

Eye Opener Wage Gap by Charna Albert

Even in 2006, the fabled “glass ceiling,” which has kept women professionals below the level of their male counterparts in status and salary, is not a fable. The wage gap, a difference in the amount women make compared to men who have the same jobs, persists. Today, women make on average 77 cents to every dollar men make, regardless of what kind of work they do.

According to a survey done in 2004 by the National Association for Female Executives, women earned an average of 10,000 dollars less than men who had the same job. The wage gap is even higher among highly educated women.

In addition to this, only around half of all retired women with professional degrees receive a pension, which gives them about \$5,600 a year. Retired men with professional degrees tend to receive \$10,340 annually.

In the U.S, two federal laws protect workers from wage discrimination. One is the *Equal Pay Act of 1963*, which forbids employers from offering women less money than men for the same jobs. The other is part of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* which prohibits employers from wage discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, or national origin. Although these laws have closed the wage gap significantly, unjustness remains.

Though the problem is a national one, it can be felt close at home. The *University Times* of Pitt ran an article on November 9th, 2006 stating that women faculty at Pitt earn on average around 74.8 % of what the male faculty earn. This is around the national average for institutions of higher learning. Gender gaps also exist in regards to promotions and tenure. This inequity is damaging to the integrity of the institutions. Also, as a study done by the Association of American University Professors titled *Faculty Gender Equity Indicators 2006* states “...Colleges and universities are not taking advantage of the widest talent pool when they discriminate on the basis of gender in hiring or promoting faculty.”

According to this same study, in 2004, women earned more than half of all graduate degrees, 59% of master’s degrees, 49% of first professional degrees, and 48% of doctorates. In addition, 53% of PhDs granted to U.S. citizens in 2004 were obtained by women. Yet, only 25.8% of tenured faculty at universities are women. Women faculty are also often paid lower salaries when first hired than men who have the same job. This is not only unjust to the women and degrading to the institutions, but discourages women from pursuing careers in research and higher education.

In Pitt, the percent of women who hold senior and tenured positions is slightly lower than the national average. In addition, women full professors earn on average 87.9% of what male faculty earn - compared to 91.5% nationally. If our country and its institutions of higher learning want to end the inequities and take advantage of the talents and success women have to offer, we must work to end the stubbornly persistent wage and status gap.