bechman (California State Government). Heading CSWEP-South and Southwest is Joan Haworth (economics,

Florida State) assisted by Ruth Andress (business, University of South Carolina), Mary Fish (business, University of Alabama), Persis Rockwood (marketing, Florida State) and Judy Pitcher (Consumer Product Safety Commission). Janet Goulet (business, Wittenberg), is the Chair, CSWEP-Midwest, assisted by Kim Sosin (economics, University of Nebraska), and George Thoma (economics, Elmherst). Jean Shackelford (economics, Bucknell) heads CSWEP-East, assisted by Teresa Amott (Wellesley), Judith Stitch (American Council on Education), and Julianne Malveaux (management, New School).

The Denver AEA meetings featured Alice M. Rivlin, Director of the Congressional Budget Office of the U.S. Congress, as the speaker at a joint CSWEP-American Finance Association luncheon. Her talk described the profound changes in the government budgeting process that have taken place over the past five years, and gave a preview of improvements that are now under consideration. There were also two major sessions of particular interest to women. One was the traditional CSWEP research session with the topic being the effect of inflation on labor force participation and the distribution of household income. A second CSWEP-sponsored session described some proven techniques for improving the status of women in all types of employment: academic, business, government, and labor. This session was particularly lively. Mentoring and networking techniques were advocated, as well as selection by women of fields such as micro-economic theory and econometrics where demand is strong. In addition, the importance of commitment from the top was stressed as a key ingredient to improving status. Thus, direct techniques must be supplemented by efforts to affect the decisions of persons in top positions.

Finally, Marianne Ferber has carried out an analysis of the use of the CSWEP roster. One of the resolutions adopted when CSWEP was formed required the provision of a roster of its women members, listing their qualifications and fields, which was to be made widely known to all prospective

employers. Consequently, CSWEP began to compile a roster which, by the end of 1973, contained 1,400 names. This number has grown somewhat to 1,705 names. From the beginning, the roster has been used as a mailing list for the CSWEP *Newsletter*, and this continues to be one of its functions.

The primary purpose of the roster, provision of a list of women economists along with information about them that is useful to potential employers, committees seeking qualified women to serve on panels, boards, etc., has also been served since CSWEP has made the roster available for a nominal charge, which helps defray the cost of the operation.

Unfortunately, the roster has had only limited use. The number of requests received was 17 in 1976, 18 in 1977, 10 in 1978, and 14 in 1979. In an attempt to improve usage, CSWEP has revised the format of the roster to make it more legible, has made it more up-to-date by switching from an annual to a semi-annual update, and has sent a mailing to academic institutions and some government agencies telling them of the availability of the roster. The result of all these changes has been a more than 100 percent increase in requests. But the total number is still only 31 for January–May 15, 1980.

CSWEP is interested in exploring new and easier ways of getting information to potential users. We are currently exploring ways to improve the computer accessibility of the data. We have also begun to use the data for analysis. Any suggestions for further improvements in the production or use of the roster or for additional ways to bring its existence to the attention of potential users will be gratefully received.

II. Analysis of the Status of Women Economists

Because of the timing of the 1980 meeting of the American Economic Association, the Universal Academic Questionnaire data used for reporting purposes by my predecessors are not available. Thus, my report must rely on other data sources. Fortunately, the CSWEP roster has recently been put into analyzable format by the able and energetic efforts of Marianne Ferber. A computer

program to analyze these data is being prepared by Joan Haworth, who plans to use it in her own research and to make it available for future CSWEP reports. Since this program is not yet complete, Beverly Loudermilk and Anna Pegram of my office undertook the tedious task of collating at least some of the roster data, which they did with remarkable care and good cheer. Using letters and phone calls, they also assisted in compiling a list of women economists who are assistant, associate, and full professors at the Chairperson's Group of Universities.

