

Women, minority faculty less likely to negotiate pay or seek other job opportunities, finds study

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Credit: Nicole Smith, made with Midjourney/University of Michigan

Race and gender inequities in faculty representation and support have been widely acknowledged, but [a new University of Michigan study](#) reveals a previously underexplored contributor to disparities in pay and employment conditions: negotiation behavior.

Led by Jeremy Wright-Kim, U-M assistant professor of education, the research explored gender- and race-based differences in negotiation [behavior](#) and institutional responses, shedding light on the pressing issue of pay inequity and resource allocation within [higher education](#).

The study, published in *The Review of Higher Education*, defined negotiation behavior as actively seeking an outside job offer, receiving a formal job offer and renegotiating the terms of employment.

"We wanted to understand better negotiating behavior as a source of inequity," Wright-Kim said. "We know that there's a lot of racism and sexism that manifests in various ways among the [faculty](#). So, we've looked at a broader sample and built on what we qualitatively already knew to try to concretize it in a quantitative metric, utilizing the best data possible."

Using the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education, an annual faculty survey conducted over nine academic years from 2012 to 2020, Wright-Kim and colleague Laura Perna of the University of Pennsylvania collected data from about 31,000 faculty at 191 institutions.

The objective was to describe the characteristics of faculty who engage in negotiation behaviors, institutional responses to those negotiation behaviors, and variations in negotiating behaviors by the gender and race/ethnicity of the negotiating faculty.

"One of the most relevant findings is that there are significant differences in negotiation behavior across gender and racial/ethnic groups," Wright-Kim said. "Men and women of color, for example, are less likely than white men to seek external job offers. While men of color are less likely than white men to negotiate their employment net of other variables; the men who negotiate are more likely to receive an

increase in [base salary](#) compared with other faculty."

Contrary to prior research, Wright-Kim said the research shows that [white women](#) when compared to white men, are less likely to seek outside offers. Still, they're more likely to negotiate their employment.

"When compared to [white men](#), men of color are less likely to negotiate but women of color have no significant difference," he said. "That's why it's so dreadful that it's women of color who are most likely to report no adjustments."

The role of negotiation behavior

According to the researchers, these findings begin to uncover the role of negotiation behavior as a significant factor contributing to these disparities. Seeking and receiving external job offers is considered an effective strategy for salary improvement and enhancing overall employment conditions and may even be required by some institutions.

However, this practice may inadvertently lead to pay discrimination based on race and gender, given differential negotiation tendencies, they said. Moreover, institutions may be differentially responding to faculty [negotiation](#), further exacerbating inequity.

"These discussions present some lessons," Wright-Kim said. "First, [faculty members](#) could be doing themselves a disservice if they don't engage in seeking external offers. Even though it shouldn't be their job to play this game, seeking outside may matter, and doing so may help put them in a strong negotiating position.

"And the more important implications are for colleges and universities. They need to be collecting data on the negotiated experiences of their faculty. Only through that systematic collection and interrogation of the

data can an institution or a college identify to what extent they perpetuate negotiated inequities.

"Achieving pay equity and [resource allocation](#) fairness in higher education is a shared responsibility that requires the commitment of academic institutions and their leaders."

More information: Jeremy Wright-Kim et al, Gender and Race-Based Differences in Negotiating Behavior among Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty at Four-Year Institutions, *The Review of Higher Education* (2023). [DOI: 10.1353/rhe.2023.a907271](https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2023.a907271)

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