

# **Resource Equity at Case Western Reserve University:**

## **Qualitative Baseline Data Report**

CASE Resource Equity Committee  
NSF ADVANCE Evaluation Team

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## INTRODUCTION.

This report summarizes findings from focus group and individual interviews conducted at Case Western Reserve University (Case) in early Spring 2004. The purpose of this study is two fold. First, it seeks to establish baseline qualitative data about the experiences of women faculty in 4 test departments for the NSF ADVANCE program and, secondly, to extend and verify whether conditions and results observed in a prior wave of focus group data collection still exists.

The current study is the second phase of a three-phase project initiated by the University Resource Equity Committee (REC) in 2000. The REC was commissioned by the University Provost at the recommendation of the Faculty Senate and was charged to design and implement a study to investigate the academic resources available to faculty on Case's campus. Phase I used purposive sampling to convene focus groups interviews, from which the REC garnered baseline perceptions and experiences of participants concerning the distribution of departmental and university resources by gender, and the barriers, both formal and informal, that faculty encounter in their careers. For the complete report go to <http://www.case.edu/admin/aces/resources.html>. Phase II obliges the REC to repeat analyses conducted in Phase I of both quantitative faculty salary studies and qualitative focus group analysis.

During the three-year interim between the first and current waves of data collection, findings from the REC committee's report were instrumental in Case's pursuit and attainment of an interdisciplinary NSF Transformation Award. This award, the NSF ADVANCE grant, promotes gender equity for women in science and engineering fields of academia. The current study acts as a baseline data collection for the NSF project, while also serving to extend and confirm findings from the first round of focus groups. A third, and final phase of data collection and analysis will take place in 2007, which will identify and assess improved experience and access to resources for women faculty at Case.

The following report will identify areas of overlap between the two data sets, as well as areas of divergence. Four pilot departments participated in the current focus group interviews: physiology and biophysics, chemistry, organizational behavior, and mechanical and aeronautical engineering. We conducted three focus groups: one for mixed rank female faculty, one for mixed rank male faculty, and a final focus group for department chairs. Additional individual interviews, following the same protocol and script, were offered to faculty members whose schedules conflicted with the timing of the focus groups.

Analysis of the transcribed data was conducted by members of the ADVANCE / REC research team. We have organized our results in terms of three broad categories: department and school culture, University culture, and the culture of academia. Within categories, we discuss emergent themes from our current focus group and individual interviews and include direct quotes from the transcripts so our respondents are able to speak for themselves.

## STUDY DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION.

A total of three focus groups were conducted in early Spring 2004: one focusgroup of mixed rank women faculty, one of mixed rank male faculty, and one of department Chairs. The focus groups ranged from 3 to 9 participants and were audiorecorded. Participants in these groups were encouraged to act as Key Informants, relating not only their own experience but also that of colleagues at Case.

Among the 4 test departments, there are a total of 97 primary faculty members; 20% is female (N=19) and 80% of this sample is male (N=78). Overall, we had 23 faculty members participate, for a response rate of 24%, with 47% of the female faculty members participating, 19% of the male faculty, and 100% of the department chairs participating. The data collected from our respondents resulted in 11 hours of audio-tape and 80 pages of transcribed text.

Initially, 17 people participated in formal focus group interviews, for a response rate of 18%. One focus group was comprised of junior and senior female faculty members (N=5; 47% response rate), the second included both junior and senior male faculty members (N=9; 12% response rate), and the third focus group consisted of 3 department chairs (75% response rate). The result was approximately 5 hours of tapes, yielding 38 pages of transcribed text.

Suspecting that faculty members' schedules were influencing our participation rates, we contacted test department faculty, offering individual interview opportunities. Through these means we obtained an additional 6 male faculty members, for a total of 15 male participants. We also interviewed the 4<sup>th</sup> and final department chair, resulting in a 100% response rate.

The individual interviews provided a supplementary 6 hours of tape and 42 pages of transcribed text. Thus, the overall response rate was increased to 24%, which included 19% of the male faculty members from our test departments participated, 47% of the female faculty members from the four departments, and 100% of the department chairs. We obtained a total of 11 hours of audio taped interviews and 80 pages of transcribed text. We are unable to provide additional descriptors for participants without compromising assurances of confidentiality that were part of our IRB protocol.

REC research team members moderated the focus groups, based on training by Eleanor Stoller, Ph.D., a co-investigator on the NSF ADVANCE grant, who teaches a graduate seminar in qualitative Research Methods and uses focus groups in her research investigations. For each group, a second research team member served as a facilitator, recording observations regarding group dynamics, making conversation notes to guide transcription, and monitoring recording equipment. The interview guide for the focus group sessions consisted of seven questions, which sought respondents' perceptions of the different experiences of male and female faculty at Case. To see the complete interview guide, please refer to Appendix 1.

At the end of each focus group, each participant was provided with a note card, which asked that they "Please summarize your experiences as a CWRU faculty member in one word or phrase." To see responses obtained from the note cards, please refer to Appendix 2. The focus groups and

individual interviews were tape-recorded and the transcripts were then analyzed, using standard methods of content analysis.