Tables 1–3 summarize in tabular form information contained in the April 1980 CSWEP roster. Table 1 displays the distribution of women economists by highest degree. It is seen that nearly 90 percent of the women on the CSWEP roster have advanced degrees. The distribution of advanced degrees across primary field of specialization indicates that the proportion of women with only a Bachelors' degree is significantly higher than average in only two fields, economic statistics and business and finance, where about 20 percent of women economists have only Bachelors' degrees. Slightly more than a quarter of women economists have a Masters as their highest degree. The economic statistics and business and finance fields are again the two fields in which this proportion is significantly above the average. Thus, women in these two business-related fields tend to stop their education sooner than do women in the more academic fields of specialization in economics.

Roughly half the women in the roster have completed their Ph.D.s. This contrasts with about 13 percent who have all but their doctorates. Thus, nearly four times more women economists have continued their education through the Ph.D. level than have quit before completing their dissertations. Since a number of roster members are still students, even this may overvalue the rate of noncompletion. I cannot but believe that a comparison of these figures with those of the AEA membership as a whole would reveal that the record of women is no worse than that of men in this regard. Certainly, our figures dispel the notion that most women economists tend to drop out rather

TABLE 1—PERCENTAGES OF WOMEN ECONOMISTS BY HIGHEST DEGREE AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Primary Field of Specialty in Economics	Highest Degree					Status			
	B.A., B.S.	M.A., M.S.	A.B.D.	Ph.D.	Other	Employed Full Time	Student	Employed Part Time	Other
000 General Economics	7.6	29.8	9.7	52.5	0.4	84.9	6.7	5.5	2.9
100 Economic Growth, Development	11.0	28.9	8.7	51.4	0.0	75.7	11.0	4.6	8.8
200 Economic Statistics	20.9	34.2	9.0	35.1	0.8	74.6	13.4	6.0	6.0
300 Monetary and Fiscal	8.4	24.3	17.8	48.6	1.0	78.5	14.5	5.1	1.9
400 International Economics	10.9	25.6	16.0	46.2	1.3	78.2	13.5	5.1	3.1
500 Business and Finance	20.1	40.2	5.8	33.3	0.6	90.2	3.5	2.9	3.5
600 Industrial Organization	12.7	27.1	18.6	40.7	0.8	80.5	12.7	4.2	2.5
700 Agriculture	10.6	23.4	12.8	51.1	2.1	85.1	6.4	6.4	2.1
800 Manpower, Labor	6.3	18.0	17.7	56.9	1.2	82.0	10.6	3.9	3.5
900 Welfare Programs	7.7	23.0	15.3	53.1	1.0	80.1	7.7	5.1	7.1
TOTAL	10.9	27.2	13.3	47.9	0.8	81.0	10.0	4.8	4.2

Source: CSWEP Roster, April 1980.

than to complete their dissertations. Preliminary analysis of the roster data also reveals that significantly higher percentages of women are attaining the Ph.D. as their highest degree in the years since 1970 than in prior years.

Table 1 shows that over 80 percent of the women in the roster are employed full time. Ten percent are students, 5 percent are employed part time, and 4 percent have other or unknown status. These data suggest that of the women who care enough about main-

taining a professional link to have joined CSWEP, only a small minority have selected part-time employment or have dropped out of the labor market. The vast majority are serious members of the labor force.

Table 2 displays the type of employment chosen by women in the CSWEP roster. Roughly half have chosen academic careers. In all but two fields (general economics, and business and finance), one-fourth to one-fifth have chosen government service or service in the nonprofit sector. While the

