

THE INDEPENDENT EQUITY COMMITTEE AND HIGHER EDUCATION EQUITY IN TEXAS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Independent Equity Committee, a group of eight full professors from the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Texas at Austin, issued its 2019 equity assessment on Hispanic faculty to assist the university in preparing a plan of action. The Committee members ascribe to the principles of equity, inclusion and diversity that the university promotes in accord with stated equal employment opportunity laws and policies and the shared goals of fairness, transparency, honesty and collegiality. Encouraged by the response of university administrators to the Gender Equity Report of 2008, we adopted many of the same categories of analysis, recommendations, and plan of action. Furthermore, we demonstrated that seemingly neutral policies, practices, and systems of management have produced disparate impacts on Hispanic faculty a clear and compelling analysis of public data available to anyone concerned with lack of equity for Hispanics in compensation, governance, and advancement. Colleagues in other universities claim similar problems. University leaders and policy makers should encourage institutions of higher learning in the state to conduct equity assessments and adopt plans of action to improve inclusion and diversity, with equity.

BACKGROUND

In response to a petition by three Hispanic faculty to the History department, colleagues agreed to an equity assessment with a focus on Hispanic faculty. In October 2018, a committee reported equity problems in pay, access to leadership positions, and faculty hiring and retention and concluded that Hispanic faculty were the most affected. Some reforms occurred, including some merit raises and a revamped governance system, although pay disparities and lack of representation in standing committees, program management and endowed chairs continues.

Alberto Martínez, the Chair of the Equity Committee, and other Latino/a faculty from history reached out to colleagues in the College of Liberal Arts and discovered that inequities were not limited to the History Department. The Independent Equity Committee subsequently issued the Hispanic Equity Report on October 8, 2019 (See attached Report).

FINDINGS

1. Hispanics are strikingly under-represented among the faculty;
2. The university pays substantially lower salaries to Hispanic faculty—especially Hispanic women faculty—despite higher levels of scholarly production;
3. From 2010 to 2018, Hispanic faculty received the lowest rates of promotions to the ranks of Associate Professor with tenure and of full Professor;
4. Hispanic faculty were less likely to be granted honors such as professorships and endowments or teaching and service awards; and
5. Disparities in compensation correlate with the lack of Hispanic faculty in leadership positions as administrators, deans, and department chairs.

FURTHER ACTIONS

The President and Provost of the University of Texas at Austin agreed in principle with our findings and initiated some reforms that promised equity to Hispanic faculty. The Independent Equity Committee collaborated with them in a number of ways, including the submission of personal claims statements by thirty-four (34) Hispanic faculty with impressive records of scholarly production. These statements point to longstanding under-representation, and significant inequities in pay, governance and recognition in their department and colleges. The university granted equity raises to some of the Hispanics in the list, however, the amounts given to the persons on our list were not sufficient and the university granted most of the raises to persons that were not on our list. Moreover, the university has announced a plan to advance equity, but they do not explicitly aim to solve the disparate pay of Hispanics.

In part because of this response, the Independent Equity Committee is pursuing the following actions:

- Ten Hispanic professors, including some members of the Independent Equity Committee, have registered formal complaints of pay discrimination with the Department of Labor.
- We support the decision of the national President of LULAC, Mr. Domingo García, to establish the Higher Education Task Force with the charge of conducting a national equity study on Hispanics modelled after the Hispanic Equity Report (2019)
- The Independent Equity Committee also supports Senate Bill 1709 (<https://legiscan.com/TX/text/SB1709/2021>), authored by Senators Cesar Blanco (District 24) and José Menendez (District 124). The bill would require institutions of higher education in Texas to increase the representation of faculty “of color” on the basis of equity assessments and research-based plans of action. We ask the public to track the bill and to express support for it by mail or in person if hearings on the bill are held.

THE INDEPENDENT EQUITY COMMITTEE

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