The procedure consisted of team members initially reading each transcript individually, identifying distinct comments and keywords. The team then met to discuss each transcript in depth, comparing keywords, themes, and categories from the current data to the REC Committee's code from the first phase of data collection in 2000. Areas of agreement as well as divergence were identified. It is noteworthy that the Phase I REC code was not referred to immediately to allow for new themes to emerge if present.

Five overarching themes were communicated across our male and female participants:

1. Proportional rarity of women is an issue at Case.
2. Female faculty members deal with token dynamics associated with being a statistical minority.
3. The academic environment is structured by rank and gender, advantaging men's careers.
4. Women perceive their rarity as a disadvantage. Men agree with this perception but also view it as a potential advantage or opportunity.
5. Case, as an institution, is resistant to change and improvement efforts.

These themes were evident at multiple levels, including home departments and schools, the University, and academia as a whole. Our results are thus organized below following this template, providing direct quotes from our respondents to best illustrate how these themes are manifested and experienced at Case.

It is noteworthy that the ADVANCE program's interventions had not been initiated during either the first or second waves of data collection. However, as a result of the release and dissemination of REC committee's initial findings, Case implemented positive change toward obtaining and sustaining gender equity on campus:

1. The Case Western Reserve University Women's Center was established.
2. A Faculty Diversity Officer was added to the Human Resources Department.
3. REC Committee findings were instrumental in Case obtaining the NSF ADVANCE grant.

## RESULTS.

After combing through each of the three focus groups and the individual interviews, we concluded that the themes and codes that emerged from Phase I of the REC Committee's focus groups largely capture the current experiences of faculty in the four test departments. There are, however, themes from the original coding which were not addressed by current participants. In addition, other themes, which had not been of primary importance three years ago, received quite a bit of attention in the current sample. Both of these differences are potentially explained by the difference in sampling procedure, sample sizes, and the passage of four years' time. In 2000 the REC Committee focus groups utilized purposive sampling, identifying potential respondents who were defined as key informants on issues relating to gender. While these issues also characterize academe as a whole, our focus will be on local levels amenable to intervention by the NSF ADVANCE project.

### *1. The Culture of the Department or School.*

#### *a. Proportional Rarity of Women in the Department or School:*

Participants in all groups referred to the lack of a critical mass of women faculty, which affects work load and both formal and informal interaction. One male faculty member said:

“I'm not very aware of women's voice[s], colleagues' voices. ... I think we've maybe had one woman candidate in a dean search. We've had one woman associate dean and no chairs that I'm aware of, so far. In the “hierarchy” and particularly in the appointments committee, it's still very male dominated.” *Male*

Another male faculty member observed, “Women, until recently in our department, have been the minority, so there's the minority / majority difference that can be pretty powerful.” An aspect of the low density of women on campus is the high amount of committee work female faculty members across ranks are asked and required to do.

A female respondent reported, “Because I'm a woman, I spend so much time serving on committees.” A male colleague concurs, “...Because there are less women and because, to provide a balance, you'd like to have women on committees... maybe it's not a 50/50 population [so] they tend to get asked to do more things.” A second male faculty member commented on the committee work load of his female counterparts:

“[Women are] tapped for a lot more committee assignments, sometimes because you want some gender representation. ...The work load can be higher, sometimes, if you only have a limited number of, you know, that could be for either race or gender, or age distributions... So I think that, that is one, perhaps unintended, but I think it is a de facto consequence.”  
*Male*

The proportional rarity of women in faculty positions is also acted out through the absence of collegial relationships among women and networking through informal relationships that could potentially reduce feelings of marginality (“other-ness”).

“We walk into a faculty meeting and see a sea of male faces. None of them have had the experience of dressing and sending off their family that morning. I’m not knocking them, they just don’t know what it’s like.”

*Female*

The impact of a scarcity of female faces in the classroom and departments impacts students as well as faculty. Female students at Case tend to look to women faculty as potential role models, mentors, or advisors. A male respondent argues that the dearth of female faculty members sends a negative message to our female students:

“I mean, you’ve got 60% of the students are women, and then if they only see that [there’s only one PI] in the department [who] is a woman... I mean whether that’s an overt or subconscious message to them, [it says] it’s gonna be hard to proceed through the ranks... It’s gotta be scary.”

*Male*

A second male respondent adds to this comment, saying:

“The female students have brought it up with me several times, like, ‘What the hell is wrong with this place?’ So, they’ve definitely noticed [the scarcity of women faculty].. and that’s a problem.” *Male*

A third participant adds to the conversation:

“I would tend to agree. I would think rather than seeing it as an opportunity, [female students] might see it as an environment that they wouldn’t feel very comfortable. *Male*

*b. Token Dynamics in the Department:*

The scarcity of women faculty at all levels results in pervasive token dynamics of the following forms. Women faculty described heavier workloads, including responsibilities that impinge on research time and are often considered “invisible” work: advising students; mentoring junior faculty; administrative departmental work (e.g. maintaining the department web page); and service assignments (e.g. attending open houses and serving on student committees). In addition, women feel that they carry a disproportionate share of the committee work, which are not positions increasing professional status, as committee assignments are perceived to reflect a gendered process, in which women are assigned to less powerful and less visible committees.