TABLE 2—PERCENTAGES OF WOMEN ECONOMISTS BY TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT AND JOB AVAILABILITY

Primary Field of Specialty in Economics	Employment				Availability for Other Positions			
	Aca- demic	Govern- ment/ Nonprofit	Indus./ Banking Consulting	Other/ Un- known	Actively Looking	Consider Good Offer	Not Inter- ested New Position	Un- known
000 General Economics	77.3	3.4	8.8	10.5	5.9	41.2	22.3	30.7
100 Economic Growth, Development	37.6	19.1	26.6	16.7	10.4	54.3	11.0	24.3
200 Economic Statistics	35.8	20.1	27.6	16.4	9.0	45.5	20.9	24.6
300 Monetary and Fiscal	52.8	22.4	10.7	14.0	11.2	47.2	19.2	22.4
400 International Economics	37.2	24.4	21.8	16.7	16.0	44.2	18.6	21.4
500 Business and Finance	33.3	9.2	48.9	8.6	11.5	44.8	16.7	27.0
600 Industrial Organization	38.1	23.7	27.1	11.0	7.6	60.2	10.2	22.0
700 Agriculture	55.3	21.3	17.0	6.4	6.4	55.3	12.8	25.5
800 Manpower, Labor	56.1	21.6	12.9	10.2	8.6	53.7	18.0	19.6
900 Welfare Programs	51.5	20.9	14.3	13.3	11.2	45.4	23.5	19.9
TOTAL	49.3	17.8	20.4	13.8	9.9	48.3	18.1	23.6

Source: CSWEP Roster, April 1980.

TABLE 3—PERCENTAGES OF WOMEN ECONOMISTS BY PUBLICATION RECORD AND BY ACADEMIC RANK

Primary Field of Specialty in Economics	Articles and Books			Women Academics by Academic Rank				
	None	One or More	Unknown	Dean/ Dept. Head	Prof.	Assoc. Prof.	Asst. Prof.	Instructor, Etc.
000 General Economics	35.3	35.3	29.4	5.3	18.0	23.3	27.5	25.9
100 Economic Growth, Development	35.8	38.2	26.0	0.0	20.0	20.0	30.8	29.2
200 Economic Statistics	55.2	20.9	23.9	4.3	10.9	17.4	21.7	45.6
300 Monetary and Fiscal	42.5	32.7	24.8	3.5	15.9	21.2	29.2	30.1
400 International Economics	41.7	31.4	26.9	7.0	15.8	21.1	21.1	30.3
500 Business and Finance	51.2	23.6	25.3	5.2	24.1	19.0	19.0	32.7
600 Industrial Organization	50.8	28.0	21.2	4.4	15.6	11.1	28.9	39.9
700 Agriculture	31.9	29.8	38.3	0.0	11.5	23.1	23.1	42.4
800 Manpower, Labor	27.8	41.6	30.6	2.1	18.9	23.1	30.8	25.2
900 Welfare Programs	27.6	46.9	25.5	3.0	22.8	14.9	31.7	27.6
TOTAL	39.0	34.2	26.8	3.7	18.1	20.3	27.6	30.3

Source: CSWEP Roster, April 1980.

overall average of women with jobs in the business sector is about one-fifth of the roster population, the distribution ranges from a low of less than 10 percent in the general economics area to a high of nearly 50 percent in the business and finance area. Slightly less than 14 percent of roster members did not fill in employment information. Primarily these were women who had indicated student or other status, and hence the employment question was not pertinent for them. Certainly, Table 2 suggests that more effort should be expended by CSWEP on behalf of its members who have chosen non-academic careers.

Table 2 also reveals that women economists are a great deal more flexible about considering job changes than is generally supposed. Only 18 percent of the women in the roster have indicated they are not interested in a new position. Almost 50 percent would consider a good job offer, and another 10 percent are actively looking for a job.

Table 3 reveals that more than one-third of the roster members have published one or more books and articles in contrast to just under 40 percent who are known to have no publications. While the known publishers thus do not form the majority of our membership, the proportion of publishing women is certainly high enough to dispel the notion that women tend to teach but not

to publish. Not surprisingly, the two fields where women had the least proportion of advanced degrees, economic statistics and business and finance, also display the lowest publication rates. The two fields with the highest proportion of publishing women are the fields of manpower, labor, and welfare. Thus, women who are interested in fields where women's issues play a major role tend to write somewhat more than women with other primary fields of specialization.

