

# **Benefits of Ensuring Gender Equity**

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## **Why is gender equity desirable, above and beyond fairness?**

**Equity is a window on institutional effectiveness. Solving an equity problem can lead to solving a problem unrelated to equity. Equity problems often point to general problems.**

The reason equity is a window on institutional effectiveness is that women and minorities, as groups, have less power in institutions than do white men, as a group. Women and underrepresented minorities act as a proxy for those with less institutional power.

Without policies that ensure equal access, resources and facilities tend to flow to those who have the most power in the institution. Without policies that track the progress of different groups within the institution, it is impossible to know whether resources and facilities are being distributed evenly.

One example: a discovery that women in an institution receive computer support more slowly than men can lead to a rational and systematic way of handling all computer help requests.

Another example: the discovery that women receive less information about how to succeed can lead to the discovery that department chairs and division heads do not see faculty or staff development as one of their most important responsibilities. That in turn can lead to improved development procedures across the board.

Another example: the difficulty of determining how long women stay in the rank of associate professor can lead to the discovery that the institution has no effective way of monitoring overall faculty progress and thus no way of determining where improvements are needed.

**Gender equity in salary, promotion, and access to resources maximizes the number of people who will receive the power and resources they need in order to do their best work. It also reduces the possibility that some people are prospering at the expense of others.**

**Equity increases the range and size of the candidate pool, thus maximizing the chances of hiring the best new faculty or staff.**

The larger the pool, the greater the choice and the higher the likelihood of finding well-qualified candidates.

Also, women job candidates are likely to be slightly more talented than men, given their difficulties in accumulating advantage.

**Within colleges and universities, a diverse faculty gives students a head start in learning how to appreciate and interact with a range of authority figures.**

Students will graduate into working in a diverse world. The mental flexibility that is necessary for success in a diverse world will be developed in part through experiences with a diverse student body and in part through experiences with a diverse group of faculty and administrators.

**By modeling diversity in the professoriate and in senior levels in the professions, equity demonstrates to women and underrepresented minorities that they have a future - a good future - in academia and the professions. And if they do not have a future, why are we educating them?**

Aspirants do not need to see people exactly like them in senior positions and among the faculty. But the presence of a variety of social groups in positions of authority should have two effects.

First, diversity suggests that there is room for the aspirant: where there is a lot of variety it is plausible to think that there is room for more.

Second, and relatedly, diversity will make the role of, say, scientist or surgeon or successful business person one which is not sex- or race-specific. It will thus make it easier for everyone to make accurate judgments of the qualifications and value of non-traditional applicants for positions.

**Equity increases the likelihood of innovations in ideas, policies, research, teaching, and scholarship.**

Innovations arise from diverse groups of people with diverse perspectives. It is not that people reason differently as a function of their sex or race, but that they will have somewhat different interests and experiences which in turn give rise to different ideas.

(A good example: the development within the discipline of psychology of new areas as women and underrepresented minorities entered the field.)

Further, the acceptance of innovations is more likely among a diverse group of people.

**Equity creates a stronger and more viable institution via a reputation for fairness.**

Demonstrations of fairness, and concern for fairness, build loyalty from within, attract interest from outside, and increase the attractiveness of the institution to underrepresented groups.