

The Representation and Pay of Women and Minorities in Higher Education Administration: Institutions That Are Getting It Right

A CUPA-HR Research Brief

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Citation for this report:

McChesney, Jasper (August 2017). *The Representation and Pay of Women and Minorities in Higher Education Administration: Institutions That Are Getting It Right*. Research report. CUPA-HR. Available from: <http://cupahr.org/surveys/publications/research-briefs/>.

Introduction

When we think of diversity and equity in higher education, we may think first of students. However, diversity in faculty and staff is also important.¹ Administrators in particular engage in many functions that represent an institution to the world outside of higher ed and are high-profile examples of how diversity is valued on their campus. Earlier this year, CUPA-HR published research briefs on representation and pay equity for women and racial/ethnic minority administrators in higher ed, using data from 15 years of salary surveys.^{2,3} Although there were a few successes highlighted, gains in representation and pay for both women and minorities are barely perceptible; overall, higher ed institutions are not performing as well as one might expect. This led us to wonder which institutions are doing well in their diversity and equity efforts.

To answer this, we compared higher ed institutions' performance over 16 years in terms of representation and pay equity for women and minority administrators. We identified 11 institutions that have had consistent success. We also looked more broadly at the kinds of institutions that have been more successful than their peers in four areas of diversity/equity (Figure 1). These data — along with qualitative data from HR leaders at the institutions we've identified as “getting it right” — allow some conclusions to be drawn about the characteristics and practices of successful diversity and equity efforts, which we hope can point the way for higher ed institutions striving to create more diverse and equitable workplaces.

The College considers diversity and inclusion examples of its Core Values — specifically Respect. We take great care to ensure employees receive equitable pay and market value compensation, along with traditional and work/life benefits.

—Mae Ashby, Associate Vice President for Human Resources, Seminole State College of Florida

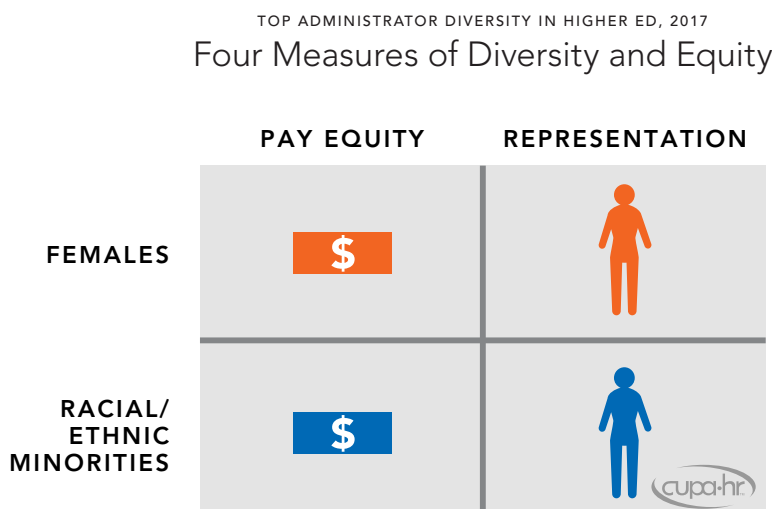


Figure 1

- 1 Hawkins, D., & Nicola, T. (August 16, 2017). *Diversity Among Higher Education Admission Professionals Is More Important Than Ever* (Blog). American Council on Education (ACE). Available from: <https://www.higheredtoday.org/2017/08/16/diversity-among-higher-education-admission-professionals-important-ever/>
- 2 Bichsel, J., & McChesney, J. (March 2017). *Pay and Representation of Racial/Ethnic Minorities in Higher Education Administrative Positions: The Century So Far* (Research report). CUPA-HR. Available from: <http://www.cupahr.org/surveys/publications/research-briefs/>
- 3 Bichsel, J., & McChesney, J. (February 2017). *The Gender Pay Gap and the Representation of Women in Higher Education Administrative Positions: The Century So Far* (Research report). CUPA-HR. Available from: <http://www.cupahr.org/surveys/publications/research-briefs/>

Methodology

Our data were obtained from the previous 16 years of CUPA-HR's *Administrators in Higher Ed Salary Survey*. Each year, institutions voluntarily submit salary and demographic data on their administrators.⁴ The number of participants varied by year, and was typically around 1,300; in total, 2,279 distinct higher ed institutions were included. Four diversity and equity metrics were calculated in the following manner from each institution's reported administrators:⁵

$$\text{women's pay equity} = \frac{\text{median female pay}}{\text{median male pay}}$$

$$\text{minority pay equity} = \frac{\text{median minority pay}}{\text{median White pay}}$$

$$\text{women's representation} = \frac{n \text{ women}}{n \text{ women} + n \text{ men}}$$

$$\text{minority representation} = \frac{n \text{ minorities}}{n \text{ minorities} + n \text{ Whites}}$$

Institutions were then ranked on each of the four measures each year, from lowest to highest (allowing ties). These ranks were placed on a standardized scale from 0 to 100 so that all years would be comparable, regardless of the number of participants. If an institution had no women administrators in a given year, it was assigned a rank of 0 for both women's representation and pay equity; the same practice was followed for racial/ethnic minorities.