Untenured women, in particular, find it difficult to refuse administrative and service responsibilities when asked by senior faculty or administrators, even when they realize that accepting these responsibilities will detract from the time available for their research.

Respondents in our women’s focus group cited requests for them to help with “un-official” work in their departments as one of the differences in experience between male and female faculty

members. One participant in our women's focus group stated, "...There is much unofficial service work on many levels. Undergraduates and graduates both seek me out with questions, even ones not in my department."

Another female participant states, "I feel like I do a lot more service... I help with recruitment, the department web page." Another female respondent spoke to the invisibility of the things she finds herself spending time on:

"...It seems like I have a lot of graduate students and post docs who come to me with questions or needing to be mentored. You don't get a lot of official credit for it (towards tenure) because it's confidential, you can't talk about it." *Female*

Paradoxically when there are too few women, they perceive that they concurrently stand out (are extremely visible and constantly scrutinized) while at the same time being overlooked (excluded from power networks). A second facet of token dynamics, mentioned across both male and female respondents, concerns the exaggerated inclusion of women, but in social interactions, rather than in power networks. One respondent commented:

"As far as the group that goes to lunch, we make every effort to make sure we invite the women faculty to come. ... If anything [our female colleagues are] getting assaulted a little bit too much to be included in things, because everybody's trying to make sure that we're... being fair." *Male*

Token dynamics may take the form of preferential social and cultural norms. A female participant referred to the patterns of socializing among her male counterparts:

"In my department, [when] all the men go golfing... I'm not involved. When my colleagues play golf, they get to know each other as humans. We're excluded from networking... There's a men's room barrier. You can bridge it to a point, but not completely." *Female*

A male supports the previous quote, reflecting:

"There are probably all kinds of norms or customs that make, that would make a woman, a woman faculty member, feel a little bit more like a stranger. I don't know about Case in general, but I know for years here, when I first came, you know, we'd have golf outings. So it's an ease of connection. There are poker games with people that have been going on for 20 years. Those are more around friendships than about the University, but they kinda start with ways men connect." *Male*

A third characteristic of token dynamics is apparent when women faculty members are seen as representative of their gender, becoming a symbol or stand-in for all women. One female respondent said:

“When women’s issues come up, I get comments directed toward me that I have to respond to, both positive and negative. Then I get comments about whether I should really be involved with these issues, and put myself out there like that.” *Female*

Serving as a representative for the entire gender group is not something only observed by women. A male participant, and a former department chair, supports this notion:

“I made a push to see if we could...significantly change the gender balance in the department, it was interesting because at least my thought was if you hire [only] 1 woman, that woman becomes the representative for all women in the world, and that just won’t work out.” *Male*

*c. The Gendered Profession in the Department:*

As a social institution, many aspects of academia are underpinned by assumptions about who is filling the professional roles. These subsuming notions are preferential to men. One of our male participants highlighted differences in working hours “acceptable” for male versus female faculty.

“You take a job like this, in a male dominated profession... there’s a lot of us working late in the office, coming home at odd hours.” He went on, referring specifically to pressures faced by a female colleague who’s recently had a baby, “She can’t just work late here after hours, she just can’t. Whereas it’s more acceptable for a husband to say, ‘Well I can’t come home, I’m working.’ If mom does that, that’s bad, just because the way society is set up.”

Moreover, attempts at integrating work and family responsibilities poses additional challenges to women faculty. One female respondent commented directly to the tension between work demands and family time:

“I have young children, so I’m hesitant to consult, and that reduces funds I could have for graduate students to work as RAs on my projects. We have to fund those ourselves. I can fund someone for a while, and then they move on to something else. I don’t get to work with RAs for a long time because of that.” *Female*

Another example of the gendered nature of the profession is the scheduling of classes and faculty meetings, which can be problematic for women with young families. One woman noted, “It wears on you... Why are seminars 4:30-5:30?”

*d. The Myth of Women’s Advantage in the Department:*

Although men generally agree that women are disadvantaged members of the Case faculty, they also perceive minority status as a potential advantage in terms of increased access to resources or



opportunities. The myth of minority advantage that bends in the direction of women is expressed in several comments:

"...My impression is, in this department, being male or female makes almost no difference, in fact it may be even easier to get access to resources...but I think it is the chair's opinion is that there is absolutely no bias, even if that means going beyond equity." *Male*

"We are very sensitive to make sure that salaries are fair. If anything, we're going to err, we're going to err and make sure that the women's salary is above or greater than contemporary, or a commensurate male." *Male*

"... Now there's a little resentment by the male faculty. Just a little resentment." *Male*

"But the male faculty that came in who now see the start up packages being offered to the more recent hires who happen to be women, are, there's always this, "I didn't get that much, I could have gotten more, I should have asked for more," you know, it isn't gotten unpleasant, it's just there's awareness. Very, very much awareness." *Male*

In spite of these perceptions, one male faculty member spoke against the myth of opportunity in being a statistical minority:

"...My gut response to that would be that [women are] not in it to try and take advantage of some sort of quota system. [Women] feel like they can be good at it and they want to make it, based on the same [criteria] without having to take advantage of anything like that." *Male*

