CSU QUALITATIVE RESEARCH
SUBCOMMITTEE OF SCSWF

METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS
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NATIONAL CONTEXT: CLIMATE SURVEYS

Many research-intensive universities in past two decades have assessed climate for women faculty:

- Syracuse, U of Minnesota, U of California System
- U of Denver, Purdue, Iowa State,
- U of Colorado, Cornell, Michigan,
- U W-Madison and UW-Milwaukee

Catalysts: ADVANCE (NSF) grants, Faculty Advocacy, response to grievance, leader-driven
ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

Large Scale Climate Surveys (e.g., HERI survey)

Qualitative Studies (e.g., focus groups)

ADVANCE activities: mentoring, leadership, implicit bias training, changes to search committees, pay equity studies, work/life balance policies

BUT: ACE (2016) finds gender-based inequities persist

Bilimoria & Liang (2012) “To overcome existing barriers and inertia, wider and deeper change is needed in our higher education institutions” (p. 206)
CSU CONTEXT

1997: President Al Yates created: President’s Commission on Women and Gender Equity at Colorado State University (CSU).

2012-2013: Senior CSU women faculty met President Frank and Provost Miranda to express concerns

2013: Standing Committee on Status of Women Faculty created to address challenges to women faculty

2014 Campus wide climate survey (N= 2150) men and women, all staff.

2015-2016: Follow up qualitative study to understand deeper concerns for faculty women
EXTERNAL RESEARCHER

Conducted all interviews and focus groups – each was taped

Collated transcriptions of the focus groups and interviews and surveys

Redacted all identifying information before SCSWF members reviewed the data.

Collaborated with SCSWF members to analyze the data and develop recommendations.
PARTICIPANTS

Responded to an invitation with a pseudonym
Agreed to participate in a focus group or interview
Maintained confidentiality throughout process
Eleven focus groups, 10 individual interviews, 21 responses to online survey
Total of 76 women across all ranks and appointment statuses (approximately 12% of faculty women at CSU)
METHODOLOGY

**Design:** set of questions to assess the complexity of women faculty experiences, outcomes, and opportunities at CSU.

**Purpose:** To gather data in the form of narratives from women faculty

- not gathered or reported out in other data gathering efforts
- gain in-depth knowledge of a complex topic.

**Outside Researcher:** To control for insider status of CSU researchers and ensure confidentiality.
METHODOLOGY


Validity (Trustworthiness/Credibility): Rigor of the coding process and inclusion of interrater reliability
METHODOLOGY

**Triangulation:** Multiple forms of data collection (focus group, interview, written responses), Multiple statuses of participants (rank and appointment type, administrator), Multiple researchers, (Merriam & Tisdell, 2014).

Findings are consistent with results from SCSWF Survey (2014), and similar to other academic studies on women faculty.
FINDINGS

Gender-Based Inequities: Participants consistently reported gender-based inequities at both inter-personal and institutional levels

“When [our leader] first came, he met with all faculty individually. He told all of the women the same story about his wife, that she did the right thing and stayed home with the children.”

“There is sexism-mostly from students...male students challenge us..with behavior that suggests ..that women are not as capable.”
FINDINGS

Gender Bias Has Significant Impacts: Gender significantly shapes faculty experiences and perceptions, and gender bias impacts women faculty in light of professional status, productivity, health, and work satisfaction.

“And it just kind of reached a point where I was so depressed and I was very worried about my own health, and thinking I don’t know what I am going to do. … I know that I’m not talking suicidal, but I mean you reach a point in time where you start getting into that situation.”
FINDINGS

Micro-Cultures of Gender Inequity: The experience of gender inequity is most pronounced within “micro-cultures,” i.e., the level of academic unit (i.e. department).

“It seems like you’re always at the will of whoever comes into power. Whether that be a chair or a Dean or whomever might be entrusted, whether or not they’re going to be honest and, and do what’s for the good of the faculty rather than for their friends”
FINDINGS (CONT.)

A Self-Perpetuating System: Participants consider institutional structures and policies part of self-perpetuating systems of gender bias.

“Administrators…[are hired] from within almost all the time. We [have] a lot of… high administrators who have been here for almost all their careers and then you know they never leave.”

“Another process is broken, and that is the evaluation of the administrators…[there isn’t any] vetting or weeding out of bad chairs, bad deans, or bad Vice Presidents...they are protected by the administration”
FINDINGS (CONT.)

Professional Dissonance: Participants expressed profound and multifaceted conflicts between their personal/professional values and those of the institution, due in great part to the historically patriarchal values of the institution.