We defined top institutions as those with diversity/equity ranks in the top two-thirds every year they participated. That is, they were never in the lowest third. Only institutions that participated for at least 10 years (not necessarily consecutively) were considered.⁶

4 Administrators were analyzed as a group. See the [Administrators Survey Participation Integrated Template](#) for a list of the administrative positions surveyed. Partial submission of positions is allowed, causing institutional performance to fluctuate, especially at smaller schools. Estimates suggest around 90% of administrator positions are usually provided, however. For-profit institutions and system offices were excluded from this analysis.

5 Administrators reported without demographic data were omitted from the analysis.

6 When examining a group of institutions (e.g., private religious ones), we averaged every institution's rank over time, then took the average rank of all institutions in the group.

Institution Characteristics

We considered whether certain types of institutions typically performed better on a relative basis. As can be seen in Figure 2, public institutions generally outperformed private ones. The exception is in women’s representation, where private independent institutions were ranked the highest.⁷ Although religious schools showed the weakest performance in minority representation, they are improving in this area and have performed similarly to other private institutions in the last few years.⁸

Recognizing that traditional pay philosophies and practices can often have a disparate impact on minorities and women, we have actively pursued a different philosophy and method of recruiting and establishing pay. We do not use traditional factors, such as years of experience, but rather set a starting pay and adjust it for very specific reasons like a unique skill or experience.