## 2. Culture of the University.

### a. Proportional Rarity of Women at Case:

A respondent described how effects of women's proportional rarity on campus goes beyond departmental interactions. Concerns with gender balance on University committees also adds to the demands on women faculty members' time:

"Basically, I mean and this *doesn't* come out of the department so much, the president's office says, 'We want you to be on this search committee,' or 'we want you to be on the president's search committee, we're searching for a president for this university and we would like you to be on it.' The person says, 'God, this is such a prestigious thing to be asked to do. I really want to do it [because] I'm so busy with my research,' and I say, 'Don't do it.' But they ended up doing it because the president or somebody writes a letter saying 'I want you to be on this search

committee.’ And if they’re the only woman they’re going to be asked a lot to fill roles like that.” *Male*

*b. Addressing the issue of proportional rarity: Unintended consequences*

One of the explicit aims of the ADVANCE study at Case is increasing the number of women in science and engineering fields. By improving the University’s academic culture and policies, more women may be recruited and retained. One of the anticipated consequences of more women faculty, especially in senior positions, is that a shift in culture will take place, influencing and improving the University’s infrastructure, and policies, while also supporting a more equitable environment.

Although these outcomes are viewed as being largely positive, some participants highlighted potential unintended consequences of some of the interventions and policy changes recommended by the ADVANCE study. A respondent discusses the impact of bringing in outside women as full professors or chaired professorships:

“It’s my understanding that there’s a move afoot to... find resources to hire senior tenured, full professors as chair that are women. I think that is a mistake. Women faculty, who are presently on this campus...have essentially earned the promotion, and in some cases a chaired professorships. They’ve paid their dues, they’re loyal, they’ve worked here, they’ve done well, they’ve done everything expected of them. ...Elevate *them* to the chaired professorships. I know the effort is emphasizing and increasing the number of women on campus... I want to bring in women at the assistant associate level, but I want to promote. ...In my own department it would actually be a morale problem to bring in a woman from outside and give her a chaired full professorship... when there’s somebody... right now who deserves [it].” *Male*

Another example of an unintended consequence associated with the recruitment of senior women deals with the inclusion of spousal hiring as part of a competitive start-up package. Several respondents mentioned the need for increased attention to this aspect of Case’s recruiting efforts, some suggesting Case should be more aggressive in offering positions to spouses and partners of candidates, while other respondents suggested spousal hiring may in fact un-do efforts of the ADVANCE project.

“... You could make an offer to the male spouse of a female candidate that you really want to recruit, but by making that offer to the male spouse... you might be cutting off another female faculty position.” *Male*

A third unintended consequence associated with the ADVANCE project at Case was raised regarding the professional development interventions offered to female faculty, such as coaching, mentoring, and network building. One participant specifically suggested that by not including other minority groups in these activities, a perception of exclusion was being

perpetuated. The respondent encouraged the ADVANCE team to consider expanding the project to include other groups of the campus population, such as racial minorities.

“I [support] this whole initiative about potential disparities or ways to increase equity and representation, opportunities for advancement and enhancing overall experience. I would suggest that the same need exists beyond the scope of [women]. The same needs exist for other minority groups, other than that based upon gender. It raises interesting concerns [for] other minority groups. As I begin to hear about things like the mentoring that is made available for... women, then as another minority group member, I think, “Wow... this is something I could use, this would be great if I could have this mentoring network, mentor committee.” I think that [racial] minority faculty members... have as much of a need for that kind of thing. It actually sets up a condition... worse than it was in general before, because now there’s a sense that there are these resources available that you’re not being allowed to tap into.” *Male*

*c. Gendered Profession at the University Level:*

Questions about integrating work and family responsibilities generated a number of concerns that illustrate the ways in which routine policies and practices privilege men whose wives who assume responsibility for unpaid family work. Discussions of work-family conflict most often emphasized university policies and academic culture.

Regardless of gender, a number of participants argued that family responsibilities compete with the productivity expectations of academic careers. An example comes from one faculty member participating in the Men’s Focus Group:

“Well the culture is for faculty to put in full time, and *then some*, in their research, so that obviously is a pressure for anyone who has a family.”  
*Male*

While recognizing that family demands impact both men and women, most participants agreed that women carry a greater burden of family responsibilities than men. For some, this gender difference was seen as inevitable.

“I think it’s clearly the case, at least in my family. My wife took care of my, both children, cut back her working hours. It was a basic decision, you know, when you pursue careers.” *Male*

Although family responsibilities are most prevalent in the early (pre-tenure) years of an academic career, when families are most likely to be caring for very young children, demands for care continue across women’s lives. Specific mention of child and elder care was made in both the focus group and individual interviews.

