

Women In Academia: What Can Be Done To Help Women Achieve Tenure?

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Abstract

Women are not tenured at the same rate they are receiving PhDs, and less likely to be tenured when compared to their male counterparts. Reasons women have difficulty achieving tenure include not discussing important information about an academic appointment with colleagues, working part time or as adjunct faculty, being involved in “pastoral or administrative” work, not having a realistic understanding of how important research is when untenured, and experiencing non academic issues. Interventions to alleviate this situation include departmental/campus policies before/during/after the woman is hired. Before being hired it is important to provide female faculty mentors to bright/capable women doctoral students and help them prepare for the academy by prioritizing scholarship over teaching and encouraging publications. During the hiring process it is useful to target women through advertising/recruiting at conferences, consider hiring current female doctoral students after completion of a post doctoral experience at another institution, and appointing women faculty as chair/members of search committees. After women are hired it is important to improve transparency/equitability/inclusivity of tenure guidelines, assist women create a plan of action related to tenure criteria and their own skills/abilities, provide formal/informal mentoring opportunities, improve the departmental/campus climate regarding female faculty and interaction with male colleagues, and adopt family friendly policies to better integrate family/work obligations by providing flexibility in when/where/how work is done, or offering job sharing or part time employment options.

Introduction

Achieving tenure is one of the most important transitions a person experiences if choosing an academic career. Considered a rite of passage, it reflects one’s professional standing and accomplishments, and if not achieved may be the reason a faculty member either leaves the academy entirely or seeks a position at another institution (Reybold, & Alamia, 2008). Tenure also often defines one’s future career trajectory as it reflects the academy’s recognition of the faculty member’s potential and contribution (Defillippi & Author, 1994).

Normally, academic performance toward tenure is based on a trinity of faculty roles and consequent contributions. Included in the expectations are an evaluation of research productivity including the quality and number of publications (scholarship); student ratings of teaching; and citizenship/service to the institution, or one’s community or discipline (Reybold & Alamia, 2008; Todd, Madill, Shaw, & Bown, 2008). However the procedure used to evaluate faculty accomplishments so one may achieve tenure tends to be quite rigid and bureaucratic (Stewart, Ornstein & Drakich, 2009), and the time frame within which the information needs to be gathered, which is typically six years, makes it difficult for many women to be successful. In fact, according to Stewart and colleagues (2009) women have historically and frequently been excluded from the academy and especially the higher professorial ranks. In addition, they are often underrepresented in faculty considered for tenure and less likely to be tenured when

compared to their male counterparts even though they receive PhDs at the same rate as males (Harris, 2009; West & Curtis, 2006; Wolfinger, Mason, & Goulden, 2009).

Although there have been improvements in this situation, and the proportion of full-time female faculty members in the United States almost doubled from 1984 to 2008, women continue to leave the academic pipeline, especially from the tenure track (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008). In addition, according to the American Association of University Professors (2010), when looking at women nationally, 31% hold non-tenure-track positions, 26% are on the tenure track, and 43% have tenure. Compared to male faculty, a much higher percentage of men hold tenure, and there are much fewer men on the non-tenure-track than women. Indeed, women in academia have challenges related to achieving tenure their male counterparts do not have. Why is this? What can we do to alleviate the situation? The following paragraphs will initially discuss why women have challenges and difficulties achieving tenure and then offer suggestions to alleviate the situation.

The situation

There are several reasons women have difficulty achieving tenure. These include not discussing important information about an academic appointment with colleagues, working part time or as adjunct faculty, being involved in “pastoral or administrative” work, not having a realistic understanding of how important research is when untenured, and experiencing non academic issues that make it difficult to meet tenure criteria. A discussion of each follows.

