

Equity



“I have noted that almost all of the committee chairs in our department are female, particularly those [committees] that I perceive as less powerful and more administrative.”

Equity is about fair treatment, without favoritism or bias. Having access to opportunities, such as leadership positions and service on important committees, as well as the way resources are allocated, for example funds, space and research assistance, contributes to whether or not a faculty member feels the climate to be fair and equitable. Since different faculty members may need different kinds of assistance and support at different points in the career, one should not expect that this means everyone should have exactly the same opportunities and resources all the time, however, the rationale for how decisions are made around allocation of resources and opportunities should be understood by everyone in the department.

Equitable distribution of workload for teaching, advising and administrative service is also essential for department harmony and creating a positive and engaging department climate. Again, the rationale used for distributing tasks, and transparency about each faculty member’s contribution to the shared workload of the department is essential to maintain a sense of equity and fairness. Some departments have created documents listing each faculty member and their allocation of different kinds of committee work, teaching, etc., to provide transparency about who is doing what. Department chairs can use such a document as an annual sign-up sheet for each year’s tasks. This can also be helpful for encouraging members of the department who regularly avoid service, to feel some added responsibility to do their fair share.

“Teaching assignment is a highly non-transparent process. Teaching duties should be fairly applied ... Some faculties receive unfairly easier teacher assignments (deals) than others.”

In order to identify issues of equity, it is useful to have systems in place to review data about important standard departmental activities: recruitments, appointments, workload allocation, promotions, retention efforts and resignations. By looking at these data over time, patterns may be identified for different groups that suggest inequity or bias. Proactive steps can then be taken for future correction. Salaries should also be reviewed at the school or department level to ensure that equity is maintained over time. Without building in accountability processes, unfair incremental changes or patterns can develop that remain hidden and go uncorrected.