

Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession

The Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession (CSWEP), established by the AEA in 1972, was charged with monitoring women's position in the profession and undertaking activities to improve it. This report summarizes changes that have occurred in the position of women economists in academia during the 1980s and describes the Committee's activities during the past year.

The Changing Status of Women Economists

Overall, women economists are more numerous now than in 1980, and they are slowly advancing in academia, but few have reached the rank of full professor. These conclusions are based on data from a matched sample of colleges and universities that responded to the Universal Academic Questionnaire in both the 1980-81 and the 1987-88 school years.¹ Although the matched sample includes only half of all institutions reporting in 1987, the characteristics for the entire group are essentially the same as for the sample analyzed here.²

As shown in Table 1, the proportion of Ph.D.s in economics awarded to women by schools in the matched sample rose sharply between 1980 and 1987—from 12 percent to 19 percent, in part reflecting women's rapidly growing representation in economics at the Bachelor's degree level during the late 1970s.³ The share of Master's degrees in economics awarded to women also increased substantially (from 21 to 29 percent), but the pro-

TABLE 1—SELECTED DATA ON STUDENTS IN ECONOMICS

	1980-81		1987-88	
	Total Number	Percent Female	Total Number	Percent Female
Recipients of Degrees in Economics^a				
Bachelor's	5,889	29.2	6,910	31.4
Master's	710	20.7	719	29.1
Ph.D.	410	12.4	368	19.4
Graduate Students in Economics^b				
Enrolled				
In Ph.D. Program	2,279	18.0	2,886	22.3
In MA Program	861	26.0	691	24.7
Receiving Aid				
In Ph.D. Program	1,582	19.2	1,997	23.6
In MA Program	271	29.5	188	27.1
Distribution of Employment for Ph.D. Recipients^c				
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Educational				
Institutions	66	68	57	69
Government ^d	8	6	11	5
Private Sector ^e	12	18	12	10
Other ^f	15	9	21	16
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Data from the Universal Academic Questionnaire for institutions responding in both the 1980-81 and 1987-88 school years.

^aFrom 80 institutions awarding only Bachelor's degrees, 20 awarding Bachelor's and Master's degrees, and 50 that also award Ph.D.s.

^bFull-time students attending the 50 institutions in the matched sample that award Ph.D.s.

^cShown in percent. Excludes recipients whose subsequent activity is not known. Based on the 50 institutions in the matched sample that award Ph.D.s.

^dIncludes federal, state, and local governments.

^eIncludes business, industry, banking, finance, consulting, and research institutions.

^fIncludes recipients employed in international agencies and other countries, as well as those in postdoctoral programs, seeking employment, or out of the labor force.

portion of Bachelor's degrees was stable at about 30 percent. The gender distribution of graduate students shifted somewhat, from 18 percent of Ph.D. students in economics being women to 22 percent. Among students in both Master's degree and Ph.D. programs, women remained slightly more likely than men to receive aid.

¹The Committee thanks Charles Scott and Joan Harworth for their valuable contributions to this analysis.

²The matched sample contains 80 of the 188 undergraduate institutions that responded in 1987, 20 of the 42 institutions that award only Bachelor's and Master's degrees, and 50 of the 71 institutions that award Ph.D.s. The tables presented here are available for the entire 1987 sample on request.

³See CSWEP Annual Report, 1985, *American Economic Review Proceedings*, May 1986, pp. 452-57.

TABLE 2—NUMBER OF FULL-TIME FACULTY AND PROPORTION WHO ARE WOMEN, BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION AND RANK

	1980		1987	
	Total Number	Percent Female	Total Number	Percent Female
Undergraduate Institutions^a				
Full Professor	110	8.2	155	7.1
Associate Professor	128	3.9	151	8.6
Assistant Professor	150	10.7	150	20.7
Instructor	42	21.4	27	11.1
Total	430	9.1	483	12.0
Graduate Institutions^b				
Full Professor	624	1.8	648	2.9
Associate Professor	278	6.5	287	8.7
Assistant Professor	341	12.0	326	19.3
Instructor	45	24.4	22	18.2
Total	1,288	6.3	1,283	8.7

Source: See Table 1.

^aBased on 80 undergraduate institutions that award Bachelor's degrees in economics but do not have graduate programs.

^bBased on 50 institutions that award Ph.D.'s in economics.

As women have progressed through their careers, they have made up a growing proportion of faculty at the ranks of assistant, associate, and full professor, as shown in Table 2. Only in the case of full professors at undergraduate institutions did the proportion of women fall, and when this relatively small group is combined with full professors at graduate institutions that award Ph.D.s, the overall proportion of women rose from 2.7 to 3.7 percent. Nonetheless, only 30 of 803 full professors at institutions in the matched sample were women.

