Two studies quantify bias in US higher education

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Two recent papers by CU Boulder and SFI co-authors explore the socioeconomic makeup and the educational backgrounds of tenure-track faculty across the U.S.

The first study, published in *Nature Human Behavior* in August, showed that academic faculty are 25 times more likely to have a parent with a doctorate degree. Moreover, researchers Allison Morgan (CU Boulder), Nicholas LaBerge (CU Boulder), former Complexity Postdoctoral Fellow Daniel Larremore (CU Boulder), SFI Professor Mirta Galesic, Jennie Brand (UCLA), and SFI External Professor Aaron Clauset (CU Boulder) found that the rate nearly doubles at prestigious universities, and has held more or less constant for the past 50 years.

A related study, published in *Nature* in September, is the most thorough analysis to date of the faculty structure in U.S. education. Co-authors Hunter Wapman (CU Boulder), Sam Zhang (CU Boulder), K. Hunter Wapman et al, Quantifying hierarchy and dynamics in US faculty hiring and retention, *Nature Human Behaviour* (2022). DOI: [10.1038/s41562-022-01425-4](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-022-01425-4)

The researchers note that a biased system makes it much harder for good ideas to spread from less prominent institutions, and from socioeconomic and demographic groups that are under-represented amongst university faculty.


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