

Committee on the Status of Women
Annual Report 2009-2010

Committee Members:

Amy Herring (Biostatistics)
Donna LeFebvre (Political Science)
Susan Parish (Social Work)
Ross Simpson (Medical School)
James Thompson (English)
John Thorp (Medical School)
Anne Whisenant (Faculty Governance, ex officio)

Charge: “The committee addresses ongoing concerns of women faculty members, identifies obstacles to achievement and maintenance of equality in the representation and status of women on the faculty, and proposes steps for overcoming these obstacles” (Faculty Code, § 4-22).

Report of Activities: The Committee on the Status of Women focused primarily on faculty salaries, as other offices and groups, such as the Carolina Women’s Center, address more generalized gender issues on campus. As was reported last year, we requested information from the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment that would allow replication of the prior salary equity study conducted when Dr. Pisano chaired the Committee on the Status of Women. The Committee requested additional information across multiple years to enable salary comparisons at points of relative career equality (e.g., initial hiring, promotion to associate, promotion to full). We also offered to conduct the study if supplied with deidentified data.

After a significant delay, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment supplied basic summary statistics on November 13, 2009. While an enormous volume of information was supplied, individual-level data was not provided, and, the summary data were at best misleading and at worst inflammatory. For example, the average salary in Fall 2008 for male full professors (12 mos) with 8+ years of experience in public health was \$191,286 compared to \$163,627 for female full professors. For new full professors (0-5 years’ experience), the average for males was \$222,900 compared to \$171,282 for females. While it is quite possible that these discrepancies could be explained by additional variables (that were requested, but not provided) such as precise years in rank at UNC, years since graduation, named professorships, or administrative roles held, we are unable to determine based on the information provided whether such apparent discrepancies could be legally explained, or whether they represent a real gender disparity.

The Committee has proposed, and continues to propose, that a comprehensive salary survey be conducted each year to assess equity issues with relation to gender. While racial equality is not this Committee’s domain, we also suggest this survey be fully comprehensive and at the same time address equity issues with respect to race (with hopefully more detail than the prior report, which lumped all non-whites in the same racial group). The Committee has offered to help automate this process so that the survey could more easily be conducted annually. (This type of survey is currently being prepared by Dr. Pisano and the School of Medicine in an independent effort.) In addition, we suggest a new longitudinal study to track whether the university is making strides over time to address any disparities. We also suggest that the university should make a concerted effort to record the value of start-up packages offered to incoming faculty members in order to ensure all faculty members are treated fairly.

The Committee has offered to help with design and analysis of these salary studies (to address issues such as small representation of minorities within specific departments) but has not had success in moving this forward.