

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

The American Economic Association's charge to the Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession (CSWEP) is to monitor the position of women in the profession, and undertake activities to improve it. This Report briefly examines the position of women economists in academia from 1974 to 1988 and describes the Committee's recent activities.

The Changing Status of Women Economists in Academia

Since 1974, there has been a strong upward trend in the proportion of faculty in graduate economics departments who are women, although the proportion of those receiving tenure remains somewhat lower than might be expected based on these trends. These results are based on data about graduate economics departments (i.e., departments that grant Ph.D.s) that responded to the AEA's Universal Academic Questionnaire (UAQ) in any year between 1974 and 1988.¹ Because few departments responded to the questionnaire in every year, the data used in this analysis for each year are based on all graduate departments that responded in that year.² Although a large matched sample of departments would be preferable for this longitudinal analysis, the relative measures used here (such as the proportion of assistant professors who are women) would not be greatly affected by the year-to-year variation in the group that did respond as long as this variation was not systematically related to the presence of female faculty. If, however, the departments that responded later in the period tended to be the ones that

¹The Committee thanks Charles Scott and Joan Harworth for their valuable contributions to this analysis. Please note that, as described later in the text, the UAQ is the source for the figures and tables herein.

²The number of departments responding declined over the 1974-88 period, however, from an average of 90 during the 1970s to an average of 70 in the past 6 years.

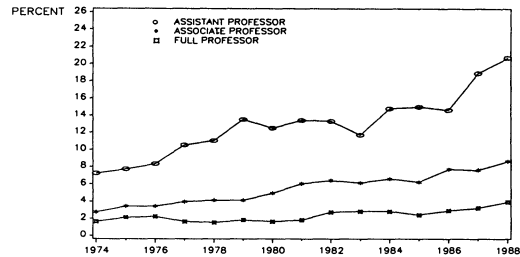


FIGURE 1. PROPORTION OF FACULTY IN GRADUATE DEPARTMENTS WHO ARE WOMEN, BY RANK: 1974-88
(As a percent of faculty with the same rank)

had hired and promoted the most women, these data would overstate the progress being made by female economists.³

As shown in Figure 1, the proportion of assistant professors who were women tripled between 1974 and 1988—rising from 7 to 21 percent. This increase reflected the growth in the proportion of Ph.D.s in economics awarded to women from under 10 percent in the early 1970s to about 20 percent near the end of the 1980s. The proportion of associate professors who were women also tripled, from 3 to 9 percent, while the proportion of full professors more than doubled from under 2 to almost 4 percent. In both cases, this growth reflected the rising proportion of women at the next lower rank.

Similar patterns are apparent in looking at promotions to associate and full professor. Figure 2 shows the proportion of faculty promoted to associate professor, and the proportion promoted to full professor, who were women. Of those becoming associate

³The longitudinal results presented here are consistent with information based on two particular matched samples. One sample, consisting of departments that responded in both the 1980-81 and the 1987-88 school years, was examined in last year's annual report (see *AER Proceedings*, May 1989, pp. 422-25). Data about departments that responded in both the 1984-85 and the 1988-89 school years are analyzed at the end of this section.

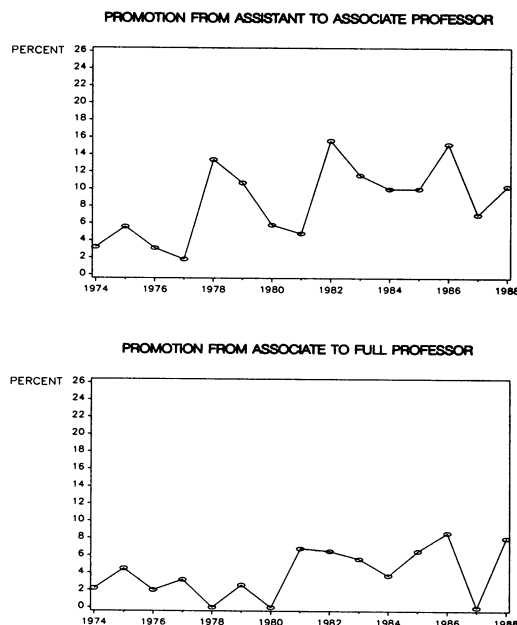


FIGURE 2. PROPORTION OF FACULTY PROMOTED TO THE NEXT RANK WHO ARE WOMEN, GRADUATE DEPARTMENTS ONLY, 1974-88

professors between 1974 and 1978, 6 percent, on average, were women. This proportion rose to about 9 percent in the 1979-83 period, and to 10 percent in the 1984-88 period. Of those becoming full professors in the three 5-year intervals, an average of 2, 4, and 5 percent, respectively, were women.