One reason women may have difficulty achieving tenure is that they may not discuss important information with their colleagues regarding research and the tenure process, often because they feel marginalized or less included professionally (National Research Council (NRC), 2009; Price, et al., 2009; Todd et al., 2008). Female faculty may feel marginalized because they are likely to experience sexual harassment and gender discrimination (Todd et al., 2008). In fact, when surveyed, significantly more women than men holding academic appointments felt they experienced gender discrimination and sexual harassment (Carr, et al., 2000). Another reason female faculty may not discuss important information with male colleagues relative to tenure, is that the patriarchal system of academia makes females feel less included professionally and not part of the academic network. Therefore, they feel isolated or excluded from sources of information that can provide them with help in learning about the tenure process (Aluko, 2009; Todd et al., 2008). They also may not even be aware of the tenure criteria (Todd, et al., 2008) or believe the criteria to be vague and difficult to understand (Philipsen, 2008). If the guidelines for achieving tenure are seen as intangible, unclear, ambiguous, or diffuse (Stewart, et al., 2009), the political undertones of a particular department may also make it difficult for women to seek the information from colleagues related to what is needed to successfully achieve tenure.

A second reason women may not achieve tenure at the same rate as their male counterparts is that many work as part time or as adjunct faculty (Harris, 2009; Langan & Morton, 2009; Wolfinger, et al., 2009). As a result, they may have higher teaching loads and

fewer opportunities for research funding or facilities to support their teaching or research projects when compared to male colleagues. These women may also be seen as not having a strong commitment to the academy or to a research trajectory since they do not hold a full time faculty appointment. Consequently, they may be viewed as temporary workers by the wider campus or department and have less opportunity for travel to not only share their research with other professionals but also to network with colleagues living farther away. However, many women purposively choose to work part time or as adjuncts early in their careers (Report of the ASHP task force on Pharmacy's changing demographics, 2007) and while their children are young which may delay or prevent their chance of achieving tenure later in their careers.

A third reason women may have difficulty achieving tenure is that it is more common for women in academia to be involved to a greater extent in pastoral or administrative work than their male counterparts. This pastoral or administrative work includes advising students, teaching courses, especially at the undergraduate level, or serving on departmental or campus committees. These assignments add responsibilities and commitments to what is normally expected for a faculty position yet may not count as much as scholarship towards tenure (Barata, Hunjan, & Legget, 2005; Sakamoto, McPhail, Anastas, & Colarossi, 2008; Todd, et al., 2009). As a consequence, some women may not believe they will be able to meet the tenure criteria and therefore withdraw their candidacy from consideration before actually being evaluated.

A fourth reason women may have difficulty achieving tenure is because male academics, when compared to female academics seem to have a more realistic understanding of how important scholarship is when being evaluated for tenure. Consequently, they often devote additional time and effort in the evenings and on weekends to their research (Todd et al., 2009). On the other hand, female faculty tends to work in the evenings and on weekends because of teaching responsibilities, especially if they value teaching over research. In addition, if men have greater access to equipment needed for their research and better clerical support for their research and teaching needs, (NRC, 2009), women may be less motivated to even seek tenure (Land & Morton, 2009). These women may also lack adequate mentors who can assist them in understanding the expectations and requirements of an academic appointment, especially those related to scholarship (Cruz, Johnson, & Thomas, 2009; Kezar & Lester, 2009). However, if women believe they and their accomplishments including research will be held to a higher standard when seeking tenure than their male counterparts, even if not true (Sakamoto, et al., 2008), they may then choose not to be evaluated.

Finally, women in academia may experience non academic issues including family obligations involving children and/or a spouse. These non academic issues often make it difficult to meet tenure criteria and interfere with attending conferences, writing, publishing, completing research projects, obtaining funding, and traveling for work related opportunities within the pre tenure years (Aluko, 2009; Ceci & Williams, 2010; Harris, 2009; Mason & Golden, 2004; NRC, 2009; Price, et al., 2009; Sakamoto, et al., 2008; Stewart, et al., 2009; Todd et al., 2008). Indeed, the family like the academy has been termed a "greedy" institution (Currie, Harris, & Theile, 2000) which makes excessive demands on women and may cause internal conflicts as women

with children and/or a spouse are pulled in different directions because of these competing demands (Harris, 2009). Consequently, those who seek to balance the demands of both institutions commonly experience loyalty conflicts between the family and the academy and between motherhood and a profession.

