

Ending the Gender Gap in Educational Leadership: A U.S. Goal for a Balanced Administration by 2030

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Abstract : This presentation examines the gender gap in leadership positions at colleges and universities within the United States. Despite the fact that women now outnumber men in earning doctorate degrees, women continue to hold far fewer positions of educational leadership, and still, earn less money than men do at every level. Considering the lack of female representation in positions of leadership, there are clearly outside variables preventing women from attaining these positions, despite their educational attainment. Following this study, the American Council on Education (ACE) set a goal to achieve an equal percentage of females holding college presidency positions by the year 2030. This goal is particularly ambitious, especially when considering the gender disparity at all ranks in higher education. Men still hold nearly 70% of all full professorships at degree-granting institutions. Even when women are equally represented in numbers, men typically hold a higher rank and are more likely to be tenured. Across all four-year colleges and universities in the United States, men earn more money than women at every rank and in every discipline. There are over twice as many men than women represented on governing boards, who help formed and uphold campus policies. The fact that the low percentage of female presidents has remained static for many years deepens the challenge for the ACE. Although emphasizing the need to create greater opportunities for women in educational administration is admirable, it is difficult to simplify the social forces that create and uphold the status quo of male leadership. When aiming to ensure 'women' hold 50% of all college presidency positions, it is important to consider how the intersections of race, social class, and other factors also correlate with lower job status. This presentation explores how gendered notions of leadership begin in a child's early years and are carried into future careers, and how these conceptualizations impact the creation and upholding of educational policies at every academic level. Current research that emphasizes the importance establishing a bottom-up approach to a gender equity infrastructure for children early in their educational careers will be discussed. A top-down approach starting with female college presidents is incomplete and insufficient if the mindsets of the youth who will one day be entering those institutions of higher education are not also taken into consideration. Although ACE has established this lofty goal for female college presidencies by the year 2030, a road map for this will ensue, has not yet been provided. The talent pool of women who are educated and experienced for such positions is vast, but acknowledging the social barriers existing for women in these positions will be crucial to making the changes necessary for these leadership opportunities to be long lasting and successful.

Keywords : equity, higher education, leadership, women

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