—Ken Nufer, Director of Human Resources, Pueblo Community College, CO

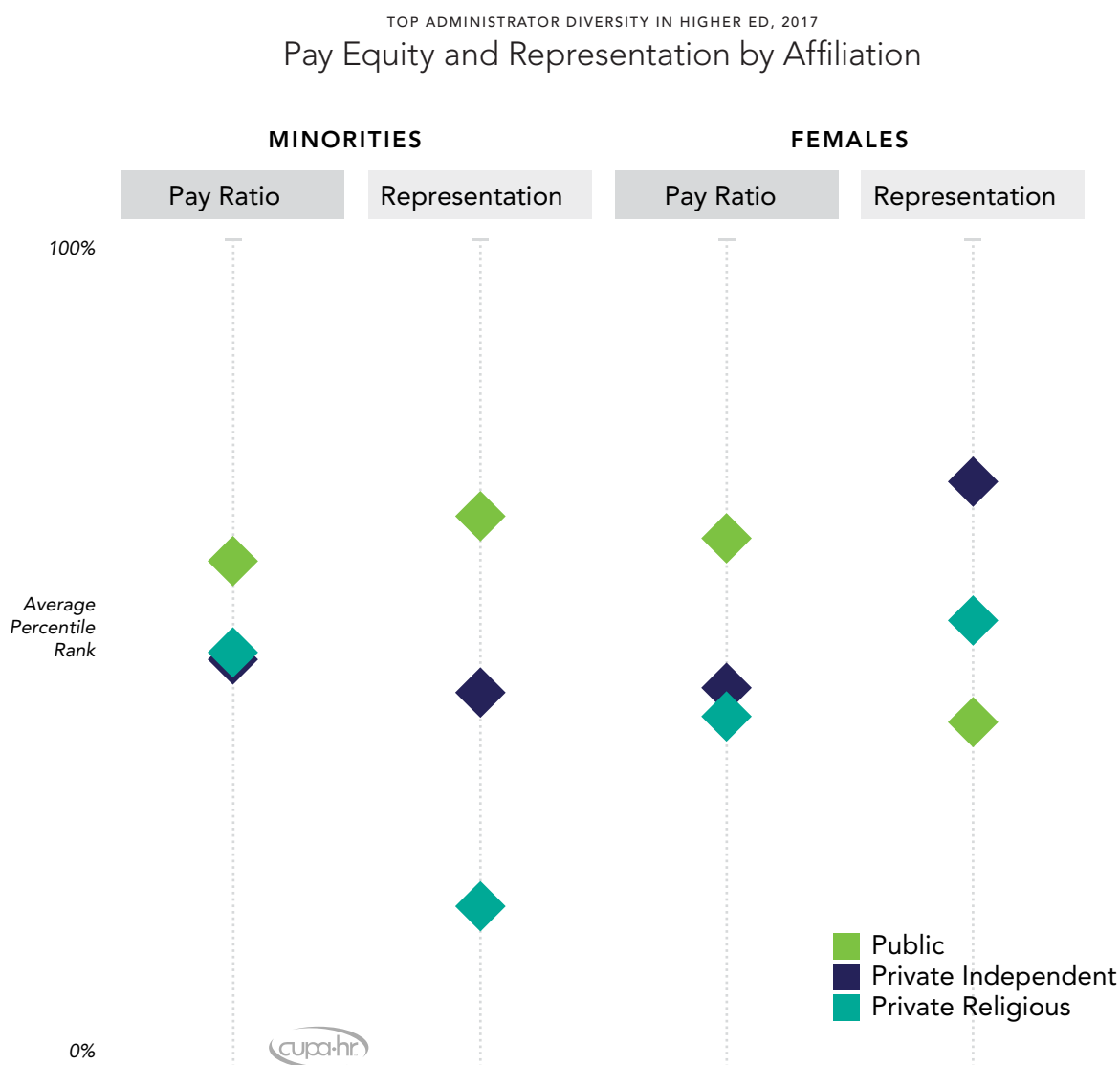


Figure 2

7 Institutions with no minorities or women reported in a given year were not ranked for pay ratio.

8 This same general picture remains true even if we do not consider community colleges, which are exclusively public in our sample.

Figure 3 shows rank differences in terms of classification. The figures for women’s equity are noticeably dominated by Associate’s institutions, which also perform well in minority equity. Doctoral universities excel in representing minorities in their administrative positions. Minority pay rankings are similar across groups, and minority pay in general is close to parity with pay for Whites — as we found in our earlier brief.⁹