“On a more comfort level, do we have any facilities here for childcare?  
Why not?! Why not?! It’s an absolute must An absolute must, just to

relieve the pressure a little bit. There's *no* reason not to have child care... There are some little things that can be done." *Male*

Backing this opinion, one of our male participants provided further comments on issues of work and life integration, highlighting these issues span academic and life stages:

"There are a bunch of different dimensions... One is family issues, which is the fact that no matter how liberal or progressive people... are... the female who is the mother, is the one who spends more of the time taking care of any children, elderly parents, family responsibilities. It's almost impossible for me to conceive of this as being a family-friendly, gender-neutral institution of work without some form of childcare. It just doesn't work. It hurts the women much, much more than the men. ... You've got to attend to that. It's got to be done." *Male*

A male faculty member compares previous positions to his experiences at Case:

"I worked at [universities]... all of them had subsidized on-site daycare and places really should have it. ...How can you expect to recruit women and retain them if you don't offer a standard of assistance?" *Male*

Another male respondent in a focus group interview reiterates these views when asked for closing thoughts:

"Just to reiterate the lack of childcare on campus, I think it should be fixed, pretty simple. It should be subsidized... for faculty. It should be there." *Male*

Although work-family issues dominated discussions of faculty careers as gendered, participants also addressed other differences. For example, regarding interaction styles, several participants pointed to other ways the everyday aspect of the academic profession is gendered. Respondents mentioned women's lack of skill with negotiation and how this impacts whether or not they initiate side deals, better start up packages, reduced teaching loads, better lab spaces, and so on. Women are not socialized to successfully negotiate for better deals. A male respondent discussed the difference in socialization between women and men:

"I've spent my life learning how to interact and relate to men, from the sports field to the classroom. I think if you look at any interaction, whether it's one-up-man-ship or making an argument that gets you something that you want, that the other person doesn't want to give up, there's a certain way you go about it, the postures. But it's not necessarily a skill women learn at an early age. It comes secondary." *Male*

A female participant agrees. She asserts:

“[Side deals] involve skills women maybe aren’t good at: negotiating skills, influence skills. It may come more naturally to men, or maybe they have fewer hurdles to cross. *Female*”

*c. Case, as an institution, is resistant to change and improvement efforts:*

The larger culture of academic institutions was seen to influence the everyday experiences of faculty at Case. Reflective of the larger world of research universities, teaching and institutional service at Case are perceived as being trivialized and devalued. Some respondents question the University’s commitment to issues of equity. Moreover, some respondents feel the driving force behind Case is the “bottom line.” Efforts to initiate change confront both an academic culture and a bureaucratic structure resistant to innovation. One respondent reported:

“I would say one of the single biggest things we’ve got to work against, in the sense that we’ve got a faculty that are supposed to be setting policy and doing things, [is] the bureaucracy that seems to be this huge, immovable mass.” *Male*

Following this sentiment, a second male respondent offered the following:

“I feel that... there is always some reason that things can’t be done, because it’s never been done that way, and I see this number of people involved in that capacity, growing year by year, eating up more and more resources. ... By and large they’re telling us why we can’t do things. I think that if you’re a, kind of a small, and flexible, more nimble, letting people follow their ideas, supported by bureaucracy, supported by a support staff that’s supposed to be enabling these things, instead of regulating and governing these things... there’d be more resources available [and] everything wouldn’t feel like a struggle. I think just the change in the culture and feeling, just how hard it was to make any progress.” *Male*

The ambiguity of the tenure process at Case is another institutional factor, specifically referred to, as an issue impeding the faculty’s capacity for innovation, achieving organizational goals, and developing the institution.

“There’s an equal opportunity for unhappiness with the tenure process right now and the lack of definition around [it].” *Male*

Many respondents described the criteria for gaining tenure and promotion as being unclear and unrealistic. Moreover, there is a pervasive sense that rules are not applied with equity across faculty. A senior male faculty member captures this when commenting on the difficulties of mentoring junior members of his department.

“There’s a lot of pressure to build up a research program.... Sometimes I think the goals, which are set by the administration, are somewhat

artificial and unrealistic, and very often are set by people who wouldn't be particularly able to do that themselves. I think that's probably a fair comment, that sometimes they're unreasonable, and sometimes I worry... well, how would you perceive it if I told you don't worry, the goals are unreasonable." *Male*

Another respondent speaks to his sense of incongruity between the University's goals and the criteria for promotion. He cites a number of cases in his college where decisions not to grant tenure were over-turned at the Provost level.

"The candidates I mentioned earlier, where the provost's office over-turned the school's, *our* school's decision, all in the cases of women, I think those have been great decisions. In [some] of the... cases, they are institution builders. They're leading very important programs. So, my question is what's going on in the system such that somehow our internal peer evaluation isn't matching up with what the university sees as valuable contribution?" *Male*

The elitist nature of the academic institution was brought out by some participants. We categorized these comments into four codes: the existence of a pervasive deference to rank within the hierarchy; too few women faculty members at the full professor rank and in high level administrative positions; rank privilege accrues to male faculty but not to female faculty; and diversity is not valued. The university itself was described as being a gendered hierarchy. The bottom of the hierarchy is more heavily feminine and the top of the hierarchy is much more masculine.