The proportion of faculty receiving tenure who were women is shown in Figure 3. Again, the progress of women in the economics profession is apparent: this proportion averaged 4, 6, and 9 percent in the three 5-year periods. Nonetheless, these figures are somewhat lower than might be expected, considering that the proportion of assistant professors who were women has been over 10 percent since 1977 and at least 13 percent since 1979.

Progress over the past 4 years may also be examined using data from the departments responding to the UAQ in both the 1984-85 and the 1988-89 school years, although the results must be treated with caution because the two academic years may not be represen-

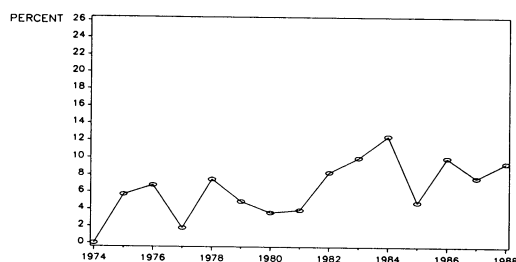


FIGURE 3. PROPORTION OF FACULTY RECEIVING TENURE WHO ARE WOMEN, GRADUATE DEPARTMENTS ONLY: 1974-88

tative ones.⁴ As shown in Table 1, women received a higher proportion of the Ph.D.s awarded in 1988 than in 1984, but represented about the same proportion of graduate students in both years. Female Ph.D. students were about as likely as their male counterparts to receive financial aid, although female Master's students were more likely than their male counterparts to be assisted in both years.

Women made up a higher proportion of the faculty in 1988 than in 1984 in both undergraduate and graduate economics departments in the matched sample. Table 2 shows that growth occurred at all ranks except that of full professor. In fact, because there were more full professors in these departments in 1988 than in 1984 (718 compared with 672, for a net gain of 46), the number of women at that rank actually rose from 35 to 36 even though their proportion declined slightly. Nonetheless, this increase of one woman stands in sharp contrast to the increase of 45 men with the rank of full professor in these departments.

Table 3 provides information about the hiring, promotion, and tenure decisions of

⁴The matched sample contains 78 of the 159 undergraduate institutions that responded in 1988, 19 of the 38 institutions that award only Bachelor's and Master's degrees, and 45 of the 66 institutions that also award Ph.D.s. Although the matched sample includes only one-half of all institutions reporting in 1988, the characteristics for the entire group are remarkably similar to those for the sample analyzed here. The figures presented here are available on request for the entire 1988 sample.

TABLE 1—SELECTED DATA ON STUDENTS
IN ECONOMICS

	1984-85			1988-89		
	Total No.	No. Female	Percent Female	Total No.	No. Female	Percent Female
Recipients of Degrees in Economics^a						
Bachelor's	6,595	2,150	32.6	7,546	2,562	34.0
Master's	536	151	28.2	566	153	27.0
Ph.D.	304	46	15.1	381	80	21.0
Graduate Students in Economics^b						
Enrolled						
In Ph.D. Program	2,338	499	21.3	2,341	501	21.4
In MA Program	701	177	25.2	552	143	25.9
Receiving Aid						
In Ph.D. Program	1,648	358	21.7	1,784	386	21.6
In MA Program	229	78	34.1	177	55	31.1
Distribution of Employment for Ph.D. Recipients (in percent)						
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Education	44	56	49	53		
Government	8	11	8	20		
Private Sector	24	19	10	8		
Other	24	15	34	18		
Total	100	100	100	100		

^aFrom 78 institutions awarding only Bachelor's degrees, 19 awarding Bachelor's and Master's degrees, and 45 that also award Ph.D.s.

^bFull-time students attending the 45 institutions in the matched sample that award Ph.D.s.