TOP ADMINISTRATOR DIVERSITY IN HIGHER ED, 2017

Pay Equity and Representation by Classification

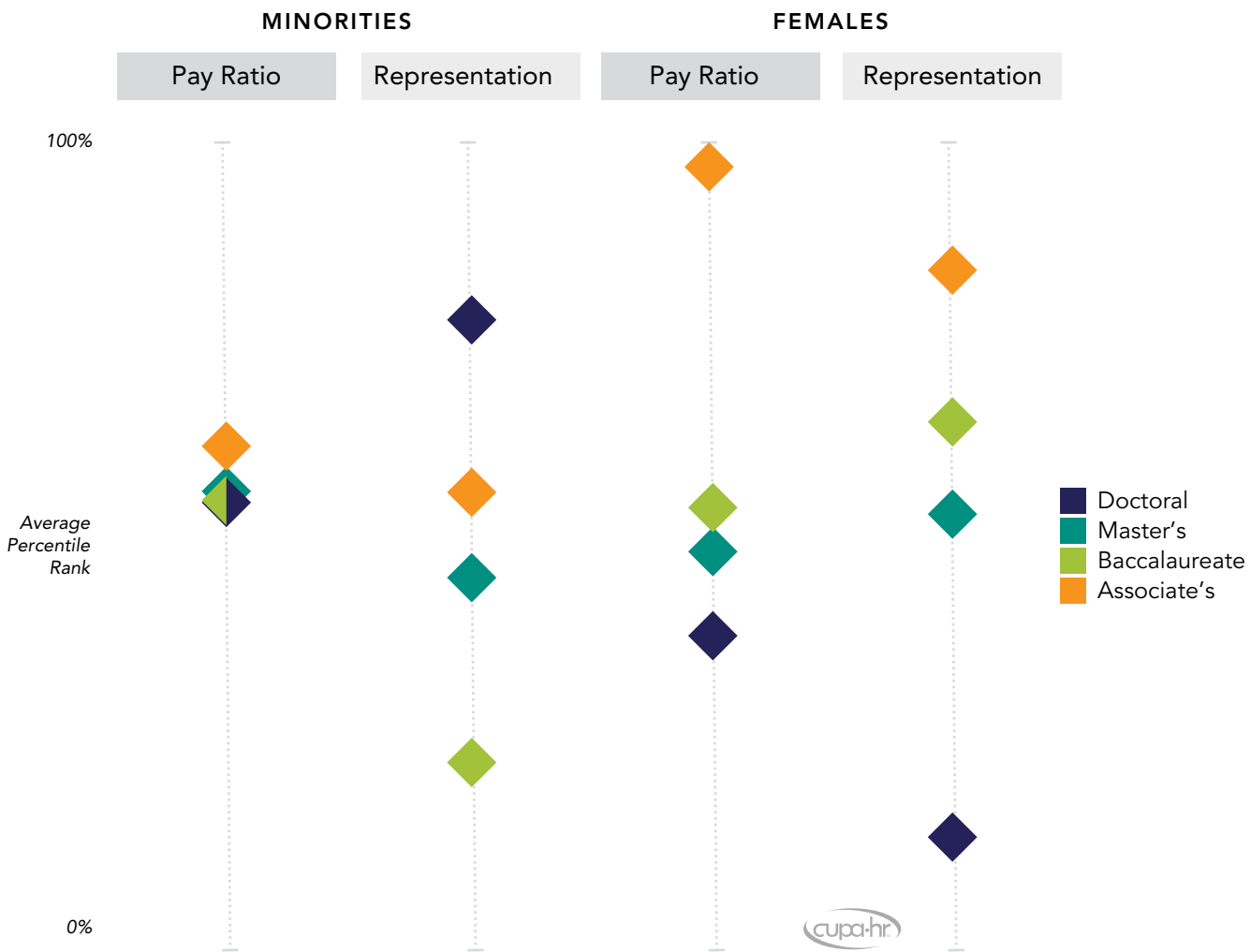


Figure 3

9 Bichsel & McChesney, 2017b.

Some of these same patterns are found when comparing by administration size. As can be seen in Figure 4, rankings for women’s representation tend to be highest at institutions with smaller numbers of administrators. The reverse is true for minorities, where pay equity and representation increase markedly with the number of administrators.

TOP ADMINISTRATOR DIVERSITY IN HIGHER ED, 2017

Pay Equity and Representation by Number of Administrators

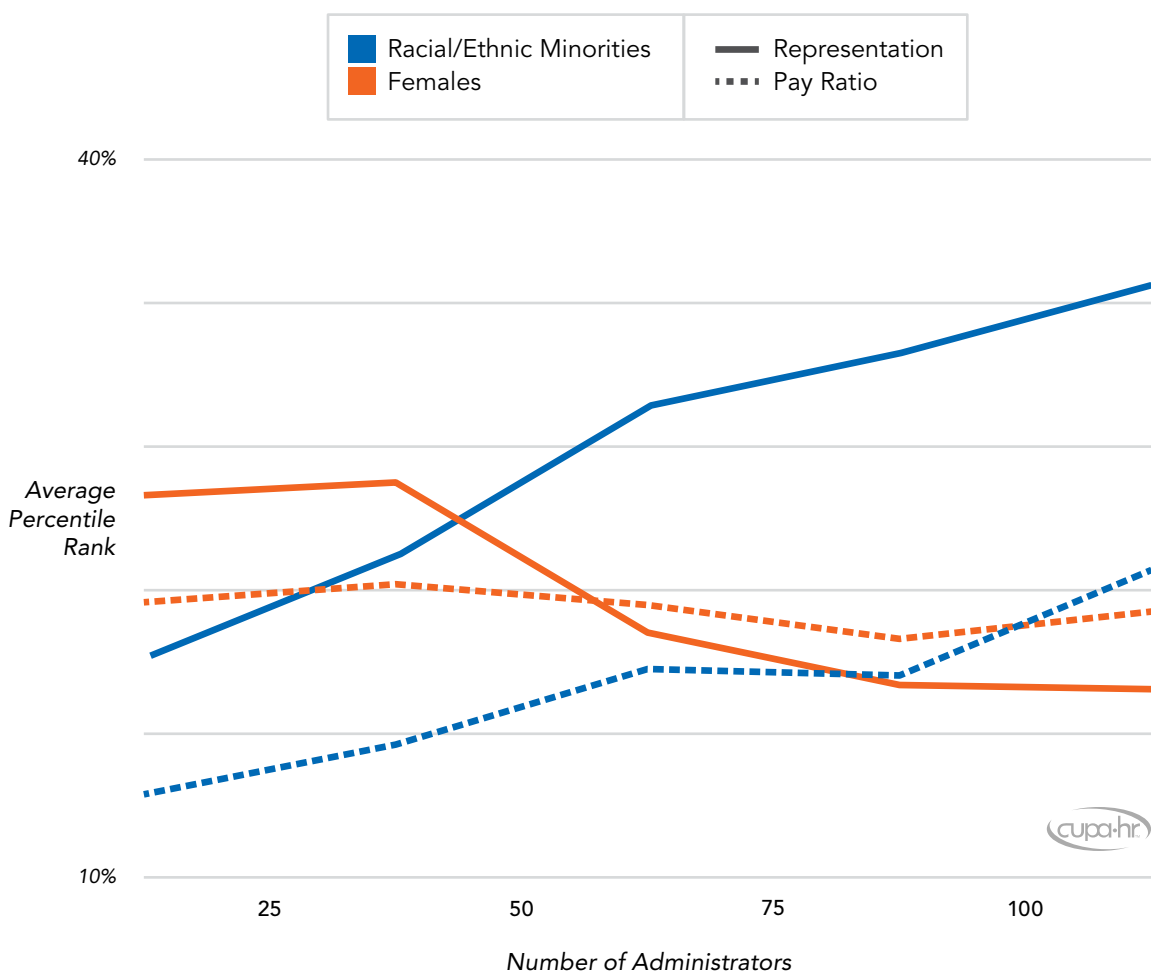


Figure 4

Top Schools

For each of our four diversity and equity measures, we identified the top-performing institutions. These institutions were ranked in the top two-thirds each year they participated in the survey, with at least 10 years of participation during the 16 years we analyzed. The Venn diagram in Figure 5 shows how many institutions met these criteria for one or more measures simultaneously.

