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Colleges fail at hiring female science profs

More women are getting doctorates in fields such as biology, but they aren't landing on the faculty.

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Although a growing number of women are earning doctorates in science and engineering at the country's top research institutions, they are poorly represented in the faculty ranks, according to a national survey released Thursday.

The percentages of women are lowest in tenure and tenure-track positions, the survey found, but even in disciplines where women outnumber men earning doctorates, such as in the biological sciences, women still were underrepresented significantly as faculty.

The findings were part of a national survey produced by Donna J. Nelson, a chemistry professor at the University of Oklahoma. Statistics were collected from several disciplines at the country's 50 universities that spend the most research money.

Universities sent Nelson data from fiscal 2002 to 2004 in 14 disciplines of science and engineering.

"In some disciplines, it is likely that a woman can get a bachelor of science without being taught by a **female** professor in that discipline," Nelson wrote. "It is also possible for a woman to get a Ph.D. in science or engineering without having access to a woman faculty member in her field."

Among the survey's findings was that the percentage of women among full professors ranged from 3 percent to 15 percent. In all but one discipline studied, the highest percentage of **female** faculty is at the assistant professor level.

Minority women were even more underrepresented, the study noted. There were no African American, Hispanic or Native American tenured or tenure-track women faculty members in computer science departments at the top 50 research universities.

Texas A&M University and the University of Texas at Austin - the only two Texas research institutions included in the survey - had varying levels of **female** faculty members across the science and engineering disciplines.

In chemistry departments, for example, five of 44 faculty members at A&M were women. At UT, only two of 47 were women.

While it didn't offer explanations for the imbalance, the survey raised concerns that universities lacked parity among role models and mentors.

"When **female** professors are not hired, treated fairly and retained, **female** students perceive that they will be treated similarly," Nelson wrote. "This dissuades them from persisting in that discipline."

Marcia Greenberger, co-president of the National Women's Law Center in Washington, said the survey's results should be a matter of national concern.

"Universities must monitor their hiring and promoting practices more vigorously and work harder to remove the barriers that still exist to the advancement of women and people of color," Greenberger said. [mflores@express-news.net](mailto:mflores@express-news.net)

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