Frequently these non academic issues affect women disproportionately when compared to men, and campus family leave policies often do not entirely remunerate women for their efforts in this area (Stewart, et al., 2009). This may be because in many societies, women are typically socialized to identify with familial roles and expected to be nurturing, and compliant (Caldwell, Liu, Fedor, & Herold, 2009). Most workplace contexts including academia reinforce these traditional gender roles and women are then often seen as subservient and passive (Aluko, 2009; Harris, 2009; Hewlett & Luce, 2005; Langan & Morton, 2009). Therefore, they may not seek to have the campus family leave policies changed so they are more supportive of these efforts. On the other hand, men are typically socialized to adopt more dominant and aggressive roles and frequently demonstrate these behaviors in their employment/work roles (Caldwell, et al., 2009; Harris, 2009; Hewlett & Luce, 2005; Langan & Morton, 2009), and may not see a need to have campus family policies changed, especially if not married to a female academic.

In addition, women academicians spend more time on family responsibilities than male academicians, especially if they have young children or elderly parents; as a result, these responsibilities interfere with a woman's ability to assume research and teaching responsibilities needed for tenure (Rogers & Fink, 2009; Wolfinger, Mason, & Goulden, 2009). When these women then assume an academic career, their responsibilities at home often do not change from when they did not have an academic appointment; they still maintain primary responsibility for child care and house hold chores and the time required to spend on work and family responsibilities often conflicts. This is true even though these women make changes in their lives by hiring domestic help, scheduling family related appointments around teaching and scholarship time tables, and juggling family and work responsibilities so they do not draw attention to the women (Aluko, 2009). In fact, Aluko (2009) discovered the work and family situations/responsibilities were major problems throughout a woman's academic career and there was little campus support to help her cope with the situation.

On the other hand, there are some women with family obligations who are granted tenure. However, these are women who postpone/forgo child bearing (Harris, 2009; Sakamoto, et al., 2008) until they have achieved tenure or, have fewer children, or then purposively seek part time employment within the academy. Nonetheless, these choices may result in colleagues viewing them as not committed to the academy since they may be of a lower or different priority when compared to the choices of their male colleagues (Harris, 2009).

Another non academic issue related to family obligations, is that some women in the academy, if married to another academic, may relinquish their own careers to facilitate the career of their spouse. This is especially true if the spouse's career takes precedence over the woman's career (Young & Holley, 2005; Wolfinger, et al., 2009), and means she may move from one

institution to another institution at the expense of her career. Indeed, this situation would make it less likely for her to achieve tenure before another geographic move occurs.

The solution

The following paragraphs offer three categories of suggestions for solutions that, if implemented, may help women achieve tenure at a higher rate than what is currently the case. The suggestions include what can be done before the woman is hired as an assistant professor, what can be done when looking for female candidates to fill a faculty position, and then what can be done after the woman is hired. Some of these suggestions are local and relate directly to the department or unit and others are more global and related to the wider campus/university.

Before the woman is hired

Several interventions can be adopted before the woman is hired into a faculty position. These suggestions are directly related to experiences the woman has while a graduate student.

First, it would be important to mentor female graduate students. One kind of mentoring could focus on the requirements of a career in academia through both formal and informal discussions. These discussions could occur as faculty and students interact in courses or on research projects (Langan & Morton, 2009). This mentoring is especially important because many female graduate students do not feel they are as much a part of an academic network as male graduate students and therefore not privy to the same information as their male counterparts (Herzig, 2004). Another type of mentoring could occur by using female faculty as chairs or members of dissertation committees (Harris, 2009). This kind of mentoring would allow female graduate students to see the possibilities of they themselves being involved in doctoral students' research activities in the future, and encourage them to consider and perhaps pursue an academic appointment.

