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College science depts. slow to hire female professors  
Few serve on faculty despite Title IX's discrimination ban.

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WASHINGTON ? A surprise awaited Susan Masten, Ph.D, when she walked into her first faculty meeting in Room 3546 of the engineering **college** at Michigan State University 14 years ago. Rather than elated, she felt alone.

It would have been the same then ? and now ? at almost any science department in any of the top 50 universities in America, according to a study released Wednesday.

Thirty years after the federal government banned gender discrimination in all academic programs that receive federal aid, the study found that science and engineering faculties across America remain overwhelmingly white and male.

While there is little overt discrimination, the study said that the cycle of male dominance tends to perpetuate itself.

"Women are less likely to go into and remain in science and engineering when they lack mentors and role models," it said.

The study, conducted between 2000 and 2004 and funded by the Guggenheim and Ford foundations, found that the percentage of women among full professors in those disciplines ranges from 3 percent to 15 percent.

Minority representation in those departments is even lower. For example, at Michigan Technological University in Houghton, there are nine full faculty members in the civil engineering department ? none is black, **female**, Hispanic, Asian or Native American Indian. There are 11 associate professors on staff, one of them a woman three assistant **female** professors and eight white male assistant professors.

The University of Michigan's chemistry department has 27 full professors, including one woman, one black and one Asian-American.

Because some of the most visible gains for **college** women have come through sports, many forget that the famed Title IX of the nation's education code also applies to academics, said Jocelyn Samuels, vice president for education and deployment at the National Women's Law Center in Washington, D.C. Samuels notes that because Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 also bars sex discrimination by employers with more than 15 workers, the law applies to universities whether or not they receive federal funding.

"One of the things this report does is systematically evaluate the extent to which the pattern (of underrepresentation) exists across the disciplines in the top research universities in the field," Samuels said.

Samuels said government agencies should do a better and more concentrated job of enforcing civil rights laws in academia, and that universities should do a better job of self-evaluation.

### Feeling of isolation

Recalls Masten, associate chairwoman of the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at MSU: "When I walked into my first departmental faculty meeting and realized I was the only woman there ? the secretaries brought in the coffee and then they left ? it was just me and 25 faculty members. And that's when I felt alone.

"It was intimidating actually," remembers Masten, still the only woman in MSU's civil and environmental engineering department. "It's not that they meant to be intimidating, but they were. They were wonderfully supportive. I don't think I would have stayed here if they weren't supportive, but it was intimidating. I think it was the first time I really realized what an African-American or Hispanic or any other minority might feel in a room full of white men."

For Billy Joe Evans, professor emeritus in chemistry at the University of Michigan, Masten's situation is distressingly familiar. "I believe I am the only tenure-track African-American who has ever been on the Michigan chemistry faculty,"

said Evans, who taught at the university for 33 years. "In all of those years we never considered, seriously, hiring an African-American," he said. "Not only has there not been any hiring, there has not even been an attempt. ... In the last 20 years, about 400 degrees (Ph.Ds) in chemistry were generated (by African-Americans) and not one was hired."

Dr. Donna Nelson, a professor of chemistry at the University of Oklahoma and co-author of the women in science report, found the statistics shocking.

"We found zero black assistant professors in chemistry. The most junior person (an associate professor) had been hired 10 years before in the top chemistry department. It had been 10 years since they had hired an assistant. At the same time, Ph.D attainment by black students had been increasing. And they could not say that there were not black people available, because if you could hire black people from 10 years ago when Ph.D attainment was low, why can't you hire one now when the numbers are increasing?"

Evans said that being "the only one" was never a problem. "What was difficult was however good one's ideas may have been, they rarely got a fair hearing, and for me that was not so bad because I had an existence outside of the department and my opinions were respected on the national level even if they weren't in the department."

#### Promotions are slow

Many universities have long acknowledged that they've been slow in promoting women. In 1996, a University of Michigan internal study found that women were significantly underrepresented in executive ranks and faculty, particularly with tenured professors. At that point, women held just 12 percent of full professorships and the university had, according to then-President James Duderstadt, "a big problem at high levels and on tenure track."

The lack of **female** faculty, critics say, undermines efforts to attract girls to science and engineering, and particularly into the classroom on the **college** level ? largely due to a lack of role models.

According to the report, even in disciplines where women outnumber men earning Ph.Ds, the percentage of assistant professors who are white men is greater than women. For example, in the biological sciences, 44.7 percent of the Ph.Ds between 1993 and 2002 were awarded to women while in 2002, they accounted for only 30.2 percent of the assistant professors.

"I go to school where it's one **female** to every eight or six guys," said Suzanne Kayser, 20, a junior majoring in mechanical engineering with an emphasis in biomedical engineering at Kettering University in Flint. "I've been in classrooms where I have been the only **female** student or one of very few. In some of my classes last year, I was the only one or maybe one of three or five.

"And the professor is almost always a man," Kayser said.

Efforts now are under way across the nation to encourage women and young girls to take up scientific studies, in recognition that part of the problem is a traditional cultural bias favoring men in those disciplines.

"I think there were times when it would have helped me to have more **female** mentors," said Nelson, who co-authored the report with Diana C. Rogers, also of the University of Oklahoma. "I think that every **female** and minority experiences some problems along the way, but as most have, we've learned to cope at that level and as long as we can handle it and walk on, it's no big deal."

#### Caption:

Suzanne Kayser, 20, is a junior majoring in mechanical engineering with an emphasis in biomedical engineering at Kettering University in Flint. She has often been the only woman in her class.

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