Participants referred to the deference given to high-ranking members: full professors have inordinate power and influence. Rank was determined to be more (or as) important a factor as gender in faculty-staff interactions and other university practices. Several participants paused after sharing an observation to wonder if the pattern they had discussed reflected female gender or junior rank. Participants in almost every focus group pointed to the lack of senior women and the consequences of this. A male faculty member observed of his school:

"We've had one woman associate dean and no chairs that I'm aware of, so far. In the "hierarchy," and particularly in the appointments committee, it's still very male dominated." *Male*

Another male respondent asserts:

"There's a lot of bias based on rank, and that interacts with gender unfortunately. It seems there are these rules about what's required for tenure. And for men, they seem to be bent, but for women, they're applied to the letter of the law. ...I've been on the appointments committee for 8 or 9 years, and this goes back a certain amount of time. It seems to me, when it's a woman all this stuff comes up. I remember a case where there was a gap in a woman's vitae in terms of professional experience... this

person was probably having a child or some “life thing”... and one person on the committee said, “Well, where *was* this person during this period of time? How come this period of time isn’t there?” And I’ve *never* heard this kind of thing come up for a man.” *Male*

A male participant discussed this trend:

“The campus still is top heavy with people 60-80 in age and sadly these are virtually all male with, I don’t even know if there’s an exception... basically, they’re so dominated by males and an anachronistic point of view. But you know, this kind of culture pervades this campus, and I happen to know because women faculty have told me how offensive they find that... frankly, I find it offensive. Considering the sources.” *Male*

Speaking directly to the power and influence of full professors, one of our male participants recalled situations where colleagues were being reviewed for tenure and promotion:

“There’s a smaller and smaller number of people who are making decisions, because only full professors can decide whether associate professors are promoted. So, in many departments that’s like two or three people, voting on one person... I’ve seen gender situations, in a number of cases, where an associate professor has a bad relationship with one full professor and that’s sufficient to make it impossible for that person to get promoted. And I just would guess that if you’ve got a full professor who somehow has some gender bias going on, that would make it tough.” *Male*

### *3. The Culture of Academia.*

While the five overarching themes were explicitly described in the settings of the department and University, specific mention of the same issues occurring across the academic environment was not as frequent. This can be related to the wording of our interview protocol, which intentionally focused respondents attention on their experiences and perceptions within their departments or primary units and at Case. However, some respondents implicitly referred to the relatively small numbers of women in the sciences and engineering at Case as being a reflection of their proportional rarity in the fields throughout academe. Similarly, issues of token dynamics in the academe were generally referred to, but not spoken about particularly. One theme which did receive quite a bit of consideration was the gendered nature of the academe and its expectations, culture, and values.

#### *a. The Academic Profession is Gendered:*

Several participants in our focus groups spoke the overarching culture of academia and noted ways in which men’s lives are privileged in this environment. For example, a male respondent, in an individual interview, observed the difference in experience when it comes to the daily duties and routines of academic work:

“I think the big difference is tenure. I think that’s the critical switch. I think if [women] can struggle with balance *and* be able to get tenure, I think it changes. But up until that point... I don’t think men can relate, because it’s not *just* balancing. I think the choice they have to make, just the choice of being with the children in particular or writing or being at work is a different kind of choice, than the male saying I might not be able to go to the kids’ concert.... it’s a different connection. That’s a tough balance choice, it was for me, but it’s just not the same.” *Male*

Another male participant argues that work-life issue, as illustrated by differences in balancing family responsibilities and work demands, is an issue saturating the academic environment.

“I think [imbalance exists] across academia. We depend on really getting grants, which means a full time job, otherwise you’re not competitive. So that’s really the question, the competitiveness, for me. Regardless if you put in less time, if you take a few of the same training and skills, it’s the time that counts.” *Male*

Referring to issues of childcare on campus, a male respondent argued the addition of such facilities would serve as a short term solution but would not impact the larger, systemic barriers to equity in academia.

“But even if you had a fully-functional day care facility... you’re not going to leave your kid in day care from 7:30 or 8 in the morning until 6 or 6:30 at night. That’s just not what happens. So, even with a daycare facility, there’s still gonna either have to be an unbelievable disciplined division of duty for one spouse or the other to knock off early that day, which [has] an absolute impact on career advancement, or, there’s still gonna be one, if you have two faculty who are married and have a child, one of ‘em’s gonna take a hit.” *Male*

Furthermore, participants referred to female colleagues who questioned the general academic attitudes and perceptions, choosing a part time or other nontraditional career path.

“I know a couple people that, they were working at Case in a different department, and they just decided not to pursue a career because they want to be more the caregiver and they feel they didn’t have enough support, and they just try to find alternative jobs, some place else, whether it’s teaching at school or any other sort of possible, agreeable jobs based on their degree.” *Male*

“I remember I used to have friends, women friends in college, and they did very well, they were in the top students and they went abroad for PhD and then for one of my friends...[is] still very active researcher, she has no kids. And then for the other one, she has kids, but then she is still a post



doc and she's happy to be a senior post doc in a lab. And she doesn't need to spend a lot of time in the lab, she doesn't want the pressure." *Male*

*b. Academia, as an Environment, is Resistant to Change:*

Participants in our focus groups discussed resistance to change and improvement efforts across the academe. Participants in our male focus group wondered whether changes at the University level would benefit Case or reduce its competitive edge with other research universities. A respondent in our men's focus group indicated that although positive changes had been implemented at Case, the federal granting agencies have not followed suit.