From the president down, we've had demonstrated support in moving the College forward. Examples include creating an Office of Access, Equity, and Diversity; creating an assistant vice president role that oversees the area; and campus initiative groups like the Anti-Racism Team and the Diversity Council.

—Mum Martins, Chief Human Resources Officer, Oakton Community College, IL

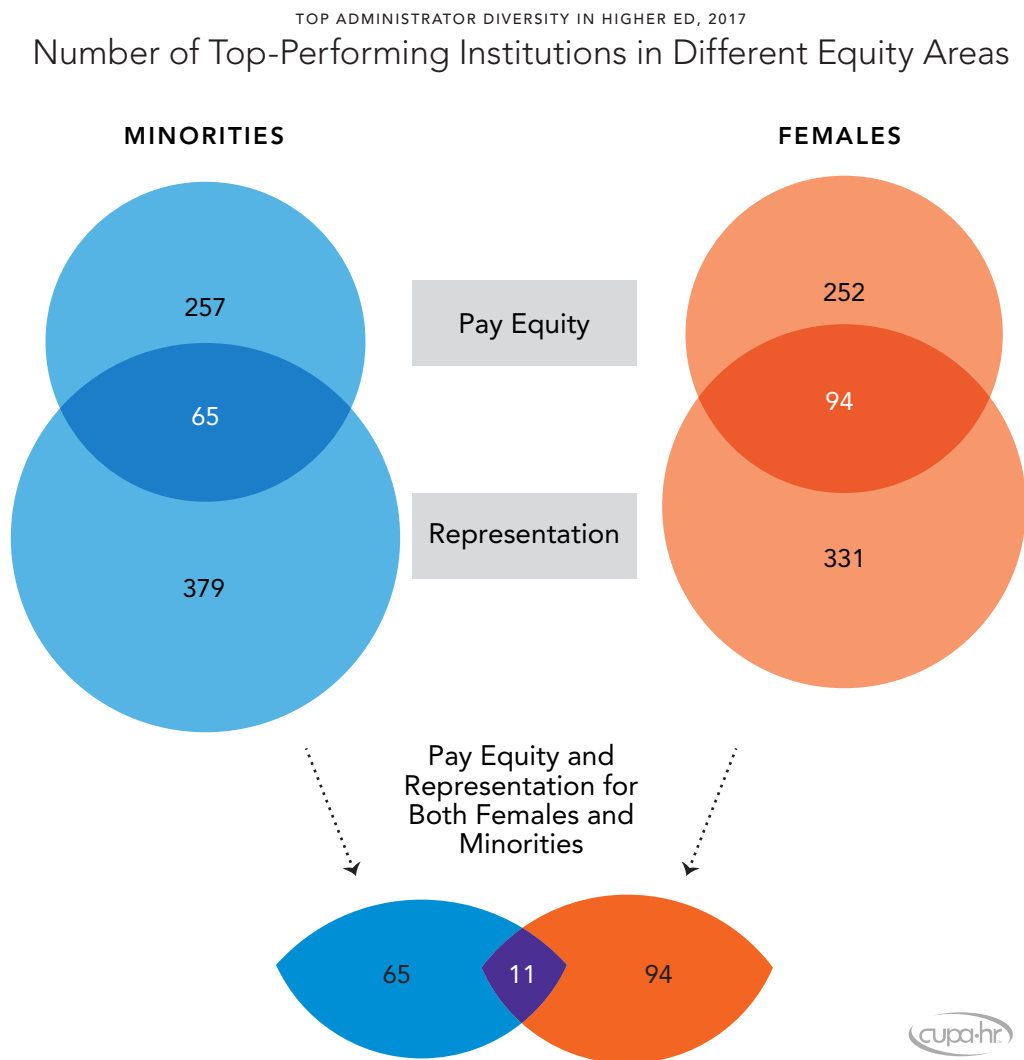


Figure 5

Although many institutions did well in at least one diversity/equity area, relatively few did so for both representation and pay, either for women or minority administrators. However, 11 institutions were top performers in all areas, sustaining equitable pay and representation for both minorities and women over 16 years. Examining the full list (Table 1), we can see that these 11 institutions do not fit a single profile, but represent a broad range of classifications, affiliations, and regions.¹⁰ Additionally, although institutional size covers a range from 1,735 to 12,807, there are not many large institutions represented.