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

	1984-85			1988-89		
	Total No.	No. Female	Percent Female	Total No.	No. Female	Percent Female
Undergraduate Institutions						
Full Prof.	105	15	14.3	130	16	12.3
Associate Prof.	107	12	11.2	129	17	13.2
Assistant Prof.	152	24	15.8	143	29	20.3
Instructor	47	8	17.0	24	8	33.3
Total	411	59	14.4	426	70	16.4
Graduate Institutions						
Full Prof.	567	20	3.5	588	20	3.4
Associate Prof.	270	15	5.6	230	21	9.1
Assistant Prof.	320	48	15.0	313	64	20.4
Instructor	28	3	10.7	18	2	11.1
Total	1,185	86	7.3	1,149	107	9.3

^aExcludes 19 institutions that award Bachelor's and Master's degrees, but not Ph.D.s.

the graduate departments in the matched sample. Women made up a smaller proportion of newly hired assistant professors, but a larger proportion of newly hired associate or full professors, in 1988 than in 1984. Although it may appear that there were substantial differences regarding promotion and tenure between the two years, small numbers of events are the actual explanation.

TABLE 3—CHANGES IN STATUS OF FULL-TIME FACULTY
AT PH.D.-GRANTING GRADUATE INSTITUTIONS

	1984-85			1988-89		
	Total No.	No. Female	Percent Female	Total No.	No. Female	Percent Female
Hired						
As Assistant Prof.	54	13	24.1	67	9	13.4
As Associate or Full Prof.	22	1	4.5	23	3	13.0
Promoted						
To Associate Prof.	23	2	8.7	23	2	8.7
To Full Prof.	19	1	5.3	18	0	0.0
Tenured						
At Associate Prof.	20	3	15.0	18	1	5.6
At Full Prof.	4	0	0.0	2	0	0.0

For example, the 5.3 percent of promotions to full professor in 1984 represented one woman, compared with none in 1988.

In summary, as female economists progress through their careers, they are advancing in rank and becoming tenured in greater numbers. A basic question remains, however. How fast should the proportion of associate and full professors who are women grow? The answer depends on the total number of positions at these levels, the rate of turnover caused by factors such as retirement, and the quality of particular male and female faculty members being considered for promotion. The CSWEP Board hopes to be able to shed some light on these questions in next year's Report.

The Committee's Recent Activities

The Committee's activities in 1989 continued to focus on helping women advance in the economics profession. To expand the number of entries in CSWEP's roster of female economists, chairs of economics departments were asked to provide questionnaires and membership applications to their female graduate students and faculty, as well as to any men they thought might want to join CSWEP.⁵ The chairs were also asked to send the same information to any recent graduates whose current addresses were

⁵CSWEP's roster contains information about characteristics such as current employer, educational background, fields of specialization, and number of publications.

available. The Board is extremely grateful for their cooperation which has resulted in large numbers of new entries in the roster and many new members. In addition, the Board has begun updating and expanding the roster using information from the new AEA directory.

To expand the number of employers using the roster to identify potential job candidates, the Board now routinely provides prospective employers with information about the contents of the roster and about the new computer-readable forms in which the data can be obtained. The employers contacted by CSWEP include all those placing announcements in *Job Openings for Economists* or the *CSWEP Newsletter*, as well as the chairs of economics departments.

Another major activity was organizing six sessions for the AEA's 1989 annual meeting—three on gender-related topics and three on theory and applications in industrial organization. For 1990, the nongender-related sessions will focus on science, technology, and productivity. The Board also continued for a second year its practice of sending each person asked by the President-elect to organize a session lists of experienced female economists who specialize in the same fields as the organizer. Preliminary results from the Board's study of participation in sessions at the past seven annual meetings indicate that these reminders were associated with greater representation of women.

Publishing three issues of the *CSWEP Newsletter* absorbed a considerable portion of the Board's resources. The *Newsletter* continued to provide information designed to help young economists succeed in the profession, including calls for papers and notification of sources for research funding. Articles covered topics such as an ex-editor's tips on how to write journal articles that will be accepted and the process for awarding grants used by the Economics Program of the National Science Foundation.

Finally, the Board thanks Joan Haworth, the Committee's Membership Secretary, and her staff, for their outstanding work updating the roster, preparing special mailings, and creating customized lists of female economists from the roster. Three Board members, whose terms expire this year, have also contributed a great deal to the Committee. Marjorie McElroy was the southern regional representative, responsible for organizing sessions, a business meeting, and a reception at each annual meeting of the Southern Economic Association during her term. In addition, she and Cecilia Conrad each co-edited an issue of the *Newsletter*. McElroy, Conrad, and Judith Lave all organized sessions for the AEA's annual meetings and reviewed papers from them for publication. The Board is also grateful to Dennis B. Melby for doing an excellent job in producing the *Newsletter*.

NANCY M. GORDON, *Chair*