"... You can get [tenure] extensions for family reasons, but that doesn't necessarily solve the problem... Even if Case was extremely flexible in terms of the amount of time... grant agencies are not... If your productivity is not what it should be in a four year period, or what they're looking for, family issues are not taken into consideration if you're trying to renew a grant at NIH. *Male*

Another respondent in the men's focus group supports this, explaining:

"I think the Heart Association has a box, 'Please explain deviations.'... You know that kind of thing should be built into the system, I mean it's kind of inhumane to expect the same thing out of someone that has 4 kids than someone who didn't in those first nine years. But the federal government, they don't have anything, like the NIH or NSF, they don't have that little box to explain what you were doing. *Male*

Themes regarding the academic environment also dealt with the tenure system, questioning its efficacy and effects on the culture of the academe.

"What I see happening, in the recent years, that the pressure to receive tenure is so great, that when they get tenure, men *or* women, they just don't do anything for 5 or 6 years. In a sense, it's kind of understandable. And what's sad is that some people just say they've been forced in the process of getting tenure, to do stuff they weren't that excited about, so they've lost all taste for doing research. You know, they say, 'What's the point of all this?' It's really sad." *Male*

"[Women] come in as assistant, may even make tenure, but for some reason they drop out of the system before being promoted and remaining as sort of a full professor. So they're more in the junior ranks of women in percentage to males, but that drops off. And the question is, is there something about the expectations and the demands that get placed when you jump to associate with tenure, then you go for full, that for one reason or another women are not happy. I would like to say that I had one woman faculty member leave the department, and this was after she received tenure, and her tenure case was very strong... And

then, she left. And she wasn't happy with academia, and didn't like working in academia, and she didn't want to go through the rest of this process to be reviewed again... and I'm wondering if there's something about the pressure, just the nature of being faculty / employee and working toward these various goals, and in some women's cases they stand back and say, "I'm just... this isn't making me happy. I'm not happy. I don't like this. I'd rather do something else." And maybe this is a fundamental cultural difference between men and women, but I think a lot of times men never ask that question." *Male*

Speaking about the latent sexism among benefactors, corporate sponsorship, and other donors to Universities, one department chair observes:

"I think the sexism of the external environment is a horrible limitation that we have to face in terms of some very viable candidates for leadership roles-- donors, board members, CEO's-- because, it's still is more male dominated. The visiting committees and boards may not be quite equal but close to it, but as research shows, women aren't on the key committees. So I think that has makes it difficult. In our field in particular, when we've looked at a female candidate, at one time it was a serious candidate, I didn't think she got a fair shake in terms of... some of my male counterparts, but because this is a [professional] school, that means we're so dependent on CEOs for hiring students, or at least their opinions endorsing them, and from donors. There's a level on leadership issues... at the dean level as well, I think that that is still an major challenge." *Male*

### COMPLIMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

The above quotes and themes support the assertion that faculty members at Case are aware of and concerned about equitable access to resources, work-life integration, and quality of life among faculty members at this university.

#### *a. Positive Comments:*

In addition to these perceptions and experiences, our respondents also had many positive comments about Case.

"One of the reasons I came here, instead of other places, is because [Case] did seem [more functional], not on a male/female equity level, but just that this department seemed to be more collegial." *Male*

"I have one child. In my previous job, I had to pretend that I had no personal life. Coming here it was a relief that male colleagues said no to 8:00AM meetings because they had to drop their child off at school then.

In my experience, it's more accepted at Case that you have a life outside of here." *Female*

"It's very easy to get extensions on the tenure clock, if you take a year off to deal with the kids. So there's been an accommodation for that." *Male*

"[Having] any outbreaks of sexism, which are overt, to be dealt with, we've already covered. So I wouldn't even bother bringing it up, because I think we've got mechanisms in place. I'm not saying we're dealing with it *all*, but on the whole, when you can see it there's somebody doing something about it." *Male*

"...Going to the 9-year tenure clock, giving people a year of maternity leave without it counting against the tenure clock was helpful. I think that this NSF program is helping and will help. I think there's a Provost's program set aside to bring more senior women faculty to bring them onto campus, to create more of a [positive] model." *Male*

*b. Recommendations:*

One question from our interview guide asks each participant to imagine they had 5 minutes with President Hundert and to describe what they would suggest to make Case a more equitable environment for faculty members. Below are some of the ideas collected.

"Aside from daycare? That's my first thing." *Female*

"...I think it would be nice if the administration would take a good look at infrastructure that's here and ask a few questions of faculty about what can we do." *Male*

"Case needs to stop beating itself over it's head with a stick- it's got an inferiority complex. Why? Because it fails to recognize that we're one of the best regional universities in the United States. Forget about trying to be another MIT, another Harvard. Forget it! Be Case. Don't try to be anything else. Once you accept what you are, you'll find you'll have no difficulty in selling yourself. We have no problem getting students to apply, just not in numbers that would be compatible with rankings from US News & World Report. Who *cares*? We can fill the place up with students who want to be here. So what's the problem?" *Male*

"I would tell him it comes from the top. We need a cultural overhaul. It only happens when it's clearly a priority. You don't make a presidential advisory council on women and have 3 people in between you and it and call it a 'university council on women' which answers to the vice-provost, instead of a direct line like previously." *Female*

