On Campus

Report Addresses Gender and Race Disparities Among Faculty

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Maya Tolstoy, interim executive vice president and dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences

A two-year study on the status of women and underrepresented minority faculty at Columbia — one of the most thorough examinations of gender and racial equity ever undertaken by an institution of higher education — has resulted in a set of proposals for closing salary gaps, spurring academic advancement, and improving the overall work environment.

The 145-page report, drafted by the Policy and Planning Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, was released in October.

Among the report's findings is that Columbia has a lack of diversity in senior leadership of academic departments and centers; insufficient transparency about how important decisions are made; and unclear policies and decision-making processes. It also found evidence of disparities in workload and salary for women and underrepresented minorities, and a persistent problem of harassment and discrimination.

Some of these issues were addressed even before the report was finalized, but others "will require concerted and dedicated efforts over time," says Maya Tolstoy, interim executive vice president and dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, who oversaw the writing of the report. The recommendations range from tangible changes, such as immediately correcting salary inequities, to promoting broader cultural shifts.

President Lee C. Bollinger, in a letter to the Columbia community accompanying the report, wrote that he is "deeply grateful to the Arts and Sciences faculty for engaging in this careful self-examination, for identifying where we are falling short, and for pointing out where we must direct our efforts as a University."

Adds Tolstoy: "One of the things that's important about this report is that this is not merely a Columbia problem: it's an academic problem at many universities. I hope this will help change the conversation in higher education."



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