Chapter 12
Advancing Women Leaders in Academe:
Creating a Culture of Inclusion

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ABSTRACT

Much has been written about the dearth of women in leadership positions within the academy both in the United States as well as abroad, however, the percentage of women in key roles continues to remain stagnant. This chapter reviews the forces at play that promote and/or hinder the advancement of women into leadership roles. Several barriers to progression have been identified in the literature ranging from implicit bias, individual preference, and struggles with work life balance to organizational issues such lack of adequate role models and a culture structured around masculine archetypes. Although much is written about programming aimed at the individual or micro level, the larger context of organizational culture must be addressed in order to effect real change. The author suggests that creating a culture of inclusion can facilitate advancement and equity and reviews aspects of the organization that can be utilized as levers for change.

INTRODUCTION

There are numerous accounts in the literature which have spoken to the dearth of women in leadership positions in institutions of higher education. A recent study of the American Council of Education (2012), notes that although women earn a majority of post- secondary degrees in the states, they occupy just 26 percent of all college presidencies. Morley's (2013) compilation of data shows similar findings for senior leadership of educational institutions in the United Kingdom and European Union. Although women outnumber men at the undergraduate level, the percentage of women declines as one progresses up the academic ranks and organizational hierarchy. Other statistics corroborate this phenomenon (Grove, 2013) and indicate that females outnumber males at the undergraduate level, comprising 60% of that population, and make up 50% of early career academics. By the professorial level, the percentage of

women has dwindled to 19%. In the UK, female vice-chancellors hold 14% of the positions. The rate of advancement to date has also appeared to stall as well (Madsen, 2012; Harris & Leberman, 2012), although recent news indicates that is may be increasing incrementally (Elms, 2015).

Morley and Crossouard (2015) in their extensive review of practices in South Asia which encompassed Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, suggest that the percentages of women in leadership are even lower. In most cases, with the exception of Sri Lanka, disaggregated data related to gender was not available. Similar findings from Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria have also been noted.

This chapter examines the forces at play that help or hinder women's advancement through the higher education hierarchy, reviews current initiatives designed to assist this process and makes the case for developing a culture of inclusion.

BACKGROUND

Contemporary Leadership and the Feminine Advantage

Within higher education, the need for effective leadership has never been greater. It is even more important than other entities, when one considers the significant role that these institutions play in society and the economy (Jarboe, 2013). Although historically run according to a masculine hierarchal archetype, there are multiple challenges facing higher education today that will necessitate a different kind of leadership in order for an organization to remain viable (Hanna, 2003) such as: technological advances which require less of the physical "ivory tower" and more of an easily accessible network; interdisciplinary collaboration between faculty in order to help learners resolve the complexity of real world issues; promotion of entrepreneurial ventures; connection to lifelong learning; technologically competent faculty; student centric operations; strategic thinking and the development of developing strategic alliances with others; measuring program quality; and transforming institutional bureaucracy. Hanna (2003) also notes, "the industrial modern system of education will move to a post-modern perspective in which taking advantage of context, collaborating, and constructing knowledge will be valued skills" (p. 32). In addition, there is a growing awareness that the governance of higher education should reflect the diversity present in the staff, faculty, students and public that invests in them (Jarboe, 2013).

Leadership has been studied for centuries, and historically, it has been construed as primarily a masculine enterprise. Effectiveness has been defined in terms of masculine traits such as drive, achievement, self-confidence, influence, and authority (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Madsen & Hammond, 2005). The professoriate in particular, is still a highly gendered, hierarchal occupation (Maranto & Griffin, 2011). Bryman (2007) suggests that competencies needed for leadership effectiveness in the contemporary higher education enterprise include strategic visioning, setting direction, and facilitating movement in that direction. It is accomplished by being considerate, treating others fairly, being trustworthy and having integrity, encouraging open communication and participation in decision making, acting as a role model, communicating status of the unit, creating positive and collegial work environments, advancing the department's cause and reputation, promoting faculty development, and providing feedback on performance.

More recent literature, has suggested that a more feminine enactment of leadership, characterized as inclusive, egalitarian, participative, and flexible may be just what is needed for the academic organization of today (Hanna, 2003; Isaac, Griffin, & Carnes, 2010; Madsen & Hammond, 2005; Eagly, 2007).

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