“[Get] rid of associate professor ranks and just once you’re tenured, you’re full. And I’m saying that for both male and female faculty members. I think it’s an archaic distinction. . . . When you get tenure, you get associate with it, and then there’s this other hurdle. And that other hurdle keeps people from building the institution, spending time in program development, doing things that are just as important in a university as research. I’m not suggesting we stop the research or anything, I’m just saying we’re building the institution on the backs of people whose backs are going to break. Because they’re not going to get full, they’re going to get tired of being asked to serve on committees and so forth, and there are other people who I think have an instinct to serve and an instinct to build [the] institution and community, [but] who are feeling forced to choose otherwise. *Male*

“You need resources to attract the top people. People get frustrated and leave. When the dean of [my school] describes success in terms of *not losing people*, that’s pathetic.” *Female*

“Listen to [women], first. I mean have a set of conversations, yourself, as well as encourage every one of your key people to access the different women faculty separately from the men. Now you should access them together as well, but there are separate issues that they face, and they need to be heard with a time and a place that they can talk.” *Male*

“It’s almost impossible for me to conceive of this as being a family friendly, gender-neutral institution of work without some form of childcare. It just doesn’t work. It hurts the women much, much more than the men. I don’t know how to do that, I don’t know what it would look like, but you’ve got to attend to that. It’s got to be done.” *Male*

“Spend some money as a research intensive institution. It applies to all issues. They’re conservative here.” *Female*

“Maybe it’s got nothing to do with gender issue, but certainly it’s attitude. It amazes me that the university doesn’t hire the people who sweep up the floors, do the kitchen work, clean our buildings. If they were Case employees, we’d have a bond with the local community that would be hard to beat. Why, because if their kids were academically eligible they could come to school. What would it cost the University to let two extra people sit in on my class, not much, and there’s plenty of room! In the end, okay, maybe it costs a little more, but . . . if we want to be helpful to the local economy, we don’t need to start with some high tech specialized industry, which probably wouldn’t benefit a lot of people, but *this* would. How many people work here at the janitorial level? And their families, and where do they live? They live right over there.” *Male*

“Actions speak louder than words.” *Female*

**Focus Group Report - Appendix 1:  
Phase II Interview Guide for REC Focus Groups  
2004**

The interview guide for the focus group sessions consisted of five questions:

- 1. How do you think the experience of being a faculty member at CWRU is different for women than it is for men?*
- 2. Does gender make any difference in access to resources for faculty at CWRU – things like salary, travel money, teaching loads, committee assignments, lab space, access to clerical or other support, institutional research funds, sabbatical or other leaves?*
- 3. Do you think gender makes any difference in everyday interaction among faculty, between faculty and administrators, or between faculty and staff? Do people notice gender when they talk with one another?*
- 4. Does the impact of family life differ for men and women faculty? Do women and men face different issues in balancing work and family demands?*
- 5. Do you think the issues facing women faculty change across the academic career – as we/they move from assistant professor to full professor?*

After completing the interview guide, the moderator concluded the session with two questions, asked in a round-robin manner.

- 1. Suppose you had one minute to talk to President Hundert about how to improve the situation for women faculty at CWRU. What would you say?*
- 2. Have we missed anything? Is there anything we should have asked but didn't?*

**Focus Group Report - Appendix 2:  
Phase II Note Card Statements  
2004**

**“Please summarize your experiences as a Case faculty member in one word or phrase.”**

“Challenging.” *Male*

“I have had a mixed experience. Case has provided many opportunities. However, the expectations are quite high but the support is not always there.” *Male*

“I have been successful, but like a car that is being driven at 60mph with the parking brake on. You move forward, but with a lot of resistance to overcome.” *Female*

“In general, my experiences were positive. There are better institutions – but there are also others that are really terribly. However, its reputation is better than the actual experience.” *Male*

“Good working environment within my specific department. At times difficult to cross over to other departments and colleagues. Sensation you are in a vacuum as far as external (university) support/help/consideration.” *Male*

“My experience in my department has made me painfully aware of the challenges facing women in science – it is the first time in my life I have felt disadvantaged for being a woman.” *Female*

“Frustration. Old-fashioned culture. Conservative. So how do I get anything accomplished with these obstacles?” *Female*

“My overall experience is generally positive, but mixed. The academic career is challenging, over consuming at times, but rewarding in this environment. However, more support, both in mentoring as well as administratively could have improved the experience.” *Male*

“Supporting.” *Male*

“Marginalized. Isolated. Working hard all the time. Watching for indirect signs of support (because direct signs are very rare).” *Female*

“My experience at Case has been excellent in terms of support, mentoring, and feedback.” *Male*

“In my experience, Case has provided a positive environment for research. What problems I have would not be solved by moving.” *Male*

“I do not like the startup package, which is 50% compared to a lot of others. I think the academic atmosphere will be better if we have better academic seminars. I particularly think the parking is a problem. It is easier for a student to get parking compared to faculty. What is the logic to it?” *Male*

“I came to Case from another university... We are, my family and I, extremely pleased with our new situation. Case provides a fantastic environment both professionally and personal. The topic of this focus group aside, it should be recognized that this is a quality institution run by professionals for professionals.” *Male*

“Abused.” *Male*

“Ok, though the Case community lacks creativity and innovation, and is dull.” *Male*