Table 3 reveals that approximately 70 percent of women academics are in tenure track positions. About 38 percent have achieved appointments at the associate professor level or above. To see whether this is an improvement in status, I compared this distribution with that reported in the first annual CSWEP report of May 1973. At that time approximately 79 percent of the women were in tenure track positions, and 38 percent had achieved appointments at the associate professor level or above. So women's status has not improved in this regard. Table 4 displays a number of other comparisons over time and over data sets of women's status. The only improvement is that the roster data indicates that women have achieved somewhat higher ranks on average than have been reported by the Universal Academic Questionnaire data. In other respects, both for universities as a whole, and for the

TABLE 4—FACULTY DISTRIBUTION OF TENURE TRACK RANKS BY SEX

	Universal Academic Questionnaire, 1972				Universal Academic Questionnaire, 1978-79				CSWEP Roster, April 1980	
	Females		Males		Females		Males		Females	
	No.	Distribution	No.	Distribution	No.	Distribution	No.	Distribution	No.	Distribution
All Colleges and Universities, Economics Departments										
Full Professors	48	21.5	1489	38.2	48	19.7	1637	43.4	184	31.3
Associate Professors	59	26.5	1055	27.1	58	23.8	1005	26.6	171	29.1
Assistant Professors	116	52.0	1350	34.7	138	56.5	1130	30.0	233	39.6
TOTAL	223		3894		244		3772		588	
Chairperson's Group of Universities,* Economics Departments										
									CSWEP Survey March 1980	
Full Professors	14	26.4	563	51.4	10	17.5	653	57.4	20	22.1
Associate Professors	8	15.1	211	19.3	8	14.0	184	16.2	17	16.8
Assistant Professors	31	58.5	321	29.3	39	68.4	301	26.4	58	61.1
TOTAL	53		1095		57		1138		95	

*The Chairperson's Group of Universities was comprised of 43 major universities in 1972, and of 65 major universities in 1978-79.

Chairperson's Group as will be discussed later, women's status has declined in comparison with their earlier status and in comparison with that of men.

The most startling difference between the roster figures and those reported by the Universal Academic Questionnaire concern total numbers of women in academe. The 1972-73 questionnaire data cited 223 women economists in tenure track positions. Five years later those data showed a slight increase to 244 women. The CSWEP roster reveals some 843 academic women; 588 of the women are in tenure track positions, over twice as many as have been picked up using the traditional questionnaire as the data source. Thus, the roster data reveal that there have been serious underestimates in the pool of women economists. The discrepancy is due in part to the fact that many universities do not complete the questionnaire data. In addition, because the questionnaire data are directed only at economics departments, substantial numbers of women economists who are in other departments are not picked up.

The status of women economists in the Chairperson's Group of Universities has always been considered an important indicator of our stature in the profession. With this in mind and because of doubts about the completeness of the questionnaire data,

CSWEP conducted a survey this spring of the women economists at the Chairperson's Group of Universities. A total of 95 women in economics departments were found who were at a rank of assistant professor or above. This figure is nearly double the 57 women reported in the 1978-79 Universal Academic Questionnaire data. The survey data are reasonably complete for the economics departments of the major campuses, and include at least some women economists from other departments and campuses. Indeed, the survey identified an additional 44 women economists in the Chairperson's universities whose appointments were in business schools, in departments of city or regional planning, in agricultural economics departments, in outlying campuses, and so forth. This represents a 40 percent increase in the number of women economists who would otherwise have shown up in the Chairperson's group.

Aside from finding a larger pool of women in these universities, the survey is not very heartening. Within the 65 economics departments of the major campuses of the Chairperson's group, 40 had no tenured women professors, 18 had one tenured woman, and 7 had two tenured women. Moreover, of the 40 departments with no tenured women, 17 also had no untenured women. So even using the survey data, there is no

doubt that these departments remain nearly totally male.

The distribution according to professional rank of women in the Chairperson's economics departments is also disheartening. As Table 4 shows, whereas only 40 percent of tenure track women in the CSWEP roster are assistant professors, 61 percent of the women in the Chairperson's group of economics departments are at this rank. The associate professors constitute 17 percent of the Chairperson's departments, but 29 percent in the membership at large. Full professors are 31 percent of the roster population, but only 22 percent of the Chairperson's group. A comparison of women's distribution by rank with that of the men in these departments is equally disheartening. In the 1973 CSWEP report, 51 percent of the male professors in the Chairperson's economic departments were full professors as contrasted to 26 percent of the women. In the 1980 CSWEP report, 57 percent of the men were full professors as contrasted to only 18 percent of the women. According to the CSWEP survey, 22 percent of the women professors in these universities are full professors. So in this dimension, as well, our status appears to have slipped rather than improved over the years since CSWEP was founded.