Another way to help female graduate students learn about an academic appointment would be to allow them to act as teaching assistants for faculty or independently teach a course or courses offered by the unit or department (Langan & Morton, 2009). Such experiences would let them feel they are an important and contributing member of an academic community and foster their connections to students and other faculty (Todd, et al., 2008). It would also provide them with an experience in one of the three (teaching, scholarship, citizenship) faculty roles evaluated when seeking tenure. However, for this option to succeed, it would be important to provide assistance, mentoring, and support for the graduate student so the experience is positive, any questions that arise can be answered, and any problems that come up handled.

A third suggestion related to graduate students would be to assist female students successfully navigate their graduate education so they are prepared for an academic career by prioritizing and emphasizing scholarship (Langan & Morton, 2009). Scholarship could be facilitated by encouraging publications in refereed and top tier journals that demonstrate the student's expertise in one or more substantive areas popular within the discipline (Langan & Morton, 2009). It would also be important to allow the student to present papers at professional

conferences, which helps establish the female graduate student's scholarly reputation and allows her to cultivate networks. In addition, it would be useful to help the student obtain post doctoral fellowships or scholarships and receive research grants that could offer a number of opportunities after finishing graduate school. Finally, it would be important to encourage the student to integrate her scholarship into content she is asked to teach other students. Indeed, such experiences would provide better preparation to compete for and succeed in an academic appointment (Langan & Morton, 2009) and may be another way to help women achieve tenure.

When a faculty position becomes available

There are also at least three interventions that can be implemented when a faculty position becomes available. First, it would be important to consider hiring current doctoral students after they graduate and have completed a post doctoral experience at another institution (Sakamoto, et al., 2008). This is typically not common practice, but it may work for some institutions and/or potential women faculty. This might also be a solution if it is difficult to recruit female faculty into a particular department or university, and the department/university is interested in having the former doctoral student become a faculty member.

A second intervention would be to specifically target women graduate students from other institutions through advertizing or recruiting at professional conferences (NRC, 2009). This option would allow the unit/department and university to broaden the search for qualified female faculty who may provide needed expertise to the department and let the wider academic community learn of the university's interest in and commitment to increasing the number of female faculty on its campus. It would be important to also then bring qualified female candidates to campus so they can learn of the opportunities available to them if hired and meet women currently on the faculty.

Lastly, it might be useful if the chair and/or members of the faculty search committee were female (NRC, 2009). This allows the female candidate for a faculty position to see firsthand how the campus integrates women into leadership positions, and also may make her feel more comfortable during the interview process. In addition, female candidates may be more comfortable asking female rather than male faculty on a search committee about opportunities provided on the campus for women, and what assistance the department and campus provides to help and support new female faculty as they work toward achieving tenure.

After the female faculty member is hired

Finally, there are measures that can be taken after a female is hired into a faculty position that may assist her achieve tenure. These measures can be implemented at the wider campus and department levels and although the focus is on female faculty members, can be implemented for female as well as male faculty members who are new to the institution.

Wider campus level. First, at the wider campus level, it would be important to evaluate and then assign teaching loads that are comparable or equitable across genders for faculty who are early in their career (Todd et al., 2009). Most likely this involves a decreased teaching

assignment during the first few years of employment so more time can be devoted to scholarly activities including publishing and presenting at professional meetings. In fact, many campuses adopt this measure in order to help and protect new faculty early in their careers so they successfully achieve tenure within the allotted time frame.

Second, it would be important to provide and improve transparency, equitability and inclusivity on tenure guidelines especially for those who are just beginning an academic career (Price, et al., 2009; Philipsen, 2008). This may mean holding “town” meetings or retreats with institutional leaders so new faculty might learn about the university tenure policies and expectations. Time spent early in one’s career in explaining tenure policies would also provide new faculty with opportunities to discuss issues, ask for clarification where there are concerns, and have their questions answered. It would also help eliminate beliefs that tenure policies were vague and men and women held to different standards during the evaluation process.

