



PRESS RELEASE



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Sex Discrimination in Academia Robs Female Professors of Careers, Students of Educators

WASHINGTON – In spite of tremendous educational advances, female professors continue to face potentially career-ending sex discrimination when seeking tenure, according to a new report released today by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) Educational Foundation and the AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund.

Tenure Denied: Cases of Sex Discrimination in Academia, details the stories of women who took their fight for tenure to the courts and provides a personal look into the toll it takes on these women's lives and careers. It also illustrates the loss of excellent educators for the students to these destructive disputes. Ultimately, it demonstrates an unfortunate double standard between the values of diversity and respect that universities espouse and a reality of discriminatory practices for their own female professors.

“There is something wrong in academia – which is expected to set a high standard and example for other workplaces – when the example being set for our young people is one of inequality and discrimination,” said Mary Ellen Smyth, President of the AAUW Educational Foundation. “And there is something dramatically wrong when female professors challenge discrimination and it results in irreparable damage to their careers.”

Research shows that in an academic setting, women earn less, hold lower-ranking positions, and are less likely to have tenure. Of the faculty at colleges and universities offering four-year degrees, only 27% of those awarded tenure are women. While women make up more than one-half of instructors and lecturers and nearly one-half of assistant professors, they represent only one-third of associate professors and a mere one-fifth of full professors.

Unfortunately, these battles are nearly impossible to win, since the odds are largely stacked against plaintiffs. Of the 19 AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund-supported cases described in the report, eight (42 percent) plaintiffs lost, seven (37 percent) settled, two (11 percent) won, and two cases are ongoing.

Further, according to the AAUW report, the costs of challenging sex discrimination – both financially and emotionally – are enormous. “Litigation expenses are huge in terms of both time and money, and the odds of women prevailing in court can seem insurmountable,” said Michele Warholc Wetherald, president of the AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund.

“*Tenure Denied* is not a call-to-lawsuits for the female professors” concluded Wetherald. “The report includes a number of effective strategies for both colleges and universities as well as women to use in an attempt to resolve – and in many cases, avoid – courtroom disputes.”

To receive the full report via e-mail as a PDF, contact Jean-Marie Navetta at (202) 785-7738 or NavettaJ@aauw.org. You can also view the *Tenure Denied* press kit on our website at www.aauw.org.

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The **AAUW Educational Foundation** provides funds to advance education, research, and self-development for women and fosters equity and positive societal change. The Foundation is the world's largest source of funding exclusively for graduate women.

The **AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund** provides funding and a support system for women seeking judicial redress for sexual discrimination. LAF is the nation's largest legal fund focused solely on sex discrimination in higher education.

AAUW: Because Equity Is Still an Issue