Women made up a higher proportion of those who were hired in 1987 than they did in 1980, as shown in Table 3, but their progress to higher ranks has been limited. This is especially true at the institutions with Ph.D. programs, which employed 66 percent of all associate professors and 81 percent of all full professors in 1987. Only 1 of the 30 faculty members promoted to associate professor in 1987 at these institutions was female, and all 28 who became full professors were men. Considering that women made up 12 percent of assistant professors at these

TABLE 3—CHANGES IN STATUS OF FULL-TIME FACULTY^a

	1980-81		1987-88	
	Total Number	Percent Female	Total Number	Percent Female
Undergraduate Institutions^b				
Hired	45	15.6	43	20.9
Promoted				
To Associate Professor	13	7.7	16	6.3 ^c
To Full Professor	11	27.3	13	30.8 ^c
Graduate Institutions^d				
Hired	78	12.8	93	21.5
Promoted				
To Associate Professor	28	10.7	30	3.3
To Full Professor	27	0	28	0

Source: See Table 1.

^aReflects changes for full-time faculty with ranks of assistant, associate, and full professor.

^bBased on 80 undergraduate institutions that award Bachelor's degrees in economics but do not have graduate programs.

^cWhether the entire group or the matched sample is considered, the number of women being promoted is small—5 or less in each category. Because of the small number of promotions at the undergraduate institutions, however, the share of women among faculty promoted to associate professor is three times as large in the entire group, and the share promoted to full professor is one-third the size, as in this matched sample.

^dBased on 50 institutions that award Ph.D.s in economics.

schools in 1980, rising to 19 percent in 1987, it seems that they are not advancing within academia in the same way as men. Moreover, women were not "bitten away" to tenured positions at other universities in this sample. Of the 20 full-time female faculty hired in 1987, 18 had the rank of assistant professor. In contrast, 18 men were hired with ranks of associate or full professor.⁴

Although many hypotheses have been advanced about why women economists are not progressing more quickly in academia, few facts are available. An ongoing study

⁴When all doctorate-granting institutions responding to the 1987-88 survey are considered, 24 of the 26 women hired as full-time faculty had the rank of assistant professor.

based on longitudinal data from the *Survey of Doctoral Recipients* will describe the career patterns of male and female economists in academia and other types of employment and analyze factors that may be related to differences in these patterns.

The Committee's Activities

The Committee pursued a number of activities in 1988. Several were designed to expand employers' use of CSWEP's roster of women economists, which contains information about their employers, educational background, fields of specialization, and publications. First, CSWEP's Board instituted the option of providing information from the roster in machine-readable form, as well as continuing to offer printed copies of it and the customized computer listings that were previously available. Thus, users may now obtain a diskette containing information about all CSWEP members and create their own listings of economists who meet specified conditions, or the diskette may be limited to information about members having characteristics specified by the user. Second, because employers often use the roster to expand their pools of job candidates, flyers describing how to obtain printed listings or diskettes will soon be sent to the chairs of economics departments, and to the affirmative action officers for each state and for federal agencies likely to employ economists.

To ensure that the roster is as useful as possible, the Board has also devoted considerable effort to updating information about current members and expanding the number of women economists included in it. For example, questionnaires were sent to all current members and copies are also being distributed at the technical sessions and social events CSWEP organizes at meetings of the national and regional economics associations. Early next year, chairs of economics departments will be asked to help identify female graduate students, recent graduates, and new faculty.

Since the Committee's inception, one of the Board's goals has been to expand the participation of women economists on the

program of the AEA's annual meeting. As in past years, the Board organized several sessions for the 1988 annual meeting, some on traditional gender-related topics such as equal employment opportunity for women, and others on public policy topics such as the financial position of the elderly and long-term care that are of particular concern to women. At the suggestion of Joseph Pechman and with Gerard Debreu's concurrence, however, the Board has decided to expand the topics on which it organizes future sessions to include ones that are not related to gender. A different area will be covered each year, depending on the expertise of the Board. For 1989, we plan to focus on theory and applications in industrial organization. Another innovation in 1988 was sending each person asked by the President-elect to organize a session lists of experienced women economists who specialize in the same fields as the organizer. These lists were intended as reminders of possible participants; whether relatively more women were represented on the 1988 program will be clearer when CSWEP's project to compare the AEA's programs for 1984 through 1988 is completed in 1989.

Another major activity was publishing the *CSWEP Newsletter*, one goal of which is to help young economists advance in the profession. Articles covered topics such as how to write grant proposals and how to pursue job searches involving more than one professional. Public policy topics such as child support, welfare dependency, and the changing income distribution were also addressed.

Finally, the Board thanks Joan Haworth, the Committee's Membership Secretary, and her staff for their many contributions—updating the mailing list, preparing listings from the roster, and completing special mailings, to name just a few. Three Board members, whose terms expire this year, have also contributed much to the Committee. Beth Allen has been the eastern representative, written articles for the *Newsletter*, and arranged sessions for the annual meetings. Alan Fechter helped with access to the data necessary for the CSWEP-initiated project examining differences in the career paths of male

and female economists and with arrangements for CSWEP's activities at AEA meetings. Katharine Lyall has been the Midwest regional representative throughout her term and has organized articles for the *Newsletter*

during the last two years. The Board is also grateful to Toni Foxx, who continues to do an excellent job producing the *Newsletter*.

NANCY M. GORDON, *Chair*