

This material is part of a collection that documents the harassment, discrimination, and retaliation perpetrated against Alaska's women research scientists by their supervisor, with full knowledge (and arguably, "tacit approval") of their federal employer, the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS)

Alaska women are making only slow gains in pay parity

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JUNEAU -- Women in Alaska are making progress in getting paid at the same rate as men, but that progress is exceedingly slow, a state economist said.

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The Department of Labor & Workforce Development study found that women in 2010 made 67 cents for every dollar earned by men, economist Caroline Schultz said. That's an increase of 2 cents on the dollar from 2008, but a gain of only about 5.5 cents since the first study was done more than 20 years ago, she said.

The 2010 study found men in Alaska, on average, earned \$43,684 compared with \$29,323 for women, according to Thursday's Juneau Empire.

Schultz said even when factors were considered such as occupational and regional variations, the gap was hard to explain.

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"The gap is closing very slowly," she said. "At the rate they are going we're not going to achieve pay or earnings parity any time soon."

The state's highest paying industries -- including manufacturing, natural resources and mining -- are mostly dominated by men.

State employment data shows that jobs such as miners, mobile heavy equipment mechanics and electrical power line installers pay much better than state average wages, but few women are earning those wages.

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The mobile heavy equipment mechanics field, for example, had a workforce of only 2 percent women, so while it paid, on average, \$57,520, there were only 12 women doing that work, compared with 772 men.

A big part of Alaska's wage disparity stems from the kind of jobs here, and who does them, Schultz said. That's especially true in private industry jobs.

"Although natural resources and mining employed just 5 percent of Alaska workers last year, it had a disproportionate effect on the earnings gap," she said.

If those jobs are excluded, the difference in private sector wages would rise from 63 percent to 79 percent, she said.

Government jobs tended to have pay scales that were more closely equivalent among men and women, but that didn't always boost women's earnings, the study found.

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For example, female office clerks earned almost exactly the same amount as male office clerks, but that amounted to only \$17,220 per year. Of those holding office clerk positions, 78 percent were female.

"Women seem to be funneled into lower pay occupations," Schultz said.

Women did earn more in some specific occupations. In health care, women saw some of the strongest salaries, with female obstetricians and gynecologists earning twice the salary of their male peers.

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ak2007r6

I really believe it has to do with what you are qualified for and what you set your goals to. I know many women that are just as qualified as me, in the field I work in that are making the same wage (some are making more). If someone wants something bad enough they will find a way to get it (male or female).

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I used to think the same thing, (which is how I got my Ph.D. in science with a 4.0 GPA), but my wanting something "bad enough" could not halt my supervisor's unlawful activities when he began working behind-the-scenes to decrease my program resources and career opportunities. The same types of career-damaging events were also happening to the other Ph.D.-level women in our unit. It was no secret. Our male co-workers knew what was happening because we kept showing them the evidence.

If we as a society continue to shrug off equal pay for women by assuming that woman are less talented, less motivated, and somehow less deserving, then the pay gap will never close.

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Marc Taylor,

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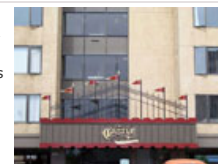
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discrimination that decreases recruitment, promotion, and retention of some employees, such as fully qualified women. You are incredibly fortunate to be inexperienced in this area, since no person (male or female) should be subjected to the unlawful harassment, discrimination, and retaliation that I experienced when I moved to Fairbanks in 2004 and began working for the USDA Agricultural Research Service. And it wasn't just me, but 100% of the women research scientists who had their career's attacked. The agency's hiring and promotion system involves no objective, measurable criteria. Statistically, the men rise rapidly in the ranks and the women don't. External systems (such as the h-index) exist, but are not used within the agency, thereby producing GS-12 women scientists with more than twice the scientific impact (h-index) of their GS-15 male supervisors. Disparity in wages will exist for as long as good men do nothing to make the system fair for all qualified employees. It's as simple as that.

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fat_freddy

'Disparity in wages will exist for as long as good men do nothing to make the system fair for all qualified employees.'And good women too.

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Marc Taylor

This comment was flagged for review.

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Fionared

Not true. I was offered less to start at the same position my male counter part was and I had more experience. Oh, and when I was interview the man asked me if I planned to have more children.

13 minutes ago in reply to Marc Taylor Report Abuse

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