“...I started this career not to make money, it wasn't my goal. I wanted to create value in the world and I want to be part of an institution ...whose primary goals are to create value, whether it's, you know, solving cancer or ameliorating poverty or, or something like that. And so, I feel like right now, my values are just so out of alignment with the University's values”
Evaluation Processes Work to Reinforce Inequities; Participants viewed evaluation processes as erratic, unfair and inconsistently applied

“Evaluation is where predominantly men would make comments -- very clear comments, such as: Remember we're the ones who decide if you get in the club.”
FINDINGS (CONT.)

Lack of Leadership to Create Real Change: Participants conveyed disillusion, distrust and/or cynicism regarding the possibility of making CSU a premier institution for women.

“So at the bottom of my heart I know that this is probably never going to happen as long as the provost’s office people stay …[the same]. [There is] probably never going to [be] any change here because there is a big block there.”
Barriers for Grievances and Complaints: Participants who turned to institutional systems with grievances or complaints often reported dissatisfaction with procedures and systemic barriers to resolutions.
FINDINGS (CONT.)

Rank Matters: Gender inequity disproportionately affects non-tenure track (NTT) faculty.

“As non-tenure track part-time adjunct faculty, I have talent and experience to give but few opportunities to use and express those talents and my experience because of how the system of hiring and distributing classes is not one to recognize those talents and experiences.”
Carrying the Load: Women faculty accomplish a disproportionate percentage of service- and non-research related work.

“So you get so many more demands placed on you. And I really do feel like this come heavily to the female faculty and staff, heavily. And that does not get counted for at all in any way…. [women’s service] gets pushed into [gender-biased] paradigms.”
FINDINGS (CONT)

Men and Women Leaders also Identified as Problematic

“….Those women who are in top administrative positions seem to reinforce the male-dominated culture rather than work to help other women, particularly adjunct women establish career paths, get evaluations, get access to resources, or be considered for merit raises.”
Accumulation of Gender Inequity

“I did what I was supposed to do as Assistant Professor, I did it as an Associate Professor, I got to be a full Professor, and then I looked around and literally it's like -- what now? ... And you never arrive. You never, you never are in….You're never accepted.
FINDINGS (CONT)

Women of Color & LGBT at Increased Risk for Inequity:

Talking about mentoring other women: “She was so concerned about what she knew, especially for some of the female faculty members -- that would come to her on the side or that she was trying to mentor. And this particular area was notorious for female faculty leaving, especially female faculty of color.”
Women Faculty Thriving at CSU

“I think it's real important for me to feel part of a big collaborative venture…. But, but those collaborative ventures I've found nationally and internationally [not on my own campus or department].”
DEVELOPING RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussions among the research team
Dozens of recommendations from participants
Guidelines from best practices from the University of Denver, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the American Council on Education, and the organizational literature on reducing turnover
Harvard Business Review article by Dobbin and Kalev “Why Diversity Programs Fail”
Engage managers in solving the problem. When managers boost diversity efforts they think of themselves as “diversity champions” vs. making people do things as this ends up solidifying entrenched attitudes.

Expose managers to people from different groups. Once folks work alongside people with different racial, gender, ethnic and sexual identities their attitudes begin to change.

Encourage social accountability for change that is make sure folks understand what they decide will become public or at least that they will be accountable for their decisions. People want to look good to their peers and social accountability promotes possibilities for change that again has a self-motivator to it.
UNDERGIRDING CONCEPTS

Transparency (T): At all levels, significant leadership decisions (and rationales for those decisions) should be clearly articulated and made accessible to CSU faculty in order to enhance effective communication and inspire the trust necessary for productive collaboration and shared goals.

Accountability (A): Effective accountability measures—including clearly articulated outcomes/objective statements, as well as fair and confidential procedures of information collection—should be implemented for leadership at all levels.

Consistency (C): Within units and at the larger institutional level, leadership decisions that impact faculty should be consistently applied.
IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

Develop an administrative position has the power and authority to implement meaningful change. Title may be Vice Provost for Gender Equity or similarly influential leadership position.

Develop gender-related “desired outcome statements”/objectives for administration and faculty across the university.

Develop procedures for effective and meaningful evaluation in light of these outcomes/objectives. Ensure that these procedures provide confidentiality for individuals and measurable results.

Establish an Advisory Committee to ensure accountability, review evaluation measures and results, and support the implementation of institutional changes. Ensure a process of “checks and balances”

Report advances to the CSU community (Town Hall meetings, Source announcements, etc.).