Table 1

Institution	State	Census Region	Affiliation	Classification	N Admin.	N Students
Goucher College	MD	South	Private Independent	Baccalaureate	52	1,759
Holyoke Community College	MA	Northeast	Public	Associate's	31	4,430
Howard College	TX	South	Public	Associate's	30	2,027
Luzerne County Community College	PA	Northeast	Public	Associate's	19	5,081
Montclair State University	NJ	Northeast	Public	Doctoral	65	12,807
New Jersey City University	NJ	Northeast	Public	Master's	49	6,437
Oakton Community College	IL	Midwest	Public	Associate's	24	5,513
Oakwood University ¹¹	AL	South	Private Religious	Baccalaureate	40	1,735
Pueblo Community College	CO	West	Public	Associate's	24	3,532
Seminole State College of Florida	FL	South	Public	Baccalaureate	34	5,648
Winston-Salem State University	NC	South	Public	Master's	51	5,165

¹⁰ The number of administrators listed reflects the number of positions submitted to CUPA-HR's salary survey and not necessarily the total number of administrators at the institution, averaged over all years of participation by that institution. The number of students is also an average of the number reported during years of participation.

¹¹ Oakwood University is considered a minority-serving institution.
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/edlite-minorityinst-list-tab.html>

In Context

In identifying good equity performance, we have focused on ranked comparison between institutions in a given year. This intentionally glosses over some important context.

In higher ed, some metrics of diversity and equity have been harder to sustain than others.¹² Figure 6 shows pay ratios over time for the middle third of all institutions, as well as the top 11. We can see how much larger the gender pay gap is than the gap for minorities.¹³

Pay equity is embedded in Goucher College's community principles: respect, inclusion, communication, service and social justice, and responsibility. These principles are rooted in the college's history, as it was a women's college from 1885 to 1986.

Since it is the main source of salary data for colleges and universities across the country, Goucher uses CUPA-HR as a resource when achieving equal pay. This salary data is used as the basis for setting our exempt staff salaries, by position, regardless of gender or ethnic or racial diversity.