A third suggestion is to clearly communicate tenure criteria changes as well as provide advance notice of upcoming tenure policy changes that might affect the faculty member. This demonstrates respect for individuals and allows them to use that information in preparing the academic file that is evaluated when seeking tenure (Caldwell, et al., 2009). It may also help them revise or adjust scholarly plans/projects and the tenure time line as needed so they are better able to meet the new criteria.

Fourth, reevaluation of new faculty development programs which discuss tenure guidelines and assist faculty create a plan of action related to their own skills and abilities (Reybold & Alamia, 2008) may be needed. Such programs should be broad, encompassing, individual-centered, and provide information regarding what is needed for one to be a successful academic. It may also be useful for those attending the new faculty development programs to assess individual abilities, needs and situations in relation to the importance each has to oneself and an academic appointment. Such an assessment may encourage thinking about one’s career over time so female faculty is made aware of choices needing to be made regarding achieving tenure in the future, and how career and family responsibilities may be successfully combined so tenure is granted in the future (Reybold & Alamia, 2008). Such programs should also schedule meetings several times during the academic year to discuss tenure criteria and the new faculty member’s progression toward meeting those criteria (Kezar & Lester, 2009).

A fifth suggested intervention would be for the wider campus to consider allowing women to “stay in the game” as adjunct or part time permanent faculty, with the possibility of tenure or a longer term contract (Ceci & Williams, 2010). This would require major changes at many institutions since currently, most adjunct or part time positions are typically on a semester by semester contract. However, if adopted, part time or adjunct female faculty would have some level of protection or job stability and the arrangement could act as an incentive and motivator so the faculty would be more committed to the department and campus. This kind of position might be especially attractive to women with children or to women who do not have geographic mobility. The lower pay associated with such positions (if there were stability or it counted toward tenure) may also be acceptable as many women faculty members are not the primary

family breadwinner (Wolfinger, et al., 2009). In addition, these changes in part time or adjunct positions may make it easier for the woman to be tenured when she returns to full time employment if tenure were not already offered to adjunct or part time faculty. Such arrangements could help eliminate the belief by many that part time/adjunct faculty are second class citizens (Sakamoto, et al, 2008; Wolfinger, et al., 2009), and not committed to the academy.

Indeed, there are benefits to the campus and the woman if she were allowed to stay in the game as part time or adjunct faculty. One benefit to the campus is that committed and valuable faculty would be retained, resulting in less turn over and expense associated with recruiting and orienting new faculty to the academy. One benefit to the female faculty is that it would provide a reward system and promote commitment to the institution and motivation to work hard in support of the institution.

A sixth wider campus measure to help female faculty achieve tenure would be an extended probationary period or at least the opportunity to stop the tenure clock (Harris, 2000; Philipsen, 2008) or provide pre-tenure leaves (Ceci & Williams, 2010). This would allow the woman faculty member who works full time and has young children to have more time beyond the typical six years before she is evaluated for tenure (Harris 2009). One variation of extending the probationary period might be to offer a half time tenure position where the expectations would be to accomplish half of what a full time faculty member is expected to accomplish within the typical six year time period. Another variation would be to allow twice as much time (for example 11 – 12 years) to demonstrate accomplishments before the faculty member is evaluated for tenure (Ceci & Williams, 2010).

There are benefits to these measures. If an extended probationary period were possible or if the tenure clock were stopped temporarily, it would allow the woman to improve her teaching, work on a research trajectory, and also make it easier for her to move into a full time faculty position if she chooses to enter full time academia later. Such measures also provide professional contacts/socialization experiences and consequently increase productivity and loyalty over time. Similarly, it might be prudent to firm up tenure expectations/requirements so they are based on outcomes rather than on time served (Philipsen, 2008). In such a situation, however, it would be important for women faculty to know early on what outcomes would be needed to achieve tenure within a particular time frame and then have the opportunity to make choices of how to make the outcome expectations work for them (Philipsen, 2008). Some women faculty may also be able to move between full and part time positions as necessary according to particular situations.