In the top seven economics departments, only one, MIT, has a tenured woman. There are no tenured women in the economics departments of Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Chicago, Stanford, or Berkeley. Both MIT and Berkeley do, however, have a tenured woman in a noneconomics department. Thus, the traditionally dismal record of the top economic departments in the nation remains dismal as far as women are concerned.

Although the prestige schools have been closed to women, government service has opened up during 1973-80. Not surprisingly, many of the women in our profession have risen to prominence along this latter path. Unlike academe, women economists have been appointed to the highest government offices: to the Cabinet; to the Council of Economic Advisors; to Commissionerships as varied as the Federal Reserve Board,

the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Civil Aeronautics Board, and the Consumer Product Safety Commission; to directorships as varied as those at the Congressional Budget Office and the National Commission for Employment Policy. I conducted in 1980 a count of women economists who were at supergrade and appointed positions in Washington and found at least as many women there as are tenured in economics departments at the Chairpersons Group of Universities. Thus, although there are substantially fewer numbers of women economists in government, they have achieved relatively greater stature than their counterparts in academe.

Table 5 displays primary field of specialization among four groups of women economists—the entire CSWEP roster, the members of the CSWEP roster who are still students, the women economists in all departments at the Chairperson's Group of Universities, and the women who have joined the Washington Women Economists group. The first column shows the percentages for the AEA membership as a whole. The CSWEP distribution does not look that different from the distribution of the total AEA membership. The only categories that differ by more than three percentage points are manpower, and labor and welfare where the proportion of women are higher. It is interesting that the women students in these categories are at roughly the same level as the total AEA membership. The new crop of women economists differ from their predecessors in focusing their attention away from women's issues and toward areas such as industrial organization and international economics.

Some 44 percent of the women who have found jobs in the Chairperson's Group of Universities are, surprisingly, in the two women-related issue codes of manpower, and labor and welfare. The manpower, labor figure for the women in the Chairpersons' Group is nearly double that for CSWEP women as a whole. Thus, the impression in the Chairperson's Group of Universities that most women economists work in fields related to women's issues seems to arise because these universities have recruited

TABLE 5—PERCENTAGES OF VARIOUS GROUPS OF ECONOMISTS
BY PRIMARY FIELD OF SPECIALIZATION

Primary Field of Specialty in Economics	Women Economists				
	Total AEA Membership	CSWEP Roster	CSWEP Students	Chairperson's Group	WWE
000 General Economics	17	14	7	16	2
100 Economic Growth, Development	12	10	11	6	12
200 Economic Statistics	8	8	13	5	9
300 Monetary and Fiscal	14	13	14	11	9
400 International Economics	9	9	14	8	12
500 Business and Finance	9	10	4	2	4
600 Industrial Organization	9	7	13	8	7
700 Agricultural	6	3	6	1	10
800 Manpower, Labor	9	15	11	28	15
900 Welfare Programs	8	12	8	16	20

Source: 1978 AEA *Directory of Economists*, CSWEP Roster, April 1980, CSWEP Survey of Chairperson's group, March 1980, Washington Women Economists Membership Directory, 1980.

such women more than they have women from other fields.

The fields of specialization of the 273 members of Washington Women Economists are distinctive in that there are few generalists and larger percentages of women in the fields of development, international, agriculture and welfare than in the Chairpersons' group. Other interesting statistics (not displayed on the chart) are that

the WWE group has a lower proportion of Ph.D.s (32 percent vs. 48 percent) than the CSWEP roster as a whole, and that the distribution of WWE membership by type of employment yields 53 percent working in government, 33 percent in business, 10 percent in academe, and 4 percent not employed.

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