—Deborah Lupton, Vice President for Human Resources, Goucher College, MD

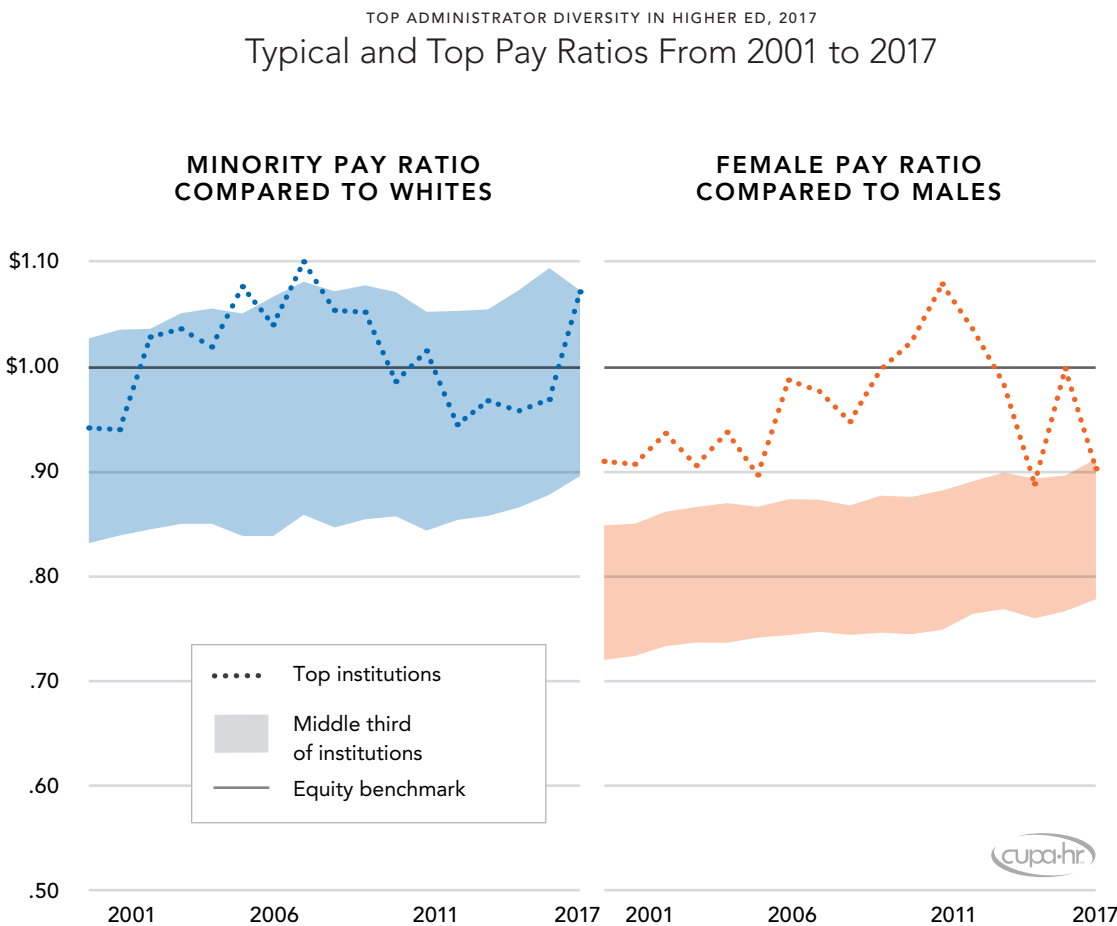


Figure 6

¹² Bichsel & McChesney, 2017a; Bichsel & McChesney, 2017b.

¹³ The pay “gap” is shown here as the distance from the \$1 mark. In the chart for women, \$1 represents a dollar that men earn; while on the chart for minorities, it is every dollar earned by Whites. Parity in pay is seen when an institution falls exactly on \$1.

Figure 7 depicts representation, and we can see that the representation of women administrators as a whole is now at parity,¹⁴ while minorities are still under-represented.¹⁵ The top 11 have been consistent in outperforming other institutions — their median performance is shown by the dashed lines.

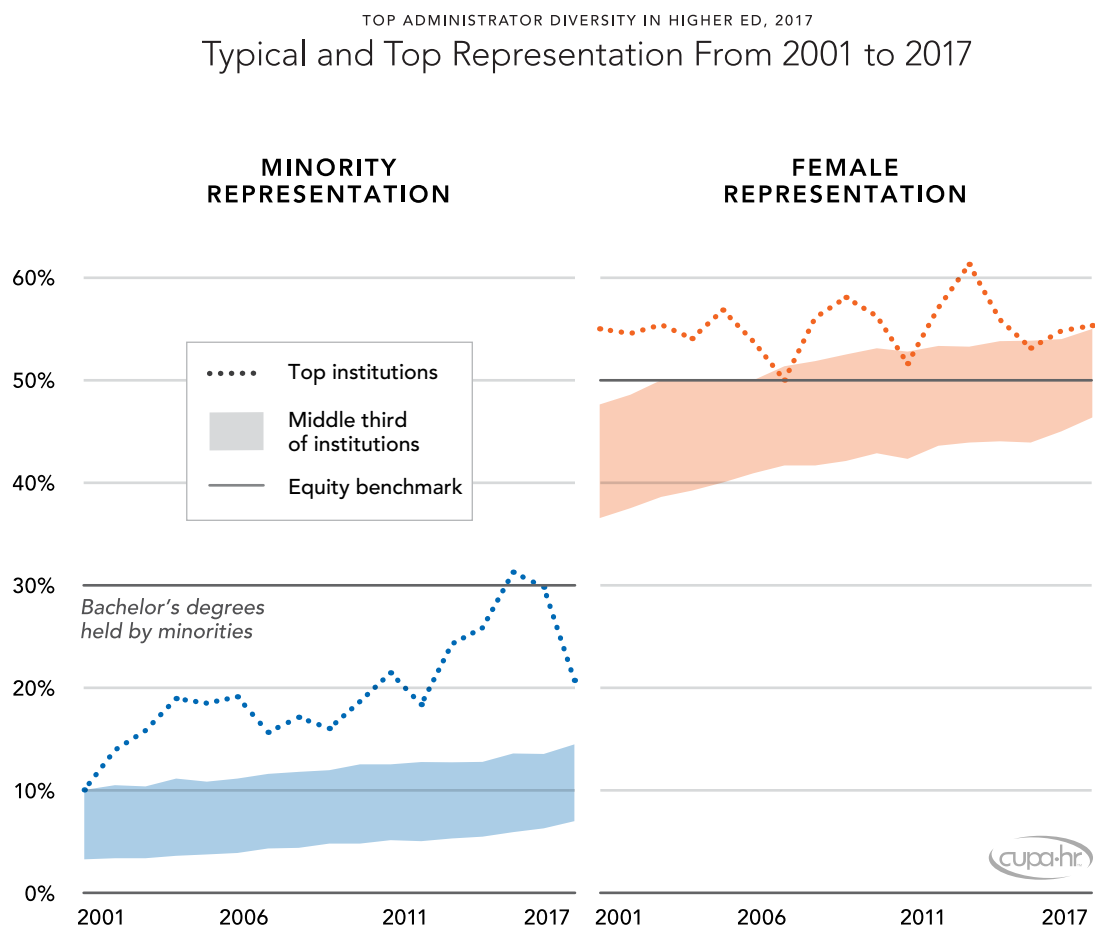


Figure 7

14 Women continue to be under-represented in executive administrative positions in higher ed. Bichsel & McChesney, 2017a: <http://cupahr.org/surveys/publications/research-briefs/>