A seventh suggestion to help women faculty achieve tenure after being hired relates to family friendly policies that better integrate family and work obligations (Aluko, 2008; Harris, 2009; Todd, et al., 2008). There are several options available related to family friendly policies that can help women successfully navigate an academic appointment. One family friendly policy involves providing child and infant care for women faculty on the tenure track. (Aluko, 2008; Sakamoto, et al., 2008). Flexibility not only in when, where, and how work is done (Harris, 2009; Hewlett & Luce, 2005; Sakamoto, et al., 2008), according to one's career trajectory is another family friendly policy. This may mean an 8 – 5 pm Monday through Friday schedule in a

faculty office would not work as well as being able to work from home or in the evenings. On the other hand, if the female faculty member needed to take time off for family or personal obligations, but still remain connected to the academy, flexibility would allow the faculty position to be maintained and the faculty member not marginalized when able to come back to work on a more regular schedule (Hewlett & Luce, 2005).

Another family friendly option may be to examine committee work and teaching responsibilities. This may mean modifications which allow female faculty to remain active and contributing members of the academy while also relieving them of some teaching and service obligations (Aluko, 2009). This is especially important during the early years of an academic career.

However, any family friendly policy may involve reconsidering a pipe line versus life course perspective (Stewart, et al., 2009; Todd, et al., 2008). The pipeline trajectory is a lock step sequence of events academics must pass through successfully within an allotted time frame to rise to the top of the profession; non participation at any stage means one needs to drop out and then begin at the beginning if choosing to reenter the pipeline (Kulis, Sicotte, & Collins, 2002; van Anders, 2004). The life course perspective on the other hand, considers how various responsibilities (work/family) over one's life course vary and therefore require adjustment and change according to the situations. This is more in line with women's academic careers; especially if they have children and move between full and part time employment depending on family needs/situations (Wolfinger, et al., 2009).

A final campus wide intervention might be to offer job sharing options (Armenti, 2004; Ceci & Williams, 2010; Harris, 2009; Rogers & Fink, 2009; Sakomoto, et al., 2008). This is a flexible alternative arrangement whereby employees share work responsibilities. For example, job sharing, which emerged in the 1970s, would allow two part time women faculty with the same academic appointment/responsibilities to arrange their schedules to cover the duties of one full time appointment. Although in this arrangement some faculty may work more than 50% time that does not always need to be the case, depending on the situation and responsibilities or schedules outside the academy (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2004).

Job sharing opportunities would not only benefit the entire campus, but also the employee. Benefits to the academy include retaining experienced faculty, completion of the "work", less turnover and costs associated with turnover, less absenteeism, greater loyalty to the campus, and better productivity. Benefits to the female faculty member include balancing work and family obligations, maintaining knowledge/skills and involvement in academia, being more committed to the academy, and having more opportunity for advancement and greater job satisfaction (Rogers & Finks, 2009). For this to work however, there needs to be campus wide support and frequent communication among all parties (the two women, the faculty supervisor or department head) so conflicts are resolved early and clear goals and responsibilities are outlined. In addition, the women participating in job sharing need to be committed to making the arrangement work, put forth the effort to make it work, and be team players and interested in both women succeeding rather than only one woman succeeding (Hirschman, 2005).

Department level. There are also interventions that can be implemented at the department level related to mentoring, having a supportive department chair, and the climate of the department. Each is discussed in the following paragraphs.

First, mentoring which is commonly provided at the department rather than at the campus level is extremely important for female faculty. However, it is important in any mentoring model that the mentor focuses on supporting the personal and professional development of the protégé by sharing experiences, expertise, and influence (Hewlett & Luce, 2005; Price, et al., 2009; Zellers, Howard, & Barcic, 2008). In addition, the mentoring should be formal rather than informal and can involve traditional one on one mentoring following the dyadic model of mentor and protégé (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Sakamoto, et al., 2008), or provide peer mentoring for groups of women (Driscoll, et al., 2009).

If offering one on one mentoring using the mentor protégé model, it would be important for the mentor and protégé to periodically discuss tenure requirements; the protégé's progress in achieving tenure; and for the mentor to offer support and brainstorming sessions related to what might work best for a particular new faculty member. However there is a danger that the one-on-one model may unintentionally promote a hierarchical power relationship between mentor and protégé when the mentor represents the dominant paradigm and the protégé is from a non dominant group (McCormick & West, 2006). Therefore, if one-on-one mentoring is used, careful selection and matching of the mentor and protégé becomes important so feelings of self doubt, devaluation, and loneliness on the part of the protégé do not occur (Driscoll et al., 2009).

A second mentoring model is to provide facilitated peer mentoring (Driscoll, et al., 2009; Hewlett & Luce, 2005; Mullen 2005). Here, one or more senior faculty women mentor a group of protégé's (other women) rather than using the one-on-one model. This type of mentoring is not likely to reproduce or reinforce hierarchical power relationships sometimes seen in the one-on-one model because facilitated peer mentoring encompasses an equal balance of power that values honest expression of issues and concerns, and understands the importance of integrating home/family and academic responsibilities (Driscoll, et al., 2009). In this type of group mentoring, each member of the group functions as both a mentor and protégé to other members, and overtime, protégés become mentors to newer female faculty. However, if the peer mentoring model is adopted, it would be important to set timelines for long and short term goals related to achieving tenure. For example, writing candidate statements that could be reviewed by the group, submitting a manuscript for review and completing an abstract for consideration as a presentation or poster at a professional conference. If the manuscript(s) and abstract(s) could be reviewed by the group prior to submission, group members would need to meet frequently and submit those documents to the peer mentoring group prior to meetings.

Both types of mentoring are helpful interventions for new female faculty. However, no matter the type of mentoring provided, it would be important to continue the mentoring until the protégé was tenured rather than being discontinued after only one year.

Another departmental intervention would be the presence of a supportive department chair who works with female faculty to understand their career goals, acts as an advocate by making sure new female faculty have the opportunity to attend professional meetings so they can share results of their scholarly projects and network with colleagues, and allows/encourages opportunities for women faculty to participate in professional development activities which would help them achieve tenure. Changing working conditions and removing obstacles so they are more family friendly if the female faculty has family obligations, (Kezar & Lester, 2009) may also be useful. Specifically, this may mean being flexible as to when the female faculty needs to be available to students and colleagues, and where she completes her responsibilities.

A third departmental intervention would be to improve the climate of the department if necessary so interactions between faculties are positive, nurturing and supportive. This is especially critical because female faculty is less likely than male counterparts to discuss professional topics including tenure requirements, salary, benefits, and research (NRC, 2009). Eliminating stigmas often accompanying flexible work schedules/careers if they are in place, and not penalizing faculty for taking advantage of flexible work schedules, would also be important. In addition, focusing more on departmental goals being met in a timely fashion rather than requiring faculty be available during 8 – 5 pm Monday through Friday, would be another way to improve the departmental environment. Lastly, if telecommuting were seen as a viable step to maintaining a respected and acceptable faculty position, especially for those needing to be home when children are young, the departmental climate needs to support that option. However, it would always be essential that any assignments or responsibilities were completed no matter where the work occurred (Hewlitt & Luce, 2005).

Conclusion

Indeed, there are a number of highly qualified women faculty members who want and need to maintain active involvement in the academy so they are able to achieve tenure. It is true there are challenges in creating the circumstances that will allow women to achieve tenure, but the academy needs to consider implementing policies that reflect and support rather than punish those women faculty who choose an alternative academic path from many of their male counterparts. The suggestions offered here which involve measures that can be taken while the female is a graduate student, when a faculty position becomes available, and after the woman is hired may be a first step in changing the situation, and increasing the number of women in academia who are tenured.

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