15 Our benchmark is the percentage of bachelor degrees awarded to racial/ethnic minorities, which was approximately 27% in 2017. US Census data, via American Fact Finder: <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>

There has been very gradual progress in all four measures over the last 16 years, as we noted in our previous briefs.¹⁶ This can be seen in Figures 6 and 7, where the shaded regions show a slight upward trend. The top 11 were also defined in this changing context: To qualify for “top” status, institutions had to be inside or above the shaded regions every year — and since those are slowly rising, the bar for “top” status was also being raised over time.

Also note that the lines depicting the median value for the top 11 institutions are quite erratic. This is because the sample size is relatively small compared to the shaded region, and if an institution did not participate in a given year, or changed its staffing significantly, the top 11 result shifts dramatically. The larger trends in higher ed are better seen in the shaded region, with its much larger sample of institutions.

¹⁶ Bichsel & McChesney, 2017a; Bichsel & McChesney, 2017b.

Explaining Success

What has made our 11 top institutions rise consistently above other institutions? We reached out to the chief human resources officers at each institution for their thoughts.

Many of those who responded noted a formal commitment to diversity, equity, and/or inclusion efforts incorporated into the mission statements and strategic documents of their institutions, along with support from top leadership. This may apply especially to the many community colleges in the top 11. Two-year institutions often have strong ties to their local area, as well as a mission to aid underserved populations — and they were generally ranked highly on all diversity/equity measures.¹⁷ However, actions targeting minorities are not limited to two-year institutions. Some of our top 11 noted strong efforts to advertise positions both widely and in publications targeted at minorities.

Finally, many institutions described hiring and salary increase structures focused on establishing fair market compensation. These efforts often relied on data — institutions cited benchmarking and extensive compensation analysis as important tools. In one case, an alternative evaluation system was adopted, based more on specific employee skills rather than experience or subjective criteria. Since women and minorities are likely to suffer from subjective bias,¹⁸ and women in higher ed are paid less than men overall, a data-centric approach may be important in achieving success in diversity and equity efforts.

We advertise our open positions among notable publications that target diverse candidates as well as to alumni of Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic-Serving Institutions. We also conduct extensive classification and compensation analyses for our positions, factoring in internal equities as well as salary data from our peer institutions. CUPA-HR's DataOnDemand tool has been a very reliable metric for this purpose.

—Junea Williams-Edmund, Interim Vice President of Human Resources, Montclair State University, NJ

17 Mullin, C. (February 2012). *Why Access Matters: The Community College Student Body*. (Policy brief). American Association of Community Colleges.
<http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Publications/Briefs/Pages/pb02062012.aspx>

18 Clegg, A. (February, 2017) "Unconscious bias hinders diversity recruitment." *Financial Times*.
<https://www.ft.com/content/b6065b00-d340-11e6-b06b-680c49b4b4c0>

Conclusions and Next Steps

Higher ed is not immune to the diversity and equity shortcomings and challenges in other sectors, particularly around women's pay and the representation of racial/ethnic minorities. However, there are clearly examples of institutions that are indeed doing well, and have been doing well for over a decade. We're pleased to note their successes, as well as some general patterns:

- Many institutions have achieved success with administrator diversity/equity for *either* racial/ethnic minorities or for women, but very few have achieved success on all measures.
- Very successful institutions do not fit a single profile. They are generally not considered elite institutions. Instead, a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion from leadership as well as data-driven decision making were commonalities.
- Minority representation and pay has been strongest at larger institutions and at public ones.
- Women's pay has been most equitable at associate's institutions. Although representation for women administrators is fairly good overall, it has been highest at associate's institutions and at smaller, non-religious private institutions.

Emulation of the successes we've noted might start with the following:

- Share these findings with senior leaders at your institution.
- Consider the creation of chief diversity positions or offices, if they do not already exist, as well as task forces focused on equity and diversity.
- Evaluate compensation and recruiting practices.
- Find ways to incorporate data and data-driven decision making that can reduce bias and ensure fair market compensation.

It will not be easy for institutions of higher education to reach the goal of full equity, either in pay or representation, for women and minorities. Using data to note shortcomings and challenges is one part of the solution. The other is to actively pursue more equitable policies and practices. We hope these findings will assist institution leaders as they create calls to action regarding representation and pay equity for women and minorities.

